

ASTON UNIVERSITY

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the International Strategy Committee meeting held on Thursday 21st February 2019.

PRESENT: Saskia Loer Hansen (Chair), Kate Sugden, Geoff Parkes, Bhavisha Koner, Frank Austermuehl, Patrycja Rozbicka, Pawan Budhwar, Ania Bailey, Carolina Salinas, Christina Matthews, Wendy Yip, Amna Atteeq, Paul Hebron

APOLOGIES: Paul Knobbs, Matthew Dean, Marc Hornby, Fiona Kilker, Fiona Lacey, Mark Smith, Elizabeth Woodfield, Claire Freeman

SECRETARY: Jessica Rigby

IN ATTENDANCE: Alan Hawkesworth

1. MINUTES

18/40 CONFIRMED:

The Minutes of the International Strategy Committee held on the 3rd December 2018 (Blackboard).

2. PPCI Updates

18/41 RECEIVED:

- I. An update on the context of the Brexit Contingency Planning paper to be discussed.

18/42 NOTED:

- I. The Brexit Contingency Planning paper is written with a 'no deal' scenario as the focus and that all options presented were subject to change depending on Government updates. There will continue to be a lot of uncertainty, though the contingency planning is trying to propose actions that are within our control, and to ensure that we have thought through the implications of a No Deal Brexit scenario in terms of current international placement students and students awaiting confirmation about international placements for 2019/10.
- II. Brexit paper will be circulated to the Executive on Monday 25th February for review.

3. Discussion: Brexit Contingency Planning

Led by the Director, International Development, Wendy Yip, and Secretary, Jessica Rigby.

18/43 RECEIVED

- I. An oral summary of the Brexit Contingency Planning paper which was developed by colleagues from the International Office, Vice-Chancellor's Office (Policy

Adviser) and Careers+Placements using information provided by Government Technical Notices and Universities UK International.

18/44 NOTED

- I. A communications plan is under review for current Aston students on an Erasmus placement, as well as compulsory abroad placement students for the 2019/20 academic year.
- II. The critical areas of the report focus on students currently out on placement, and inbound students currently studying at Aston.
- III. That if students had to leave their placement to return to Aston due to Brexit complications, there would be implications, including ensuring students meet the requirements to pass their placement year, accommodation provisions, welfare issues and potential insurance claims for loss of finances. Identified that Care Leaver students would be of particular risk.

18/45 ACTION

- I. Student Services to identify any Care Leaver status students currently on a placement in Europe (Christina Matthews)

18/46 RECEIVED:

- I. An update from Careers+Placements regarding student mobility.

18/47 NOTED:

- I. Noted two placement providers (1 x Netherlands, 2 x France) have contacted Aston to confirm student placements will be ended on 29 March in case of a No Deal Brexit. It is expected that more placement providers may follow suit, or at least we have to be prepared for that being the case.
- II. There are four students due to start placements after 29th March, two of whom are starting on 1st April.

18/48 ACTION:

- I. Careers+Placements to discuss potential early start with students due to begin placement on 1st April. (Careers+Placements)

18/49 RECEIVED:

- I. An update from Aston's insurance representative.

18/50 NOTED:

- I. Aston's insurance provider sees Brexit as a 'foreseeable event', therefore is not likely to reimburse the cost of students needing to return to the UK.
- II. European Health Insurance Cards would cease to be valid in the instance of a no deal, however insurance will still be valid. Students may need to pay the €25 processing fee in place of the EHIC card.

- III. Staff and students should ensure there are 6 months remaining on their passports from the date of entry into the EU country.

18/51 ACTION:

- I. Careers+Placements to send communications to students regarding passport validity. (Careers+Placements)

18/52 NOTED:

- I. For the 2019/20 academic year there is no underwrite guarantee and there are 108 compulsory international placement students in this cohort. Of this figure, 70% are likely to go to EU destinations.
- II. Universities UK International are advising universities not to publicly announce underwrites as this undermines their lobbying work with the Department for Education.
- III. There may be reputational consequences if Aston is unable to underwrite and therefore sees a significant loss of overseas placements. This may also impact relationships with employers. For 2018/19 there has already been a decrease in overseas placements (by 40).
- IV. A Brexit Student Ops Group has been created with representation from each relevant school and department.
- V. All Erasmus+ Inter Institutional Agreements should be underpinned by an Exchange partnership Agreement which protects in the instance of a no deal. A review was undertaken to assess this and it was found that of the 83 EU partnerships Aston holds, 17 agreements were missing or needed renewing. All 17 are currently being drafted and circulated, or discontinued in some instances.
- VI. Noted changes to visa requirements will add increased pressure to the visa compliance team. Likewise, changes in placement locations will increase pressure and change strategic focus of Placements Business Development teams.
- VII. LHS currently have six students studying at Aston who used a national ID card to enter the country. These students may now need formal passports to be able to travel back to their home country.

18/53 ACTION:

- I. Student Services to explore what needs to be communicated to these students, and other potential EU non-UK students who have come to the UK using national ID cards, in conjunction with LHS. (Christina Matthews, Bhavisha Koner)

18/54 NOTED:

- I. Associate Dean Research is reviewing exposure in terms of risk areas in research.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

18/55 NOTED:

A Brexit Town Hall meeting is to be held on Monday 11 March at 13:00pm in MB220.

5. DATE OF MEETINGS

18/56 NOTED

Meetings for the academic year 2018/19 are as follows:

- Thursday 16th May, 2019: 10:00-11:30am, Council Room