

SENATE

Open Minutes

Of the Teams meeting held on Wednesday, 23 September 2020.

Present via Teams meeting:

Nick Braisby	Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Gavin Brooks	Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Liz Cleaver	PVC Education and Digital
Ellie Smith	Academic Registrar and Secretary
Julie Irwin	Director of Student Success
Florin Ioras	Director of Enterprise and Research
Russel Stone	Head of School, Media & Creative Industries
Kevin Maher	Head of School, Business, Law & Computing
Paul Morgan	Head of School, Human and Social Sciences
Phil Wood	Head of School, Aviation & Security
Sri-Kartini Leet	Head of School, Art, Design & Performance
Karen Buckwell-Nutt	Head of School, Nursing & Allied Health
John Hathaway	Elected representative, Business, Law & Computing
Louisa Berry	Elected representative, Aviation & Security
Lauren Vincent	Elected representative, Art, Design & Performance
Daisy Toscano	Elected representative, Health Care & Social Work
Sainey Faye	Nominated representative, University Partnerships Board
Margaret Greenfields	Nominated representative, Research and Enterprise Committee
Richard Jones	Nominated representative, Education Committee
Tamsin Grainger	Student's Union President
Natasha Neale	Student's Union Vice-President- Education
Miriam Moir	Head of Registry Services (Secretary)

Apologies

Rachel Cragg	Pro Vice-Chancellor External Engagement
Helen Ayo-Ajayi	Elected representative, Nursing & Allied Health
Rob Penhaligon	Elected representative, Media & Creative Industries

Minutes of the meetings held on 25 March 2020

20.59 The Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 10 June 2020 and 4 August 2020 were approved as accurate records. Senate was reminded that at the August meeting it was agreed that the *No Detriment Policy – Exceptional Regulations* which had been in place during the initial Coronavirus crisis whilst the University campuses were closed, should be rescinded at the end of the 2019-20 academic year. Senate had approved a new policy – *No Detriment Policy: Emergency Measures* – which could be invoked should a further crisis situation arise. Senate noted that the University was currently open, in line with the Government's position on the provision of education to students, and would be delivering a hybrid curriculum of online and face-to-face learning. Senate concluded that

at this time there was no requirement for the *No Detriment Policy: Emergency Measures* to be invoked, but that the situation would be kept under review, with an emergency Senate convened to take any further decisions.

Status of Actions

20.60 It was noted that one action remained incomplete- the nomination of a Senate member from the Professoriate. The Director of Enterprise and Research confirmed that a name would be available once the Professoriate had met.

Chair's Actions

20.61 Chair's Actions taken since the last meeting of Senate were endorsed.

Curriculum Change 2023 (SEN20.17)

20.62 The initial scoping document for Curriculum Change 2023, a programme to develop a revitalised portfolio of courses supporting core growth, was presented to Senate. The paper explained that activities would be prioritised under five workstreams designed to enable growth in core student numbers, retain students, create value, raise satisfaction and provide skills for the world of work. A dedicated support team was to be resourced.

20.63 Senate welcomed the initiative and asked whether flexibility could be built in to the timescales to enable staff to think ahead and to embed placement plus. It was suggested that professional practice years might be considered in the framework. However, it was noted that this could be one option: placement type activities would need to be developed in different ways depending on the requirements of the programme and any professional body accreditation. It was noted that with this enhancement approach, outcomes would not be noticeable for 3-4 years.

20.64 Senate noted the paper and requested that regular updates be received.

Partnership Strategy (SEN20.18)

20.65 Senate received a paper outlining a new Partnership Strategy aligned to the goals and intentions of Impact 2022 and providing the framework to underpin activities to enhance the quality of the University's partnership offer.

20.66 It was noted that the strategic alignment to Impact 2022 had resulted in a shift in strategic direction for educational partnerships, with the emphasis moving away from an increase in volume towards opportunities for wider collaboration and knowledge exchange.

20.67 Senate questioned whether the strategy would address the educational quality of partners. It was noted that the principles to be applied – which were clearly aligned to the University strategy - would ensure that processes for approving partners were robust, and that mechanisms for monitoring and improvement would be implemented. Senate welcomed the recognition that additional scrutiny would be beneficial.

20.68 Senate commented that the section on Transnational Education was less developed than other sections and queried whether this could be strengthened. It was agreed that this section should be expanded in relation to the University International Strategy.

20.69 The question of support for partners in the learning and teaching area was raised. It was noted that the learning and teaching requirements for Bucks academic staff should be replicated for partner staff, and that this would be expanded in the implementation of the strategy.

20.70 The issue of front-loading resources within Schools and other services for supporting partners was raised, and it was expected that a more robust strategy would recognise the resourcing implications of partner expansion.

20.71 It was noted that this was the first iteration of the Partnership Strategy, and Senate approved the paper for further consultation and engagement across the University and with partners.

SAMMs to SERs (SEN20.19a and 19b)

20.72 A summary of changes to be implemented as part of the Annual Monitoring process for 2019-20 was given to Senate. The School Annual Monitoring Meetings would be converted to School Enhancement Review Meetings, each to be chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital), with follow up meetings to build on identified good practice and positive impact. The priority was for Schools to consider the data and build in enhancement.

20.73 Senate welcomed the initiative and made the point that access to data would be key to its success. This had been recognised, and arrangements were in place to provide core data for the SERs.

20.74 Senate also noted that the new initiative would build on the excellent work which came from the SAMMs and would replicate and expand the valuable dialogue with colleagues from outside the Schools themselves. Reporting timelines would be tight this year but would be reviewed in future.

20.75 Senate supported and noted the change in practice.

University Committees (SEN20.20)

20.76 Changes to the *University Committees: Constitutions and terms of reference* formal document were presented to Senate. These consisted of amendments to terms of reference, memberships, nomenclature and policy names.

20.77 Senate approved the changes to the document.

20.78 Senate noted that the University had invested in committee software as part of its commitment to reduce the use of paper and enhance efficiency.

Grading Descriptors (SEN20.21)

20.79 Details of the Level 6 Grading Descriptors agreed by Education Committee in June 2020 were presented to Senate.

20.80 It was particularly noted that the implementation of the Grading Descriptors would fulfil the commitment made in the Degree Outcomes Statement, published in July 2020. Use of the Descriptors would ensure the development of consistent marking approaches to assure standards and support students through developmental feedback. A pilot had been undertaken and it was found that the descriptors did not impact negatively over current practices.

20.81 Senate noted that the document addressed Level 6, but that work was ongoing for descriptors at Levels 0, 4, 5 and 7. It also noted that staff development would be needed regarding production of the associated marking schemes, and also over the use of the higher end grades.

20.82 Senate noted the paper and approved implementation from 2020-21.

Senate Debates 2020-21 (SEN20.22)

20.83 It was noted that in 2019-20 Senate had included a debate on its agenda. Only one debate was held in December 2019 as later meetings moved online due to the move to remote working.

20.84 Senate agreed that it would like to include debates at future meetings and considered topics which had been previously proposed, plus new suggestions. Following discussion it was agreed that the following would be taken forward during 2020-21:

- December 2020: "What's higher in Higher Education?" – incorporating Knowing our customers/students – being relevant and unique as previously proposed
- March 2021: Free speech/Prevent: the University's position
- June 2021: Widening Participation issues - what this means for the University in terms of challenges and strengths

20.85 It was agreed that position papers would be produced to inform the debate, with an output to be derived from Senate's discussion.

20.86 Members of Senate were encouraged to consider topics for future meetings.

Transition of CEG responsibilities

20.87 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital) made Senate aware that CEG, originally the Covid Education Group, had been renamed the Continuity Education Group and was going to continue to meet to discuss operational matters, but that policy decisions would be referred to Education Committee during 2020-21.

20.88 Senate noted the update and thanked CEG for its ongoing work.

Reports to Receive:

Chair's Report

20.89 The Chair gave a verbal report noting the following:

- A positive financial statement was expected for 2019-20.
- The University's good performance in the NSS, despite the gravity of the COVID 19 situation. Areas for improvement were graduate level employment, particularly as the Government is likely to focus on courses with low graduate level employment as being of poor value.
- Partnership income was to be reported gross, to reflect the large volume of activity the University undertakes with partners.
- The University was working closely with the local authorities over Covid planning. Universities were to remain open according to Government advice, as key providers of education.
- Work is being developed with the DataHE consultancy to identify the University's strengths and weaknesses in past patterns of acceptances and enrolments, market position, demographic positioning and level of entry tariff.

Council Report

20.90 The Minutes from the meeting held on 28 July 2020 had been circulated and were received.

Student Union Report

20.91 The President of the Student's Union gave a verbal report, noting the following:

- A positive report from the SU's auditors
- The appointment of a new trustee.
- Plans for making the SU venues and transport Covid safe: Freshers events were being run, with a virtual Freshers Fair, and it was reported that students were following Covid guidelines.
- Societies and clubs were awaiting clarification of activities which could be undertaken, and these would be kept under review. Senate was reminded of Varsity on 24 March 2021.

Academic Planning Committee (4 June 2020)

20.92 The Minutes from the meeting held on 4 June 2020 had been circulated and were received.

20.93 Senate was reminded that the Minutes of these meetings were confidential and business sensitive.

Matters for Endorsement:

External Examiner Approval Panel (SEN20.25)

20.94 Senate received the update from the External Examiner Approval Panel and endorsed the decisions made in each instance.

New Programmes of Study and Revalidations (SEN20.26)

20.95 The report detailed recommendations to Senate of programmes presented to Approval Panels where conditions had been signed off, mostly during the summer of 2020: it was noted that going forward programmes needed to be approved by December in order to recruit effectively for the following September. Concern was expressed over the number of programmes which had conditions set by the approval panels.

20.96 The programmes were presented to Senate and endorsed.

Closing remarks

20.97 The Chair closed the meeting by thanking members for their hard work during the last year, particularly given the difficult circumstances, and wished all a successful new academic year.

Dates of the next meeting

The next meeting of Senate is on Wednesday 16 December 2020 at 2.00pm.