



Buckinghamshire New University

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| confirmed by Council: | |

Council

Minutes

date: **7 July 2014**
time: **4.00 pm**
location: **Missenden Abbey**

Present:

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Christine Beasley (Chair) | Independent Council member |
| Antony Bellekom | Independent Council member |
| Antonia Byatt | Independent Council member |
| Baljit Dhillon | Independent Council member |
| Ruth Farwell | Ex officio member and Vice Chancellor |
| Lori Flynn | Independent Council member |
| Michael Hipkins | Independent Council member |
| Julie Irwin | Nominated Senate member |
| Maggie James | Independent Council member |
| Tim Marshall | Co-opted Council member |
| Ken McCrea | Co-opted Council member |
| Hilary Mullen | Elected Staff member (Academic) |
| Jenny Newton | Independent Council member |
| Simon Opie | Independent Council member |
| Keith Ryan | Independent Council member |
| Linsey Taylor | Nominated Senate Member |
| Brian Tranter (Deputy Chair) | Independent Council member |

Officers:

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|---------------|------------------------|
| Ellie Smith | Clerk to the Council |
| Vanessa Pilon | Registrar (Governance) |

In attendance:

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|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Derek Godfrey | Deputy Vice Chancellor |
| Ian Plover | Deputy Vice Chancellor Designate |
| Shân Wareing | PVC Learning & Teaching |
| Alison Chambers | PVC and Executive Dean S & H |
| Vicky Vass | Interim PVC and Executive Dean DMM |
| John Cooper | Director of Finance |
| Steve Dewhurst | Director of Business Planning |
| Naomi Franco | President, Students' Union (retired) |

Apologies:

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| Matt Gilbert | Ex officio member and President, Students' Union |
| Ian Hillan | Independent Council member |
| Sukhie Mattu | Elected Staff member (PSE) |
| Terri Teasdale | Independent Council member |

948 Introduction of New Members

948.1 The Chair introduced and welcomed Dr Vicky Vass as the newly appointed interim Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean for the Faculty of Design, Media and Management.

949 Declaration of potential conflicts of interest

949.1 It was noted that Antony Bellekom had commissioned the University to undertake some work on behalf of a client. In addition the Vice Chancellor, Ruth Farwell, declared an interest for item 25 on the agenda, Appointment of Vice Chancellor.

950 Minutes of the Meetings held on 31 March 2014 and 10 June 2014

950.1 The Minutes of the meetings held on 31 March 2014 and 10 June 2014 were signed as a correct record without amendment. The actions from the meetings were noted as either on the agenda or completed.

951 Matters Arising

951.1 None were raised.

952 Chair's Action

952.1 None had been taken since the last meeting.

953 Vice Chancellor's Report

953.1 Vice Chancellor's Report, including Key Performance Indicators (C/14/14)

This included commentary on:

- Update on progress against relevant academic objectives since the last report
 - Acceptances to offers of places on full-time undergraduate courses for 2014 entry
 - NSS response rate
 - League tables
 - Employability data
- Sector developments
 - Government thinking on tertiary sector, skills and 'coldspots'
 - HE funding regime in England
 - Participation trends and widening access in England – recent access and policy
 - Changes to Disabled Student Allowance for English-domiciled students
 - HEFCE work on information for students and prospective students
- BEST
 - CEO report from the BEST Board
 - BEST financial position 31 March 2014
 - BEST benefits analysis March 2014
- Recent successes
 - NHS contract monitoring
 - Heist Award nomination
 - Notable events in health education
 - Three awards to graduates of the BA (Hons) Three Dimensional Contemporary Craft and Products
 - Professorial inaugural lecture

953.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

The headline position was reported on updates on financial, enrolment and recruitment performance and forecasts as the end of the year approaches. The current financial position is strong, the student numbers for 2013-14 are higher than those declared in December and the recruitment position for full-time undergraduates for 2014 entry has not changed significantly since the report made to the June meeting.

The balanced scorecard was noted with the status showing several changes. In the area of green and improving these included employment, environmental performance, milestones and facilities performance. Investment is an area rated as amber. A number of areas were shown as

red and improving and this included student satisfaction. A forecast of minor deterioration was shown in the areas of space efficiency and affordability and investment.

- 953.3 Following a question members were advised that there had been some movement upwards in the student applications and accepts for 2014-15 at a level which would be normal for this time in the recruitment cycle. Members supported the clear, informative and concise report provided.

954 Pro Vice Chancellor Learning & Teaching Report

- 954.1 A report was received based on achievements for 2013-14 and plans for 2014-15.

Achievements this year were developed around a new Learning & Teaching Directorate bringing existing services within the same umbrella to work towards improving the quality of teaching and services delivered to students. These included employability and enterprise, Activities Weeks, student feedback, development of curriculum, academic staff meeting national standards, NSS scores and increased access to University facilities. Key successful projects included the 24/7 library opening and the improved completion and turnaround of students' assessed work within the timescale specified. Full details of the improved rates of turnaround for students assessed work were noted in a tabled paper.

Plans for 2014-15 include the implementation of the enhanced student experience package, benchmarking research activity, further progression of academic workload planning, further improvements of NSS scores, developing a new marketing strategy, improved communications and on-line content development.

- 954.2 A number of enquiries were made with suggestions and responses provided as follows:
- The outcomes of the 2014 NSS will be published in August 2014
 - Improved University systems take time to impact on NSS scores which are completed only by final year students who respond to the questionnaire based on their experience over three years of study
 - Improvements in performance management will make a difference both to teaching and to response times
 - Course structure changes will improve the times taken to feedback to students on assessed work by reducing the amount of, and spreading out the submission dates for, assessments
 - The introduction of Activities Week has led the sector in its implementation but it needs more involvement of both staff and students
 - Raising the level of research & scholarship undertaken to that of comparable universities will inform teaching, however, it was thought that good teaching did not necessarily automatically come from research and scholarship
 - The system for the collection of module evaluation is to be changed to obtain increased completion rates and evaluation of teaching from the students' perspective
 - Employability and enterprise are at the forefront of teaching from the start of the course and students are equipped for employment early and with continuing support after graduation

955 Students' Union Report (C/13/20)

- 955.1 The President's Report provided critical reflection on her year in office, the successes, performance issues of some staff, the implementation of innovative plans to improve teaching/assessment/facilities/student experience and the potential to do better. The support, openness and availability to debate issues with the Senior Management Team have enabled the progression of innovative ideas and have been welcomed by the Students' Union.

Suggestions were made regarding priorities for the future and these included:

- Marketing and Communication – this is a key senior appointment requiring a cutting edge and inspirational leader who will instigate innovative ideas to highlight the best of Bucks
- Performance of middle management – need better communication to lecturers and rapid implementation of proposed changes
- Dynamism and speed of action and reaction – to implement improvements and change quickly and positively
- Investment in resources – faster implementation of agreed projects to improve both the facilities and the ambience of the campus

- Vice Chancellor appointment – A critical appointment with which the Students' Union would welcome involvement

Finally the Students' Union President thanked the University for all their support and hoped that her candid, but heartfelt comments, would be taken in the constructive way intended. She advised that she had enjoyed both the challenges and successes and stressed that there was such potential for the University to thrive.

955.2 A number of comments were made with suggestions and responses provided as follows:

- It was stressed that the Students' Union relationship with the Senior Management Team was fantastic
- Constructive criticism was made to inform change
- Bucks is innovative in the changes made which are not being made elsewhere and should celebrate its successes more
- Responsibility for change needs to be made and delivered across all levels and in a timely manner in order to be successful – the timing is not necessarily at the speed wished for
- Effective delivery of teaching, relationships with students are the benchmark of success and should be underpinned by staff PDR's
- PDR development over the last five years has been impressive but there is some way to go in relation to performance – this is acknowledged and is currently being developed further as a corporate objective
- Electronic and hard copy books are improving year on year in the library
- This is a creative university and could be promoted by students producing a promotional video clip of what it is like to study here

The Council noted that quantitative performance measures are used to measure the student experience such as NSS results and also module evaluation. It was considered that it would be helpful if there was also some form of qualitative assessment with Council hearing directly from some students about their experience, perhaps in the form of a video.

The outgoing President was thanked for all her hard work in promoting change and improvements across the University.

956 Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust and University Hospital Status

956.1 Members were asked to note the exploration of a potential joint initiative with the Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust to help them gain University Hospital status through among other things the development of a Buckinghamshire Research Innovation Centre. Details of the background and plans together with the benefits were fully explained. The next joint meeting between the University and the Trust would look at and agree a more detailed proposal which would include contractual, governance, financial and resourcing proposals.

956.2 This was reported as a potentially exciting venture for the University, totally different to any existing relationships and playing to strengths in service improvement as well as science and resource service models. It is anticipated that it would provide an entry to post graduate medicine and applied research. This would make a difference to the provision of service to people. There would be initial cost implications but it was thought that this would generate net income in future. It was thought that it would create a greater presence in the local area which would benefit applications for potential future NHS contracts as well as supporting the progression of the University's application for research degree awarding powers.

(Action: PVC Faculty of Society & Health and Director of Finance)

957 Audit Committee

957.1 Minutes of the Meetings held on 13 May 2014

The minutes and confidential minutes of the Meeting held on 13 May 2014 were received.

957.2 HEFCE's annual assessment of institutional risk (C/14/18)

It was noted that this annual letter advised that the University is not at higher risk following their assessment of the accountability returns made for 2012-13.

958 Governance Committee

958.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 May 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2014 were received. Following the completion of the annual committee review, the President of the Students' Union, Matt Gilbert, was invited and agreed to join the Governance Committee to further enhance the decision making of this committee.

958.2 Election – Professional Service Employee (Verbal)

It was noted that a strong field of nominations were put forward for election with 60% of eligible professional service employees voting. The E-learning Services Manager, Steve Hoole, was the successful candidate and his appointment was APPROVED for four years from 1 August 2014.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

958.3 Single Equality Scheme: Objectives for 2014-15 (C/14/19)

The Action Plan for 2014-15 was considered in detail and it was thought that this was progressing well. The plan promoted the raising of equality awareness and the embedding of equality policy across the University.

Council **APPROVED** the planned activities for 2014-15.

958.4 Council Membership of University Committees and Boards of Subsidiary Companies (2014-15) (C/14/20)

The revised membership of committees and the revised membership of the Boards of Trustees of the Subsidiary Companies from 1 August 2014 were put forward for consideration. The process by which memberships were considered and proposed was clearly explained.

Council **APPROVED** the changes to the membership of University Committees and Boards of Subsidiary Companies for 2014-15.

(Action: Clerk to the Council)

959 Resources Committee

959.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 June 2014

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2014 including the confidential minutes were received.

959.2 Proposal for HE Centre in Aylesbury (C/14/21)

See confidential appendix.

959.3 Financial Position May 2014 (C/14/22)

The current financial position was noted as reported to Resources Committee. It was thought that the outturn figures would be better than reported. Income and expenditure as well as the operating performance are better than budget with an overall forecast position better than reported previously. Increased overall forecasts for both income and expenditure were noted as well as detailed income and expenditure, balance sheet, KPI's and forward projections for cash balances.

959.4 Draft Budget 2014-15 and HEFCE forecast to 2017 (C/14/23)

The report on the proposed draft budget showed the key areas of movement between the forecast for 2013-14 and budget for 2014-15. These included a reduction in grant income, an increase in undergraduate fee income as well as NHS contract income and increased costs in several areas. Assumptions were made in relation to employee salary increases, spending on IT projects, Waterside, capital investment on Hughenden residences and investment fund spend to sustain the University's infrastructure as well as costs relating to the Enhanced Student Experience package. The budget reflects a contingency of £1.45m which would normally be set at £0.5m. The increase relates to the uncertainty about student recruitment figures. This was also well within the covenants set by the bank.

The financial forecasts to 2017 included, the increase in undergraduate student fees from 2014, the meeting of the debt covenants, the risks to the University and how these might be monitored and mitigated over the plan period. Commentary was noted on sustainability, recruitment,

pensions, efficiency improvements, lease at Uxbridge, subsidiary companies and changes to reporting as a result of the newly published HEFCE Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability.

The draft budget for 2014-15 and HEFCE forecast to 2017 and their submission to HEFCE were **APPROVED** by Council

(Action: Director of Finance)

- 959.5 Uxbridge Lease (C/14/24)
See confidential appendix.

960 Report on Senate Matters

- 960.1 Report on Senate Matters (2013-2014) (C/14/25)

The report on Senate Matters for 2014 to date was received. It included those matters which had been discussed, reported and approved, including approval of several procedural and regulatory documents, as well as standing items, the receipt of reports from Committees and Faculties and approval of Honorary Awardees. This was noted.

- 960.2 Minutes of the Student Experience Committee held on 13 May 2014

The minutes of the meeting were noted as received. These included discussions on NSS, enhanced student experience programme, Personal Tutoring Policy, OIA Good Practice Framework and library fine reduction. Further discussion took place around the Personal Tutoring Policy, incentivising library book returns and the move to more strategic debate. These were noted.

961 Other Matters

- 961.1 Use of University Seal and Coat of Arms (C/14/26)

A report on the use of the University Seal and Coat of Arms was received.

962 Appointment of a Vice Chancellor (Verbal)

- 962.1 See confidential appendix (2)

The Vice Chancellor, Ruth Farwell, left the meeting for this item.

963 Formal thank you for departing Council Members

- 963.1 The retiring Deputy Chair of Council, Brian Tranter, was thanked for his unstinted support and contribution to both the Council and Senior Management Team over many years. The Chair and members wished him well in his future endeavours.

Students' Union President, Naomi Franco, was thanked for her lively and constructive contribution to both the Council and Senior Management Team during her term of office and the Chair and members wished her well in her future endeavours.

964 Date of next meeting

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

Tuesday 14 October 2014 commencing at 4.00pm at Missenden Abbey.

Monday 24 November 2014 commencing at 4.00pm at High Wycombe (joint meeting with Senate followed by a Council Meeting).

Members were reminded that the Graduation Ceremonies are to be held during the week beginning 8 September 2014 and that they were all welcome to attend. This is a great event celebrating the success both of the students and the University.

The meeting started at 4.00pm and finished at 6.45pm.

Signed: _____
(Chair of Council)

Date: _____

Prepared by Registrar (Governance) – 14 July 2014
Checked by Clerk to the Council – 16 July 2014
Checked by the Vice Chancellor – 29 July 2014
Confirmed by the Chair – 30 July 2014