



SENATE

Open Minutes

Of the meeting held on Wednesday, 22 March 2023 in G5.05, High Wycombe, and on MS Teams.

Present:

- Professor Nick Braisby (Vice-Chancellor [Chair])
- Professor Rachel Cragg (Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital))
- Professor Paul Morgan (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience))
- Ellie Smith (University Secretary and Clerk to Council)
- Miriam Moir (Academic Registrar)
- Kirsteen Coupar (Interim Director of Student Success)
- 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)
- 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)
- 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)
- Professor David Warnock-Smith (Research and Enterprise Committee Representative)
- Dr Ben Clayton (Professoriate Representative)
- Charlotte Leighton-Woods (Students' Union President)
- Emily Crawshaw (Students' Union Vice-President (Education and Welfare – Uxbridge and Aylesbury))
- Dr Emma Tomsett (Secretary)

In attendance:

- Steve Edge (Head of Sustainability) – for the Sustainability Strategy item only
- Wendy Binmore (Committee Officer) - Observer

Apologies:

- Professor Florin Ioras (Director of Enterprise and Research)
- Alison Maton (University Partnerships Board Representative)
- Brandon Tester (Students' Union Vice-President (Education and Welfare – High Wycombe))

Welcome / Apologies for Absence

23.01 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted three apologies. A particularly warm welcome was extended to the Academic Registrar who was attending her last meeting before her retirement.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

23.02 There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

Minutes of the previous meeting

23.03 The minutes of the previous meeting on 7 December 2022 were approved as an accurate record subject to the amendment of minute 22.323 to “Key Board members would include the Heads of the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery, Health and Social Care Professions and Human and Social Sciences, but if other Schools launched health and well-being activity they would be included.”

Action: Secretary

Matters Arising / Status of actions

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

23.05 The following additional verbal updates were also noted:

- 22.238 Support to Study Procedure: the Chair had provided additional feedback having been asked to approve the procedure by chair's action. The Chair would consider approving it by chair's action once his feedback had been actioned by the Director for Student Success.
- 22.331 Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Implementation Plan: it was agreed that annual monitoring of reasonable adjustments should be considered by Education Committee.

Chair's Action

23.06 There were no Chair's Actions to note.

Chair's Report

23.07 Senate received a verbal report from the Chair. The Chair drew Senate's attention to the following matters:

- Senate would be pleased to know that the University's United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI) issues had been resolved; the Chair thanked the University Secretary and Clerk to Council and all colleagues who had helped achieve this extremely successful outcome
- the recent Investiture of the University's inaugural Chancellor, Jay Blades MBE, and Chancellor's Day and had been extremely successful and the University was now considering how to effectively utilise opportunities which might be highly beneficial to BNU that arose via the Chancellor. The Chair thanked all colleagues involved in delivering the events
- the University had launched its new strategy, Thrive 28; it would be essential to socialise it as it would be an enduring feature of the University's operations for several years to come
- a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Damien Page, would join BNU in June
- the University planned to introduce a Student Experience Forum (SEF) which would manage the student experience and help BNU achieve better progress on issues relating to the student experience. It was intended to complement the work of the governor-led Student Experience Committee (SEC), which would retain responsibility for oversight of the student experience to enable SEC to give the University's Council assurance that BNU was managing the student experience satisfactorily
- the High Wycombe Estate Development was progressing well and remained on budget, but the timescale had shifted slightly as the University had added further projects to the works; the practical handover date was scheduled for 1 September 2023
- the University was in the final stages of acquiring the Brunel Engine Shed in High Wycombe and hoped to sign the lease imminently
- the University expected to purchase Alexandra House in High Wycombe shortly, which would expand BNU's student accommodation and grow the University's footprint in High Wycombe
- the long-running pay dispute between employers and the sector trade unions (TUs) had progressed to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). Employers had recommended a final award of a 5-8% increase from 1 August of which a 2% or £1,000 (whichever was greater) increase would be brought forward to 1 February in recognition of the cost pressures on staff, but the TUs had not yet agreed to this offer. Many providers had already advised they would be unable to pay the increases or that doing so would move them into deficit. Universities UK (UUK) had estimated that one-third of providers were in financial distress at the current time, but Senate could be encouraged that BNU was not one of them
- The Chair had attended a UUK event discussing how providers could navigate future financial pressures as it was expected that there would be no additional government funding even if there was a change of government after the next general election. Options discussed included becoming more commercially agile, recruiting more International Students and taking costs out of the business model
- The Chair had attended a meeting with the Secretary of State for Education at which he had attempted to press her on challenges to the delivery of degree apprenticeships such as differential funding and fees and on the declaration from the Home Secretary that Police Constables did not need a degree to join the police, but the Secretary of State had made little comment on either point
- The Chair had agreed to chair a Buckinghamshire Council Skills Board, which would be a sub-committee of a Place-Based Growth Board (of which the Chair would also be a member) established by Buckinghamshire Council following the likely dissolution of the

Buckinghamshire Learning Enterprise Partnership following a recent announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

- 23.08 The Head of School: Creative and Digital Industries noted the challenging times for the sector, with recruitment falling and a hostile government and media. The Chair agreed, commenting that current discourse had undermined confidence in students about going to university which was unlikely to change soon so the best route forward would be for BNU to align with the government's education strategy.
- 23.09 The Head of School: Creative and Digital Industries commented that the Lifelong Loan Entitlement and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) would be even more important and that BNU needed to develop its micro-credentials. The Chair agreed that BNU needed to reach a strong position at the modular level in order to promote its offer, but had not yet quite achieved this.
- 23.10 The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Health and Social Care) advised Senate that she was also monitoring the Nursing sector as there had been suggestions that the government might adopt a similar position for Nurses as they had for Police Constables in order to address the large number of nursing vacancies.

Quality Matters

Annual Quality and Standards Report 2021-22

- 23.11 Senate considered the Annual Quality and Standards Report 2021-22, which was the culmination of the Annual Monitoring process to provide assurance to Senate and Council about the maintenance of quality and standards at the University during the previous academic year. The Education Committee Representative informed Senate that the report was a summary of meetings of the Education and Quality and Enhancement Committees and drew Senate's attention to sections 6 and 7 on areas of risk and concern and on good practice before inviting comments.
- 23.12 Senate held a robust discussion of the report during which it was highlighted:
- BNU needed to increase External Examiners' attendance at Boards of Examiners partly by resolving scheduling issues, but also by greater engagement from programme teams with their External Examiners throughout the year, including encouraging them to attend the Boards
 - in response to concern about Foundation Year and Level 4 progression rates, it was noted that the University had experienced difficulties with International Students during 2021-22 which it was hoped would not be repeated, but had also introduced Results Days in summer 2022 when additional support from the Student Achievement and Success team had been available to students required to do reassessment and from the Careers Service for awards students, and was reviewing these again for 2023
 - The University was also reviewing its Academic Assessment Regulations as External Examiners had expressed concern that students were able to be reassessed on everything because it set students who had achieved almost no credits up to fail – work was ongoing to identify if there was a maximum reassessment envelope beyond which students were required to do too much.
- 23.13 Senate requested the following amendments:

- the report's conclusions should be amended to draw them back to the Office for Students (OfS) B Conditions. Senate was advised that each School would be asked to produce a report demonstrating it met the B Conditions in Annual Monitoring for 2022-23
- the wording in Section 4.1 stating that international learners had been "convicted" of contract cheating and commissioning offences should be amended
- further information should be included in the report regarding the two partners rated Red by External Examiners and the action being taken to address this, led by the University Partnerships Board
- clarification needed to be added that Progression rates were being compared to baselines for Continuation, not Progression, and that these were separate measures, although linked, and distinct from the OfS's use of the term 'progression' to refer to rates of highly skilled employment
- the report should make it explicit that BNU had provided responses to all External Examiner Annual Reports
- it should be made clear that each underlying report discussed had an action plan for 2022-23, so no action plan had been added to the final report.

Action: Head of Quality and Standards

- 23.14 Senate was informed that the Student Attainment Action Plan would be presented at its June meeting.
- 23.15 Senate agreed, and expressed its confidence that, quality and standards had been maintained at the University in 2021-22 while noting there were some areas of concern around which action was being taken. Senate recommended the report to Council for approval.

* TEF Submissions

- 23.16 The University and Student Submissions for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023 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. Senate noted the submissions without comment.
- 23.17 The Chair noted that several agenda items had been starred, but it was still essential that Senate members read starred papers and raised any comments or queries with the Secretary before meetings.

OfS Sexual Harassment Condition

- 23.18 Senate noted a report on the OfS consultation on a new approach to regulating harassment and sexual misconduct in English higher education which proposed placing substantive enforceable obligations on universities and colleges to ensure that students were protected from harassment and sexual misconduct. The Dean of Students highlighted the following key points to Senate:
- the sector had previously had voluntary standards to meet, but the OfS had not been satisfied with them so was proposing the new approach

- BNU was preparing its response to the consultation on a new condition of registration (E6 (harassment and sexual misconduct)) which would require universities and colleges to publish a single document containing the steps it would take to protect students from harassment and sexual misconduct; arrangements for handling incidents; details of how it would support anyone involved in incidents; and details of training for students and staff. Responses were being collated from across BNU and Senate members were welcome to contribute
 - clarification was required from the OfS on what should happen to students who did not complete mandatory training, for example because culturally they believed it inappropriate
 - the University had signed up as a participant in an OfS pilot survey to understand students' experiences of sexual misconduct while at university or college as this would provide valuable information about BNU learners' experiences and enable BNU to help shape the future national prevalence survey which would be introduced to all providers in England.
 - BNU was also reviewing its current policy and processes against the consultation document to identify gaps and areas of risk.
- 23.19 The Students' Union (SU) President advised Senate that all SU staff would meet together shortly to agree a joint SU response to the consultation.
- 23.20 Senate was informed it would be challenging to implement the changes within 3 months, as BNU would need to demonstrate that it had sufficient resources to support them, but BNU was not starting from nothing: it already had Sexual Violence Liaison Officers / Investigators and would be launching a Report and Support process. Additional investigators would need to be trained.
- 23.21 In response to a query, the Dean of Students advised that she believed online training would not be sufficient.
- 23.22 The Chair noted this would generate a significant amount of work if the Condition was introduced.

Quality Assurance Matters

External Examiner Approval Panel Report

- 23.23 Senate endorsed the External Examiner Approval Panel report without comment. The Academic Registrar informed Senate that the last two meetings had not been quorate, which had doubled the work required for each meeting as all outcomes had had to be circulated by correspondence after each meeting. The Registrar requested that another Teaching Representative from Senate joined the Panel, as the Panel's Terms of Reference stated Senate Teaching Representatives had to be members.
- 23.24 The Teaching Representative: School of Nursing and Midwifery, who was already a member of the Panel, agreed with the Registrar's comments. The Teaching Representative also noted that External Examiners were being asked to accept larger portfolios of work, but explanations about why larger remits were needed was not being made in applications.

Validation Report

- 23.25 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.

Partnership Franchise Report

- 23.26 There was no activity to report to Senate.

University Matters: Institute of Health and Social Care update and amended Terms of Reference

- 23.27 Senate noted the following updates on the activity of the Institute of Health and Social Care from the Institute's Director:

- there had been a focus on Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) accreditations for BNU's Health provision: the Institute had co-ordinated submission activity for the Health and Care Professions Council accreditation event which had resulted in BNU receiving the highest outcome and confirmation that it would not be assessed again for five years
- the Institute had launched some local skills courses through its Place-Based Educator Group meetings
- the Institute was the project lead in developing the Buckinghamshire Community Wellbeing Hub with the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy, which had secured £195,000 in project funding from Health Education England. The Hub had been launched internally on 9 March 2023 and would strengthen BNU's links with local communities, offer volunteering opportunities for students and might also offer placement opportunities in the future
- the Institute had secured over £550,000 of income through successful funding bids and had been nominated to be part of a Nursing Associate in Social Care pilot project
- work was ongoing to launch BNU's Occupational Therapy offer.

- 23.28 In response to a query from the Chair, the Director commented that the Institute's Board had held its inaugural meeting recently which had focused on business and compliance. The University's Strategic Nursing, Allied Health, Health Care and Social Work Provost had commented that he had been extremely assured by the meeting. The Director felt it had been a highly effective meeting.

- 23.29 Senate also approved the amended Terms of Reference for the Institute of Health and Social Care Board, which now included the Director of the Institute chairing the Board instead of the Deputy Chair of Council.

Student Matters

Students' Union Report

- 23.30 Senate received a report from the Students' Union (SU) which provided an overview of the recent Sabbatical Officer and Student Leader elections results from 10 March 2023 and an

introduction to the manifestos of the two new SU Vice-President (Education and Welfare) elects. The SU also requested an update on the library refurbishment at High Wycombe.

- 23.31 The Chair congratulated the new Sabbatical Officers on their election and offered commiserations to the current SU President. Ms Leighton-Woods would be missed, but the incoming team would also be excellent.
- 23.32 The Chair requested that future reports on SU election results contained percentage turnout data to enable BNU to identify what it could do to help increase turnout.
- 23.33 In response to the query regarding the library refurbishment, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) commented that initial scoping and consultation had been carried out, but further clarification was needed around the scope of the plans. An interim Library Manager had been appointed while a permanent replacement for the current Library & Learning Resources Manager was sought. Plans were in place to recruit a new Library leadership team.
- 23.34 The Education Committee Representative asked which Officer covered Apprenticeship learners, as apprentices now accounted for 1 in 7 BNU learners, and was advised this was currently the remit of the Part-Time and Commuting Officer.
- 23.35 The Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital) queried whether representing HTQ and other vocational learners needed to be embedded in the remit of the SU Vice-Presidents to ensure they were part of University discussions about this provision.

Student Experience Forum: Terms of Reference

- 23.36 Senate considered the draft Terms of Reference for a deliberative Student Experience Forum (SEF) as a standing Committee of Senate. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) advised Senate that the purpose of the SEF was to create more space for the co-ordination of the student experience. Membership was being considered carefully in order to include some new voices and avoid duplicating membership from other committees.
- 23.37 The SEF would also enable Education Committee to give greater focus to quality and standards and education issues, but there would be a close relationship between them.
- 23.38 Senate supported the proposal to create the SEF but did not approve the Terms of Reference as it was noted that they were still draft and needed further development. During discussions of the proposal, the SU President commented that the SU wanted further discussions about the membership as they believed a permanent member of SU staff, all four Sabbatical Officers and the Student Executive Officer should be members of the Forum.
- 23.39 It was clarified that the two postgraduate student members would be taught postgraduate students.
- 23.40 It was noted that further consideration needed to be given to the School Directors of Education committee memberships as the potential changes to Education Committee's remit might mean that quality enhancement was considered by Education Committee.
- 23.41 It was agreed that the final terms of reference and membership would be presented to Senate at its June meeting for approval.

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) / University Secretary and Clerk to Council

Strategic Matters

Sustainability Strategy

- 23.42 Senate considered the final draft of the Sustainability Strategy which had been developed in conjunction with BNU's Sustainability Committee and EDI Working Group. The Head of Sustainability informed Senate that the strategy focused on expanding the definition of sustainability to encompass environmental, economic and social sustainability, and could broadly be simplified into "doing the right thing for BNU people, learners, the wider community and the planet". The strategy contained 10 strategic areas tied into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and specific targets for each area. It strove to demonstrate how the strategy would interact with BNU's daily operations and wider strategic concerns. A summary would be added at the start of the document before it was shared with staff and students.
- 23.43 The Chair commented it was extremely pleasing to see the strategy, which would enable BNU to work towards its ambitious targets.
- 23.44 Senate held a robust discussion which highlighted the following points:
- the strategy set out how BNU would manage sustainability; more detailed technical documents would be produced for each area
 - the 'Sustainability Vision' in the document could be made more inspiring, perhaps reflecting some of the verbal introduction the Head of Sustainability had given Senate
 - the strategy did not include reducing the carbon footprint of BNU's learners travelling to campus, but it was part of BNU's Scope 3 Emissions and work to address this would be developed
 - the Head of School: Creative and Digital Industries offered his support to 'greening' BNU's Pinewood Studios campus
 - consideration should be given to whether 'Education' should be higher up, or first, in the list of strategic areas as education was the University's core business
 - an Equality Impact Assessment needed to be added

Action: Head of Sustainability

- in order to embed the strategy, the targets needed to be made 'real' to staff, highlighting the individual actions they could take to make a difference. The Head of Sustainability agreed that staff engagement was the most important element in making the strategy successful and staff training was being developed, beginning with the Management Development Programme. Workshops would be held for staff and students
- the targets were a mixture of those that could be more easily achieved and stretch targets, and had been developed through a combination of reviewing BNU's current performance against the sector and from knowledge of how BNU's buildings needed to be decarbonised, which had enabled the production of some quantitative targets. It had not been possible to set SMART targets for all areas as some areas were so extensive that it would have committed BNU to unrealistic / unachievable targets
- the target to keep office temperatures between 20 and 25 degrees strove to achieve a balance between making sure staff were productive as they were not working in cold offices and a

'fabric first' approach as BNU needed to improve its buildings first. Discussions would be needed regarding air conditioning as staff did not work well in extreme heat, but this needed to be balanced with capital and operational needs.

- 23.45 The Head of School: Art, Design and Performance informed Senate that the School's final-year students would be asked to submit a sustainability assessment for their Final Major Projects to ensure they considered sustainability. The School had also embedded sustainability in many of its Curriculum23 modules.
- 23.46 The Chair highlighted that the strategy contained an important revision mechanism that accepted this could be an evolving strategy that went through different iterations. It needed to contain some targets as a starting point, but it was understood that it might prove that some of those targets were too difficult or not ambitious enough and needed amending.
- 23.47 Senate approved the strategy, noting that there was a revision mechanism to review it annually and amend it if needed.
- 23.48 The Chair requested that the Head of Sustainability delivered a workshop to the University Executive Team (UET) and the University Management Group.

University Matters

University Committee Constitutions and Terms of Reference

- 23.49 Senate considered an updated University Committee Constitutions and Terms of Reference document for publication on the University website. The University Secretary and Clerk to Council advised Senate that further iterations would be needed and that UET had also begun discussing a committee effectiveness review of Senate and its standing committees. It would also clarify what a 'committee', 'working group', 'panel' etc. was and where it was the responsibility of a job role to make a decision instead of asking a committee to make the decision.
- 23.50 Senate identified additional amendments and agreed that the Chair could approve the document by Chair's Action subject to the following amendments being made:
- the title of 'Students' Union Vice-President (Student Involvement)' needed to be amended from 1 June to 'Students' Union Vice-President (Achievement and Belonging)'
 - it was requested that the SU Sabbatical Officer Representative on Sustainability Committee was amended to the Vice-President (Achievement and Belonging)
 - the Equality Impact Assessment should be amended to state "there is an ambition to diversify committee membership"
 - it should be noted whether Directorate for Student Success staff were on committees representing Learning and Teaching or Student Support
 - School Directors of Education should be ex-officio members of Quality Enhancement Committee
 - the Professoriate should be removed from the structure diagram
 - the precise number of meetings held by University Partnerships Board should be agreed
 - the statement that Research and Enterprise Committee reported into 'UET – ToR [b]'
- needed clarification.

Action: University Secretariat / Committee Officers

- 23.51 The Chair noted that committees should not approve amendments to their Terms of Reference: they should propose changes for Senate's consideration and approval.

Policy Oversight Group

- 23.52 Senate received an update on the Policy Oversight Group to assure Senate that work was underway to ensure all documents in the BNU Policy and Procedures Framework were up-to-date and reflected current subject/operational requirements and sector best practice; met all compliance requirements and were written to the highest standard. The University Secretary and Clerk to Council, who chaired the Group, informed Senate that the Group had reviewed the Framework Register to determine the owner of every policy; every policy was now owned by a job role.
- 23.53 The Group had identified policies that required a priority review and had also considered how the Framework could be streamlined. It had identified a number of policies it believed could be rescinded in order to reduce the Framework to a more manageable level.
- 23.54 The Chair requested that some principles were agreed regarding what a policy looked like and that it should be a general statement of principles. Policies needed to be user-friendly. The University Secretary confirmed the Group was considering this.
- 23.55 The Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor commented that the search function on BEN needed improvement in order to help staff find answers to their queries. The University Secretary confirmed that the Group was considering where policies were published and what search terms should be used with them.
- 23.56 It was confirmed that Senate would receive an annual report from the Group.

* Committee Minutes

- 23.57 Senate received the minutes of the following committee meetings without discussion. 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 29 November 2022 and the Strategic meeting held on 7-8 February 2023
 - Academic Planning Committee: the Reserved Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022
 - Education Committee: the Open minutes of the meetings held on 9 November 2022 and 18 January 2023
 - Research and Enterprise Committee: minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2023
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee: minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2022
 - Sustainability Committee: minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2023
 - Institute of Health and Social Care Board: minutes of the inaugural meeting held on 22 March 2023.

- 23.58 The University Secretary highlighted to Senate that Council had approved the Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2022 at its meeting on 29 November 2022. At its February 2023 meeting, Council had heard a presentation from the Head of School: Health and Social Care Professions on the School which had been well received, and such presentations were being built into all future Council meetings.
- 23.59 The Chair commented that consideration needed to be given to how Senate could also gain a sense of the vibrancy of Schools.

Reserved Business

Honorary Awards Nominations

- 23.60 This item was considered under Reserved Business. See Reserved Minutes.

Any other business

Procedure to nominate Senate Representative to Council

- 23.61 Senate approved a procedure to nominate a new Senate Representative to Council following the conclusion of Hilary Mullen's term on Council on 31 July. It was agreed that this should be a Standing Procedure which Senate was only asked to approve in the future if it changed.

Date of next meeting

- 23.62 The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 7 June 2023.
- 23.63 Senate thanked the Academic Registrar for the huge contribution she had made to the University and Senate. The Chair noted that Ms Moir had often been the voice of reason, of proper process and of caring for BNU's students. She had navigated many complex issues, including the Covid-19 pandemic; amendments to the degree classification algorithm; the No Detriment Policy and a shift in what quality meant for BNU. The Chair extended his sincere and deep thanks for her service and hoped the University would see her again.
- 23.64 Ms Moir thanked the Chair and Senate, and remarked it had been a joy working for the University.