



SENATE

Open Minutes

Of the meeting held on Wednesday, 07 June 2023 in G5.05, High Wycombe, and on MS Teams.

Present:

- Professor Rachel Cragg (Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital) [Acting Chair])
- Professor Paul Morgan (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience))
- Ellie Smith (University Secretary and Clerk to Council)
- Stephen Wiggins (Interim Academic Registrar)
- Professor Karen Buckwell-Nutt (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Health and Social Care) / Director of Institute of Health and Social Care)
- Emma Binnie (Dean of Students)
- Professor Sri-Kartini Leet (Head of School: Art, Design and Performance)
- Professor Musa Mihsein (Head of School: Aviation and Security)
- Dr Sarah Williams (Head of School: Business and Law)
- Dr Russel Stone (Head of School: Creative and Digital Industries)
- Professor Ricardo Khine (Head of School: Health and Social Care Professions)
- Dr Ciaran O'Keeffe (Head of School: Human and Social Sciences)
- Professor Florin Ioras (Director of Enterprise and Research)
- Gail Rowntree (Teaching Representative: School of Aviation and Security)
- Hilary Mullen (Teaching Representative: School of Creative and Digital Industries)
- Brenda Brown (Teaching Representative: School of Health and Social Care Professions)
- Michela Falcone (Teaching Representative: School of Art, Design and Performance)
- Dr Kevin Campbell-Karn (Teaching Representative: School of Human and Social Sciences)
- Ian Chisholm-Bunting (Teaching Representative: School of Nursing and Midwifery)
- Dr Marcus Wood (Education Committee Representative / Head of Quality and Standards)
- Professor David Warnock-Smith (Research and Enterprise Committee Representative)
- Dr Ben Clayton (Professoriate Representative)
- Charlotte Leighton-Woods (Students' Union President)
- Brandon Tester (Students' Union Vice-President (Education and Welfare – High Wycombe))
- Dr Emma Tomsett (Secretary)

In attendance:

- Nicola Shepherd (Academic Developer (Academic Practice and CPD Lead) – for the Artificial Intelligence item only)
- Shabana Hussain (Principal Partnerships Officer) – for the Partner Periodic Review item only

Apologies:

- Professor Nick Braisby (Vice-Chancellor [Chair])

Welcome / Apologies for Absence

23.65 The Acting Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted one apology as outlined above. A warm welcome was extended to the Interim Academic Registrar and the Teaching Representative: School of Art, Design and Performance who were attending their first meetings of Senate.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

23.66 There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

Minutes of the previous meeting

23.67 The Open minutes of the previous meeting on 22 March 2023 were approved as an accurate record without amendment.

23.68 The Reserved minutes of the previous meeting on 22 March 2023 were approved as an accurate record without amendment.

Matters Arising / Status of actions

23.69 Senate noted the status of the actions as outlined on the action sheet.

23.70 Senate confirmed the procedure for the election of the new Senate Representative to Council held in May had been followed correctly, approved the election results and confirmed that the Head of School: Health and Social Care Professions would be Senate's Representative on Council from 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2025 alongside the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Health and Social Care).

23.71 The Chair noted that the election turnout rate of 62% had been disappointing and reminded members that it was their duty as members of Senate to vote in Senate elections.

23.72 The Chair thanked the Teaching Representative: School of Creative and Digital Industries for her service on Council as Senate Representative, which would end on 31 July.

Chair's Action

23.73 Senate noted the following Chair's Actions approved by the Chair since the previous meeting:

- Approval of the Support to Study Procedure on 25 April 2023
- Approval of the updated University Committee Constitutions and Terms of Reference document on 26 April 2023
- Approval of the Student Experience Forum Terms of Reference and Membership on 4 May 2023.

- 23.74 Senate agreed that the Support to Study Procedure needed further dissemination to staff. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) welcomed comments from members on the most effective way to inform staff about the Procedure.
- 23.75 The Acting Chair noted that newly published or updated policies should always be communicated to staff.
- 23.76 The Secretary advised that the University Ethics Panel had recently reviewed its Terms of Reference and these would now be updated in the University Committee Constitutions document as the Research and Enterprise Committee had approved them.
- 23.77 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) advised that the Student Experience Forum Terms of Reference would also go to Council's Student Experience Committee. The SEF's first meeting was in June and Senate would be kept informed about its actions. Considerable thought had gone into the membership as the aspiration was to have a smaller membership that did not duplicate other memberships and had a strong professional services representation, but it would be kept under review.
- 23.78 The Students' Union (SU) President informed Senate that the SU would prefer that all Sabbatical Officers were members of the SEF. The Acting Chair noted that the Pro Vice-Chancellor had stated the membership would be kept under review, but it was agreed that this discussion would be continued outside the meeting.

Chair's Report

- 23.79 Senate received a verbal report from the Acting Chair. The Acting Chair drew Senate's attention to the following matters:
- the government had recently announced that International Students on postgraduate taught programmes would no longer be able to bring dependents to the UK. The impact of this decision was not yet known but it would not change BNU's strategy or approach to international recruitment
 - BNU was shortlisted for four Whatuni Student Choice Awards and was delighted to have won the Cost of Living Response Award. BNU's work to support students during the cost-of-living crisis had been the result of an excellent partnership between the University and the SU
 - announced today, BNU had fallen 7 places in the Complete University Guide League Table 2024. The University was working to identify the reasons for this decline and would be developing an action plan. One factor in the result appeared to be the impact of methodological changes to the league table: on student satisfaction, although BNU scored highly (thirteenth best in the UK), the guide had altered the weighting of this measure. The table also placed a lot of weighting on research activity
 - the Human Resources team had won the prestigious Universities Human Resources Team of the Year award due to work which had delivered reduced turnover and improvements in diversity, for which the Acting Chair congratulated the team
 - BNU had secured the Brunel Engine Shed, an exciting space that will make a strong visual point that High Wycombe was a university town
 - the University was preparing its final submission for the Times Higher Education Awards

- the Acting Chair thanked the SU for its recent SU Awards which had celebrated the achievements of BNU's staff and students
- the final date for marks to be entered ahead of the summer Boards of Examiners was 9 June; it was critical that Academic Registry received all marks by that date
- the University Executive Team had recently reviewed attendance monitoring data and noted this was still not satisfactory; the Acting Chair would be leading an investigation into areas where attendance was poor. It was essential that the University reflected on how it could engage all its students

23.80 Senate members made the following observations in response to the report:

- the government had also announced that International Students could remain longer in the UK if their results were delayed by the University and College Union's marking and assessment boycott
- the 9 June marks deadline applied to programmes whose students were going to the summer Boards of Examiners for consideration for awards or progression. Academic Registry would be checking on 12 June for any missing marks; staff should inform Registry now if they would not be able to meet this deadline due to exceptional circumstances such as personal illness
- some programmes were continuing teaching through the summer break, so it was essential that staff continued to complete registers during the summer.

Strategic Matters

Use of Generative AI at BNU

23.81 Senate considered a report on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Higher Education, BNU's initial response and plans to develop BNU's full response by September. Senate also considered the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) guidance on maintaining quality and standards in the age of Generative AI.

23.82 Senate's attention was drawn to the following points by the Teaching Representative: School of Human and Social Sciences and the Academic Developer (Academic Practice and CPD Lead):

- technology doubled its processing capabilities every 18 months; AI was experiencing a double exponential growth
- the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 had raised ethical questions that were being considered by governments across the globe
- students were already using AI; the issue was how to ensure they used AI appropriately
- BNU's initial response had included guidance to students on how to use AI appropriately and guidance to staff on what they should be aware of during the current marking period, and this response had delivered what the QAA proposed in its guidance
- the Academic Integrity Panel had seen several cases involving AI and had applied what it believed was a fair approach that was supported by the SU, but was concerned there could be an exponential growth in cases involving AI
- failing to guide students in how to use AI appropriately carried many risks, including reputationally, in terms of student employability (employers might fire staff who presented

AI-generated work as their own) and in complying with the Office for Students B Conditions of Registration (1-4)

- the next stage of BNU's response would be led by an AI Working Group to further determine what the appropriate use of AI was and to embed this in policies, create guidance templates for staff, raise awareness amongst staff and students, integrate AI into the Curriculum23 Hallmarks, deliver training, and propose future development needs. Agility would be key to a successful response.

23.83 Senate held a thorough discussion of the report during which it was highlighted:

- there was a clear public interest in the use of AI in universities as the Academic Registry had received its first Freedom of Information request regarding how many cases of academic misconduct involved the use of AI in assignments
- it was essential that quality assurance was put in place
- BNU's response to AI could become sector-leading: the Head of School: Human and Social Sciences was receiving requests from teacher-training providers about how BNU was approaching the use of AI
- there was a need to check assessment criteria were compatible with the approach to AI
- academics could make changes to assessment briefs in response to the emergence of generative AI without having to get approval from the Course Amendment Panel (CAP) providing the assessment remained broadly in line with the module specification; changes might only have to be approved by CAP if the module specification had a particularly precise definition of an assessment
- further communications might be necessary regarding assessment changes.

23.84 Senate supported the plans to develop BNU's response to AI as outlined in the paper.

Research Strategy

23.85 Senate considered the final draft of BNU's new Research Strategy 2022-2028, which had been recommended for Senate's approval by the Research and Enterprise Committee. The Director of Enterprise and Research highlighted the following key points to Senate:

- the Strategy was written to meet BNU's needs regarding achieving Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP); an improved performance in the Research Excellence Framework 2028, where the target was a Grade Point Average of near 3.0%; and the Thrive 28 Strategy
- it contained targets for all Schools, clear objectives, key performance indicators (KPIs), benchmarks and an outline of how these would be assessed and monitored, which would be led by the Research and Enterprise Committee and Senate, as part of the work to embed a research culture at BNU
- the targets had been reviewed by BNU's external auditors and made SMART in response to their feedback
- it was built on 5 pillars which in turn built on the 4 pillars of Thrive 28.

23.86 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council commented that enablers were needed across BNU to help staff achieve the KPIs.

- 23.87 The Director of Enterprise and Research advised Senate that the University Bid Manager had offered training to all staff who would be writing bids for research funding.
- 23.88 Following a query regarding the Strategic Partnerships benchmark, the Director advised that the definition of a 'strategic partnership' could include a BNU staff member working with an academic from another institution on a research project/output, but also included other activities such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.
- 23.89 It was noted that more funding bids would have to be submitted and succeed in order to meet research and enterprise income targets.
- 23.90 Senate approved the strategy subject to the inclusion of achieving RDAP as a KPI.

Action: Director of Enterprise and Research

Student Matters

Students' Union Report

- 23.91 Senate received a report from the Students' Union (SU) which provided an overview of issues raised by students with the SU and areas where the SU sought further clarification of BNU's plans. The SU also congratulated five BNU staff who had won awards at the recent SU Awards.
- 23.92 the SU President highlighted customer service issues that the SU would also raise at the Student Experience Forum (SEF) in the future and observed that some students were reluctant to raise issues out of concern that this could negatively affect their grades. In addition, students were also disappointed that the free meals initiative had ended for the summer break; much outstanding work had been done to help students with the cost of living and it was hoped that this would continue in 2023-24.
- 23.93 The SU also requested an update on the personal tutoring work that had been ongoing through the current academic year. The Acting Chair informed Senate that a consultant had been commissioned to complete the personal tutoring work and ensure it was implemented from September. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) agreed it was essential that the personal tutoring policy and process was clear for the 2023-24 academic year.
- 23.94 Senate agreed that under no circumstances would a student be penalised academically for any concern they had raised, and that this message needed to be clearly communicated to students in order to ensure students felt confident in raising issues.
- 23.95 in response to a query from a member, the SU confirmed that senior BNU staff did work with the SU to address inappropriate comments made by staff as soon as they were made aware of them.
- 23.96 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) confirmed that some of the issues raised would be addressed by the SEF.

Student Attainment Action Plan

- 23.97 Senate considered the 2021-22 Student Outcomes Action Plan which had been developed with the School Directors of Education and the Quality Enhancement Committee.

University-wide and School specific actions had been proposed by the School Directors of Education and the Directorate for Strategic Planning and Change. The Acting Chair also informed Senate that, for the first time, actions had been put against key themes from the data, but that on some areas the University did not yet fully understand why there was a gap so the appropriate action that needed to be taken had not yet been determined. Further data analysis and research was included in the plan to ensure the reasons for all gaps were understood.

23.98 Senate approved the plan.

Quality Assurance Matters

External Examiner Approval Panel Report

23.99 Senate endorsed the External Examiner Approval Panel report. The Interim Academic Registrar advised Senate that there had been six new External Examiner appointments, four changes to remit and one resignation.

23.100 The Interim Academic Registrar informed Senate that were still programmes that needed External Examiners (which Registry had flagged to Schools throughout 2022-23), that a number of programmes would need to find new examiners between now and August and that he would also be writing to Schools about irregularities in the use of examiners.

23.101 It was also challenging to find academics willing to act as External Examiners (EEs) due to their workloads at their own institutions, although the increase to BNU's EE fee approved by Senate in September 2022 had helped. Academic Registry was also trying to launch a Higher Education Academy-accredited training course for EEs who were new to the role to offer them further support.

23.102 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council remarked that BNU received many requests for EEs from other providers and encouraged BNU staff to become EEs. Alongside the benefits for their professional profile, it also helped to recruit EEs for BNU.

Validation Report

23.103 Senate endorsed the recommendations from approval events for new programmes (validation) and re-approval events for existing programmes (revalidation) outside the Curriculum 23 programme without comment.

Partner Franchise Report

23.104 There was no activity to report to Senate, but the Acting Chair informed Senate that BNU was reviewing attendance at partners. Attendance at some partners was good and better than at BNU.

Regulatory Matters

Taught Degree Programme (TDP) Regulations

23.105 Senate considered the new TDP Regulations which would complement BNU's new academic provision introduced through the Curriculum 23 Change Programme (C23). The Regulations

had been considered by Education Committee and recommended for Senate's approval. The Interim Academic Registrar particularly drew Senate's attention to the Regulations' new format, which was intended to improve the clarity and transparency of the Regulations for learners and staff and make them easier to use.

- 23.106 In response to a query, the Education Committee Representative clarified that the increase in the postgraduate (PG) module pass mark to 50% only applied for students enrolling on new PG taught (PGT) programmes resulting from C23. It was not changing for students already currently enrolled on PGT programmes.
- 23.107 Senate approved the Regulations for immediate use.

Degree Outcomes Statement 2022-23

- 23.108 Senate considered the University's *Degree Outcomes Statement 2022-23*. The Interim Academic Registrar drew Senate's attention to the three-year decline in the percentage of Good Honours awarded by BNU: the sector average was 79%, but BNU's was now 50%. The decline was largely due to the low awarding of Good Honours at partner providers: 71% of BNU's core students achieved Good Honours, but partner percentages were significantly lower. This suggested that BNU might need to review whether the value of all BNU educational partnerships was right.
- 23.109 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council informed Senate that Council was aware of the impact partners were having on the metric. The University's long-term strategy was to redress the balance between core and partner students, and the Statement demonstrated why growing the core was so important. The University had invested in staff to support growing the core, but it now needed to see this growth.
- 23.110 The Interim Academic Registrar commented that the work balance between BNU and partner staff was different to what he had experienced at other institutions; it could be worth reviewing the partnership contracts as there appeared to be a legacy issue meaning some contracts might not offer the same value they once had.
- 23.111 The Head of School: Creative and Digital Industries asked if there were any partners that were outliers with particularly low Good Honours rates that BNU could focus on. The Education Committee Representative advised that it was unfortunately the opposite: the University's partnership with the partner that awarded the most Good Honours was ending soon.
- 23.112 Partner students often came from areas of high deprivation, which supported the University's Access and Participation Plan, but if partners could improve, with BNU support, their Good Honours rates BNU would perform even better.
- 23.113 Senate recommended the Statement to Council for approval but agreed that, without losing any of the key messages, it should be shortened and made more succinct before it was presented to Council.

Action: Interim Academic Registrar / Head of Quality and Standards

Programme Monitoring and Periodic Subject Review Procedure

- 23.114 Senate considered the new *Programme Monitoring and Periodic Subject Review* procedure. The Education Committee Representative advised Senate that the procedure had been amended to respond to Senate's previous queries about linking it to the Office for Students'

B Conditions of Registration around quality and standards: it now combined the annual monitoring and periodic review processes and focused them around the B Conditions. The new procedure, if approved, would commence from the 2023-24 academic year and staff briefings and guidance would be provided to Schools.

- 23.115 Senate approved the procedure for immediate use subject to the amendment of paragraph 42 to “Review Panels must also include a relevant professional representative, employer and/or a recent graduate of the subject area. Requests for additional panel membership should be discussed and agreed with the Quality and Standards Team at the outset.”

Action: Head of Quality and Standards

- 23.116 As a result of the approval, Senate also agreed to rescind the current *Annual Monitoring Policy* and *Periodic Review Process* documents with immediate effect.

Partner Monitoring and Review Procedure

- 23.117 Senate considered the revised *Partner Monitoring and Review Procedure*. The Principal Partnerships Officer (PPO) informed Senate that the document took the same approach as the *Programme Monitoring and Periodic Subject Review* procedure, but was partner focused. It amalgamated the annual monitoring and periodic review processes and aligned with the University’s approach of continuous monitoring. The report templates were broadly similar to the University’s, although there would be a Partner Quality Report rather than a School Quality Report.

- 23.118 The Procedure had been reviewed by the University Partnerships Board and the Policy Oversight Group in May, but had not yet been seen by the Education Committee. The Acting Chair sought agreement from Senate that it would consider the paper without Education Committee consultation. Senate agreed this approach.

- 23.119 The Acting Chair queried whether it needed to make more explicit that Schools were responsible for the quality of the programmes delivered by their partners and the role of partner colleagues.

- 23.120 Senate also queried the use of the term ‘Link Tutor’, which in Nursing and Midwifery had a very specific meaning: the link between the School and a Hospital Trust.

- 23.121 Senate approved the procedure for immediate use subject to the following amendments:

- review the use of ‘Link Tutor’ and change it to either ‘Partnership Tutor (Link Tutor)’ or just ‘Partnership Tutor’
- paragraph 45: expand it to read “External members will be sourced by the Partnership Tutor and approved by the Head of School”
- the inclusion of a flow diagram clarifying the responsibilities of BNU and the responsibilities of the partner during the process.

Action: Principal Partnerships Officer

- 23.122 Senate also agreed to rescind the *Partner Periodic Review Policy* once amendments had been made and confirmed through chair’s action.

- 23.123 Senate noted the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) Annual Statement for 2022-23. The Dean of Students informed Senate that BNU was below benchmark for its OIA Band. Academic Registry and the Resolutions Team had worked extremely hard to try to resolve complaints at the early resolution and formal stages of the process.
- 23.124 The Education Committee Representative commented that it was pleasing that none of the complaints that had gone to the OIA had been justified or partly justified and that the number of settled cases was below the average. While it was imperative that students should never be prevented from going to the OIA, further work could perhaps be done to support students in understanding that the OIA would not recognise some of the circumstances in which they made complaints: for example, the OIA would never consider a complaint that involved academic challenge.
- 23.125 In response to a query, the Dean of Students advised that BNU did not have any complaints that involved large numbers of students, although one group complaint involving 51 students was ongoing and some of those students might go to the OIA. The Dean and the Resolutions Team had also not been given the details of any students involved in the sector-wide complaint regarding teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, but the Students' Union might be aware of some students who were part of the complaint.
- 23.126 The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Health and Social Care) and the Acting Chair queried whether the complaints processes for partners, apprentice learners and employers were fully articulated. The Dean of Students advised that partner students should follow the complaints process at the partner first and if dissatisfied with it could then approach BNU, and ultimately the OIA; apprentice learners should follow the BNU complaint process. It was agreed that the Dean of Students would contact the Apprenticeship Hub and the Partnerships Team to ensure this was fully understood.

Action: Dean of Students

OfS Ongoing Conditions of Registration including Reportable Events: Compliance Monitoring (Annual Report)

- 23.127 Senate noted the Annual Report on the Office for Students (OfS) Ongoing Conditions of Registration including Reportable Events: Compliance Monitoring. The University Secretary and Clerk to Council informed Senate that the University remained compliant with the Conditions of Registration, but was keeping the B Conditions under review as there was much ongoing activity in this area. There had been 6 reportable events during the year, three of which were reported under an F3 Notice. The Notice meant that the University was required to 'always' report events which were previously categorised as 'sometimes' reportable.
- 23.128 Senate was also informed that the OfS had undertaken various consultations during the year. The OfS had been subject to an inquiry by the House of Lords Industry and Regulations Committee.
- 23.129 The Higher Education Freedom of Speech Bill had now become law and it was likely that a new condition on freedom of speech would be introduced.

University Matters

Calendar of Deliberative Committees 2023-24

23.130 Senate noted the Calendar of Deliberative Committees for the 2023-24 academic year, which now included the Sustainability Committee (new in 2022-23), the Institute of Health and Social Care Board and the Student Experience Forum (new for 2023-24).

23.131 Senate agreed that meetings should be hybrid in 2023-24, but that there could be value in developing some principles for hybrid meeting attendance.

* Starred Items: Committee Minutes

23.132 Senate received the minutes of the following committee meetings without comment. These items had been deemed starred items which would only be discussed if the Secretary received comments or queries on them before the meeting. No comments or queries had been received.

- Council: Open Minutes of the Business meeting held on 18 April 2023
- Academic Planning Committee: the Reserved Minutes of the meetings held on 2 March and 4 May 2023
- Education Committee: the Open minutes of the meetings held on 15 March and 10 May 2023
- Research and Enterprise Committee: minutes of the meetings held on 9 March 2023 (which had been amended following the meeting) and 25 May 2023
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee: minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2022
- Sustainability Committee: minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023.

Date of next meeting

23.133 The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 20 September 2023.