



Buckinghamshire New University

Draft:	21 October 2010
approved for circulation:	8 November 2010
confirmed by Council:	

Missenden Council

Minutes

date: **19 October 2010**
time: **4.00 pm**
location: **Carrington Room, Missenden Abbey**

Present:

Roy Darby (Chair)	Co-opted Council member
Anthony Bellekom	Independent Council member
Mitch Brown	Independent Council member
Antonia Byatt	Independent Council member
Ruth Farwell	Ex officio member and Vice Chancellor
Lori Flynn	Independent Council member
Tom Foy	President, Students' Union
Ian Hillan	Independent Council member
Smita Jamdar	Independent Council Member
Pauline Odulinski	Co-opted Council member
Simon Opie	Independent Council member
Keith Ryan	Independent Council member
Terri Teasdale	Independent Council member
Brian Tranter (Deputy Chair)	Independent Council member

Officers:

Ellie Smith	Clerk to the Council
Vanessa Pilon	Registrar (Governance)

In attendance:

Derek Godfrey	Deputy Vice Chancellor
John Cooper	Director of Finance
Chris Kemp	Pro Vice Chancellor, Faculty of Design, Media & Management
David Sines	Pro Vice Chancellor, Faculty of Society & Health
Trevor Nicholls	Pro Vice Chancellor, Campus & Facilities
Steve Dewhurst	Director of Business Planning
Ruth Gunstone	Director of Student Experience

Apologies:

David Griffiths	Independent Council member
-----------------	----------------------------

670 Chairman's Welcome

670.1 The Chair welcomed Smita Jamdar to her first meeting and invited her to introduce herself.

Ms Jamdar advised that she was a Partner and Head of Education for Martineau – a solicitors practice which acted for both Universities and FE Colleges within the UK. She thought that she would be able to bring a wider vision of activities within the University sector and was very pleased and excited to be part of the Council of this University.

670.2 The Chair welcomed Vanessa Pilon, Registrar (Governance) to her first meeting as Minute Secretary.

670.2 The Chair advised that, although a tremendous amount of work had gone in to identifying members in the category of Elected Academic Staff, Elected Professional Employees and Appointed Senate representatives, it had not been possible to complete the process in time for this meeting. He was confident that these new members would be in post for the November meeting of Council.

671 Declaration of potential conflicts of interest

671.1 No conflicts of interest were declared or identified.

672 Matters Arising

672.1 Changes to membership of Missenden Abbey Board:

The membership of the above board had been discussed at the May meeting of Governance Committee and it was agreed that Bryan Long, who was standing down as Chair would be replaced by Ian Hillan. In addition Keith Ryan would also join this Board to replace a member who had previously left. The Chair advised that he would write formally and thank Brian for his service to this Board.

673 Strategic Plan (2010-2015)

Members of the Senior Management Team and Senior Managers of the University gave a series of presentations relating to the implementation of the Strategic Plan as detailed below:

673.1 Priorities for 2010-11 (To include NSS Headlines)

The structure of the Strategic Plan is based on five key strategies, the 'S&4P's': Student Experience, People, Partnerships, Physical Environment and Performance. These are underpinned by the Corporate Planning Statement.

(a) Student Experience

Priorities were identified as:

- Plans to build post graduate and part time provision through new course development and a small increase in numbers on existing provision
- Achieve targets for Faculty Enterprise activities through short courses and conferences as well as knowledge exchange, to include International recruitment and commercialisation of physical activity
- Improve the student experience (as measured by NSS and internal surveys) through meeting the three week return of coursework and the piloting of the electronic submission of assessment
- Targets set for scholarship and selective research activities to be met through a Nursing Research Centre and a Leadership and Management Research Centre
- Achieve targets for international recruitment

Improving the student experience will be taken forward by considering student concerns, identified weak areas and inconsistencies as noted in the National Student Survey 2010. The results showed an increase in response rates with the overall satisfaction score remaining the same, whereas other universities had seen a decrease in their overall satisfaction scores. Nevertheless our overall score is still lower than most universities. Some positive comments noted by students included industry contacts and placements, helpful and enthusiastic lecturers and Gateway facilities and rooms. There are perennial weaknesses in

feedback on assessed work and in some areas the style and content of teaching, library resources and support for technology and workshops.

The University and its students are partners in a learning community. This has been exemplified through the development of a **Learning Partnership Agreement** published to both staff and students in September 2010. The agreement includes the responsibilities of both staff and students in relation to Behaviour, Academic Support, Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Feedback. It is a two-way process encouraging personal responsibility in line with the University's core values of clarity, openness, respect and delivery on commitments

The formation and launch of a new Bucks Alumni was described to provide networking and socialising, professional development, figureheads and role models. This would be taken forward as a two way process benefiting past and current students as well as the University. It would build on current achievements to strengthen and widen the network as well as creating a pride in the University.

International Student Recruitment targets have increased to take account of a new partnership which has been developed with Campus Group Education India Pvt. Ltd. The initial one year contract would provide the University with a Bucks Regional Office in India with contacts in 18 countries and 93 cities. Recruitment would be through this organisation which would undertake all the admissions and verification procedures and would provide a better student experience both pre and post enrolment. Specific courses are being targeted and if successful this may be used as a model to recruit internationally elsewhere.

(a) People Strategy

Priorities for 2010-11 included skills development of leaders and managers, a new performance management framework as well as a Bucks core competency framework. In addition other key areas being taken forward are resource planning with managers, people engagement, the well-being agenda and the 2010 Best Companies Survey which is currently open to employees.

(b) Partnerships

Priorities for 2010-11 included managing the partnership working through one database with allocated responsible account managers. Key areas to progress include improved governance, extending partnerships with the NHS and the private sector as well as closer working relationships with further education colleges and local authorities. Some projects are already negotiated successfully and these include the formation of a National School of Furniture and a close relationship with a local film studio which will extend contacts with this industry nationally. These will raise the profile of the University locally and nationally.

(c) Physical Environment

Priorities for 2009-10 already completed include the refurbishment of the 3rd floor at the Uxbridge Campus and the Timberlake Wing at High Wycombe as well as improvements (efficiency and energy) to heating systems at High Wycombe. In addition the criteria for the HEFCE Capital Investment Framework 1 had been successfully achieved. This means that an application can now be made for the Capital Investment Framework 2, which if successful means that future capital funding is allocated without condition. Targets for the coming year include increased income from the commercialisation of facilities, the establishment of a Sustainability Committee and Information Systems and Services Board as well as delivering a new website and improving internal systems and services. In addition sources of finance will be sought to increase the student residential accommodation.

673.2 Corporate Planning Statement 2010-11 (C/10/01)

The Strategic Plan has been operationalised into a set of priorities and objectives for the Senior Management Team (SMT) and show how the plan will be implemented and monitored. This will ensure clear lines of accountability, linking each objective to a member of SMT. This has been informally discussed by the Chairs of the Council Committees and progress against objectives and performance will be reported to and discussed by the Remuneration Committee during the year.

Following discussions members felt that this was a useful plan and thought that as time went on it would continue to evolve.

It was **agreed** that the Corporate Planning Statement 2010-11 be approved.

673.3 Process for Monitoring Progress and Achievement against the Strategic Plan

(a) Budget Update for 2010-11

Progress on the cost reductions and savings completed and still required was provided. Including voluntary severance, savings ideas from employee consultations and targeted reductions in operational expenditure budgets. Public funding cuts as a result of the Browne Review and the Comprehensive Spending Review have been planned for and incorporated into the financial forecasts. However, it is expected that further savings would be required from 2011-12. SMT were making plans to manage this and would keep Council informed as developments occurred and as information became available.

(b) Balanced Scorecard

An overview of the Strategic Plan, monitoring and performance was demonstrated in a presentation of the Balanced Scorecard. It links the S&4Ps to the Corporate Planning Statement, Strategic Risk Register, Academic, Financial and Human Resources Planning and Estates, IT and Facilities through the Senior Management Team to Faculty, School, Department and Directorate Plans and Task Groups. It also identifies devolved objectives, budgets, targets, monitoring and risks back to SMT and on to Council through the Balanced Scorecard, Council set KPI's and SMT monitoring. In addition individual performance management is identified as linked between the Corporate Planning Statement and SMT monthly monitoring. This provides an overview of planning and performance including key performance measures and improving performance. It can also be used for Corporate Planning, Strategic Risk Management as well as how well staff work together as Business Partners. The Strategic Risk Register was shown and this identified clearly the coded level of risk against each section. This process was still being developed. It required the development of a few new indicators and a code book for the KPI's. When completed this would be approved and monitored through SMT and Resources Committee.

(c) Vision for Closer Collaboration with Aylesbury College

Aylesbury College is a medium sized college which has developed new facilities and aims to grow to provide education locally. They have a similar ethos and strategies to the University and would like to strengthen the partnership with the University moving forward together to offer a multiversity campus in Aylesbury from the cradle to the grave.

Discussions between the University and Aylesbury College were currently ongoing in relation to developing closer working through a shared educational ethos and aims as well as through joint partnership working and sharing resources to deliver existing services. A grant had been obtained to explore governance models for a possible future relationship.

Council endorsed the proposal to explore a closer working relationship with outline proposals to be prepared and put forward for discussion at a December 2010 meeting between the Chairs and Chief Executives. These would then progress to the Boards at the College and the University's Council, Consideration of what other partnerships in the sector are doing to be considered and explored.

(Action: Vice Chancellor)

674 Possible Scenarios for the future of higher education in the context of the Browne Review and public sector cuts

674.1 Browne Review of Higher Education and Student Finance – 12 October 2010

The Vice Chancellor gave an overview presentation of the key aspects published in the Browne Review.

This review was developed around 6 principles:

- More investment for higher education
- More student choice
- Everyone with potential should be able to benefit from higher education
- No one pays until they start work
- Payments should be affordable
- Equal treatment for all including part-time students

It was also subject to the Government Comprehensive Spending Review due to report the following week.

Key points highlighted included:

- Student Finance – how that will be funded, wholly through student fees (except for STEM subjects) what will be available through loans and how and when they will be repaid. Students from low income families will be funded through grants on a means tested sliding scale. Universities would be allowed to charge a higher student fee, whatever the student would pay. The recommended level of fee was £6,000 in order to remain close to the current funding position. Universities charging more would pay a levy of 40% on fees charged above £6,000. Students would apply for a loan when they apply for a course provided they meet the entry tariff and could take that loan anywhere, including private providers.
- Student numbers and entry tariffs – the entry tariff would be set each year by government. Numbers offered would be increased by 10% but that would be subject to the entry tariff. There would be no restriction of numbers of students an institution can admit.

674.2 Public Sector Cuts

The Department of Innovation and Skills is targeted with identifying savings of £2.7b. Some of this will be within the Higher Education budget as a result of the Browne Review but cuts to other sectors would affect HE as well. These could include the NHS (Nurse training), Research and Research Councils, Public Sector eg Local Authorities commissioning as well as capital funding.

674.3 Possible Scenarios

The recommendations of the Browne Review included:

- removal of the cap on fees
- removal of funding for all but clinical and STEM subjects
- loans for living costs not means tested
- living cost grants still available for poorer students
- changes to loan repayments structure
- a single Higher Education Council to be formed
- no cap on student numbers but minimum entry tariffs to be set by government each year

This will mean that the HE sector will be influenced by market forces and students will question whether what they are receiving is value for money.

The implementation of the recommendations of the Browne Review would depend both on the announcement of the public sector cuts in the Comprehensive Spending Review on 20 October, the acceptance of the proposals in part or as a whole and the interpretation of the recommendations. If the recommendations are adopted in their entirety, Universities will have to reposition themselves quickly in terms of costs and student finance for implementation in September 2012. Decisions on what fees to charge for September 2012 entry will need to be made by Spring 2011. The new government financial arrangements will be phased in over 3 years which is towards the end of the current Strategic Plan.

In order to maintain income across the board, student fees of approximately £6,500 per student would have to be charged. Some courses might bear a cost at this level or higher because of their prestige nationally but some of the portfolio might not recruit at this level. Clarity would be required on entry tariffs for part time students who entered with experiential learning. Part time recruitment may be hardest hit by the new fee structure as the existing fees the students pay are considerably lower than their full time equivalent. However they would have access to loans now

for the payment of fees. Many of Bucks students start studying later in life and their potential improved earning capacity is over a shorter timescale. When top up fees were implemented Universities were surprised at how many students still wanted to study at this level – this might not be the case with higher fees. However with many more people being unemployed education is a way of increasing your skill base to offer not only higher but up to date skills. Bucks can still be a market leader not just for specific subject areas but also for being able to obtain employment, post graduation.

The restructuring and management changes implemented at the University will enable the University to reposition itself within the market place. Clarity on government proposals are urgently required in order to guide the University's positioning. SMT will be using their influence at the highest level and formally responding to the consultation on the White Paper which will come out of this Review.

674.4 Is the University's Strategic Plan fit for purpose?

The Strategic Plan is based on a stable, although decreasing income funded by government. The changes proposed by the Browne Review and the higher cuts than anticipated in public spending changes the basis of the strategic plan to one driven by market conditions and competitiveness. Branding and promotion will be the key to keeping the Bucks name at the top of the list for students wanting the style of study and support offered. In addition to the plans already put in place further consideration might be given to accreditation, part time, work-based learning, flexible delivery, two year degrees, as well as co-funding with employers to fulfil demand for industry by higher level skills. This should include vocational courses where study is linked directly to work. Relationships with employers and partnerships locally and nationally will have increased importance.

Successful universities will be those that define themselves in a manner which is easily understood both by the applicant and their family. Courses which are nationally recognised in their field may command a premium whereas specialist courses may be required only locally and in only small numbers. Courses which are market leaders may not just be those nationally recognised but those where it is known that students can obtain employment when they graduate.

It was **agreed** that evidence be sought to affirm the strategic intent through:

- Portfolio Review – low price vs premium price
- The use of current students' profile – age/location
- The identification of the percentage of students/ courses which might be vulnerable to students choosing to study elsewhere
- Consultation with feeder schools and colleges about fees and price modelling
- Exploration of other income streams
- Exploration of the growth agenda
- Vocational and higher level apprenticeships
- Offering a different package for part time recruitment

In addition the research undertaken would inform any changes required to the Strategic Plan. It was noted that agreement on the pricing structure would need to be confirmed by Spring 2011.

(Action: SMT)

Further discussion and an update on the current position to be considered further by Council in November 2010.

(Action: SMT)

Presentations given to be sent round to all members.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

675 Date of next meeting

675.1 The next meeting of Council is scheduled to take place on:

Joint Senate/Council: Monday 22 November 2010, commencing at 4.00pm in the Boardroom, High Wycombe.

Council: Monday 22 November 2010, commencing at 5.45pm in Room G5.05, The Gateway Building, High Wycombe

The meeting started at 4.00pm and finished at 6.45 pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chair of Council)

Prepared by Registrar (Governance) – 22 October 2010
Checked by Clerk to the Council – 29 October 2010
Confirmed by the Chair – 8 November 2010
Confirmed by VC – 15 November 2010