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Senate

Open Minutes

Date of meeting: **Wednesday, 18 March 2015**

Duration of meeting: **1.30pm to 3.30pm**

Location: **G5.05, High Wycombe Campus**

Attendance

| Name | Faculty / Directorate | Category of membership |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rebecca Bunting | Vice Chancellor's Office | Chair |
| Miriam Moir | Academic Quality Directorate | Officer (Secretary) |
| Marcus Wood | Academic Quality Directorate | Office (Minute Secretary) |
| Ian Plover | Vice Chancellor's Office | Ex-officio |
| Shân Wareing | Vice Chancellor's Office | Ex-officio |
| Alison Chambers | Society & Health | Ex-officio |
| Lorraine Watkins-Mathys | Design, Media & Management | Ex-officio |
| Sue West | Society & Health | Ex-officio |
| Ruth Gunstone | Student Services Directorate | Ex-officio |
| Ellie Smith | Academic Quality Directorate | Ex-officio |
| Ruth Clemow | Society & Health | Ex-officio |
| Alison Shreeve | Design, Media & Management | Ex-officio |
| Frazer Mackenzie | Design, Media & Management | Ex-officio |
| Jo Rixon | Society & Health | Elected |
| Sue Axe | Society & Health | Elected |
| Piers Worth | Society & Health | Elected |
| Linsey Taylor | Design, Media & Management | Elected |
| Allen Stroud | Design, Media & Management | Elected |
| Richard Jones | Design, Media & Management | Elected |
| Matt Gilbert | Students' Union | Student Representative |
| Connor Baker | Students' Union | Student Representative |
| Kirstie Ward | Academic Quality Directorate | Observer |

Apologies

| Name | Faculty / Directorate | Category of membership |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Vicky Vass | Design, Media & Management | Ex-officio |
| Barbara Dexter | Learning and Teaching Directorate | Ex-officio |
| Lauren Griffiths | Society & Health | Ex-officio |
| Phil Wood | Design, Media & Management | Ex-officio |
| Jake Kaner | Design, Media and Management | Elected |
| Carol Pook | Society & Health | Ex-Officio |

Absent

| Name | Faculty / Directorate | Category of membership |
|------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| None | | |

Welcome / Apologies for absence

- 15.01 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.
- 15.02 6 apologies for absence were noted and recorded.

Minutes of the previous meeting

- 15.03 The minutes of the meeting of 17 December 2014 were approved as an accurate record.

Status of actions from the previous meeting

- 15.04 Senate reviewed the action sheet and noted updates as follows:
- a) Minute 14.45: Actions identified at the meeting to consider FT and PT recruitment patterns would be incorporated into ongoing activities
 - b) Minute 14.58.2: The meeting scheduled for 30 March had been cancelled, but would be rescheduled in due course.
 - c) Minute 14.58.3: Lessons learned from academic appeals and academic misconduct would be integrated in ongoing activity and reported to QEC.
 - d) Minute 14.58.4: Staff development activities are being integrated and will be further reported to QEC.
 - e) Minute 14.58.5: The report arising from the review of the partnership strategy has not been presented. SMT will receive the report with recommendations to inform the strategy in due course.

Chair's Actions taken since the previous meeting

- 15.05 Senate reviewed the three Chair's Actions taken since the previous meeting and endorsed the decision taken in each case.
- 15.06 The Chair noted the high number of decisions which had been undertaken by Chair's Action to date. Senate was reminded that Chair's Action should be exceptional rather than a routine aspect of committee governance.

- 15.07 The Director of AQD noted that a number of Chair's Actions related to validations which fell outside the committee reporting schedule. AQD was working with both Faculties to improve the future scheduling of events.

Vice Chancellor's report to Senate

- 15.08 The Vice Chancellor gave a verbal update to Senate.

Updates on HEFCE, REF, HEIF and QAA

- 15.09 The funding letter from HEFCE is due to arrive 27 March 2015. Members were reminded of the forthcoming election on 7 May 2015. It was noted that regardless of which party formed the next Government there was a strong likelihood of in-year cuts to the Higher Education budget; HEFCE had not ruled out this possibility.
- 15.10 The proposal by the Labour Party to reduce student tuition fees from £9,000 to £6,000 was noted. There would be no automatic 'top-up' in funding to meet the £3,000 fees shortfall under such an arrangement, which would also be more vulnerable to cuts in the higher education budget.
- 15.11 HEFCE has produced its strategic plan. This focuses strongly on skills, excellence in teaching and practice, economic benefit and social mobility. HEFCE has a new role as a regulator and will be responsible to the government for protecting the student interest.
- 15.12 The Competitions and Markets Authority has published guidance to students on their rights as consumers ensuring Universities deliver on promises they have made, e.g. through the publication of Key Information Sets (KIS). The University will need to review any transactional promises made to students.
- 15.13 Funding from the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise has been determined and the University will receive notification of its allocation on 27 March 2015. It was noted that the funding mechanism had changed to a 4:1 funding ratio for 4* research (from an original 3:1).
- 15.14 Revenue from the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) is no longer secure. There is a need to demonstrate income, impact and sustainability deriving from any funding received.
- 15.15 A review is currently ongoing in to the quality assurance of higher education, a role currently undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). This will be a competitive bidding process and changes in quality assurance requirements and/or processes could be expected

Senior Management Team (SMT)

- 15.16 A proposal has been submitted to Council to restructure the Senior Management Team. Further details would be provided to staff in due course following a review of the skills required to take the University forward.
- 15.17 Work was ongoing on a new strategy for the University. A full consultation exercise would be undertaken on ways in which Bucks could improve and work better. Members of SMT had met for a recent Away Day which had started this process.

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)

- 15.18 As noted in the recent all-staff digest message, the University's UKVI Highly Trusted Status (HTS) licence has been suspended. As a consequence of the suspension, the University is not allowed to issue Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) letters. The decision also means that the University cannot employ staff requiring a Tier 2 Visa (existing staff on contract are not affected).

- 15.19 In the period October 2013 to October 2014, the University exceeded the number of Visa refusals permitted by 1.16% (against a maximum of 20% - now reduced to 10%). This equates to ~2.8 students. The University has 20 days to make a representation for the UKVI to reconsider this sanction.
- 15.20 The University has revisited every visa rejection and is taking legal advice to inform a representation in relation to any errors found in the underlying data. The UKVI has also been invited to visit the University to discuss the situation. If HTS is not reinstated, the University will need to wait six months before reapplying. It was confirmed that none of the visa rejections related to bogus certification in any way.
- 15.21 The University featured in the national press as a result of the visa rejection. Bucks is one of the first Universities to be considered under a new system introduced by the Government.

University Campus Aylesbury Vale (UCAV)

- 15.22 The development of a new campus in Aylesbury presents a major project for Bucks and has significant prospects for the University. There is a need for the idea behind the campus to be understood better within the University, including how the offer is distinctive from existing campuses in High Wycombe, Uxbridge and the site at Missenden Abbey. It was noted that UCAV will provide excellent facilities in a very good setting but needs a complementary focus and mission which focuses on the potential for new students to the University.

The revised FHEQ: implications for exit awards (SEN15.02)

- 15.23 The University is reviewing its awards framework, and particularly the award of intermediate and exit awards, following publication of the revised Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in November 2014.
- 15.24 The issue for Bucks relates to the lack of programme learning outcomes for intermediate and exit awards; these are currently based on credit only. From August 2015 separate, programme-specific learning outcomes will be required for all awards conferred by the University.
- 15.25 QEC has considered a paper on this issue and requested further investigation on various issues, including in particular the grounds for referral and condonation. A joint meeting of QEC and LTC will be held to discuss a revised proposal prior to presentation of a final paper to Senate in June 2015.
- 15.26 The Chair noted the need for condonation to be used carefully and under specific circumstances and queried whether key learning outcomes should ever be eligible for compensation. Senate suggested the use of a viva be investigated as a means of determining whether learning outcomes had been met. It was confirmed that similar processes exist at other HEIs.
- 15.27 Senate endorsed the proposed the way forward as outlined in the paper but reiterated the need for revised regulations to be in place for September 2015.

Validating Partner for Research Degrees – update (SEN15.03)

- 15.28 An update on progress for the search for a validating partner for the University's research degrees was noted. The University is in negotiation with Staffordshire University and a provisional timeline and fee have both been agreed.
- 15.29 It is anticipated that if a formal agreement goes ahead, the University may be able to recruit to research degrees in the autumn.
- 15.30 A visit to Staffordshire University for Bucks staff has now been arranged.

Formal proposal for Activities Week 2015-2016 (SEN15.04)

- 15.31 A formal proposal for a replacement for Activities Week was considered following a request by Senate at its December meeting (Minute 14.65).
- 15.32 It was recommended that the University's default provision should be that teaching should be timetabled without a break in the autumn and spring terms, i.e. that there should be no formal University-wide activities week. This was supported by the demonstrable low take-up of the current Activities Week by students. Course teams should be expected to plan employment-focused activities, e.g. bringing in external speakers, scheduling field trips and other activities. Such activities could take place at any time and not be restricted to a specific week. The Chair emphasised that nothing is optional about scheduled teaching.
- 15.33 Teams should ensure that activities were correctly timetabled to ensure that the University could demonstrate delivery of scheduled learning and teaching activities specified at validation and published in Key Information Sets. The Chair noted concerns over lectures being cancelled. It was expected that such cancellation should be exceptional and teaching teams should be encouraged in such situations to organise replacement activities for students.
- 15.34 The proposal was approved for 2015-2016 onwards. The Pro Vice Chancellor: Learning and Teaching was asked to ensure that this was communicated to staff.

Action: Shân Wareing

Review Process for University Departments and Academic Partnerships (SEN15.05)

- 15.35 A new process for reviewing University Departments and Academic Partners was considered.
- 15.36 The process built on the existing Periodic Department Review Process (which would be rescinded) but tightened guidance for Faculties to implement. In particular, the process required a Self-Evaluation Document (rather than existing Context Document). Heads of Schools will also be required to sign to say that they have seen the SED.
- 15.37 A full consultation process had been undertaken and the document had been recommended by QEC.
- 15.38 The process was approved.

Open Access Policy (SEN15.06)

- 15.39 A new policy giving guidance on Open Access publishing was considered.
- 15.40 The policy was driven by the requirement for articles to be made open access on the Bucks Knowledge Archive (for both text-based and other output types). The policy had been recommended by the University Research Committee.
- 15.41 The Chair noted that the policy represented a straightforward response to a sector-wide issue, but there was a need for the document to be communicated to staff. This was currently being undertaken through Departmental meetings and staff development activities.
- 15.42 The policy was approved.

Amendment: Deliberative Committee Structure (SEN15.07)

- 15.43 Revisions to the University Committees (Deliberative): Constitution and Terms of Reference were presented.

- 15.44 Changes related to the integration of the newly-formed Academic Enhancement Team into the membership of both QEC and LTC and to a revised membership for the Equality and Diversity Committee.
- 15.45 The amendments were approved.

Amendment: Student Complaints Procedure (SEN15.08)

- 15.46 Revisions to the Student Complaints Procedure were presented for recommendation to Council.
- 15.47 Changes were fully outlined in the summary paper and included requirements to meet the publication of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework. In particular, this included the removal of the Complaint Panel from the process – which had never been used but had proved confusing. Work had also taken place around investigations to ensure that all points raised in a complaint had been properly addressed. The procedure had been recommended by SEC.
- 15.48 The Chair asked for comments from the student representatives present. The Vice President: Education and Welfare noted that the changes were not major and were generally helpful for students.
- 15.49 Members raised concerns in relation to the process diagram incorporated on page 14 of 17 of the document.
- a) There was concern that the Head of School was not referenced as an appropriate member of staff for students to approach in relation to a serious complaint. It was agreed that the document should be updated to refer to “the appropriate employee” rather than “the Head of Department or Service”.
 - b) Members did not find the examples outlined helpful (e.g. how someone spoke to a student could be both ‘something simple’ and ‘something more serious’ and depended entirely on the context). The examples would be removed.
 - c) The Chair noted that very serious complaints should involve SMT directly as it was not appropriate for a junior officer of the University. The Director of Student Services confirmed that this already happens in practice.
 - d) Members were surprised to see in the process diagram an example of a ‘straightforward problem’ being escalated directly to a formal complaint if talking to the member of staff directly did not resolve the concern. It was clarified that informal complaints should not be escalated until all options had been considered with relevant staff. Complaints would be sent back if it was considered that this had not taken place.

Action: Ruth Gunstone

- 15.50 Senate considered the role of the Investigating Officer to be critical to the process requiring a specific skill-set. It noted the current difficulty of finding an appropriate member of staff to take on this role, especially given the need to maintain distance from the complaint itself while remaining knowledgeable of the mechanisms or processes being referred to. The Director of Academic Quality explained that a number of individuals had received formal training and were able to approach the Student Resolutions Officer for further guidance.
- 15.51 Subject to amendment of the process diagram to take into account Senate’s comments, the process was recommended for approval by Council.
- 15.52 Senate further considered it appropriate to retain the document under continual review to ensure that issues arising from implementation of the process could be considered and incorporated.

Amendment: Student Disciplinary Process (SEN15.09)

- 15.53 Revisions to the Student Disciplinary Procedure were presented for approval.
- 15.54 Changes provide clarification and meet demands that have become apparent through the process being applied in practice and which are outlined in the overview document. Amendments had been recommended by SEC.
- 15.55 The Chair asked for comment from student representatives. The Vice President: Education and Welfare considered changes to be minor and reflected the process as a living document. The practice itself had not changed.
- 15.56 The process was approved.

Amendment: Validation Process (SEN15.19)

- 15.57 Revisions to the Validation Process were presented for approval.
- 15.58 Changes included updates to terminology and the documentation required for partner providers.
- 15.59 It was noted that AQD had been asked to review the process for revalidating existing courses. The document before Senate did not include these changes as the process was still being reviewed. A full proposal would be brought to QEC following the outcome of a consultation process.
- 15.60 Senate asked AQD to ensure that drop-down boxes in forms relating to the names of Departments were kept up to date. This was agreed.
- 15.61 It was noted that the process would be affected by the earlier discussion on programme learning outcomes (Minute 15.24ff. above). The Process will be further updated as required to comply with the consultation.
- 15.62 The process was approved.

External Examiners: Update (SEN15.10)

- 15.63 An update on External Examiners was provided.

External Examiner Arrangements for the BSc Osteopathic Principles at ISO Milan and IAO Ghent (SEN15.10A-D)

- 15.64 Senate was asked to approve the nominations of Andre Farasyn (SEN15.10A), Dr Roberto Codella (SEN15.10B), and Elisa Burato (SEN15.10D). They were also asked to approve a change of remit for Francesca Wiggins (SEN15.10C). This was part of a linked arrangement as provision at Milan and Ghent was delivered in Italian and Dutch/English respectively. Full details were provided in the paper.
- 15.65 It was acknowledged that assessment of work in a foreign language represents a high risk for the University. Robust arrangements were being proposed to safeguard provision and reduce the need for translation of student work.
- 15.66 The Chair asked for the justification of the partnership recognising the QAA's identification of delivery in a foreign language as being high risk.
- a) The Dean of Society & Health noted that the partnership formed part of a broader approach to widen work with the allied health professions. The Faculty had links with the British Osteopathic Society and was bringing in new business.
 - b) Provision had been considered carefully by both Academic Planning Committee and QEC where it had been made clear that this arrangement did not set a precedent for the University.
 - c) The Partner Link Tutor was an Italian speaker which further helped to mitigate the risks associated with translation of work.

- d) The Pro Vice Chancellor Society & Health recognised that this represented a high risk area for the University, hence the need to ensure quality assurance issues were fully considered and arrangements made. The Faculty was also looking at the potential for research collaboration to strengthen ties.

15.67 The arrangements were approved.

External Examiner Extension to term, Master of Communications Management (MCM)

15.68 Senate was asked to approve the extension to term of Andrew Valdar, for the MCM programme delivered in collaboration with the UKTA (SEN15.10E).

15.69 The University had taken the decision to discontinue the MCM programme. A previous extension had previously been granted due to a change in the regime of delivery and to allow a transition period for a new examiner. This was now no longer required and an exceptional sixth year of the external examiner's terms was requested to see out delivery. It was noted that the UK Quality Code normally allows only one exceptional extension year.

15.70 Considering the exceptional circumstances outlined, Senate approved the extension.

Endorsement of Chair's Actions

15.71 Senate endorsed the 9 nominations and/or changes to remit which had been undertaken by Chair's Action since the previous meeting and as outlined in the external examiner update document (SEN15.10).

External Examiner Coverage

15.72 Two resignations had been received. Senate also noted the need to chase up missing external examiner annual reports before a formal proposal to terminate some appointments might be required.

15.73 Three external examiners in Society and Health had not been replaced since their terms of office expired on 30 September 2014. Senate asked what arrangements had been put in place to provide cover. The Dean of S&H noted that these appointments were all in the School of Advanced Health Care. Modules are being looked at by other externals in the area. For the future, the Faculty will be revisiting the deployment of external examiners across the range of provision on offer.

15.74 Attention was also drawn to the large number of appointments that were due to come to an end in September 2015 and which would need replacement.

External Examiners: Annual Reporting process (SEN15.11)

15.75 A paper had been prepared as requested (Minute 14.58) providing an update on missing External Examiner Reports. No action was required.

15.76 It was noted that reports from Patrick Collister (MA Advertising) and John Collister (MA Art & Design: Furniture) had been received since the paper had been prepared. This left three reports remaining all of which had been chased by AQD. Should the reports not be received a request will be brought to Senate to terminate these appointments.

15.77 Responses to reports had also been tracked within AQD. The report from Professor Syntetos had since received a response. Senate asked for the remaining five reports, all in Society & Health, to be responded to within two weeks.

Action: Sue West

- 15.78 QEC had reviewed Red and Amber annual reports and had approved responses in each case. QEC had asked AQD to clarify the sign-off process; this had been mapped within the report.

Validation: Recommendation of awards for approval (SEN15.12)

- 15.79 An update on course approvals was provided. Senate was asked to approve the recommendations from QEC Sub-groups as outlined.

- 15.80 It was noted that a number of courses were incorrectly titled in the report as “BA (Hons) Business and Management”, rather than the title listed in the Programme Specification which was “BA (Hons) Business Management”. This would be corrected.

Action: Ellie Smith

- 15.81 Subject to this amendment, Senate approved recommendations where conditions had been completed or where no conditions were required.

- 15.82 It was noted that conditions for the BA (Hons) Product Design (Interior Design) were due to be completed 31 March 2015. This would be confirmed at the next meeting of Senate.

Extension of validation period: BA (Hons) Airline and Airport Management, delivered at the Aviation Management College (AMC), Malaysia (SEN15.13)

- 15.83 An extension request had been received to extend the course to the end of September 2016, to allow for a remapping of the AMC programme and alignment to the revalidated programme and to allow an intake in September 2015.

- 15.84 Senate asked for confirmation that the course was in good standing. The Dean of DMM confirmed that a positive PRE report had been received but this had not been provided. Senate asked for documented evidence, specifically the PRE and related External Examiner Annual Reports, to be provided to the Secretary outside the meeting to confirm that there were no quality concerns.

Action: Lorraine Watkins-Mathys

- 15.85 Subject to such confirmation being provided, Senate approved the extension.

Committee Reports

- 15.86 Reports for University Research Committee (SEN15.16), Equality & Diversity Committee (SEN15.17) and Learning and Teaching Committee (SEN15.18) were received.

Quality and Enhancement Committee (SEN15.14)

- 15.87 The Executive Summary was received. Senate noted the ongoing work relating to the UK Quality Code and the FHEQ as preparation for external review, currently scheduled for 2016-2017.

Student Experience Committee (SEN15.15)

- 15.88 The Executive Summary was received. Senate asked for information on developments noted to improve the relationship between the University and town.

- 15.89 The Chair noted that this issue had been raised by the Students’ Union and related to a need for improvement to High Wycombe town centre to include the needs of students, specifically the provision of a night club. The Chair had met with both the Chief Executive and the Head of Wycombe District Council and received assurances that work was ongoing and there was a willingness to engage with the

University. It was noted, however, that the University needed to make more of the opportunities currently available.

- 15.90 The Director of Student Services noted that she was a member of the Business Improvement District Company (BIDCo) Board and could help promote opportunities for the University.

Date of next meeting

- 15.91 The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 10 June 2015, to take place at 1.30pm in G5.05 on the High Wycombe Campus.
- 15.92 One item of reserved business was considered. See Reserved Minutes (Minute 15.93 to 15.98).