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Senate

Open Minutes

Date of meeting: **Wednesday, 09 March 2016**
 Duration of meeting: **14:00 to 16:30**
 Location: **G5.05, High Wycombe Campus**

Attendance

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Rebecca Bunting	Vice-Chancellor's Office	Ex-officio (Chair)
Miriam Moir	Academic Quality	Secretary
Marcus Wood	Academic Quality	Minute Secretary
Sean Mackney	Vice-Chancellor's Office	Ex-officio
Tim Middleton	Vice-Chancellor's Office	Ex-officio
Lorraine Watkins-Mathys	Design, Media & Management	Ex-officio
Sue West (Items 8-22)	Society & Health	Ex-officio
Ruth Gunstone	Student Services	Ex-officio
Ellie Smith	Academic Quality	Ex-officio
Sue Procter	Society & Health	Ex-officio
Frazer Mackenzie	Design, Media & Management	Ex-officio
Phil Wood	Design, Media & Management	Ex-officio
Lauren Griffiths (Items 8-22)	Society & Health	Ex-officio
Carol Pook (Items 7-22)	Society & Health	Ex-officio
Allen Stroud (Items 1-10)	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Richard Jones (Items 1-11)	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Roland Radaelli	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Carlo Lusuardi	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Steven Pearce	Society & Health	Elected
Christine Brooks	Society & Health	Elected
Jo Rixon	Society & Health	Elected

Apologies

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Ian Plover	Vice-Chancellor's Office	Ex-officio

Lois Drawmer	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Julian Lukaszewicz	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Sue Axe	Society & Health	Elected
Ciaran O'Keeffe	Society & Health	Elected
Nasreen Akhtar	Society & Health	Elected
Joe Collins	Students' Union	Student Member
Jenny Wade	Students' Union	Student Member

Absent

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Jake Kaner	Design, Media & Management	Ex-officio

Welcome/ Apologies for Absence

- 16.01 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.
- 16.02 A number of apologies were recorded with some members due to arrive during the meeting, but it was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Minutes of the previous meeting (16 December 2015)

- 16.03 The minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate record.

Status of actions from the previous meeting

- 16.04 The Action Sheet was noted. One outstanding item (Minute 15.208) was noted as completed.

Chair's Actions taken since the previous meeting

- 16.05 Senate endorsed the two Chair's Actions taken since the previous meeting as noted on the sheet.

Vice-Chancellor's Report

- 16.06 The Vice-Chancellor updated Senate on the content of the BIS funding letter to HEFCE regarding Higher Education funding for 2016-2017. Significant items for Senate to note were as follows:

Teaching funding priorities

- a) Overall, there is a reduction in grant funding for teaching, partially offset by a slight increase in research funding. The remainder is expected to be recovered by universities through an anticipated growth in income earned from student fees.
- b) Student Opportunity Funding, which includes widening participation and disability funding, is to be cut by at least 50%. HEFCE has been instructed to focus remaining funding on government priorities of widening participation, those institutions with higher numbers of at risk students from disadvantaged backgrounds (including part-time provision), and students from low engagement geographical areas. This may have potential benefits for Bucks.
- c) Funding for high cost subjects (including STEM) will continue to be protected.
- d) HEFCE has been asked to ensure that the announcement in the Chancellor's Spending Review that nursing, midwifery and allied health professional students

will be on the standard student support system is put in place. This acknowledges the change in responsibility from the Department of Health to BIS. From 1 August 2017 the cap on student numbers in these areas will be abolished and students will pay the full £9,000 fee and be able to access student funding opportunities. The Government expects that this will lead to an additional 10,000 places during the current Parliament.

These changes will place additional challenges on placement availability (which comes with separate funding which is currently capped and is not covered by student fee income). This will be a significant issue for the University to address. In the short term, an increase in recruitment for nursing programmes may be anticipated as students apply under the current funding system for September 2016 entry. The changes will give future students access to wider finance opportunities. However, the higher age profile at Bucks may offset this through concerns over incurring debt.

Quality

- e) HEFCE has been given responsibility for the roll-out of the second year of TEF. This will include analysis of metrics and the funding council has been asked to focus on two issues:
 - i. The contractual status of academic staff – following strong Union engagement on this subject
 - ii. Teaching intensity / weighted contact hours across subject areas.
- f) The letter also notes HEFCE's responsibility for Quality Assurance which is sub-contracted to the QAA (and is currently out to tender).

Widening Participation

- g) Widening Participation figures prominently in the funding letter. There is an expectation within Government that the number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds will increase by 50%, although there is some doubt over the exact nature of the baseline figure.

Part time

- h) The letter confirms that part-time students in a STEM subject will be exempt from ELQ (study for a second degree).

Postgraduate

- i) A new postgraduate loan structure (which includes both a Master's and a Doctoral loan scheme) will be in place from September 2016. This is being actively promoted by Marketing and Student Recruitment with the current graduating cohort. The Government is concerned about barriers to progression onto postgraduate taught education generally and has requested further analysis and advice on this issue.

Market Entry

- j) Designation for postgraduate level provision will be extended to new entrants to the market (alternative providers). This will enable full access to student funding.

Business collaboration

- k) Universities are urged to increase income generation from their commercial activities. A target has been set for the sector to raise income earned from working with business and others to £5 billion per annum by 2025. This will form a key part of the University's strategy going forward.

- l) Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) will continue but allocations will be based on a demonstration of value for money in institutional plans.

Degree apprenticeships

- m) HEFCE has been asked to support collaboration and encourage the growth of opportunities to develop degree apprenticeships for both full bachelor's and master's degrees.

Equality and Diversity

- n) BIS has recognized the need to make the HE sector more diverse, especially at leadership level. It was noted that the University is in the top 15 nationally for gender balance on its governing body. A news item has been placed on the website in connection with International Women's Day.

Efficiency

- o) Universities will come under additional scrutiny to improve efficiency and control costs and, in particular, to show restraint in making severance payments and in negotiating salaries for senior staff.
- p) HEFCE has also been asked to consider ways to monitor and measure the financial sustainability of institutions and the provision they offer. The HE market is to be allowed to have successes and failures with HEFCE's existing mandate to support a failing institution now removed.

A recent HEFCE audit visit to the University had identified no issues but the University's finances remain very challenging.

- 16.07 The Government has received over 600 responses to its Green Paper published in November. In particular:
 - a) There has been near-universal rejection (including in the University's own response) of the proposed link between the TEF and a fees increase
 - b) Objection to the proposed move to one body ("Research Councils UK") to dispense both QR and research council funding under the Dual Support system. It is unclear whether this will now be taken forward.

University Strategy 2016-2021 (SEN16.01)

- 16.08 The Vice-Chancellor outlined the draft strategy which set high-level priorities for the University for the next five years. It was noted that Council is responsible for approving the strategy but takes advice from the Vice-Chancellor, Senate and from consultation across the University as a whole.
- 16.09 The strategy will be supported by both an Education and a Research & Enterprise sub-strategy and these will be presented to Senate in June 2016. Strategies will be supplemented by Directorate and Faculty plans which will help to put objectives into operation. Ultimately, these will be combined into a single, overall document.
- 16.10 It was noted that the University will need a different set of principles to budget setting which will be related directly to delivery of the strategy.

Vision

- 16.11 The current orientation towards professional and creative education is being maintained. The University will not be diversifying into other areas without a strong rationale to do so. The University will focus on applied research activities which will emanate from areas of strength.

Priorities

- 16.12 The course portfolio will be the strategy's main priority as teaching remains the University's focus. The portfolio will be reviewed at all levels, including doctoral provision. Bucks will be expected to build relationships with other institutions, offer leading-edge courses and be more self-critical about course content. Sector engagement needs to be tangible and distinctive. Focuses on graduate outcomes and employment will also tie in with BIS priorities.
- 16.13 There is a need to develop recognized excellence across the University as this is currently inconsistent.
- 16.14 Research and enterprise activities – including research informed teaching and generation of research income – will be strengthened as these will be key for the University to distinguish its activities from those of new providers entering the market.
- 16.15 An inclusive learning environment will be promoted. This is an area of existing strength and was recently acknowledged by the Director for Fair Access following his visit to Bucks. The Director was impressed by the University's existing and ongoing commitment to students from diverse backgrounds demonstrated by its accessible curriculum.
- 16.16 The University's international profile will be strengthened. This will not only include the recruitment of international students (assuming the recovery of the University's Tier 4 Licence) but will also cover partnership, research and both staff and student mobility activities. Bucks will become an international community which prepares students to graduate into employment in a global environment.
- 16.17 Partnership activities will be refocused. All partnerships will need to demonstrate high quality and be of benefit to the University. This will also tie in to the outcomes of and opportunities arising from the ongoing Bucks County Council Strategic Area Review of Further Education provision.
- 16.18 Commercial activities will increase in accordance with BIS priorities.
- 16.19 The University will be an 'anchor institution' located within the community, with the capacity to exploit commercial links. Bucks will aim to lead the sector in its areas of teaching.

Discussion

- 16.20 Senate discussed the strategy and raised the following questions for discussion:

- a) How can excellence be demonstrated in teaching and learning support?

The Chair noted a need for consistency of practice across the University plus a requirement to ensure students have a more positive attitude towards their studies. There will be an emphasis on authenticity, for example programmes recognized by professional bodies.

It was noted that learning analytics can support work with students on their seriousness to engage and achieve graduate level employment by reviewing patterns of attendance and 'touch points' to build a picture of engagement. While the focus will be on success, student engagement needs to acknowledge the learning gain as well as absolute success.

In the short term, the NSS will continue to be used for ratings.

- b) Will the University's current CORD values (Clarity, Openness, Respect, and Delivery on commitments) be included in the strategy in some fashion?

The underlying key values will remain but will be re-worded in the new strategy. CORD is used differently across the University and is not understood externally.

There is no issue with the underlying CORD principles themselves, but they need reaffirming.

c) How will research and scholarly activity underpin the aims of the strategy?

The University will be placing greater emphasis on research and enterprise, but not at the expense of teaching. Research and scholarly activity informs the learning experience. There are a number of external hallmarks that add value to the core business of learning.

- 16.21 Sub-strategies will be developed and KPIs incorporated. These will be monitored by Senate and Council and supported by a new risk register.
- 16.22 Three open sessions will introduce the overall strategy to staff. The strategy itself can be discussed with teams.

Report from the QAA on the Educational Oversight Visit, 4 February 2016 (SEN16.04)

- 16.23 The draft report from the QAA was noted. A successful EO visit formed the first requirement to be met to enable the University to reapply for a Tier 4 Licence.
- 16.24 Auditors had visited the University on 4 February 2016, following up the University's annual monitoring report / self-evaluation document submitted in December 2015. Auditors had met with students, staff involved in quality assurance, and with admissions staff. The report was the outcome of the visit. The University had requested some minor amendments to the report for accuracy and the final report will be published on the QAA website on 17 March alongside the University's 2010 Institutional Review report.
- 16.25 Overall, a judgement that "the University is making commendable progress" had been achieved. This was the highest outcome possible. Overall, the visit had been useful for reviewing the University's provision.
- 16.26 Senate extended its thanks to all those across the University involved in the process which had resulted in such a successful outcome.

Report on UKVI Compliance Visit, 1-4 March 2016

- 16.27 A verbal report was made by the Vice-Chancellor. The visit formed the second requirement to be met to enable the University to reapply for a Tier 4 Licence.
- 16.28 It was reported that all 184 international student files had been examined by the auditors, looking at, among other areas, visa decisions, student addresses and methods for tracking and recording student attendance.
- 16.29 Prior to the visit the University had already changed its processes for monitoring international students. This had received positive feedback from auditors. They had also accepted the University's new low risk strategy in relation to country to country recruitment.
- 16.30 One area of vulnerability identified related to current practices for attendance monitoring. The Vice-Chancellor noted that in some areas this had fallen below the expected requirement, and that the University needed to ensure that processes are followed in full.
- 16.31 A written report will be prepared by the UKVI, and a final decision will be undertaken by the Minister. No timescale has been provided for this decision.

Discussion

- 16.32 Members asked if there was a plan for how improved attendance monitoring would be put in to operation. It was noted that the full attendance monitoring and reporting

procedure for international students needs to be applied and comprehensively audited. In the meantime, the University will look at its operating systems as these may allow for easier implementation. While electronic monitoring may be one way forward, it is insufficient for the UKVI which requires students to be seen in person to confirm their physical attendance. Formal contact points need to be used and paper registers kept up to date.

- 16.33 The following points were also noted:
- The difference between monitoring for Home/EU and International Students
 - Staff have increasingly moved to electronic registers (as these are easier to complete and allow for greater analysis) but these are not acceptable to the UKVI who require paper copies
 - The lack of an overall attendance policy has led to an overall decrease in use of the attendance register for all students
 - There is a need for the University to redefine its objectives for monitoring attendance
 - The need to remove poor attendance monitoring practice
- 16.34 It was noted that the Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment is preparing a report as a follow-up to the visit which will identify issues for resolution.
- 16.35 Following strong support from Senate, the University will review its overall attendance policy and link this to the strategic plan and plans for student attainment and engagement. This will be undertaken initially through a Task and Finish Group.

Action: Ellie Smith

Research degree provision: Update on partnership with Staffordshire University

- 16.36 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise gave a verbal update to Senate.
- 16.37 Further to sign-off at the previous meeting (Minutes 15.195-198), documentation was sent to Staffordshire University on 17 December 2015. A set of new forms to support the documentation was subsequently submitted. A revised financial agreement is now in place, and further revisions to the Collaborative Agreement have been made. It is anticipated that the final paperwork will be received later in March.
- 16.38 Staffordshire University is reported to be keen to collaborate with Bucks to develop a joint Professional Doctorate. Bucks has stressed a desire for this to recruit in 2016-17 alongside new MPhil and PhD candidates.

Report from Students' Union (SEN16.15)

- 16.39 Senate received a report from the Students' Union. It was noted that student representatives were campaigning for re-election and unavailable to attend and thus a written report was requested. This had raised some issues that had not been previously raised through other avenues.
- 16.40 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education introduced the report and outlined progress against the items noted:
- a) IT issues regarding user support have been raised with the Director of IT
 - b) Criticism of the Big Deal On Course related to one particular course, rather than the provision for the whole University. Nevertheless, management of the provision has been tightened and a report on a revised approach will be forwarded to the

June meeting of Senate. It was noted that there is a need to show a more positive impact of the Big Deal on students, especially in the light of comments on OFFA.

- c) Assessment issues are being addressed. Over 70 delegates attended the recent Staff Development Conference which focused on assessment and some good ideas will be taken forward.
- d) Employment / Learning Gain: Investment with the SU is noted, but there is a need to ensure that these align with overall University objectives relating to attainment, attendance and achievement.

16.41 Actions identified will continue to be taken forward by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education in discussion with the SU.

Action: Sean Mackney

Work-based and Placement Learning Policy (SEN16.05)

16.42 The paper, which focused on definitions and responsibilities and which had undergone consultation across the University and was now presented on the recommendation of the Education Committee, was discussed. The expectation is that the policy will allow programme leaders to identify work-based and placement learning opportunities in ways appropriate to the particular subject area.

16.43 The following points were noted:

- a) There was some potential confusion between the exclusions at the end of section 2.1 and the references in 2.2 (in particular company visits), particularly because of defined responsibilities in the policy
- b) The policy is simple and short but was felt to lack detail, which could result in differing interpretations.
- c) There are multiple levels of risk which need to be identified
- d) There is a problem with the definitions used, particularly the phrase 'elements of work-based learning'.
- e) Historically there was a document that mapped QAA requirements that was attached to individual Programme Specifications. It would be useful for this to be included as an appendix.

16.44 It was noted that the policy is designed to be accompanied by a procedure document which would cover many of the areas noted.

16.45 Senate broadly welcomed the policy and considered it fundamental to the new University strategy bringing good practice from the University together. However, it was not clear to Senate what the implications would be of embedding work experience in all University programmes or what would happen where this did not occur.

16.46 Following further discussion it was agreed that the Policy was not ready for approval and would be taken back to the Education Committee for further discussion along with the related Procedures. This would also enable the policy to be firmly grounded within the Education sub-strategy and to be accompanied by a University-wide roll-out plan.

Action: Sean Mackney

Amendment to External Examiners' Handbook (SEN16.06)

16.47 It was noted that amendments followed recommendations from Senate at its previous meeting (Minute 15.181-182) to introduce an external examiner approval panel with

delegated responsibility from Senate and to revise wording related to interim visits had been undertaken. The amendments were approved.

- 16.48 It was noted that the Panel would convene for the first time after Easter; PSE and academic nominations were requested from Deans.

Action: Lorraine Watkins-Mathys and Sue West

External Examiner Update (SEN16.07)

- 16.49 Senate noted the report and endorsed Chair's Actions taken since the previous meeting formally to approve nominations, changes of remit and / or extensions to term as listed.

- 16.50 In particular, Senate noted one resignation, while also noting that the external examiner responsible for the BSc (Hons) Osteopathic Principles (non-practising) at the IAO, Ghent had recently died. Senate was reminded that special arrangements had been put in place relating to this appointment as provision was taught in a foreign language which presented an ongoing risk to the University (see Minute 15.64-67). AQD had already been in correspondence with the Faculty to ensure that a suitable replacement was identified by the School who met the robust criteria originally agreed.

Action: Lauren Griffiths

Validation: Recommendation of awards for approval (SEN16.08)

- 16.51 Senate reviewed the outcomes of validation events held since the previous meeting and approved the decisions in each case.

- 16.52 It was noted that responses to the Conditions for the Mental Health & Wellbeing in Education suite of courses (due 9 March 2016) had been submitted and were with the Chair of the Validation Panel for sign-off. It was agreed that Chair's Action of Senate would be taken to approve the courses for delivery.

Extension to validated term: DHE Operating Department Practice (SEN16.09)

- 16.53 Senate was asked to approve an extension of term of two years to September 2018 for this course and its component modules. This would enable the course team to accommodate the request by Trust Partners involved with this course to raise the level of the programme to a Level 6 Bachelor of Science with Honours for delivery from September 2018. It was confirmed that the programme was in good standing with the accrediting body and with the University's own internal quality processes. The request was approved.

Committee Reports (SEN16.10-14)

- 16.54 Executive Summaries from Senate Committees were received.

- 16.55 Attention was drawn to the following:

- a) QSC: The Committee continues to monitor the situation at the City of London College (see minute 15.212). There were opportunities within the partnership but this still presented a degree of risk to the University.
- b) QSC: It was noted that the increase in referrals for academic misconduct arising from the international MBA programme is being considered under the University's standard process for investigation. A series of *viva voce* examinations have been scheduled for the 20 cases involved.

While the specific incidences in question related to allegations that students had submitted work that was not their own (i.e. by using some form of essay writing service), it was noted that there are also a number of instances of academic misconduct by overseas students which needs to be addressed. The University will be seeking to raise awareness by offering an online programme to educate students as to what constitutes plagiarism.

- c) REC: Attention was drawn to the current response rate of 54% for the audit to support an application for Research Degree Awarding Powers. Response rates varied between Departments and those falling below the 50% threshold will be followed up. Thanks were extended to staff who have already engaged with the audit.

Date of next meeting

- 16.56 The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 8 June 2016.
- 16.57 There was one item of reserved business. See Reserved Minutes (Minute 16.58-16.61).