

Senate Meeting

Minutes

date: 16th March 2011

time: 1.30 p.m.

location: Boardroom, High Wycombe Campus

11.01 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and noted.

11.02 **Minutes of the last meeting – 8 December 2010**

The Minutes were accepted as a true record and signed.

11.03 **Matters arising**

a) Review of action sheet from 8 December 2010 (*Document SEN 11.01*)

All items listed on the action sheet had been completed or were included on the agenda for the meeting.

b) Confirmation of Senate members to Council and Senate member to Honorary Awards Committee of Council (verbal report)

It was reported that following the ballot held in December 2010 two Senate members (Stephen Fox and Roger Dalrymple) had been elected to Council, and another Senate member (Lindsey Taylor) had been nominated as the Senate member to the Honorary Awards Committee.

11.04 **Chair's business**

a) Chair's actions (*Document SEN11.02*)

Chair's actions had been taken since the last meeting as follows:

Approval of BA (Hons) Air Transport with Commercial Pilot Training (Top-up) (Part-Time)

Approval of MSc Social Work (Full-Time)

Approval of MSc Health Rehabilitation and Exercise (Part-Time)

Approval of BA (Hons) Creative Writing (Part-Time)

Approval of BA (Hons) Textiles (Part-Time)

The above award titles were approved by the Chairs of the QEC Validation Sub-groups following sign off conditions which had been met. Senate recommended that these be endorsed.

Approval of award title change from BA (Hons) Dance Performance to BA (Hons) Dance and Performance

Senate recommended that this amendment be endorsed.

b) Vice Chancellor's report to Senate (*Document SEN11.03*)

The Vice Chancellor commended her report to the meeting.

Under 1.4 a query was raised regarding the lack of a specific deadline for further information being released by the Department of Health regarding changes to the funding of nurse education resulting from the reform of the NHS. The Chair informed Senate that further updates would be circulated as they were received.

11.05

Annual Review & Evaluation of Faculty Provision (2009-10)

a) QEC Overview of AR&E 2009-10: Faculty Reports (*Document SEN11.04*)

It was noted that this agenda item was linked to the Executive Summary of QEC which noted that the Committee was satisfied overall that requirements for quality and standards were being met by the University. An overview of the AR&E process was given, and Senate noted that review mechanisms were in place at module and course levels, and that these were monitored through the Faculty QECs. Sample areas of provision had been examined by QEC auditors to monitor that the AR&E process was being followed, that Faculties had identified areas for action and had mechanisms in place to monitor actions being taken. The Faculty reports had been considered at QEC, and were now presented to Senate.

i) Design, Media & Management

The following points were highlighted from this report:

- The improvement in progression rates from Level 4 to Level 5 which had increased from 82% in 2008-09 to 86% in 2009-10, and from Level 5 to Level 6 which had reached 94% in 2009-10.
- The improvement in the classification profile, with the percentage of students gaining first class or upper second class honours rising from 44% to 49%.
- The overall endorsement of the Faculty's courses by external examiners, with 71 of the 78 reports being classified as green, and only two as red (and which had been addressed by the Faculty).
- The disappointing National Student Survey results, which showed little improvement in undergraduate students' perception of their experience. The Faculty has responded to this by introducing a "You said, we did" report to improve communications with students as to the Faculty's responses to concerns raised.
- The positive results from the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and the Bucks' Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

ii) Society & Health

The following points were highlighted from this report:

- The outstanding achievement of being rated one of the top universities for nursing provision across London by NHS London's Quality Performance Monitoring Team.
- The increase in market share of CPD within NHS London within

the School of Advanced & Continuing Practice, and the School of Social Sciences, Primary Care and Education, and the establishment of the Faculty in the market of NHS South Central.

- The sustained increase in demand for full time academic provision across the School of Social Sciences, Primary Care and Education, especially in Social Work and Policing.
- An increasingly positive use of WebEx as an alternative tool to deliver core content at the Uxbridge Campus, with ongoing improvements to the quality of the system being made following feedback through regular audits.
- The successful delivery of a Trauma Summer School, which was co-developed with Imperial College Health Care Trust.
- The pleasing reports received from external examiners, with 90% classed as “green” and 10% as “amber”.
- The concerns raised over the engagement of students in providing feedback, particularly through the electronic process.

Senate noted and accepted the Faculty reports.

iii) Further discussions were held concerning the following:

- Provision of flexible and distributed learning (FdL) across the University: it was suggested that as this was so crucial to future developments in the delivery of courses that there was a need for additional resourcing in this area. It was confirmed that a project to expand FdL was to be funded from the Investment Fund, and it was requested that a report on this be brought to the next Senate.

ACTION: Deputy Vice Chancellor

- The AR&E theme of Personal Development Planning (PDP) was noted as apparently being a weak area. Pilot schemes to introduce this had been varied in terms of their success rate. It was noted that in Society & Health PDP was integral to the modules and students demonstrated this through portfolio work. Senate noted that there was a need to capture the variety of PDP being undertaken, and that this, alongside addressing its implementation (particularly through consideration of introducing work-experience into undergraduate courses), should be examined by the Employability Steering Group: any actions identified should be added to the Student Experience Action Plan. The question of how personal tutoring could link to PDP and emphasise its importance to students also needed to be addressed. The Students’ Union representative informed Senate that he considered progress with PDP to be satisfactory, although further enhancement could be made in this area.

ACTION: Director of Student Experience

- Senate was informed that a new PDP system was being piloted this year for research students, developed by VITAE, in relation to the new Researcher Development Framework.

**b) External Examiner Annual Reports: University Summary (2009-10)
(Document SEN 11.05)**

The Director of Academic Quality explained that external examiners’ reports were graded “red” (ones in which academic standards were questioned), “amber” (ones

in which there were small issues to be addressed) and 'green' (reports which were good with no issues raised).

In this context it was reported that external examiners in 2009-10 had confirmed that academic standards at Bucks were comparable to the Higher Education sector and FHEQ. It was further noted that:

- A comparison with previous year's reports had not been possible because of the restructuring of Faculties, Schools and Departments
- External examiners were being appointed in a timely manner
- Only two "red" reports had been received in 2009-10
- External examiners particularly commended the level and depth of feedback given to students
- The University's processes were considered to be sound, of good quality and comparable with other institutions.

It was suggested that a process whereby areas of good practice identified by external examiners could be made available to staff across the University should be investigated.

ACTION: AQD Conferment & Events Hub

In section 4.2 of the report it was noted that in the category 'Decision making with respect to student progression and achievement' 57% of examiners did not attend either the subject panels or award boards. The question of why external examiners were not attending key boards was discussed and Senate asked Faculties to explore how to encourage external examiners to attend boards this year.

ACTION: Academic Dean (DMM) and Dean of Students, Programmes and Quality (S&H)

It was noted that AQD would be reviewing the University's External Examiner processes in the light of changes arising from the national review of External Examining Arrangements in the UK.

11.06 Annual Quality Monitoring Reports

The following Reports were commended to Senate:

a) Boards of Examiners (2009-10) (Document SEN11.06)

The Director of Academic Quality reported that the Boards were operating well and that AQD continued to support them.

From the 41 DMM and 30 S&H Boards of Examiners that took place in 2009-10, it was noted that there continued to be a large number of Chair's Actions arising from them, although the total of 255 was down on previous years.

It was noted that the introduction of paperless Boards of Examiners (where members viewed results via spreadsheets on their laptops) had been successful overall, once initial technical issues had been addressed.

It was suggested that the number of Boards attended by External Examiners could be monitored and recorded in this report in future.

b) Academic Appeals (2009-10) (Document SEN11.07)

Senate was informed that the number of appeals in 2009-10 had reduced, but that

there had been an increase in complexity, with more appeals being forwarded to the OIA, resulting in a huge increase in the volume of work.

It was noted that 23 appeals were submitted in total in the 2009/10 academic year, equating to 0.24% of all enrolments (Part-Time and Full-Time). This was lower than the previous year's figure of 0.36% of enrolments. Most of the appeals were submitted by students at Level 5 of their course. It was also noted that AQD was currently undertaking a review to streamline the appeals process.

c) Academic Misconduct (2009-10) (Document SEN11.08)

It was reported that the number of academic misconduct cases for the 2009-10 academic year stood at 75, which was 0.75% of enrolled students in both faculties. The largest proportion of these cases occurred in the postgraduate business area and in undergraduate nursing courses.

The Director of Academic Quality reported that AQD was currently reviewing the Academic Misconduct process, based on national work undertaken on a points-based system of penalties which had removed the requirement for distinguishing between major and minor plagiarism.

Members stressed that prevention of academic misconduct was very important and that the use of 'Turnitin' should continue to be strongly encouraged. It was also suggested that staff development workshops on plagiarism awareness and prevention and the interpretation of Turnitin should be arranged in consultation with GILT.

ACTION: Director of Student Experience

d) Validation and Re-validation (2009-10) (Document SEN11.09)

Senate's attention was drawn in particular to the utilisation of academic and professional external approvers from a wide range of organisations in the University's validation process. It was noted that AQD had recommended to Senate that the validation documentation and guidance notes be revised in line with sector developments and to achieve greater efficiencies in process.

e) Annual Review of Research Degrees (2009-10) (Document SEN11.10)

Senate's attention was drawn to the fact that research provision had been commended in the QAA Institutional Audit Report.

In addition, the following points were highlighted:

- It was noted that the Annual Review process had been completed satisfactorily during the 2009/10 academic year.
- MPhil/PhD results were mostly positive with the majority receiving passes with minor amendments.
- Only one withdrawal had been recorded.
- Results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) were on the whole positive and above the sector average, with the exception being infrastructure at the University, particularly concerning library resources. Further feedback in this area was being sought.

Senate recognised that the University would face difficulties in retaining the current

number of students as funding through bursaries is reduced. The link between the critical mass of research students and the maintenance of intellectual standards was crucial, and it was suggested that the University should develop a strategy to identify and retain an optimum number of research students. While it may be possible to secure funding from professional bodies and funding councils, industry partners would be less likely to fund bursaries over a three year period. It was agreed that this would be referred to SMT for further discussion.

ACTION: Deputy Vice Chancellor

Senate accepted the reports. On the basis of the evidence for 2009-10 provided in the annual quality reports and the Faculty reports as the output of the Annual Review & Evaluation process, Senate was satisfied overall that requirements for quality and standards were being met by the University.

f) General discussion:

It was noted that under the revised Annual Review & Evaluation process, timescales had been extended resulting in the Reports being presented to the March rather than the December meeting of Senate. On reflection this was not considered to be helpful, and had delayed actions being identified. It was agreed that the AR&E deadlines should be re-considered, with revisions being presented by AQD to the next meeting of QEC/Senate to take effect for ARE&E 2010-11. Further changes would be undertaken to streamline the process and introduce long-term revisions in terms of balancing work undertaken against the perceived benefits to be in place for 2011-12.

ACTION: Director of Academic Quality

It was also noted that the AR&E timescales did not link effectively with the production of statistical data, for example progression and award statistics. The census date was currently October by which time all referral boards had been held. It was agreed that the Chair would discuss this with Business Planning.

ACTION: Vice Chancellor

11.07

**Strategy for student fees and access agreement for 2012-13
(Document SEN11.11).**

The Chair presented the strategy around the proposed new fee structure for undergraduate students starting in the 2012-13 academic year. The proposal included introducing a tier system of fees, splitting them into three bands depending upon the course studied. The deadline for submission of the access agreement for the new fee levels is April 2011.

The Chair highlighted the position of the University in terms of student entries, noting particularly that there was a rise year on year ahead of the sector average in students joining the University. The Chair also noted that value for money was being provided to students, citing the example of the 'Big Deal', which was highlighted as a unique selling point. In addition, it was noted that the University was ahead of the sector in terms of the recruitment of young students, those in lower socio-economic groups and disabled students starting a first or foundation degree.

It was anticipated that such demand would continue to be the case after the new tuition fee structure was in place, and there was no reason to assume that student recruitment would be seriously affected by the new fee structure.

It was noted that over the last few years the University has made efforts to reduce costs, and this has allowed consideration of a range of fees to be possible and the

proposal of three fee bands to be developed. It was mooted that a flat rate would give a simpler message, but it was argued that the variable rates would enable support to be given across the Bucks range and market, from highly specialist, resource intensive courses to satisfying local needs. Senate discussed these, and raised the following points:

- The fees set should enable enhancement to be undertaken – for example updating workshop resources and equipment
- Students will become more aware of the employability factor built into courses – the University needs a robust process for tracking employability with provision for self-employment.
- Fees in the FE sector may have an impact on HE recruitment.
- The University should be mindful of the impact on international fees, and ensure increases match the sector market.
- The overall offer is important in terms of the Bucks brand – especially promoting employer involvement in course development.
- Part time courses need to be developed in a variety of delivery modes.
- VLE is essential to the future of the University.
- Links with Higher Level Apprenticeships should be explored, especially within the creative industries.
- Improvements in services and resources would be needed to reflect higher fees and satisfy student expectations.

11.08 Support for current students during period of course closure (*Verbal Report*)

It was reported that four courses were to close in Design, Media & Management. Work had been undertaken to ensure that students who were currently enrolled on these courses would receive a comparable teaching experience, and steps had been taken to reassure these students that they would be taught to the same high standard to the completion of the course. A policy was currently being developed to provide guidance, and this would be brought to the next Senate.

Action: Deputy Vice Chancellor/ Pro-Vice Chancellor, Design Media & Management

11.09 Institutional Audit Action Plan (*Document SEN11.12*).

Further to the Institutional Audit Action Plan which had been presented to the last meeting of Senate, a more detailed revised version had been produced for consideration. It was noted that some areas still required names against the actions, and it was suggested that this document should be cross referenced with other relevant Action Plans. It was agreed that the Quality & Enhancement Committee should monitor the Action Plan, with Senate taking an overview of progress.

Action: Director of Academic Quality

11.10 External Examiner Nominations (*Document SEN11.13*).

Chair's action had been taken since the meeting of Senate in December 2010 to approve new appointments and extensions to term of office and/or remit as follows:

Professor Robert Hinshelwood
University of Essex
New appointment

MSc in Psychotherapeutics in Mental Health

Senate endorsed the appointment for a period of four years from October 2010 to September 2014.

Dr Pat Hanlon
University of Birmingham
New appointment

MSc Air Transport Management (FT & FDL)

Senate endorsed the appointment for a period of four years from January 2011 to January 2015.

Dr Soroosh Saghiri
University of Kingston
New appointment

UG programmes, MBA MSc International Business

Senate endorsed the appointment for a period of four years from October 2010 to September 2014.

Richard Jones
Leeds College of Art
New appointment

FD Furniture: Design & Make

Senate endorsed the appointment for a period of a further year from October 2010 to September 2014.

Professor Gordon Kennedy (Ret.)
Second term appointment

FD Furniture; Design & Make;
HND Furniture Studies;
BA Furniture: Conservation, Restoration & Decorative Arts;
BA Furniture: Design & Craft;
BA Furniture: Contemporary Design

Senate noted that the nomination had been withdrawn due to a conflict of interest.

Michael Rafferty
University of Wales, Swansea
New appointment

DipHE and BSc (Hons) Nursing

Senate endorsed the appointment for a period of three years and nine months from January 2011 to September 2014.

Mike Bradley
Middlesex University
New appointment

Mechanical Engineering

Senate endorsed the appointment for a period of four years from October 2010 to September 2014.

Dr Clare Parfitt-Brown

University of Chichester
New appointment

BA (Hons) Dance & Performance;
BA (Hons) Dance & Fitness

Senate endorsed this appointment for a period of four years from October 2011 to September 2015.

Jane Sampson

University of Brighton
Extension to term

MA Graphic Design Illustration and Print Making

Senate endorsed this extension for a period of one year from January 2011 to December 2011.

Dr Theresa Porrett

The Homerton Hospital
New appointment

Stoma Care Short Course L5 & L6

Senate endorsed this appointment for a period of four years and eight months from February 2011 to September 2015.

Alex Harmer

Birmingham City University
New appointment

DipHE Operating Department Practice

Senate endorsed this appointment for a period of four years from October 2011 to September 2015.

11.11

External Examiner Coverage (*Document SEN11.14*).

Attention was drawn to four areas of provision in the Faculty of Design, Media & Management where external examiners who had retired in September 2010 were still to be replaced:

- BA (Hons) Music Industry Management – seeking replacement
- Pg Cert Blended Learning and PG Cert e-Learning –seeking replacement
- All Furniture courses – seeking replacement
- MA Art & Design – Graphic Design, MA Art & Design – Illustration, MA Art & Design – Printmaking – extension offered and awaiting acceptance

ACTION: Academic Dean, Design, Media & Management

The external examiners retiring in September 2011 were noted and Faculties reminded of the need to secure nominations and appointments.

11.12

Validation: Recommendation of Awards for Approval (*Document SEN11.15*).

A number of courses were presented for approval.

MSc Social Work
New validation

Two conditions applied which had been fulfilled. Senate **approved** the validation.

BA (Hons) Air Transport with Commercial Pilot Training

New validation

Three conditions applied which had been fulfilled. Senate **approved** the validation.

MSc Health Rehabilitation & Exercise

New validation

Three conditions applied which had been fulfilled. Senate **approved** the validation.

BA (Hons) Creative Writing

New validation

No conditions applied. Senate **approved** the validation.

BA (Hons) Textiles

New validation

No conditions applied. Senate **approved** the validation.

It was noted that the approval of MA Marketing Communications was subject to the submission of the relevant documents and would therefore be reported to the next Senate.

11.13 Quality & Enhancement Committee (26 January 2011) (Document SEN11.16)

The Executive Summary of the meeting was **accepted** by Senate.

11.14 Student Experience Committee (9 February 2011) (Document SEN11.17)

The Executive Summary of the meeting was **accepted** by Senate.

11.15 Research Degrees Committee (17 February 2011) (Document SEN11.18)

The Executive Summary of the meeting was **accepted** by Senate.

11.16 Equality & Diversity Committee (11 February 2011) (Document SEN11.19)

The Executive Summary of the meeting was **accepted** by Senate.

a) Draft Single Equality Scheme & Action Plan 2011-2012 (Document SEN11.20)

Senate noted the requirement for the University to produce a single document to cover all equality policies. The draft document had been approved by SMT, and was now seeking the endorsement of Senate before being presented to University Council.

Senate approved the draft Plan.

11.17 Learning Services Board (3 March 2011)

The low turnout for academic staff development was noted and it was agreed that a more comprehensive calendar of development should be devised for both internal and external staff development programmes.

Action: Chair of Learning Services Board

**11.18 Research Ethics & Governance Committee (28 January 2011)
(Document SEN11.21)**

The Executive Summary of the meeting was **accepted** by Senate.

**11.19 Reports from Faculties
Design, Media & Management (Document SEN11.22)**

The Executive Summary of the meeting was **accepted** by Senate.

11.20 Society & Health (Document SEN11.23)

The Executive Summary of the meeting was **accepted** by Senate.

11.21 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 8th June 2011

RESERVED BUSINESS

11.22 Honorary Awards – paper distributed at meeting (Document SEN11.24)

Senate was referred to the Minutes of the Honorary Awards Committee of 15 February 2011, and specifically to the Confidential Reserved Business where nominations for Honorary Awards had been considered. It was noted positively that the number of nominations made this year had increased.

Senate approved the recommendations of the Honorary Awards Committee for honorary awards to be conferred at the awards ceremonies in September 2011.

It was confirmed that those who had put forward nominations which had been declined by the Honorary Awards Committee would be informed of the reasons for the decisions.

Action: Director of Academic Quality & Clerk to the Council

Signed

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Chair

Date

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