



Buckinghamshire New University

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Council

Minutes

date: **31 March 2014**
time: **4.00 pm**
location: **3.07, Uxbridge**

Present:

Christine Beasley (Chair)
Baljit Dhillon
Ruth Farwell
Lori Flynn
Naomi Franco
Ian Hillan
Michael Hipkins
Julie Irwin
Maggie James
Tim Marshall
Sukhie Mattu
Ken McCrea
Jenny Newton
Keith Ryan
Linsey Taylor
Terri Teasdale
Brian Tranter (Deputy Chair)

Independent Council member
Independent Council member
Ex officio member and Vice Chancellor
Independent Council member
President Students' Union
Independent Council member
Independent Council member
Elected Senate member
Independent Council member
Co-opted Council member
Elected Staff member (PSE)
Co-opted Council member
Independent Council member
Independent Council member
Elected Senate member
Independent Council member
Independent Council member

Officers:

Ellie Smith
Vanessa Pilon

Clerk to the Council
Registrar (Governance)

In attendance:

Derek Godfrey
Shân Wareing
Alison Chambers
John Cooper
Ian Plover
Steve Dewhurst
Matt Gilbert

Deputy Vice Chancellor
Pro Vice Chancellor Learning & Teaching
Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean S&H (new)
Director of Finance
Director of the Faculty of DMM
Director of Business Planning
President elect, Students' Union

Apologies:

Antony Bellekom
Antonia Byatt
Hilary Mullen
Simon Opie
David Sines

Independent Council member
Independent Council member
Elected Staff member (Academic)
Independent Council member
Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean S&H (retiring)

913 Introduction and Welcome to new members

913.1 The Chair welcomed Dr Alison Chambers the newly appointed Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean for the Faculty of Society & Health and Matt Gilbert the President Elect of the Students' Union.

914 Declaration of potential conflicts of interest

914.1 None were declared.

915 Minutes of the Meetings held on 25 November 2013 and 18 February 2014

915.1 The Minutes of the meetings held on 25 November 2013 including confidential appendix and 18 February 2014 were signed as a correct record without amendment. The actions from the meetings were noted as either on the agenda or had been completed.

916 Matters Arising

916.1 No matters arising were noted that were not already included on the agenda.

917 Chair's Action

917.1 None had been taken since the last meeting.

918 Vice Chancellor's Report

918.1 Vice Chancellor's Report, including Key Performance Indicators (C/14/03)

This included commentary on:

- University progress to date in 2013-14
 - Overview
 - Student enrolment
 - Student Satisfaction
 - Corporate Planning Statement Objectives relating to People
- Sector Developments
 - HEFCE grant letter from the Department of Business Innovation & Skills
 - Financial health of the sector
 - Voluntary agreement on institutional designation
 - Public information
 - Office of Fair Trading
- Buckinghamshire Education, Skills and Training (BEST) – CEO Report
- Recent successes
 - Research projects in the Faculty of Society & Health
 - Bucks New University is now in Slough
 - Partnership with Sennheiser UK expands
 - Official opening of Buckinghamshire University Technical College (UTC) in Aylesbury
 - Biggest climber accolade for new website
 - Nursing Times award nomination
- Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

The balanced scorecard was noted with all status showing no changes except for People where Academic Productivity was green and deteriorating. The reason for this was clearly explained. Improvements were shown in the areas of Student Satisfaction, Income Growth, Diversification, Investment, Current Condition and Functional Suitability, Environmental Performance, Milestones and Facilities Performance.

In addition clarity was sought on the recently received HEFCE Grant letter and it was noted that this year's income would be a marginal improvement on the forecast partly as a result of higher student numbers on the old regime. It was clarified that there was currently no intention for HE funding to be tied to either graduation or employability as is the case for Schools and FE Colleges and it was thought that additional measures around quality might be introduced as a substitute for student number control from 2015 onwards but this would be focussed more on alternative providers.

919 PVC Learning & Teaching Report (C/14/04)

919.1 The report provided a summary of the current position of the Learning & Teaching Strategy Goals as previously reported as follows:

- Goal 1: Build the capacity of staff
- Goal 2: Increase provision which supports students' enterprise, employability and leadership
- Goal 3: Develop and deliver curricula which support our outrageous ambition
- Goal 4: Increase engagement of the whole community
- Goal 5: Improve the University's key systems and processes

A major improvement in the area of feedback to students on their assessed work and turnaround times was noted, and this had been welcomed by students.

In addition substantial work had been undertaken to improve the response rates to the NSS survey. This had, initially, improved response rates but the current position was in line now with the previous year at about 60% and appeared to have plateaued, although there was still time for further improvements before the closing date.

920 Students' Union Report (C/14/05)

920.1 The report provided commentary on the current achievements, plans and aims for the future as follows:

- Improvements made in the turnaround in feedback to students
- Participation in the Sports England Sports for Fun project
- Increase in volunteering hours
- Increase in additional activities including Varsity Matches, Athletic Union Award Dinner, Annual Union Awards event and Festiball, a unique weekend of entertainment
- Introduction of the shuttle bus to Uxbridge and as a result a positive response from both staff and students regarding a wider community involvement and feel
- Implementation of extended services including the 24 hour library service following the trial in 2013
- Planning for the future includes a new student training hub to build on employability, new website and planning for a multi-purpose space in the renovated south wing

920.2 It was noted that although this had been a tough year commercially for the SU with fewer students attending SU events, particularly Friday night events, the increase in the variety of events being offered had improved attendance. Students felt that High Wycombe did not offer alternatives to SU events at weekends.

Although the Students' Union felt that the University worked too slowly in implementing changes there had been an improvement in response times and SMT had worked hard to improve the student experience in many areas.

920.3 The President expressed her appreciation to the University for the support they have given and wished them luck in implementing all the exciting plans that have been developed.

921 Report on Senate Matters

921.1 Quality and standards outcomes (2012-2013) (C/14/06)

A report was received which confirmed that academic standards were commensurate with sector requirements for 2012-13. This report highlighted the successes and good practice achieved both in the faculties and service departments as well as the reviews undertaken within the University and at our Regional Partner Colleges.

Sector changes were noted in the areas of Transnational Education, Subject Benchmarks, a QAA consultation on Joint/Dual Awards and Public Information in Higher Education.

The Vice Chancellor, as Chair of Senate, confirmed that Senate had overseen the process of confirming academic standards were maintained in 2012-13.

Council welcomed the report.

922 Minutes of the Student Experience Committee on 29 October 2013 and 11 February 2014

922.1 The Minutes of the two meetings were noted as received. The strategic issues discussed at the meetings reflect the reports received by Council and its Committees.

Students were pleased to see improvements on feedback and responsiveness to issues raised. This was noted as having provided both encouragement and more enthusiasm at meetings.

923 Audit Committee

923.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 2018

The Minutes including Confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2014 were received without comment.

924 Governance Committee

924.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 February 2014

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2014 were received without comment.

The Chair drew attention to the plans to offer members a means of contributing to meetings when they were unable to attend in person, initially via phone. Members welcomed this innovation as there were occasions where the travelling time made it impossible to attend in person.

It was agreed that attendance records would be published annually to all members of Council.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

924.2 Council Elections update (Verbal)

It was explained that in accordance with the Council Procedures where only one nomination is received for the position of either Chair or Deputy Chair then the nominee(s) are duly appointed.

Only one nomination was received for each position on his occasion and it was AGREED that the appointments for the two year period 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2016 are made as follows:

Chair – Christine Beasley
Deputy Chair – Michael Hipkins

An election for the position of Professional Services Employee was in hand and would be made prior to the next meeting of Governance Committee in May.

Council members congratulated Christine and Michael on their appointments.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

924.3 Calendar of Meetings (September 2014 to December 2015) (C/14/07)

Council were asked to approve the new dates.

Council **APPROVED** the dates for September 2014 to December 2015.

It was noted that invitations for these meetings would be sent out to all members through Microsoft Outlook.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

925 Resources Committee

925.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 March 2014

The Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2014 were received without comment.

Attention was drawn to the presentation on the Ten Year Estates Strategy which was both exciting and felt to be a useful basis for prioritising improvements at High Wycombe, Uxbridge

and Waterside. It was suggested that when the University moved to the next stage in developing these proposals these might be shared with all members.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

926 Enhanced Student Experience package (C/14/08)

926.1 The package proposed in detail and discussed at Resources Committee was outlined as follows:

- Support for additional course costs
- Learning Technology
- Staff and Staff Development
- Create more 'time' for current staff to engage in enhancements to the student experience
- Learning Resources
- Accessible Campus
- Enhancing students' employability
- "Free Graduation"
- Building a Better Students' Union
- An Improved Campus Ambience

926.2 It was stressed that a full risk scenario including a worst case scenario was provided and discussed at Resources Committee and it was concluded that the best way to tackle the risks was to implement the proposed package in its entirety.

926.3 Resources Committee supported the proposals unanimously and recommended the following to Council:

- Agree the implementation of the full package
- Agree that fees for full-time undergraduate students in 2015-16 should be set at £9,000 with similar arrangements for the Access Agreement activities to 2014-15

926.4 Questions were asked around the lower costs reported, how the plan would be communicated to students as well as how its impact would be evaluated. It was thought that the latter might be through monitoring student numbers, retention rates and NSS scores and would be built into the process of taking the plan forward.

926.5 Council AGREED that the proposals made by SMT and supported by Resources Committee in 926.3 above, be APPROVED and that details of plans prepared to evaluate the results of these proposals be prepared.

(Action: Senior Management Team/Students' Union)

927 HE Centre, Aylesbury (C/14/09)

927.1 See Reserved Business Minutes.

928 Financial Position January 2014 (C/14/10)

928.1 The current Financial Position was noted as reported to Resources Committee. It was similar to that reported in November with a better than budget operating position and a slightly worse reporting position.

It was noted that grant income is now expected to increase following receipt of the March HEFCE grant letter. In response to a question it was confirmed that cash balances are lower because of the current years substantial investment programme and debtors were high at this time of year as expected because the final student fee payment is due now.

929 Tuition Fees 2014-2015 (C/14/11)

929.1 The proposals for the unregulated fees for 2014-15 for part-time undergraduate, postgraduate, and overseas students were detailed in the paper presented and recommended for approval by

the Resources Committee. They are currently set in the context of a competitive market and the subject areas that are offered.

These recommendations were **APPROVED** by Council

930 Information Technology Summary Report (C/14/12)

930.1 See Reserved Business Minutes.

931 Remuneration Committee

931.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 March 2014

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2014 were received without comment.

932 Deputy Vice Chancellor Recruitment update (Verbal)

932.1 It was reported that a strong field of applications was received with four shortlisted for the final part of the selection process. The formal interview would be taking place during the current week by a panel of Council Members including the Chair and the Students' Union President.

933 Other Matters

933.1 Use of University Seal and Coat of Arms

A report on the use of the University Seal and Coat of Arms was received.

934 Honorary Awards Committee

934.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 February 2014

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2014 were received without comment.

934.2 Recommendations for Honorary Awards

See Reserved Business Minutes.

934.3 Recommendations for Honorary Awards – Retiring Council Members

See Reserved Business Minutes.

935 Date of next meeting

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

Tuesday, 10 June 2014, commencing at 2.00pm at Missenden Abbey and
Monday, 7 July 2014, commencing at 4.00pm at Missenden Abbey.

The meeting started at 4.00pm and finished at 5.00pm.

Signed: _____
(Chair of Council)

Date: _____

Prepared by Registrar (Governance) – 2 April 2014
Checked by Clerk to the Council – 3 April 2014
Checked by the Vice Chancellor – 4 April 2014
Confirmed by the Chair – 8 April 2014