



## SENATE

**Open Minutes** of the meeting held on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 in G5.05, High Wycombe, and on MS Teams.

### **Present:**

- Professor Nick Braisby (Vice-Chancellor [Chair])
- Professor Paul Morgan (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) [Chair of Education Committee])
- Professor Karen Buckwell-Nutt (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) / Director of Institute of Health and Social Care)
- Ellie Smith (University Secretary and Clerk to Council)
- Emma Binnie (Dean of Students)
- Professor Sri-Kartini Leet (Head of School: Art, Design and Performance)
- 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)
- Lisa Wyld (Head of School: Missenden Abbey International Hotel and Hospitality School)
- Gail Rowntree (Interim Head of School: Aviation and Security)
- Ashley Church (Acting Head of School: Engineering and the Built Environment)
- Professor Florin Ioras (Director of Enterprise and Research)
- Anahita Malek (Teaching Representative: School of Creative and Digital Industries)
- Brenda Brown (Teaching Representative: School of Health and Social Care Professions)
- 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)
- Brandon Tester (Students' Union President)
- Sruthi Subhash (Students' Union Vice-President Education and Welfare (High Wycombe))
- Amy Pile (Students' Union Vice-President Education and Welfare (Uxbridge and Aylesbury))
- Dr Alison Maton (University Partnerships Board Representative)
- Dr Emma Tomsett (Secretary)

### **In attendance:**

- Nicola Shepherd (Academic Developer (Academic Practice and CPD Lead) – for the Artificial Intelligence item only)

- Anna Buckettt (Head of Policy and Strategy) – for the item on the Access and Participation Plan only
- Matt Hiely-Rayner (Director of Strategic Planning and Change) – for the items on the B3 metrics and the impact of the degree algorithm change only
- Mike McDermott (Head of University Partnerships) – for the partner franchise report only

**Apologies:**

- Professor Damien Page (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
- Stephen Wiggins (Interim Academic Registrar)
- Paul Maloret (Head of School: Nursing and Midwifery)
- Michela Falcone (Teaching Representative: School of Art, Design and Performance)
- Pia Carnegie (Teaching Representative: School of Business and Law)

**Welcome / Apologies for Absence**

- 23.134 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted four apologies. A warm welcome was extended to the Students' Union Vice-Presidents Education and Welfare who were attending their first meeting.
- 23.135 The Chair also thanked the Head of School: Health and Social Care Professions and wished him the very best for the future as he attended his final Senate meeting before leaving BNU.

**Declaration of conflicts of interest**

- 23.136 There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

**Minutes of the previous meeting**

- 23.137 The minutes of the previous meeting on 7 June 2023 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the amendment of typographical errors in minutes 23.92 and 23.95.

**Action: Secretary**

- 23.138 In response to a query, the Chair confirmed that the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) would be taking forward the investigation outlined in minute 23.79 (final bullet point).

**Matters Arising / Status of actions**

- 23.139 Senate noted the status of the actions as outlined on the action sheet.
- 23.140 Senate noted the procedure for the election of a new Senate Representative to Council following the Head of School: Health and Social Care Profession's announcement that he would be leaving BNU. A ballot was underway; the Chair reminded members that voting in Senate elections was one of their key responsibilities.
- 23.141 The Secretary would confirm if the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) could remain as the other Senate Representative to Council following the change to her role.

**Action: Secretary**

**Chair's Action**

- 23.142 Senate noted the following Chair's Action: approval of the Partner Monitoring and Review Procedure on 5 September 2023.

### **Terms of Reference / Membership / Senate Business Cycle**

- 23.143 Senate approved the amendment to its Terms of Reference confirming the Student Experience Forum reported to Senate.
- 23.144 Senate noted its membership for 2023-24. Since the meeting papers had been published, a new School of Creative and Digital Industries Teaching Representative had been elected.
- 23.145 Senate considered the indicative Business Cycle for 2023-24. Members were invited to send comments separately to the Secretary, particularly regarding the scheduling of items.
- 23.146 The Secretary and the University Secretary and Clerk to Council outlined plans to undertake a review of BNU's deliberative committees through 2023-24 for implementation in September 2024. The University was required to have a Council, Audit Committee and a Senate under its Instrument and Articles of Government, but Senate had authority to determine its own standing committees. The review would encompass committee size, composition and committees' delegated authority.
- 23.147 The Chair noted that the review could be quite radical and that committees might look very different in the future.

### **Chair's Report**

- 23.148 Senate received a verbal report from the Chair:
- a) the University had had a mixed performance in the recent university league tables. There was good news but some areas to work upon and BNU needed to monitor certain metrics to ensure it immediately identified challenges to be addressed
  - b) BNU had been shortlisted for outstanding contribution to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Times Higher Education Awards 2023
  - c) BNU had achieved outstanding results in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023 following a collective effort led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the Dean of Students. BNU had set a target of becoming number one for student satisfaction in Thrive28 and it was remarkable that on one measure BNU had already achieved being number one in England
  - d) Ofsted was currently inspecting the University's Apprenticeship provision. Feedback so far had been good, and the Chair congratulated all staff involved in delivering Apprenticeship programmes, but there could be no complacency regarding the outcome
  - e) BNU had received the provisional outcome of the latest Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) assessment, but after careful reflection was making representation for a higher award
  - f) intense work was underway to complete the High Wycombe Estate Development. The University was discussing whether to take possession of areas as they were finished or wait until the entire development was completed. The student experience was central to this consideration.
  - g) the Chair had recently met the Minister for Education; it was clear that ministers were very concerned about franchise provision. It was to be expected that more measures would be imposed on the sector relating to this area, but BNU was attempting to address the concerns.
- 23.149 In response to queries from members, the Chair confirmed:
- a) no date had been agreed for the handover of the High Wycombe Estate development or about whether to invoke the penalty clauses in the building contract while the University Executive Team (UET) considered the best way forward

- b) UET had considered the timing of making a representation on the TEF outcome as it might not be resolved before the main UCAS application deadline in January, but had agreed that achieving a higher rating, which BNU would hold for four years, would be an enormous boost for the institution. BNU would not lose its current rating by making the representation. Accrediting bodies could be informed of the initial rating
- c) the University had reviewed its buildings last year and had reasonable grounds to believe there was no Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) present within the BNU estate, but a full structural survey by qualified building surveyors would be undertaken in the next four to six weeks to confirm this.

## **Strategic Matters**

### Use of Generative AI at BNU: Update

- 23.150 Senate considered a series of actions regarding the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) at BNU. The actions encompassed both student-focused initiatives, such as AI training and resource provision, and staff-oriented measures, including the development of clear guidelines and the exploration of secure AI services.
- 23.151 Senate noted that the Artificial Intelligence Working Group had been set up as a subsidiary group reporting to the Education Committee and its actions to date.
- 23.152 Senate held a robust discussion of several actions it had been asked to approve. Senate recognised
- a) that the opportunity to educate students and staff about how to use AI appropriately underpinned the proposals.
  - b) that AI could be used legitimately by staff and students, and the need to integrate it into education in a positive way while mitigating concerns about academic integrity
  - c) there could be advantages and disadvantages about being an early adopter of AI.
  - d) that the most time-critical action was regarding whether the AI detection plug-in should be removed from Turnitin. Senate was advised there were some cost implications for doing this now, but Turnitin had also informed BNU that it might be harder to remove the plug-in at a later date.
- 23.153 Senate endorsed the proposal to remove the plug-in as soon as was practical depending on resource implications. It was agreed that the proposal, once endorsed by both Education Committee and Senate, and its resource implications should be presented to UET for final consideration.

**Action: Deputy Head of School: Human and Social Sciences /  
Academic Developer (Academic Practice and CPD Lead)**

- 23.154 The Chair noted that Senate was not constituted to undertake extensive considerations of educational matters as that was Education Committee's remit. Accordingly, Senate did not formally approve any of the remaining actions. It was agreed that the proposed actions should be taken to Education Committee for full consideration instead and that Senate should receive a recommendation from Education Committee on what actions should be taken.

**Action: Deputy Head of School: Human and Social Sciences /  
Academic Developer (Academic Practice and CPD Lead) /  
Education Committee**

23.155 The Chair would consider use of chair's action to approve any time-critical actions recommended to Senate by Education Committee.

Inclusive Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy

23.156 This item was postponed to the next meeting.

Briefing on the new approach to the Access and Participation Plan

23.157 Senate noted a briefing on the Office for Students' (OfS) new approach to the Access and Participation Plan (APP). The Chair noted that the APP was critically important to BNU.

23.158 In response to comments, the Head of Policy and Strategy confirmed:

- a) there was an expectation that providers would work with schools. BNU was working with Study Higher on this and BNU's Widening Participation team was investigating working with Year 6 children to support their transition. It was likely that BNU would focus on 1-2 targeted projects with schools
- b) awarding metrics for the School of Nursing and Midwifery were positive, but disguised awarding gaps in other Schools
- c) a project timeline had been developed to ensure the APP could be approved by Council in the necessary timeframe
- d) BNU's partners presented a challenge as their outcomes were worse than BNU's; partners needed to consider the gaps in their own provision, but also improve quality.

23.159 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council observed that it might be necessary to consider how more resource could be given to support the project; the University Partnerships Team could possibly be involved. The Chair recommended that the APP was also cross-referenced with BNU's TEF submission, which had committed BNU to developing a skills improvement plan.

23.160 It was noted that the Quality Enhancement Committee currently considered the APP and then reported back to Education Committee. It was agreed that further consideration should be given to whether the reporting line was correct as it might not be being given the prominence it needed.

**Action: Chair of Education Committee / Head of Policy and Strategy**

OfS B3 Metrics: BNU Status Update and Actions

23.161 Senate considered a report on the OfS B3 Metrics, BNU's current performance against them and planned actions to address gaps.

23.162 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) outlined what action needed to be taken to avoid areas falling below the baselines. Academic leaders must fully understand what their programme / module data meant; when identifying an action, its impact had to be known, with the quality of actions linked to data being key; processes such as programme monitoring needed to link to the B3 Conditions; scrutiny of performance needed to be more robust; it must be clear when periodic reviews would be triggered; new ways of working needed to be identified to ensure BNU was confident its teaching was being delivered well; overreliance on Associate Lecturers must be avoided, and was being monitored on a monthly basis; the personal tutoring system needed to be reformed; and Schools could undertake self-assessment in the same way as the Apprenticeships team did.

- 23.163 In response to queries regarding the implementation of Curriculum 23 (C23) for the Foundation Year and at partners and partners' use of Associate Lecturers (ALs), the Pro Vice-Chancellor commented that it was BNU's responsibility to scrutinise partners' use of ALs in order to help them move away from too much use of them. Further discussions needed to be had on C23 for partners and the Foundation Year.
- 23.164 The Chair commented that Senate should be seeking assurance that all areas identified as below baselines were being prioritised and queried if BNU's current quality assurance mechanisms monitored this.
- 23.165 The Education Committee Representative/ Head of Quality and Standards informed Senate that annual monitoring programme reports asked course teams to consider their B3 Conditions data. The Chair expressed concern that it was possible that issues might not be picked up for 12 months under those arrangements. This was echoed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education), who commented that the University needed to regularly replicate some of the National Student Survey (NSS) action planning rather than waiting for annual monitoring.
- 23.166 Senate expected Education Committee to review the data and ensure actions were in place.

## **Student Matters**

### Students' Union Report

- 23.167 Senate received a report from the Students' Union (SU) outlining concerns about communications, enrolment and the availability of accommodation and amenities for multiple intakes throughout the year. However, the SU President and the Vice-President also noted that much work was going on around customer service and thanked the University for the progress the SU was seeing on resolving the issues outlined in the report.
- 23.168 The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) asked to meet with the SU to identify how they could work together to address these issues.
- 23.169 Regarding Academic Registry, the Education Committee Representative / Head of Quality and Standards informed Senate that 72% of mitigating circumstances claims were processed within 14 working days, but Registry was seeking to improve this by enabling students to submit claims through the student portal. Academic Registry had also identified technical problems with its telephones and was discussing with Digital and Technical Services whether it could start using Cisco Finesse.
- 23.170 The Dean of Students (DoS) asked that the SU inform her of any problems with departments going forward so she could work with those departments to improve customer service and the student experience. Both the DoS and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) agreed action could be taken to address issues quickly and welcomed the SU's feedback on what BNU could do.
- 23.171 The Chair noted that some of the issues raised should go to the Student Experience Forum (SEF) to resolve in future instead of Senate and that future SU reports to Senate could perhaps reflect on whether the SU felt the SEF was working. The Chair also observed that it would be helpful to know what work the SU itself was doing as Senate needed assurance that the SU was providing its services in an effective way. It would be helpful if future reports could identify how many students had raised a particular concern and if the SU was observing any trends or changes to trends.

### NSS 2023 Outcome

- 23.172 Senate received a presentation on the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023 results. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) commended the outstanding results, noting that The Times Higher Education analysis of the results ranked BNU fifth nationally for overall positivity.
- 23.173 The SU congratulated the University on the results.
- 23.174 The Dean of Students requested that Schools informed her now of actions they had taken in response to student feedback for the 'You Said, We Did' campaign for NSS 2024.

### Initial impact of degree algorithm change

- 23.175 Senate considered a report on the initial impact of the change to the degree classification algorithm in summer 2023. The Director of Strategic Planning and Change informed Senate:
- work to review the algorithm had commenced in 2021 as BNU was an outlier in the sector for the awarding of 'Good Honours' which had been disadvantaging BNU graduates. The degree algorithm had not previously been changed for many years and therefore failed to reflect wider changes in the sector. Changes to the algorithm were introduced in 2022-23 following Senate approval to introduce discounting of students' two worst performing modules at Level 5 and Level 6 (40 credits in total across both levels).
  - the change was having a positive but very modest impact: modelling showed that of the 1,742 BNU students with a degree result as of 14 July 2023 74% had been awarded a 1st or 2.1 with the new degree algorithm compared to 68% if their result had been calculated with the previous methodology. This 6% increase was in line with the modelling before the degree-algorithm changes occurred and would continue to be monitored as more results were recorded.
  - modelling had been undertaken for all BNU and Partner students that started their final year in 2022-23 and had qualified with 360 credits as of 14 July. Many students were still completing their programmes or waiting for re-assessments to be completed before they received their final result; the modelling would be reviewed once all results had been finalised by April 2024.
- 23.176 Senate welcomed these changes and the resulting modelling and noted the need to monitor the impact of the algorithm change so that it can continue to be assured that the change had not led to artificial grade inflation.

## **Quality Assurance Matters**

### External Examiner Approval Panel Report

- 23.177 Senate endorsed the External Examiner Approval Panel report. Senate was advised that gaps remained in External Examiner coverage and Academic Registry was working to fill them with the School Directors of Education.
- 23.178 The Education Committee Representative / Head of Quality and Standards advised that BNU's Academic Practice and Curriculum Development team would be completing AdvanceHE's External Examiner training to enable them to train new examiners, removing this requirement from experienced examiners.

### Validation Report

- 23.179 Senate endorsed the recommendations from approval events for new programmes (validation) and re-approval events for existing programmes (revalidation) outside the scope of the Curriculum 23 programme. The Quality and Standards team in Academic Registry was chasing the completion of outstanding actions for courses commencing in September 2023.
- 23.180 The Acting Head of Engineering and the Built Environment advised that some of the Engineering courses were starting in January 2024 rather than September as was stated in the report.

#### Partner Franchise Report

- 23.181 Senate endorsed the report on partner approvals planned in 2023-24 and 2024-25. The Head of University Partnerships noted that the Partnerships Team was aiming for a slow and gradual increase rather than large intakes.
- 23.182 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council asked that she was notified if the Regent College and Learna Ltd programmes were approved so she could inform the OfS as these would be reportable events.
- 23.183 It was reiterated that where BNU was validating a partner programme for delivery instead of franchising a BNU programme to the partner, partners were responsible for creating their own teaching materials.

### **University Matters**

#### Council Minutes

- 23.184 The Chair and Secretary had reflected on the use of starring agenda items. In recognition of the important relationship between Senate and Council, Council minutes would no longer be starred. Other committee minutes would be unstarred on a rotating basis to ensure all committee minutes were considered at one meeting during the year.
- 23.185 Senate received the Open Minutes of the meetings of Council on 23 May and 18 July 2023. The University Secretary and Clerk to Council advised Senate that:
- a) at its May Strategic meeting, Council had received some refresher training on Prevent and Safeguarding as part of its responsibility for oversight of Apprenticeships.
  - b) at Council's Business meeting in July, Council had considered BNU's financial position, which was positive and considered whether BNU was compliant with the OfS Conditions of Ongoing Registration. Council had concluded BNU was compliant with the exception of two amber-rated conditions due to ongoing investigations into BNU's Business and Management programmes.
- 23.186 In response to a comment from the Deputy Head of School: Human and Social Sciences on minute 23.188 from Council's July meeting, the University Secretary confirmed Council was having a session on AI at its October Strategic meeting.
- 23.187 The Chair noted that Council received Senate's minutes and would reflect on whether Senate's discussions were giving Council assurance that Senate was managing and discussing matters effectively.

#### \* Starred Items: Committee Minutes

- 23.188 Senate received the minutes of the following committee meetings without comment:



- a) Academic Planning Committee: the Reserved Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2023
- b) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee: minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023
- c) Board of the Institute of Health and Social Care: minutes of the meeting held on 31 May and 19 July 2023.

**Date of next meeting**

23.189 The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 6 December 2023.