



Buckinghamshire New University

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Missenden Council

Minutes

date: **7 February 2012**
time: **4.00 pm**
location: **Carrington Room, Missenden Abbey**

Present:

Roy Darby (Chair)	Co-opted Council member
Mitch Brown	Independent Council member
Antonia Byatt	Independent Council member
Ashley Coles	President, Students' Union
Roger Dalrymple	Senate Nomination
Baljit Dhillon	Independent Council Member
Ruth Farwell	Ex-officio member and Vice Chancellor
Lori Flynn	Independent Council member
David Griffiths	Independent Council member
Ian Hillan	Independent Council member
Michael Hipkins	Independent Council Member
Sukhie Mattu	Elected Professional Services Employee
Jenny Newton	Independent Council Member
Pauline Odulinski	Co-opted Council member
Crystal Oldman	Elected Academic Employee
Keith Ryan	Independent Council member
Terri Teasdale	Independent Council member
Brian Tranter (Deputy Chair)	Independent Council member

Officers:

Ellie Smith	Clerk to the Council
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In attendance:

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

Apologies:

Antony Bellekom	Independent Council member
Stephen Fox	Senate Nomination
Simon Opie	Independent Council member
Vanessa Pilon	Registrar (Governance)

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. It was announced that Roger Dalrymple, a Senate nominated member, would be leaving the University shortly to take up a position with Oxford Brookes

University and therefore would also be resigning his position on Council. Members thanked him for his contribution to date and wished him well for the future.

745 Declaration of potential conflicts of interest

745.1 No conflicts of interest were declared or identified.

746 Matters Arising

Minute 740.4: Council received and approved the Strategic Risk Assessment and Annual Report 2011. (paper: C/12/01)

Review of the Strategic Plan

747 Introduction and Overview (C/12/02) (presentation)

747.1 The Vice Chancellor provided an introductory overview of the University's progress against the current Strategic Plan. It was noted that the University's strong performance in 2010-11 was continuing in 2011-12 with the University being on track to deliver on budget and with employee costs being maintained. There had, however, been some changes in the planned activity of the University: winners included grants, undergraduate fees and NHS contracts whilst losers were overseas and postgraduate fees, research and short courses.

747.2 In respect of student numbers it was noted that the University had met its student number control for 2011 entry and that retention rates had improved. In addition the nursing contracts for both the September and February intakes had been met. Areas where the University was not achieving its targets were in relation to postgraduate and overseas recruitment, however, it was noted that this was a common position in the sector.

747.3 An overview of government policy being enacted for 2012-13 was provided. Key points of note included the introduction of: the new fee regime, loans for part-time students (if studying at least 25% of a full-time load) and the 'tariff' and 'core and margin' which enables HEIs to recruit AAB+ students outside of their student number control and gives them the opportunity to bid for additional student numbers out of the 20,000 places which had been removed pro-rata from the sector. It was explained that a further 15,000 places were to be removed pro-rata from the sector in order to control the pressure on the loan book.

747.4 Noting the above Council were informed that the changes put the University in a relatively good position, having a potential increase of 51 (to 1820) for full-time undergraduate students for 2012 compared with 2011 entry. This put the University in the top 20% of HEIs in respect of percentage increase in new undergraduate full-time entrants.

747.5 The Vice Chancellor provided Council with speculation as to future government policy including: the likelihood that undergraduate part-time numbers will be controlled, a possible increase in the 'tariff' and 'core and margin' which would result in a fall in the student number control and therefore a possible risk to the University in losing market share. On the positive side there may be some changes to the grants bringing further subject areas back into receipt of public funding.

747.6 In summary the Vice Chancellor concluded that the University was in a strong position and that growth was being achieved, however the emerging shape was different to what had been expected. Uncertainties in government policy from 2013-14 onwards will require the University to remain flexible in its approach.

748 Enrolment Trends and Application Statistics for 2012-13 entry (presentation)

748.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor presented Council with an update on Student Recruitment covering full-time undergraduate applications, Home and EU student enrolment projections and international recruitment. Key points highlighted included:

Full-time Undergraduate applications

- The University has a tradition in recruiting late into the UCAS cycle

- Applications for September 2012 entry were at a good level and higher than two years ago (September 2010) with the University having an improved market share compared to the sector.
- Overall applications for 2012 entry to the University were down 11.5% on 2011 compared with 8.3% across the sector, however, this still give a high application to place ratio (9000 applications for 1820 places).
- The University will be prioritising conversion activities to maximise recruitment and will be reviewing the allocation of numbers to course/subject area.
- In respect of geographical spread of applicants 70% of applicants for the High Wycombe campus come from outside of the Bucks region, however, this translates to only 61% of actual enrolments. The inability of the University to offer all first year students University residential accommodation was noted as a possible factor. This pattern is similar for the Uxbridge campus.

Home and EU student enrolment

- Full-time undergraduate enrolment projections are positive and show growth
- Part-time undergraduate and part-time and full-time postgraduate show a smaller growth than expected and therefore the University needs to consider how it can deliver its part-time provision to meet the market needs in a more flexible way.

International

- In respect of direct recruitment to Bucks programmes in the UK, regional recruitment offices in India and China have been established, however, tighter controls from the UK Border Agency are having an adverse effect on recruitment currently across the sector.
- A number of in-country delivery partnerships have been approved, however, these are costly to set up and deliver a low margin return.
- A number of specialist programmes for specific markets have been introduced, eg, the Saudi Nurses course. Whilst proving successful the risk is that the programmes will only run for a limited period.
- Overall whilst international recruitment remains important to the University its growth is not as envisaged in the 2010-15 Strategic Plan.

478.2 Council members raised a number of questions and observations in relation to the presentation as follows:

- Changes to the UK Border Agency's policy could have further impact upon international recruitment – either positive or negative.
- The need to ensure that the University retains an appropriate balance of student residential accommodation as further government policy may radically change the constitution of the student body.
- The University should explore further the suggestion that the drop in full-time undergraduate enrolments compared to applications is a consequence of not being able to offer all first year students University residential accommodation.
- The University should explore further the reasons as to why applications for September 2012 entry are down by 11.5% as compared to 8.3% for the sector.
- Further investigation into those subject areas that are performing well as opposed to those that are performing poorly should be undertaken. For example is this related to sector trends, poor marketing or a reflection of NSS scores?
- Allocation of target numbers to courses should reflect the number of applications for each course. It was noted that Admissions has this information and would be using this to make recommendations about the redistribution of target numbers in the light of applications so far.

749 NHS Contracts (presentation)

749.1 The Pro Vice Chancellor for Society & Health presented Council with an update of the University's NHS provision. It was noted that the University had recently submitted two tenders for the delivery of pre-qualifying nursing: NHS London (a re-tender for the University's existing provision) and NHS South East (a tender for new children's nursing provision).

749.2 It was explained that the University had been informed that it has been successful in securing the NHS London contract and that contract negotiations were currently ongoing. Details of this

contract were still subject to strict confidentiality as was the outcome of the NHS South East tender.

- 749.3 Council expressed its congratulations to the Pro Vice Chancellor and all the Faculty and University staff who had been involved in these bids – the successful outcome of which was regarded as a major achievement for the University.

750 Aggregated View of Income (C/12/03) (presentation)

750.1 The Director of Finance presented Council with an overview of the University's planned income delivery. The following points were drawn to the attention of the Council:

- Income from grants was better than had been projected.
- Full-time undergraduate fee income was better than projected as a result of achieving additional student numbers although the need to keep within 5% of the student number control was noted as crucial.
- NHS income was better than projected although no firm projections could be given until the contract numbers were finalised.
- International income had been re-assessed to reflect the reality of the current recruitment challenges.
- Part-time undergraduate income demonstrated a large risk band as is dependent upon how the University is able to provide a more aggressive and differentiated low cost approach to this market.
- Postgraduate income is less than was originally projected.
- Other income is not as strong as was originally projected.
- Research income was noted as having a low margin.
- Other income arising from business engagement is seen as volatile with a low margin.
- Overall it was concluded that the University is hoping to achieving a more positive income than had been originally predicted in the 2010-15 Strategic Plan, however, the principal risk to this is Full-time Undergraduate income and the University must take action to ensure it recruits to its student number control.

751 Discussion

751.1 Reflecting on the above presentations Council provided the following comments/observations which the University may wish to consider:

- Does the University know what attracts the AAB+ students (currently 183 enrolments) to the University? It was noted that these students tend to enrol on the more specialist courses which have good industry links. Furthermore, the students come from the vocational qualification route rather than straight A levels.
- Ensuring conversion of applications to enrolments is crucial and the University may wish to review the staffing levels in the Admissions areas to ensure that this activity is not compromised.
- In relation to poor recruiting courses how is marketing monitored and when/how does the University take a view that further investment is not going to achieve a return?
- The need to ensure that programmes are designed in partnership with industry. It was noted that this a requirement of the University's validation process. In addition the business case for a new programme needs to demonstrate market demand.
- The need to keep monitoring the market and projecting its position in 5 years time, ie. what will be the competition from the private sector?
- How will the AAB+ students affect the market? There may be a number of highly qualified students still seeking University places in Clearing.
- How will Clearing operate in 2012 – will there be further price competition during Clearing?
- How will technology affect learning & teaching strategies and the delivery of education to the market?
- The University's current position is positive and we should "hold our nerve".
- The need to ensure that employability is a key element of all our courses.
- Current sector debate on post qualifying admissions – how may this influence the recruitment market?

- GuildHE and UUK continue to lobby government in respect of HE and UK Border Agency policy.

Planning for the Future: staying competitive and diversifying

752 Partnership with Aylesbury College (Reserved Business)

Pauline Odulinski drew attention to her personal interest in this matter as Principal of Aylesbury College and offered to withdraw from the meeting. The meeting fully supported her continued attendance and participation in the debate.

It was noted that the various papers received for this item are highly confidential and commercially sensitive.

The detailed record of this item was recorded as Reserved Business and minuted as a separate confidential appendix.

753 Strategic Options for Student Residences (C/12/06)

753.1 Council was presented with a paper detailing a number of options relating to student residences and were asked to discuss and reflect upon this. Comments/observations noted were:

- It would be useful to obtain more definitive information regarding student demand in order that a clearer picture of the effect on recruitment that accommodation has can be given.
- It was reported that the University had approximately 100 students reject offers in September 2011 as a result of the University not being in a position to offer University accommodation.
- Parents and students would welcome the guarantee of all first years being offered University accommodation. It was noted that first year students have difficulty taking private lets as they are unable to obtain appropriate references.
- There is currently no accommodation for students at the Uxbridge campus, however, the need for this is uncertain as the University is currently recruiting to its contract number regardless. However, this position may change from September 2012 when the bursary for nursing students is no longer available and the profile of students will probably change.
- The current University Head Tenancy Scheme has properties of variable standard.
- In order to meet our commitment to international students the University needs to be able to offer high quality and guaranteed accommodation.
- It is more cost effective to have a large number of purpose built rooms, ie Hughenden than a wide spread of small groups/developments which become costly to run and maintain.

754 Strategic Investments (C/12/07)

754.1 Noting that the University was now generating some cash reserves Council was presented with a paper detailing options for possible future strategic investments including: investment in a low cost delivery model, the refurbishment of South Wing and increasing the capacity of the student residences.

754.2 Council noted this paper and looked forward to receiving firm proposals in due course.

755 Concluding Summary by Vice Chancellor

755.1 Noting that this had been a useful meeting where much had been discussed the Vice Chancellor summarised the key points as:

- The core area of activity for the University remained its full-time undergraduate provision and whilst the University is currently in a good position there is need to ensure full support for recruitment and conversion of applications takes place. It was also important not to lose sight of achieving more flexibility as was the original intention of the Strategic Plan.
- Council had provided the University with some strong steers in relation to investment and resources – noting that these should be focused on recruitment, conversion, marketing and market analysis.

- Employability is key to the University's mission and so co-production of curriculum with employers is regarded as key to ensuring successful courses.
- Prioritisation is being given to ensure better results in the DLHE survey.
- The new low cost delivery model should be developed into a full business case.
- Further work on assessing the demand for student accommodation should be undertaken
- Further refinement on the options for future investment focusing on either infrastructure or accommodation should be undertaken prior to a formal proposal being presented to Council.

756 Date of next meeting

756.1 The next meeting of Council is scheduled to take place on: **Monday 19 March 2012, commencing at 4.00pm in Room 3.07, Uxbridge Campus.**

The meeting started at 4.00pm and finished at 6.50pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chair of Council)

Prepared by Clerk to the Council – 11 January 2012
Confirmed by the Chair – 29 February 2012
Confirmed by VC – 28 February 2012