Buckinghamshire New University

Draft:	17 October 2013
approved for circulation:	29 October 2013
confirmed by Council:	

Missenden Council

Minutes

date: **15 October 2013**
time: **4.00 pm**
location: **Barn Hall, Missenden Abbey**

Present:

Christine Beasley (Chair)	Independent Council member
Antony Bellekom	Independent Council member
Baljit Dhillon	Independent Council member
Ruth Farwell	Ex officio member and Vice Chancellor
Naomi Franco	President, Students' Union
Michael Hipkins	Independent Council member
Julie Irwin	Elected Senate member
Maggie James	Independent Council member
Tim Marshall	Co-opted Council member
Sukhie Mattu	Elected Professional Services employee
Ken McCrea	Co-opted Council member
Hilary Mullen	Elected Academic employee
Jenny Newton	Independent Council member
Simon Opie	Independent Council member
Keith Ryan	Independent Council member
Linsey Taylor	Elected Senate 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:

Shân Wareing	PVC Learning & Teaching
Ian Plover	Director of Faculty, DMM
John Cooper	Director of Finance
Steve Dewhurst	Director of Business Planning

Apologies:

Antonia Byatt	Independent Council member
Lori Flynn	Independent Council member
Ian Hillan	Independent Council member
David Sines	Pro Vice Chancellor/Executive Dean, S&H
Derek Godfrey	Deputy Vice Chancellor

880   Chair's Welcome

880.1   The Chair welcomed Maggie James, Ken McCrea and Tim Marshall to their first official meeting of Council. Each provided a short resume of their skills and experience.

Maggie James introduced herself as a scientist by education, having progressed from working in the drug industry to management consultancy in the areas of business development, strategic management and the management of change.

Ken McCrea progressed from the study of Psychology into the Advertising Industry, running his own Advertising Agency and then a major career change to running a rural golf club and entrepreneurial local web based businesses.

Tim Marshall progressed from computer based work to the study of Sociology, BBC outside broadcasting, Walt Disney Corporation, then the dot com industry, e learning and now is CEO of JANET within JISC.

881   Declaration of potential conflicts of interest

881.1   No conflicts of interest were declared or identified.

882   Introduction Scene setting and Corporate Planning Statement 2013/14 (C/13/31)

882.1   The University plans include providing employer led education through teaching and research. In addition we want to be recognised as excellent, better that other universities with a similar purpose and a first choice provider in subjects we are good at delivering.

882.2   The Corporate Planning Statement is the operating plan for the year and continues to be based around the S & 4P's (Student Experience, People, Partnerships, Performance and Physical Environment).   The statement reflects priorities for the current academic year following agreement by Remuneration Committee of key objectives for the Senior Management Team. The responsibility for each objective/measure and timescale were shown. Performance would be measured against these objectives both during the year and at the year end.   Links to other reports include, the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) reported to Council and financial measures for income growth related to the approved budget for 2013/14 and monitored through the Resources Committee.

882.3   The main priorities included:

- Outrageous ambition – transformational education
- Better at what we do, 'accelerating natural selection' by reviewing the courses that we offer
- Regularly and robustly monitoring performance
- Meeting recruitment targets and provide a good overall experience for our enrolled students
- Delivering better NSS scores
- Delivering staff engagement
- Delivering employer engagement – new activities mostly through BEST

882.4   The University would continue to actively review both the provision and quality of its courses as well as the processes in place to manage the provision.

882.5   It was AGREED that the Corporate Planning Statement for 2013-14 be APPROVED.

883   League Tables (C/13/32)

883.1   Detailed information was provided in the following areas:
- How we benchmark ourselves
- What we aspire to (ie how we can improve the University's position)
- How we present data
- Comparisons with competitor Universities and those which are similar in mission and size
- Example league tables with Bucks and its competitor universities highlighted

An analysis of areas which could be targeted to improve the University position was identified. These included:

- Graduate employment
- Spending per student
- Staff/Student Ratio
- Good Honours/Value added
- Degree completion and entry standards
- Improved NSS score

It was noted that certain students were excluded from some league tables eg Nursing students, and students who are not on a full honours degree programme as well as those above the age of 20. Students, whose employment six months after completion, were not in 'graduate jobs' also altered the final position in many league tables.

883.2   It was noted that the position within a particular league table related to the data provided by the University, or those nationally available such as the NSS. Each league table uses slightly different metrics, and in addition some information is included and some excluded in the different tables.

883.3   Members were asked to confirm the primary purpose of the University as well as what they would like to aspire to. Clarification and comment was sought and responses made in the following areas:

- Value added relates to comparison of entry qualifications with achievements on exit but only at 1st and 2:1 levels and only for those students with A level entry qualifications
- Nursing students don't count at the moment but will do when the graduate nurses first complete in 2 years time
- Short term and long term action plans were thought desirable with a timeline to help improve the scores year on year
- Targets are already in place to improve the NSS scores for 2013-14 including completion rates
- Academic resource needs to be targeted in the right subject areas, targeted spending can impact on league table position
- Need to listen and learn from the students what they require
- Teaching overall has achieved a low score in the Guardian table, but if you look at the heat chart provided for item 884 then there are large pockets of very good teaching; the Guardian uses a weighted combination of the NSS results for teaching.
- Must get teaching and feedback right to improve the NSS score and go up the league tables
- League tables are used most by parents wanting a Russell Group University for their children
- Need to improve in places which are important to us, learning from how other similar universities are achieving this

Members supported the University's primary purpose as defined and the strategy to improve the NSS as a primary aim with a secondary outcome of improving league table levels; in addition it should target maximising our data returns where this can have an impact.

884   NSS: 2012-13 results and analysis (C/13/33)
884.1   The NSS provides nine years of UK-wide data, gives a partial but real picture of our students' experience, is very significant for league table placing and is importance both for morale and reputation. 65% of final year undergraduate students completed the survey in 2013. A comparator graph showing UK NSS results and Bucks results was noted together with a heat map showing results across both department and subject areas. It was noted that the graph showed the University and the total for the sector, and it was thought that it might be useful to show some of our competitor universities in the graph. The results show both areas of great success and low achievement as well as a whole range in between, but the poor overall results do not reflect the successful subject areas. It was thought that the heat map, the manner in which the results had been analysed and targeted actions for 2013-14 were very helpful and a substantial improvement on previously.

Proposals for targeted actions as well as targets to reach to improve the University NSS results for 2013-14 were noted as follows:

- Feedback on my work
- Communication
- Library resources and services
- General IT resources
- Access to specialised equipment, facilities or rooms
- Overall satisfaction with the quality of the course
- Completion rate improvement to 75%
- Detailed action plan showing target dates both for communication, process and achievement
- The results within the heat map will be used in PDR's through line managers

884.2   Clarification and questions were sought in the following areas:

- Monitor social media to identify students needs and issues
- Identify what students mean by promptness
- Promptness and quality feedback is always an issue and very subjective
- The University is committed to a short turn around on marking and feedback of three weeks but understands that some modules are set up for submission at the same time creating difficulties in meeting the deadlines – this is being addressed through rewriting learning outcomes and assessment submission dates within modules
- Everyone has been fascinated by the development of the heat map and even those staff who have been identified as needing improvement are asking why other areas are better
- These results can also identify areas where problems had not been noted
- It was noted that these NSS results could not be mapped to league tables because the data collected does not necessarily relate to the same time period
- Concerns expressed about the results on teaching as this is a teaching led university – this is being taken forward through line managers and PDR's
- The take up of PDR's in DMM was reported at 98%
- DMM are monitoring NSS actions and progress on a monthly basis as well as identifying the consequences of no improvement
- Improvements noted on last year were that 90% of student timetables were issued and successful within the first week
- Need to understand that universities around the country would all be looking to achieve improvements year on year although some high achieving universities would find it more difficult to make increases as substantial as we might because we are starting from a lower base
- Identification of the position in different subject areas across the sector might be a useful statistic to present alongside the heat map
- The University needs to be agile and swift of response to keep up with today's technology and way of teaching and learning
- Identify and spread good practice across all subject areas
- Talk and listen to students and student representatives regularly as well as work in and across course teams to spread good practice and support each other

In conclusion the Chair summarised the general opinion that the University needs to identify and prioritise what to do differently to make a difference in quality and what the students say about the University at the end of their course. The approach outlined was supported and clearly showed the University adopting a different pro-active approach to improving the NSS measures.

885   HE Centre Aylesbury: update on current position
885.1   Progress to conclude the commercial arrangements for the Waterside Centre were reported as delayed as a result of changes in leadership within Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC). Full details of the results of the current negotiations were noted. Clarification was sought around the PWLB loan requirement, ownership at the end of the loan period and timing of the completion of the construction.

It was anticipated that a further update would be provided to the next Resources Committee with full proposals considered by Council in November 2013. This would include build costs, restaurant potential and extended lease.

886   Date of next meeting

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

Monday 25 November 2013, commencing at 4.00 in the Boardroom (Joint Meeting with Senate)
Monday 25 November 2013 commencing at 5.30pm in the Boardroom (Council Meeting)

The meeting started at 4.00pm and finished at 6.05pm.

Signed: _____   Date: _____
          (Chair of Council)

Prepared by: Registrar (Governance) – 17 October 2013
Confirmed by: Vice Chancellor – 28 October 2013
Confirmed by: The Chair – 29 October 2013