

Leader column

Recruitment and partnerships on the world stage

Welcome to the new look Reporter – the updated design gives the content a more strategic focus, so it's easier to see exactly what we're doing and where to achieve our objectives. It also means that this column has a new place.

As we go through the academic year, separate editions of the magazine will look at our specific key strategic areas. This first issue has an 'Internationalisation' theme. Of course, it covers other issues that are important to the University, but the main focus is on the different ways in which we are fulfilling our role as a member of the global higher education community, and how we are encouraging our students and staff to play their parts, too.

Next month our Deputy Vice-Chancellor, John Fisher, will lead a university delegation to Hong Kong to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). We already have MOUs with other valued institutional strategic partners, notably Osaka, Zhejiang, and Penn State. Much of the activity is facilitated through our membership of the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), which brings together 19 research intensive universities.

These institutional partnerships sit alongside our successes in building high quality, strategic international partnerships with groups such as Opera North, Marks & Spencer and Arup. In March we signed another partnership – a £3m deal with Sinochem, the Chinese state-owned chemicals business which will allow us to fund six research projects in MAPS and FBS. This is a significant development with one of China's biggest companies and a great example of our internationalisation strategy intersecting with our impact agenda. Good chemistry (excuse the pun) between key members of University staff – particularly Professors Long Lin and Mike Wilson – and Sinochem helped seal the deal. It topped off an excellent few months for us and I hope it will lead to more joint projects.

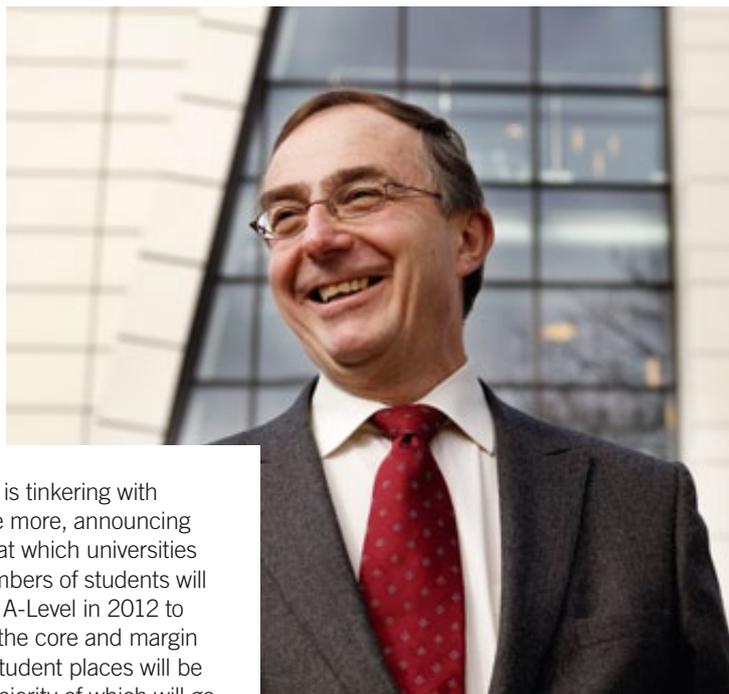
Back in the UK, we have recently been reminded yet again of the government's zeal to introduce the free market to higher

education. David Willetts is tinkering with student recruitment once more, announcing that the grade threshold at which universities can recruit unlimited numbers of students will be reduced from AAB at A-Level in 2012 to ABB in 2013. As part of the core and margin system a further 5,000 student places will be taken out in 2013, the majority of which will go to those universities charging £7,500 or lower. This is on top of the 20,000 places already set aside in each of 2012/13 and 2013/14.

The impact for Leeds will be minimal, as around 95% of our undergraduates achieve ABB or above. The core and margin system means that we will lose our fair share of the remaining 5%, but I'm not too concerned. Government believes it will drive up standards. I would argue that we have been driving up standards for all the right reasons at Leeds for the last eight years.

The changes come in the middle of the Integrated Planning Exercise (IPE), and we will look again at our recruitment forecasts. Some academics units have been reducing student numbers for strategic reasons and I don't think we will reverse those decisions. But there are some schools – Chemistry would be an example – where there is a strategic advantage in growth, and where an expansion could lead to further strategic developments in the school.

Staff recruitment has been a focus in recent weeks, in particular recruiting Leadership Chairs. Things are going well. Interestingly, three of the five potential recruitments I have been part of involved US-based academics. This is probably due partly to budget cuts in US higher education, but I think it also shows that the message about the great work we are doing at Leeds is being positively received right around the world and supports our ambitions to 'build and maintain world-class performance'. Continuing the world-class performance theme, in July we will host the Chinese Olympics team as they prepare for London 2012 – so look forward to a special edition of the *Reporter*, celebrating the participation by our staff, alumni and students in the Olympics programme.



About the Reporter

The *Reporter* is the University of Leeds' staff magazine, produced eight times a year. Over 8,500 copies are distributed to staff across campus.

The *Reporter* is produced by Sarah Ward in the Communications and Press Office.

<http://reporter.leeds.ac.uk>

Stories and Letters

Story ideas and letters are welcomed as hard copy or in email. The deadline for the next issue is Wednesday 20 June.

Events

Please submit events online at www.leeds.ac.uk/events

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Cover photograph shows students and Cultural Ambassadors Steven Marcelino and Sylvia Suyeon Wong.