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Education Committee

Open Minutes

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

Duration of meeting: **14:00 to 16:30**

Location: **HW-G5.05**

Attendance

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Barbara Dexter	Learning and Teaching	Ex-officio. Chair (Acting)
Ruth Gunstone	Student Services	Ex-officio
Julie Irwin	Learning and Teaching	Ex-officio
Steve Hoole	Learning and Teaching	Ex-officio
Carol Pook	Society and Health	Nominated
Frazer Mackenzie	Design, Media and Management	Nominated
Martha Wiekens	Design, Media and Management	Nominated
Lorna Dean Gibbs	Design, Media and Management	Nominated
Maurice Gledhill	Design, Media and Management	Nominated
Rebecca Rochon	Society and Health	Nominated
Ciaran O'Keeffe	Society and Health	Nominated
Ian Chisholm-Bunting	Society and Health	Nominated
Jenny Wade	Students' Union	Ex-officio
Liz Bell	Academic Quality	Secretary
Marcus Wood	Academic Quality	Minute Secretary (Acting)
Kath Dunn	Learning and Teaching	Invited for agenda item 14

Apologies

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Phil Wood	Design, Media and Management	Nominated
Julia Williams	Society and Health	Nominated
Ed Roe	Students' Union	Nominated

Amin Choudhury	Students' Union	Nominated
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Absent

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
None		

Welcome

15.01 The Chair welcomed members to the inaugural meeting.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

15.02 No conflicts were declared.

Minutes of the previous meeting

15.03 Due to the changes of the Committee structure and the combining of the previous Learning and Teaching and Student Experience Committees, those present who were previously members of those committees were asked to approve the minutes as an accurate record:

- a) The minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee held on 6 May 2015 were approved as an accurate record.
- b) The minutes of the Student Experience Committee held on 12 May 2015 were approved as an accurate record.

Status of actions from the previous meeting

15.04 The action sheet from the Learning and Teaching Committee held on 6 May 2015 was noted. Actions were updated as follows:

- Minute 15.64 – Short courses in events management and other areas: The SU had discussed this with the DVC. The SU would only offer additional skills sessions where these were not already offered on courses. The Chair asked for ongoing discussion between the Learning and Teaching Directorate, Faculties and the SU re future offerings.

Action: Jenny Wade

- Minute 15.82 – Action Learning for Enhancement (ALFE) Project: This would be carried forward to a future meeting of the Committee.

15.05 The action sheet from the Student Experience Committee held on 12 May 2015 was noted. All actions had either been completed or were on the current agenda.

Matters arising

15.06 There were two matters arising:

- a) Library auto renewal pilot report (Paper EDU15.06)

The report was noted. The pilot had been very successful.

- b) Student Complaints Report Extract (Paper EDU15.07)

The report was noted. The Director of Student Services highlighted that the University had paid compensation to several students for not delivering parts of their courses as promised, contrary to Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) requirements. The issue featured strongly in the recent HE Green Paper (below, Minute 15.10[a]).

The full report would be considered at the forthcoming joint SURE meeting (below, Minute 15.07).

Chair's Actions

Allocation of Auditors (SURE) (Paper tabled – available via Blackboard under SURE 2014-2015)

- 15.07 The University had agreed to schedule a joint meeting of the Education and Quality and Standards Committees to consider reports prepared for the annual Strategic University Review and Evaluation (SURE) process.
- 15.08 Auditors had been assigned to each report with QSC focusing on process considerations and EdC looking at enhancement, staff development issues and wider opportunities. Members should have already received notification of the reports to which they had been assigned.

Committee Terms of Reference and Membership (Papers available on Blackboard)

- 15.09 These were noted. The Committee asked about levels of student representation given the Committee's enhanced remit to replace SEC. In addition to the SU Vice-President Education and Welfare, there were places for both an undergraduate and postgraduate representative. Members had been appointed but had submitted apologies for the present meeting.

Chair's Report (Verbal)

- 15.10 There were five items for report:

a) Higher Education Green Paper

It was noted that the expected Green Paper had now been published and a consultation was ongoing. Entitled *Higher education: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*, the paper:

- Proposes a new Office for Students (combining a number of previous HE bodies)
- Formalises proposals for a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which allowed Universities to increase the fee cap and would initially be based on a successful QA review. TEF metrics would be based on teaching quality, learning environments, and student outcome/learning gain
- Recommends adoption of a Grade Point Average (GPA) scheme in awarding degree qualifications
- Emphasises marketisation requirements and ensures adherence to CMA regulations regarding offerings to students.

The green paper is available online via gov.uk. The Chair would seek clarification from the VC on opportunities to contribute to a formal University response. In particular, members noted a lack of reference to part-time students and some felt the impact on families deserved greater consideration.

Action: Chair

It was noted that the HEA and Heads of Educational Development Group were also collating feedback, but on a group rather than institutional level.

b) HEFCE Review of information about learning and teaching and the student experience

A consultation was currently underway to review how information is published in these areas, including the NSS and KIS / Unistats. The consultation was reviewing the format and wording of questions in the NSS. It accepted the current poor usage of Unistats and proposed a reduction in KIS reporting requirements (with additional reporting to revert to University course webpages).

c) National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS)

There has been no formal announcement from the HEA but it is understood that the scheme will run during 2016.

d) University initiatives

The Learning and Teaching Directorate (LTD) is currently recruiting for the following task & finish groups:

- Peer Observation (policy due for renewal 2015-2016)
- Flexible and Distributed Learning
- Simulation in learning, teaching and assessment
- Assessment and marking criteria

Volunteers should contact the Chair within five working days. Policies would be brought to the Committee's May meeting. Such opportunities would be useful for demonstrating eligibility for future HEA Senior Fellowship applications.

Action: Willing Members to contact Chair

e) Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education

Sean Mackney has been appointed as the University's ProVice-Chancellor (Education) and will start 4 January 2016.

An immediate priority would be the development of a comprehensive Education Strategy to replace the current Learning and Teaching Strategy.

Students' Union Report (EDU15.09)

15.11 The report identified action / updates in the following areas:

- a) Student representation, including the appointment of a BME student ambassador
- b) Additional skills training programmes available for students
- c) Confusion over the Big Deal on Course (BDOC) offerings available to students
- d) Retention research project
- e) Assessment research project

15.12 A recent meeting had reviewed the implementation of BDOC. Jo Boardman, Student Services, would be leading the project which would clarify current areas of confusion. The authoritative source of information regarding BDOC offerings was held on Blackboard under the ESEP: Big Deal on Course organisation where there was a spreadsheet by course.

15.13 The Academic Enhancement Manager asked the SU to liaise with the LTD in relation to work on assessment to ensure that activities could complement one another. This was agreed.

15.14 The Director of Student Services also noted activities undertaken by the SU in relation to Mental Health and Wellbeing and the current Alcohol Impact Project; this was a

partnership between the SU and Student Services Directorate (SSD) and ran in collaboration with 16 other universities with NUS support.

Module Evaluations Stage 1 (Paper EDU15.10)

15.15 The paper identified six recommendations to be taken forward. Some of these were already being taken forward as part of the assessment project. Other recommendations would feed into the ALFE Project and be reported upon in due course. A longer report would be made available to Faculties shortly.

Action: Julie Irwin

National Student Survey (NSS) / Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) Report 2015 (Papers EDU15.03 & EDU15.04)

15.16 Actions on the NSS have improved both the University's overall position and the comparison to competitor institutions. An Action Plan (EDU15.04) had set targets for 2016, including a target for overall satisfaction of 84%.

15.17 Results from PTES were not as positive, indicating a range of actions and work in relation to Master's level study. The University would not be submitting to PTES in 2016 and would instead focus on existing issues identified through our internal evaluation systems.

Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) Survey 2015 (Paper EDU15.08)

15.18 The paper highlighted a national average for employability of 93.2% against the University's position of 92.7% which achieved the benchmark set by HESA. Graduate employment for the year was 57%, exceeding the Bucks average (~50%) in preceding years. There were, however, some dramatic differences between individual courses.

15.19 The DLHE results provide useful information on employers. The Careers & Employability Service would be looking to promote greater links with these employers.

15.20 Operation of the DLHE continues to be discussed with the Careers Group who manage the survey for Bucks. The DLHE is currently being reviewed and there is a strong possibility that this will be undertaken centrally by government in future.

15.21 Further analysis – including breakdowns at course level – can be found on the Planning & Intelligence Blackboard Organisation. Figures are not yet available for the Longitudinal 'Long' DLHE. These will be available shortly.

15.22 The Committee queried how freelance graduates were reported in the survey. It was noted that this varied depending on the subject area in question and how respondents replied, but it would be useful to develop guidance notes around this area.

Staff Library Awareness Report (Paper EDU15.11)

15.23 The report identified a disappointing level of participation from staff indicating a need to ensure staff are aware of the range of library services available. Recommendations for action have been identified.

LibQual Library Report (Paper EDU15.15)

15.24 The survey was undertaken at the end of 2014. It was a cross-sector survey enabling the University to benchmark its position. Results strongly correlated to NSS and PTES outcomes.

- 15.25 Areas of concern were consistent across the sector and included issues related to noise, information control and areas for improvement. Approximately 300 written comments had been captured providing a good roadmap for moving forward.

Student Voice Policy (Verbal)

- 15.26 An initial draft of the policy has been circulated to stakeholders. The policy will be presented to the Committee in February ahead of a wider consultation.

Work-based Learning and Placement Policy (Paper EDU15.12)

- 15.27 The draft policy had been discussed with various stakeholders as identified. Further to comment by the Committee, the policy will go for broader consultation.
- 15.28 Key things to note were the deliberate intention to steer away from a lengthy policy and focus instead on national definitions and indications for Bucks. Simple policy statements would be supported by a series of guidelines and procedures to operationalise the policy. The policy adopted a risk-based approach with variations between different types of placement / course.
- 15.29 Members noted that some courses engaged in a variety of freelance and contract work / client briefs which were the equivalent of placements for those areas. There were also areas that did not neatly fit into the current definitions. These would be discussed further outside the meeting.
- 15.30 Members also questioned the links to the validation process. A link will be added in the next draft. Process documents would specify the required information to be contained in the Validation Context Document.
- 15.31 The Committee supported the policy. It asked that the policy be further consulted on across the University and come back to the February meeting for recommendation to Senate.

Action: Julie Irwin

Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013-2017 Progress (Paper EDU15.02)

- 15.32 The paper updated activities undertaken since 2013 to progress the strategy. This would be useful for preparations for a forthcoming HER or its equivalent.
- 15.33 It was noted that this would be superseded by any forthcoming Education Strategy.

Teaching and learning hours (Paper EDU15.05)

- 15.34 The paper had arisen from concerns from the SU regarding the use of scheduled learning and teaching hours alongside queries over levels of support and direction for guided independent study.
- 15.35 Feedback had been received from ~200 students and 45 staff. Respondents had been drawn from across all levels and modes of study. Focus was predominantly on qualitative comments but quantitative responses had demonstrated an average 13 scheduled learning hours and 18 guided learning hours per week.
- 15.36 An audit has been instigated by the VC to identify any discrepancies with published documents. Compliance testing would be undertaken between validated documentation, the programme handbook and timetabling. This was essential for compliance to the TEF and with the CMA. It was agreed that AQD would be involved due to their responsibility for producing the annual KIS submission.

Personal Tutoring Survey (Verbal)

- 15.37 The student survey would be launching 19 November and would mirror a similar survey of staff; an action plan had been identified.

- 15.38 The personal tutoring link on Blackboard was almost ready and will inform students who their personal tutor is.

Academic Teaching Qualifications (Paper EDU15.01)

- 15.39 The paper arose from a need to report annually to HESA the number of academic staff holding a formal teaching qualification (PGCert L&T in HE; subject-specific qualification; or HEA Fellowship). The report showed 74% of academic staff held a recognised qualification, exceeding the sector average. Senate had set a target of 95% by September 2018.
- 15.40 Recommendations had been identified in the report, some of which were already being taken forward, including annual monitoring and tracking by the Committee.
- 15.41 Members asked for HEA Associate Fellowships to be added to the report (recognising that these will only be eligible for the HESA return itself for academics). This was agreed.
- 15.42 Members also noted the different cultures in operation in areas across the University. It was noted that this was a sector-wide issue; however, the University would not be setting different targets for areas. The Academic Enhancement Unit would work with areas with low percentages to support them with applications for HEA fellowships.
- 15.43 Members were concerned that targets would be difficult to achieve within the two year period specified. They asked for annual targets to be specified as well as more detail for departments on the level of change required to meet the target. Case studies would also be developed to cover a range of staff, e.g. fractional appointments, where a sensitive approach might be required.

Action: Barbara Dexter to build into recommendations how the Academic Enhancement Team could support Departments to meet Senate's expectations.

- 15.44 Subject to the comments above the recommendations specified were agreed.

Analysis of Academic Misconduct Cases 2014-2015 (Paper EDU15.13)

- 15.45 The paper was part of a fuller report to be considered as part of the SURE process. Items to note were as follows:
- 6 students had been expelled for academic misconduct. A panel hearing had been built into the process as an additional safeguard and to provide an opportunity for a learning experience
 - The identification of particular student subsets where academic misconduct was high (International students; Black / minority male students – deemed to be statistically significant)
 - The prolonged timeframe between identification of potential misconduct and a penalty being levied which could be stressful for students.
- 15.46 The report identified specific issues. The Senior Registrar: Academic Assessment & Conduct had recommended the formation of a task & finish group to consider these issues and to review the overall penalty system.
- 15.47 Members noted the following:
- Decisions on academic misconduct could currently only be agreed by Heads of School which formed a bottleneck. The task & finish group should consider widening the number of people who could review cases.
 - A need to ensure that designing assessments to reduce plagiarism does not lead to an increase in the use of examinations

- Built in unfairness in areas where Turnitin is not used
- Inclusion of academic staff in training on referencing to improve advice and support available to students
- The need for student representation on the task & finish group

15.48 The Committee agreed the recommendations. The Chair would liaise further with AQD over the membership and remit of the task & finish group. The group would be asked to report to the Committee at its May meeting.

Action: Barbara Dexter

Joining Instructions (Paper EDU15.14)

15.49 The Director of Student Services informed the Committee that the paper had arisen from feedback received following the Bucks Welcome. There was a disjunct between the intention and the reality, especially with the production of joining instructions. A working group had been established to review preparations. From a learning and teaching perspective, teams needed to discuss the value of joining instructions and share best practice.

15.50 The Committee asked about preparations for the incoming cohort in February. It was noted that the paper focuses on the September start; however, there is an existing body of good practice for incoming nursing students (including the February cohort) especially the comprehensive booklet prepared; the working group had already adopted this as best practice.

15.51 The Committee asked for a Blackboard / IT induction to be built into plans for the Welcome week. It was agreed that this would be included in guidance for courses.

15.52 The Committee also noted the need to take account of up-front course costs for students. The Big Deal on Course was used in some areas to provide general set texts and these then could not be purchased before students arrived.

15.53 The Chair asked Faculty representatives to feedback the issues noted to their respective areas.

Action: Faculty Representatives

Date of next meeting

15.54 Future meetings were noted as follows:

- Joint Committee with QSC on 25 November 2015 at 16:00 in HW-WW1.12 to audit SURE.
- Education Committee on 10 February 2016 at 16:00 in HW-G5.05.

15.55 It was noted that this would be the last meeting of Barbara Dexter, Director of Learning and Teaching, who would be retiring in December. Members thanked her for her contributions to both the Education and Learning and Teaching Committees and wished her well in her retirement.

15.56 The meeting ended at 16:30.