



Buckinghamshire New University

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Council

Minutes

date: **23 March 2015**
time: **4.00 pm**
location: **3.07, Uxbridge**

Present:

Christine Beasley (Chair)
Antony Bellekom
Rebecca Bunting
Antonia Byatt
Lori Flynn
Matt Gilbert
Lauren Griffiths
Ian Hillan
Michael Hipkins (Deputy Chair)
Steve Hoole
Maggie James
Tim Marshall
Ken McCrea
Hilary Mullen
Jenny Newton
Simon Opie
Linsey Taylor
Terri Teasdale

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

Officers:

Ellie Smith
Vanessa Pilon

Clerk to the Council
Registrar (Governance)

In attendance:

Shân Wareing
Vicky Vass
David Bulbeck
Steve Dewhurst
John Cooper
Joseph Collins

Pro Vice Chancellor Learning & Teaching
Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean DMM
Financial Controller
Director of Strategic Planning & Development
Consultant
President elect, Students' Union

Apologies:

Baljit Dhillon
Keith Ryan
Ian Plover
Alison Chambers

Independent Council member
Independent Council member
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean S&H

Declaration of potential conflicts of interest

15.01 It was noted that Antony Bellekom had commissioned the University to undertake some work sub-contracted from his own company in the area of music and media.

Minutes of the Meetings held on 24 November 2014 and 10 February 2015

15.02 The minutes of the meetings held on 24 November 2014 including confidential appendix and 17 February 2015 were signed as a correct record without amendment. The actions from the meetings were noted as either on the agenda or had been completed.

Matters Arising

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

Chair's Action

15.04 None had been taken since the last meeting.

Vice Chancellor's Report

15.05 Vice Chancellor's Report (Verbal)

The Vice Chancellor updated members on her current progress in learning about the University through meeting with Readers and Professors, Heads of Schools and Departments, external partners as well as inviting staff and students to stop and talk to her as she walks around the University. She commented on the uncertainty in relation to fees and funding following the general election in May 2015 as well as drawing attention to the Hefce funding notification for 2015-16 due later in the week. She advised that the Senior Management Team were developing new strategy parameters around which there would be active discussions at Missenden Council in June followed by consultations with staff and students across the University.

15.06 A full briefing was given on the University's position in relation to the suspension of the University's Highly Trusted Status by the UKVI both in relation to the current progress and meeting with the UKVI later in the week as well as the timeline for representations and if necessary a new application. Members were assured that current staff and students were not affected by the suspension of the licence.

Clarity was sought and given on the reasons for the UKVI actions, the student numbers involved and the percentage visa refusal level now and following the implementation of revised regulations in the future. The University have identified some visa refusals on which they could submit representations and it was hoped that with the low numbers of students taking the refusals over the limit set and successful representations, the University licence may be reinstated.

Measures to mitigate this had already been put in place both in terms of withdrawal of recruitment in high risk areas abroad and a reorganisation of staffing, policies and procedures as well as a more in depth consideration of all applications. It was hoped that these changes to working practices would support the arguments for the UKVI to reinstate the University licence.

It was noted that except in one instance where an apology was given, the press coverage had been modest, accurate and based on the University press releases.

15.07 Members made further comments and sought additional information as follows:

- The effect this might have on branding
- The development of systems of response including an up to date library of photographs and media training for key staff
- Inclusion in the University KPI's
- The provision of expert/legal advice
- Support from the sector professional organisations
- The briefing of and support to current international staff and students

Members asked that an explicit strategy is prepared on International Student Recruitment and included in the Risk Register where it is monitored on a regular basis.

(Action: Vice Chancellor, Senior Management Team and the Director of Strategic Planning & Development)

PVC Learning & Teaching Report (C/15/01)

15.08 The report provided a summary of the current position of the developments in Learning & Teaching Strategy Goals as follows:

- National Student Survey (NSS)
- The Enhanced Student Experience Programme
- Staff Development
- Assessment
- Research informed curriculum
- Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement

Particular attention was drawn to the current response rate in relation to the NSS which was disappointing but it was hoped that last year's response rate would be achieved and that students currently studying off campus would be targeted to complete the survey and increase the response rate. In addition further information was noted in relation to the development of the course specific offer within the Enhanced Student Experience Programme and detailed Higher Education Academy staff Development achievements.

Students' Union Report (C/15/02)

15.09 The newly appointed President elect of the Students' Union was introduced to members. He would formally take up his appointment on 1 July 2015. It was reported that the elections had been well contested with record numbers of students voting.

15.10 The report provided commentary on the current achievements and plans as follows:

- Sabbatical Officer elections
- The Big Deal
- Recreational Activities Programme and Sports
- Student Representatives and additional skills training programme
- Societies and events
- Venue attendance and music provision
- Commercial activities and business development
- Advice Centre and volunteering

15.11 A number of projects were noted in relation to student engagement including a new website, implementing more specific activities and helping staff engage students more including partner students. Participation in both formal and sports for fun had increased as well as participation in societies. Discussions have been held with the local council to identify how social activities could be expanded in the town. In addition the Students' Union were looking at how they could increase their commercial activities to provide more social activities and increase student engagement.

Report on Senate Matters

15.12 Quality and standards outcomes (2013-2014) (C/15/03)

A report was received which confirmed that academic standards were commensurate with sector requirements for 2013-14. 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.

It was noted that although the QAA review of the University under their Higher Education Review (HER) process was due to be undertaken in 2016-17, following the HEFCE consultation undertaken earlier in the year on "The future of quality assessment in higher education", it was currently unclear now when this would take place. A second stage of the consultation was due to report in the summer of 2015 and in the meantime the University was preparing for their review under the current methodology.

The Vice Chancellor, as Chair of Senate, confirmed that Senate had overseen the process of confirming academic standards were maintained in 2013-14.

Minutes of the Student Experience Committee on 28 October 2014 and 10 February 2015

- 15.13 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. This included a discussion on strategic issues, reports from the Directorates and Faculties as well as briefing on relevant updated formal documents. A report on the NSS was noted as well as library noise reduction, Halls of residence and general improvements in student engagement and the student experience.

Governance Committee

- 15.14 Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 February 2015
The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015 were received without comment.
- 15.15 Council Recruitment (Verbal)
Members were updated on the current position in relation to the recruitment of three new members for 1 August 2015.
- 15.16 CUC Higher Education Code of Governance (Verbal)
The new Code of Governance was circulated to members. It was noted that a plan to comply fully with the new code would be brought to the next meeting for consideration and approval.
- 15.17 Calendar of Meetings (September 2015 to December 2016) (C/15/04)
Council were asked to consider a proposal to move forward the date for Audit Committee in January 2016 to 23 February 2016 and with this amendment to approve the new dates.

(Action: Deputy Chair and Clerk to the Council)

Council **APPROVED** the dates for September 2015 to December 2016 with the proposed amendment.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

Remuneration Committee

- 15.18 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 February 2015
Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2015 were received without comment.
- 15.19 Confidential Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 February 2015
See reserved business.

Audit Committee

- 15.20 Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 February 2015
The minutes including confidential minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2015 were received without comment.
- 15.21 IT update (Verbal)
Members were advised of the up to date position regarding improvements planned including the appointment of an interim Director of Information Systems and Technology and the appointment of a recruitment agency to seek to fill the post permanently. Both Audit and Resources Committee would continue to monitor progress of improvements to the University IT systems and processes.

15.22 External Auditors – contract/tendering exercise: recommendation to Council (C/15/06)
See Reserved Business

15.23 Appointment of Internal Auditors (Verbal)
See Reserved Business.

Resources Committee

15.24 Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 March 2015

The minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2015 were received without comment.

15.25 Financial Position January 2015 (C/15/07)

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 performance and return and the forecast was above budget for the year.

Clarification was sought in terms of future funding post the general election and how that might affect budgets for the following year. Members were assured that the University was aware of potential changes to funding and the need to be prepared for both competitive bidding for additional funding and preparing a budget using different scenarios to position the University in the best place for 2016-17. Budget scenarios would be presented to and discussed at a future Council meeting.

(Action: Financial Controller)

15.26 Hostel Fees 2015-2016 (C/15/08)

Proposals for accommodation fees for student residences at Hughenden, Brook Street, Alexandra House and Windsor House based on current contracts, comparators and investment were noted. The basis for the increases which had been set at a competitive level was fully explained. It was noted that the University offered affordable accommodation at a range of prices comparable with the sector and that this would be part of the discussions taking place around future strategy. It was reported that Alexandra House is to be taken out of use for 2015-16, however it could be re-instated if demand necessitated.

These recommendations were **APPROVED** by Council

15.27 Review of Financial Regulations (Verbal)

It was noted that a review was being undertaken to take into account changes in legislation, current financial practices and current sector practices and an initial draft of the new regulations would be considered by Resources Committee in June.

15.28 Buckinghamshire Education Skills & Training (BEST) (Verbal)

The Vice Chancellor reported on both the BEST Executive meeting and the BEST Board meeting held during March 2015 both of which had discussed the current position regarding the University Campus Aylesbury Vale (UCAV) in detail. The building project was going well and the location in relation to transport, other local services and the surrounding environment was excellent. Work continued to progress on the planning and delivery of courses as well as recruitment. In order to catch up with the strategy and planning necessary for this, a project manager has been appointed to oversee the project for the next six months. The faculties now have targets and plans in place to deliver courses from September and into the medium term which are relevant to the local area.

It was reported that the BEST accounts for last year have now been submitted and the BEST finance and accounts going forward will be separately submitted and reported. BEST budgets for the coming year are being prepared and regular meetings held. Reports on these would be submitted to Resources Committee in June 2015. A cost over-run to the project has been agreed in relation to external landscaping.

(Action: Vice Chancellor, SMT and Financial Controller)

Other Matters

15.29 Use of University Seal and Coat of Arms

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

Honorary Awards Committee

15.30 Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 February 2015

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015 were received without comment.

15.31 Recommendations for Honorary Awards

See Reserved Business Minutes.

Retiring Council Members left the meeting at this point at 5.55pm

15.32 Recommendations for Honorary Awards – Retiring Council Members

See Reserved Business Minutes.

Date of next meeting

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

Tuesday, 2 June 2015, commencing at 2.00pm at Missenden Abbey and

Monday, 6 July 2015, commencing at 4.00pm at Missenden Abbey followed by dinner.

The meeting started at 4.00pm and finished at 5.58pm.

Signed: _____
(Chair of Council)

Date: _____

Prepared by Registrar (Governance) – 24 March 2015
Checked by Clerk to the Council – 26 March 2015
Checked by the Vice Chancellor – 26 March 2015
Confirmed by the Chair – 31 March 2015