

From: External Relations
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To: Staff
Subject: Geoff's Update - March 2019



Geoff's Update - March 2019

We have a mixture of news at the moment, with a high level of uncertainty and some really good and exciting developments.

First of all, the uncertainty. The **Brexit** position continues to be a key issue as we seek certainty in a number of areas and we will have further communications on this when we know more. Current Government planning leaves questions around the following:

- EU students will be given three years to remain, but many courses are four years long
- There are no guarantees that professionally accredited courses will be recognised in the EU
- We do not know if there will be a replacement fund for EU projects.

Then there is the **Augar Review**, which has now been delayed by six months already. It is widely leaked that it will introduce lower levels of tuition fees and will have a cap on student numbers.

We have decided that we will not wait for the uncertainty to lift but that we will take control of our own destiny. This will take place over the coming four weeks, as we put our plans for 2019-2021 in place.

These plans are likely to include:

- Diversification with planned growth in international students, standalone HNC/HNDs, growth in postgraduate students
- Strategic agreements with key employers regarding their workforce development needs, demonstrating the importance of 'place'
- Investment in our systems and changes to our structures to make them more holistic, integrated and efficient, with a focus on the users
- Investment in teaching and learning facilities and infrastructure.

We will need to look very carefully at our course offering, with a particular emphasis on investigating courses that have low numbers.

Now for the **good news!**

- In the key TEF metric of continuation, we have just been advised that our performance has improved. That is great news but there is still a lot of work to do to get it to an acceptable level
- The Government has sought to boost international student numbers by increasing the post-study work visa period to six months. This is also very good news but it used to be 12 months and many competitor countries offer two years.



Springfield: National Brownfield Institute

There have also been some exciting announcements surrounding our Springfield Campus.

The City of Wolverhampton has announced major plans for a 10 acre residential development right next door to Springfield called Brewers Yard. This will see a mixture of

1,100 city houses and apartments and 60,000 sq ft of new retail and commercial space. It's a joint venture between developer Court Collaboration, City of Wolverhampton Council and West Midlands Combined Authority, with works set to start on site in 2020.

The Brewers Yard scheme is also set to deliver hundreds of permanent new jobs, more than 1,000 construction jobs, and built environment apprenticeship and training opportunities for our students.

Also revealed were designs of what the new National Brownfield Institute at Springfield could look like. The Institute will be home to a state-of-the-art research and innovation centre and will feature commercial testing facilities and lab space.



Telford

Last week we announced a proposed new venture with Telford & Wrekin Council to create a new education institute in the heart of Telford.

The centre will build on the success of our distributed learning centre at University Centre Telford, and seek to grow local participation in Higher Education to meet skills needs and be aimed at both young and mature learners. The council has identified a potential site overlooking one end of Southwater's lake, next to Telford Ice Rink and Travelodge hotel. It will create a prestigious new town centre facility over a number of floors with a mixed use offer.

This does not affect our campus at Priorslee. We have been there for 25 years now and are firmly committed to it and expanding our [provision as announced recently](#).

The proposed institute model will respond directly to employers' training needs with career and skills pathways for students, with courses shaped to meet the demand of businesses in and around the borough and provide opportunities for all ages. It will offer students a mix of industry-specific short courses and general full time study offering academic and apprenticeship routes linked through to jobs in the borough including

Foundation, Level 4 and 5, Degree top-ups, professional qualifications, continuous professional development and postgraduate courses. It will have a strong focus on digital and ICT including cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), gaming and cyber security training, tapping into the borough's growing digital economy.

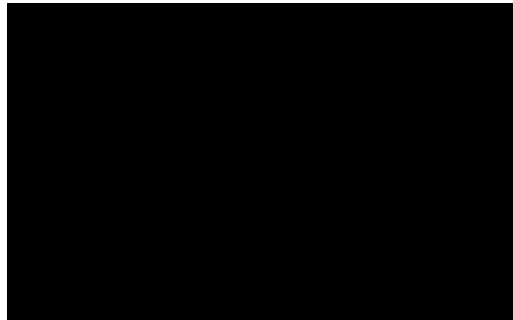
We are exploring a range of funding routes, which will inform the final business case and design of the building, which will be subject to detailed planning permission.



Judo announcement

Walsall is to host the 2019 Commonwealth Judo Championships. This is great news not only for the University but also the whole town.

We recently celebrated the fifth anniversary of our partnership with British Judo, which has its centre of excellence at Walsall Campus, and that partnership has gone from strength to strength. The Championships will be held from 25 – 29 September 2019, and will be delivered in partnership with Walsall Council. It will feature more than 1,000 athletes of varying age ranges.



Accolade for University

We've been named Midlands University of the Year in this year's Midlands Business Awards (MBA) 2019.

The University was commended for its innovation, investment, excellence in business as well as for its graduate success and employability at the awards ceremony held in Leicester recently.

Now in its 13th year, the Midlands Business Awards recognises and celebrates success, talent, entrepreneurs and business development in the region.

Sustainable Transport Strategy

The University is in the process of finalising a Sustainable Transport Strategy. Its main aim is to reduce the reliance on cars for staff and students coming to work/study and looking at how we can encourage people to use more sustainable ways of travelling.

Further communications will be issued on the strategy and a consultation connected to it will be issued in the coming months. More information on the work so far can be seen by clicking into the below presentation.



[Click for presentation](#)

Academic Regulations

Academic Board regularly reviews our regulations against the sector to ensure they are robust and allow our students to achieve their full potential.

At its last meeting the Board concluded that we are currently out of line when compared with other universities in some aspects of our regulations, and that this has resulted in our students being disadvantaged. The Board therefore approved some changes for undergraduate degrees which will come into effect this academic year.

Whilst the changes ensure that our high academic standards are maintained, they aim to ease some of the non-academic factors which impact on student progression, in supporting students to remain with their original peers, to maintain their momentum of study with a full-time diet of modules, and to benefit from a more personalised study timetable. The regulatory changes are linked with level progression, compensation for marginal failure and scheduling - all of which redress our balance and focus on supporting students to reach their full potential.

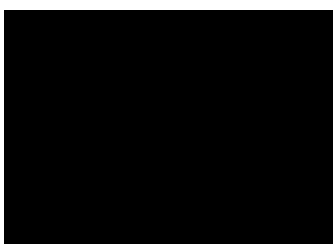
Full briefing sessions will be provided for all staff and for external examiners and I will keep you all updated of progress.

Research

Academic Board recently approved a new Research Strategy to ensure that our REF planning continues unabated. This will be published shortly. There is also a new policy on how QR funds can be spent.

In the next few weeks, we will also be consulting on the Code of Practice for submission in the REF.

Finally on research, we recently received a donation from the Chancellor and we have allocated an additional sum of £150,000 to support early career researchers through the Early Researcher Award Scheme (ERAS). The Dean of Research will be managing the fund.



Equality and Diversity

The University has pledged its support to help tackle a lack of diversity in boardrooms across the region by signing up to the West Midlands Combined Authority Inclusive Leadership Pledge.

The Pledge was set up following the Leaders Like You report, published last summer by the independent West Midlands Leadership Commission, which warned that the lack of diversity at leadership level risked damaging the region's economy and wider society. The report set out a number of recommendations, including a call for existing leaders to ensure diversity in their workplaces, identify talent and then mentor and coach that talent to produce future leaders.

[The Black Country launch of the Pledge](#) was held at the University and fronted by West Midlands Mayor Andy Street. Businesses and organisations from across the region came together for the event to sign the Pledge including the University, City of Wolverhampton Council, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Wolves, Black Country Living Museum and Actuation Systems Collins Aerospace. The WMCA is now aiming to get 1,000 businesses and organisations to sign up to the Pledge.

Women's Football

Our Women's Football team has added the Conference Cup to the League Championship they'd already claimed winning 6-1 away at University of Nottingham.

Men's Fustal

Men's Futsal were another team to win the league and cup double with a hard fought 6-4 final win against Staffordshire University.

BUCS Judo

And well done to all who took part in the BUCS Judo Championships recently bringing back five golds, one silver and a bronze plus the gold in the Women's team event.



Student Nurses nominated for awards

Congratulations to three of our students who have all been shortlisted for the prestigious Student Nursing Times Awards 2019.

Third year BNurs (Hons) Mental Health Nursing student [redacted] is a finalist in the outstanding contribution to student affairs category.

■■■■ has reached the finals of the Student of the Year: Learning Disabilities category. ■■■■ is a third year BNurs (Hons) Learning Disability Nursing student. Meanwhile, ■■■■ ■■■■ has been shortlisted in the Student of the Year: Children category. ■■■■ is studying for a BNurs (Hons) in Children's Nursing.



Staff Update

Tim Steele will join the University in June in the new role of Pro Vice-Chancellor (International). Tim is currently Vice President of International Strategy and Partnerships at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) where he has responsibility for all the institution's recruitment and partnership work for both the UK and international markets.

Over the last 20 years Tim has been a champion of the internationalisation agenda and has helped UCLan develop a number of strategic partnerships throughout the world, supporting over 5,000 students studying on a variety of courses in countries including China, Hong Kong, Oman, Mauritius, Cyprus, Singapore and Malaysia.

We had some sad news regarding members of our University community. Senior Lecturer in Public Health Pauline Fuller died recently. Pauline joined the University in September 2004.

She was well loved by staff and students within the Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing and in recent years was instrumental in providing support to many doctoral students as the course leader for the Professional Doctorate in Health and Wellbeing. This includes many staff members who she supported in their studies and also supervised as a key member of their team.

Last month we were also informed of the death of Professor Roy Newton, who was Pro-Vice Chancellor (Strategic Planning and Resources). Roy worked at the University from 1998 until his retirement in 2006.



Estates Update

Planning permission has just been granted to extend and refurbish the Sister Dora Building at Walsall Campus. This will result in a two-storey extension to the

rear of the building to house new skills and simulation labs and teaching rooms. There will also be a remodelling and refurbishment of the interior of the building. Work is to start in April and the building will close until September while the work is carried out. It will result in greater capacity and more importantly professional standard facilities for our students to learn in.

The faculty is implementing a plan to relocate staff and students to alternative rooms during this time and this will be communicated to staff over coming weeks.

Staff Awards

The nominations process is now open for the annual staff awards. If you know an inspirational team member, an individual or team that has made a fantastic contribution please put them forward.

All shortlisted nominees and their nominators will be invited to the event to be held on Tuesday 25 June 2019, where the winners for each category will be announced. Nominations are open until Tuesday 30 April 2019.

For further information and details on the nominations process [visit the Staff Awards pages.](#)



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