



SENATE

Open Minutes

Of the meeting held on Wednesday, 23 March 2022 via Microsoft Teams.

Present:

Professor Nick Braisby	Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Professor Rachel Cragg	Pro Vice-Chancellor Education & Digital
Professor Paul Morgan	Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)
Ms Ellie Smith	University Secretary and Clerk to Council
Professor Florin Ioras	Director of Enterprise and Research
Ms Miriam Moir	Academic Registrar
Ms Emma Binnie	Dean of Students
Dr Russel Stone	Head of School, Creative & Digital Industries
Dr Simon Jones	Dean of Business & Law
Dr Ricardo Khine	Head of School, Health Care & Social Work
Dr Ciaran O'Keeffe	Interim Head of School, Human and Social Sciences
Professor Musa Mihsein	Interim Head of School, Aviation & Security
Professor Sri-Kartini Leet	Head of School, Art, Design & Performance
Ms Hilary Mullen	Elected representative, Creative & Digital Industries
Ms Louisa Berry	Elected representative, Aviation & Security
Dr Dearbhla Gallagher	Elected representative, Human & Social Sciences
Mr Ian Chisholm-Bunting	Elected representative, Nursing, Midwifery & Allied Health
Dr Sainey Faye	Nominated representative, University Partnerships Board
Ms Honor Fletcher	Students' Union President
Ms Natasha Neal	Students' Union Vice-President Education & Welfare
Ms Brigitte Stockton	Elected representative, Art, Design & Performance
Mr Paul Maloret	Interim Head of School, Nursing, Midwifery & Allied Health
Professor David Warnock-Smith	Nominated representative, Research and Enterprise Committee
Dr Fiona McCormack	Nominated representative, Professoriate

In attendance:

Dr Emma Tomsett	Senior Committees Officer (Secretary)
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Apologies:

Professor Gavin Brooks	Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor
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Ms Margaret Rioga

Professor Karen Buckwell-Nutt

Ms Pia Carnegie

Acting Head of School, Nursing, Midwifery & Allied Health

Director of the Institute for Health and Social Care

Elected representative, Business & Law

Welcome / Apologies

22.01 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and accepted four apologies.

Matters Arising / Status of Actions

22.02 There were no actions to discuss.

Chair's Report

22.03 The Chair's report had been circulated in advance of the meeting; the following points were highlighted by the Chair:

- a) The United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) will visit the University in April. The University has been advised that this is not a routine visit; accordingly, thorough preparations led by the University Secretary and Clerk to Council Ms Ellie Smith and Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Gavin Brooks are underway. Good practice has been identified so far and internal teams express confidence about their management of compliance processes and regulations. The Chair expressed the view that some areas of compliance may need tightening. Any areas causing concern are and will be fully investigated and rectified.
- b) The current response rate to the National Student Survey (NSS) is 68%. Overall, response rates are very good. The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) Professor Paul Morgan and Dean of Students Ms Emma Binnie are working with those areas and partners where response rates are lower.
- c) The Chair will be holding open house-style meetings with all Schools and Directorates over the next few months.
- d) Recruitment for 2022-2023 is looking extremely strong, with BNU exceeding all UCAS sector indices. Applications are up over 34% year-on-year compared to a sector increase of approximately 3%. Offers made are up by over 15% compared to a sector fall of almost 5%. Acceptances are up 28% compared to a sector fall of 21.4%.
- e) This builds upon strong recruitment in 2021-22, particularly internationally. Successful recruitment through 2021-22 has strengthened the University's financial position, enabling some contingency to be released.
- f) BNU's improving financial position is in contrast to the sector, where 13% of providers last year stated they only had a contingency of 30 days liquidity. The perilous position of some providers will dampen pay-bargaining across the sector. The sector is waiting for the University and College Union (UCU) to confirm their final request as part of the pay-bargaining round, but it is expected that pay and affordability will remain challenging for the entire sector.
- g) BNU has submitted responses to several Office for Students (OfS) consultations. In its response to the proposed new approach to regulating student outcomes, through a

change in definition of the B3 condition of ongoing regulation relating to quality and standards, the University has highlighted ongoing statistical errors which should be adjusted. BNU's response to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) consultation challenged the timeline for the next TEF and noted the illogicality of introducing a 'requires improvement' award when the TEF is an assessment of excellence.

- h) Changes to the student loan scheme may lead students to expect even greater value from their educational experience. The continued freeze of the rate of tuition fees will impact BNU.
 - i) The University is pleased that the proposal to move to post-qualification admissions has been abandoned. It also welcomes the commitment to life-long learning and higher technical qualifications.
- 22.04 Senate held a productive discussion of the OfS consultations. It was noted that the inclusion of a student submission in the TEF is a significant change, but work has already commenced on this while detailed guidance is awaited on what should be included.
- 22.05 Senate was asked to consider whether the University should remain aligned to the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education as the B3 consultation no longer requires alignment with the Code. Senate agreed the University should continue to align itself with the Code.
- 22.06 Senate noted the proposed future inclusion of partner provision in assessments of quality and standards. The Chair reflected that this could reduce the vibrancy of the sector as providers may decide to exit their partnerships due to the risk they pose.

Matters for Approval / Discussion

Survey on Degree Classification Algorithm: Preliminary Results

- 22.07 Senate received an update on the staff survey about the proposed change to the degree algorithm from the Academic Registrar Ms Miriam Moir. The overall response was generally positive, although responses expressed some concerns, including regarding the transparency of the algorithm, the tight timeline for implementation which might limit the extent of testing, and discounting modules where academic misconduct penalties had been applied.
- 22.08 It was noted that UCFB had requested that the change was not applied to their programmes as this would disadvantage previous cohorts.
- 22.09 Education Committee has considered the proposal and recommended Senate approves continued work on the algorithm and that it should be applied to all programmes, including UCFB programmes.
- 22.10 The Students' Union had also stated that they supported the change at Education Committee.
- 22.11 Senate was assured that the change is not expected to lead to a dramatic increase in the number of 'Good Honours' made. The proposed change has been carefully modelled and is in line with changes made by other providers. An increase of 7-8% in 'Good Honours' is possible but it was stated that the principles behind the new algorithm would lead BNU to be better aligned with the rest of the sector.
- 22.12 Senate was pleased with the consultation and approved continued implementation of the revised degree algorithm.

- 22.13 Senate expects UCFB to follow the change, but UCFB can still submit a fuller detailed explanation about why they do not want this to happen. Senate authorised the University Partnerships Board to make any further final decision on this matter.

Curriculum23

- 22.14 The Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Digital Professor Rachel Cragg outlined the most recent developments on the Curriculum23 change programme. Professor Cragg thanked the Schools for providing their programme titles.
- 22.15 Phase 2 activity is now underway to gather outlines of each programme's modules before the details of the module content is collected by the summer. The project team is in place.
- 22.16 Initial activity is also underway on Phase 3, which will focus on the full detail of the curriculum and implement the programme's hallmarks. Scoping to identify the remaining workstreams needed to support the programme has begun, potentially including workstreams on placements, PSRB-accreditations and Opportunity modules.
- 22.17 Senate was assured that great progress had been made and there is no sense of any resistance to the programme.
- 22.18 A useful discussion about progress with the programme followed. Key points made included:
- a) While there is the possibility of a fourth, summer intake on programmes, the University would review its infrastructure to ensure a 12-month year can be supported while being mindful of staff well-being if any such intake became a genuine prospect;
 - b) Professional services support for academic staff to reduce some of the administrative burden on staff when preparing validation paperwork is being recruited and appointed.
 - c) Some concern was expressed that the aspiration to streamline, for instance through the introduction of a common first year across all programmes, risked losing the benefit of the attraction of very particular course titles. It was confirmed that every course title will be advertised, although the programme wishes to build the course portfolio well and make efficiencies wherever possible.
- 22.19 Senate was advised that work is also being undertaken to establish how students will make their optional module choices to ensure institutional consistency.
- 22.20 The Chair noted the progress made so far and that the programme is on track.

Qualifications and Credit Framework

- 22.21 The Academic Registrar outlined the proposed new Qualifications and Credit Framework that will replace the previous Academic Qualifications Framework. Its content reflects what is in the Curriculum23 blueprint and includes a useful clarification on micro-credentials.
- 22.22 There was a broad discussion about whether a separate programme specification should be required for all modes of delivery proposed for a programme.
- 22.23 Senate also queried whether the hyflex model of delivery should be included as a mode of delivery. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Digital agreed to reconsider inclusion of the hyflex option.

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- 22.24 The Framework was approved by Senate with the condition that it will be brought back to Senate if any amendments are made.
- 22.25 Senate approved the rescinding of the previous Academic Qualifications Framework.

Free Speech Policy

- 22.26 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council outlined the proposed amendments to the University's *Freedom of Speech policy* and operational procedure. Senate's attention was drawn to the following points:
- a) The revised policy gives greater clarification of the duties of Council, the University and the Students' Union with regard to freedom of speech.
 - b) It is proposed to devolve decision-making on speakers / events from the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor to Heads of School, the Students' Union or the University Events team depending on the nature of the speaker / event.
 - c) A definition of 'academic freedom' has been added
 - d) The external speaker request form has been updated to make it simpler to use
 - e) If there is a Prevent concern regarding an event / speaker, it will be referred to the Prevent Lead
 - f) If there are greater concerns, it will be passed to the University Executive Team (UET).
- 22.27 It is recognised that the proposals may not be ideal, and require more consultation with the Students' Union and the Events team, but it brings the University's process into alignment with the rest of the sector and with the Equality and Human Rights Commission's [guidance for higher education providers](#).
- 22.28 The University's Prevent Lead, Ms Louisa Berry, advised Senate that she supported the amendments and that it remains a priority for Prevent Leads across the sector.
- 22.29 It was noted that this policy is being amended while the University awaits the passage of the Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act through Parliament, which may result in further amendments to the policy / procedure being required.
- 22.30 A broad discussion was held regarding the proposal. It was agreed that the University Secretary should provide further clarification on point 7 of the Operational Procedure where it states that 'a member of UET may permit an event to proceed at short notice, even though these procedures may not have been completed, if they are satisfied that the University is able to comply with its legal duty'.
- Action: Ms Ellie Smith**
- 22.31 The University Secretary welcomes further comments which Senate can send to her directly. A refined policy / procedure will be represented to Senate at its next meeting.

Estates Development

- 22.32 Senate received a report on the successful stakeholder consultation that had been undertaken regarding the High Wycombe estate development.

- 22.33 The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) Professor Morgan advised Senate that the required relocation of some programmes ahead of construction work beginning had been very successful.
- 22.34 A whole-University approach is now being adopted for communications, supplemented by local communications as required for areas where there might be disruption. Close communication is being maintained between BNU and the construction team to identify any upcoming activities / disruption that might need mitigating.
- 22.35 Senate endorsed the report and the approach being taken towards staff and student engagement.

Attendance and Engagement Policy

- 22.36 Senate approved minor amendments to the *Attendance and Engagement Policy* with regard to the attendance and engagement expectations for Apprenticeship students.
- 22.37 Senate also noted that an appendix outlining the attendance and engagement policy for International students will shortly be approved by chair's action.

Confidentiality Policy

- 22.38 Senate considered a new *Maintaining Academic Confidentiality Policy* that proposed a University expectation that learners on all programmes will maintain confidentiality during their studies.
- 22.39 This policy had been recommended to Senate for approval by Education Committee.
- 22.40 A general discussion was held regarding point 16 of the policy, which seemed very broad and to suggest that a student cannot name an individual or an organisation in any learning activity. This could have serious impact on programmes where real contextual settings are used in assessments or where data is shared, for example on courses in the School of Art, Design and Performance where students share creative work they have done for companies as live briefs.
- 22.41 It was felt that further clarification was required on the context in which the policy applies; for example, if this was mainly intended for health programmes.
- 22.42 Senate did not approve the policy but requested it return to its next meeting with suitable amendments.

BSc (Hons) Midwifery with NMC Registration Regulations (appendix 7 to the Academic Assessment Regulations)

- 22.43 Following a recommendation from Education Committee, Senate approved an update to the University's *Academic Assessment Regulations* to include a Midwifery appendix for immediate use.

Reports to receive

- 22.44 Senate received the following reports without comment:

- a) Council minutes from the meetings of 23 November 2021 and 8-9 February 2022.
- b) Academic Planning Committee minutes from the meetings of 2 December 2021 and 13 January 2022.
- c) Education Committee minutes from the meetings of 17 November 2021 and 26 January 2022.
- d) Research and Education Committee minutes from the meeting of 24 November 2021.
- e) Student Achievement Report 2020-21 re-presented with a response from the Quality Enhancement Committee.

Students' Union Report

- 22.45 Senate received a verbal report from the Students' Union (SU) President Ms Honor Fletcher regarding the upcoming Sabbatical elections, where voting opens in early April.
- 22.46 A referendum is being run alongside the elections regarding adding a second Vice-President Education and Welfare based at the Uxbridge campus.
- 22.47 The SU is running a range of events to support Ukraine.
- 22.48 The Students' Union Vice-President Education and Welfare Ms Natasha Neal is pleased to be working with Professor Morgan to review programme committee meetings in order to make them as productive and efficient as possible in 2022-23.
- 22.49 The SU is also working with Professor Morgan and Ms Binnie to determine how BNU responds to the SU reports that go to Education Committee.
- 22.50 The SU also requested Senate members promote the student reps programme to students so that as few elections as possible are needed in October and the SU can instead focus on training.
- 22.51 The Chair expressed his appreciation for the work of the SU and wished it the best of luck with the elections and referendum.

Matters for endorsement

External Examiner Approval Panel Report

- 22.52 Senate endorsed the External Examiner Approval Report March 2022 without comment.

Validation Report

- 22.53 Senate endorsed the Validation Report March 2022 but requested that a column is added identifying whether a programme was for a validating or franchised partner.

Action: Ms Miriam Moir

Reserved Business

Honorary Awards

- 22.54 The Students' Union members left the meeting before this item was considered.

- 22.55 The paper is confidential and the contents must not be discussed or shared with anyone outside Council.
- 22.56 Senate approved the nominations which will go to Council in April for Council approval.

Date of next meeting

- 22.57 The date of the next meeting is 8 June 2022.
- 22.58 The Chair requested that the next meeting be extended to 2.5 hours.

Action: Secretary