



## Minutes for Senate

**Open Minutes** of the meeting held on 21 September 2022 in G5.05 on the High Wycombe and on Microsoft Teams.

### Present:

- Professor Nick Braisby (Vice-Chancellor [Chair])
- Emma Binnie (Dean of Students);
- Professor Rachel Cragg (Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital));
- Karen Buckwell-Nutt (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Health and Social Care) / Institute of Health and Social Care);
- Charlotte Leighton-Woods (Students' Union President);
- Brandon Tester (Students' Union Vice-President Education & Welfare (High Wycombe));
- Kirsteen Coupar (Interim Director of Student Success);
- Professor Sri-Kartini Leet (Head of School: Art, Design and Performance);
- Professor Musa Mihsein (Interim Head of School: Aviation and Security);
- Miriam Moir (Academic Registrar);
- Professor Paul Morgan (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience));
- Dr Ciaran O'Keefe (Head of School: Human and Social Sciences);
- Margaret Rioga (Interim Head of School: Nursing and Midwifery);
- Louisa Berry (Teaching Representative, School of Aviation and Security);
- Ellie Smith (University Secretary and Clerk to Council);
- David Warnock-Smith (Research and Enterprise Committee Representative);
- Dr Kevin Campbell-Karn (Teaching Representative, School of Human and Social Sciences);
- Brenda Brown (Teaching Representative, School of Health and Social Care Professions);
- Dr Ben Clayton (Professoriate Representative);
- Dr Russel Stone (Head of School: Creative and Digital Industries)

### In attendance:

- Dr Emma Tomsett (Secretary)

## Welcome / Apologies for Absence

22.186      The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. A warm welcome was extended to five new Senate members:

- Students' Union President Charlotte Leighton-Woods
- Students' Union Vice-President Education & Welfare (High Wycombe) Brandon Tester
- Brenda Brown (Teaching Representative, School of Health and Social Care Professions)
- Dr Kevin Campbell-Karn (Teaching Representative, School of Human and Social Sciences)
- Dr Ben Clayton (Professoriate Representative).

22.187 The Chair noted the following apologies:

- Professor Florin Ioras (Director of Enterprise and Research)
- Hilary Mullen (Teaching representative, School of Creative and Digital Industries)
- Dr Ric Khine (Head of School: Health and Social Care Professions)
- Professor David Warnock-Smith (Research and Enterprise Committee Representative)
- Dr Paul Maloret (Interim Head of School: Nursing and Midwifery)
- Brigitte Stockton (Teaching Representative, School of Art, Design and Performance).

### **Declaration of conflicts of interest**

22.188 There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

### **Minutes of the previous meeting**

22.189 The minutes of the meeting on 8 June were approved as an accurate record subject to the following amendment to minute 22.132: "The Chair noted that few capital bids that address student satisfaction issues are received during the capital planning rounds. While the University could **not** be financially reckless, colleagues were encouraged to bring proposals forward if they believed more learning resources were needed."

### **Action: Secretary**

### **Matters Arising / Status of actions**

22.190 Senate noted the updates to the actions as outlined on the action sheet.

### **Chair's Action**

22.191 Senate noted the Chair's Actions taken since the last meeting.

### **Membership / Terms of Reference**

22.192 Senate reviewed its Terms of Reference (ToR). The following amendments were approved:

- the University's new Sustainability Committee to report to Senate
- the removal of the annual Senate-Council Joint Meeting, as Senate noted that Council was satisfied it received assurance on Quality and Standards through a number of reports.

22.193 Senate also endorsed two additional amendments:

- a cross-reference to Sustainability to be added to the ToR
- Senate Secretary now appointed from the University Secretariat.

### **Action: Secretary**

22.194 Senate noted its current membership for the 2022-2023 academic year.

22.195 Students' Union (SU) Vice-President (Education & Welfare - High Wycombe) Brandon Tester and SU President Charlotte Leighton-Woods requested that Senate considered adding SU Vice-President (Education & Welfare - Uxbridge and Aylesbury) Emily Crawshaw to Senate's membership.

22.196 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council Ellie Smith noted that the Senate membership is complex as the University's Articles of Government contained specific requirements regarding the balance of members.

22.197 The Chair agreed that the membership should be reviewed again. It was noted that any change to the Students' Union representation had to be approved by Council.

### **Action: Chair / Secretary / Ellie Smith**

## **Chair's Report**

22.198 Senate received a verbal report from the Chair.

22.199 The Chair expressed sadness at the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and extended the University's best wishes to King Charles III.

### Graduation 2022

22.200 The passing of Her Majesty had meant that the end of Graduation Week was tinged with sadness. The Chair thanked the Graduation team for their superb work in pivoting the final day from a joyful to a somewhat more sombre occasion.

22.201 Senate thanked the Graduation team for ensuring Graduation had remained a wonderful week.

## Welcome Week 2022

- 22.202 The Chair thanked all the teams involved in delivering Welcome Week 2022. The Chair noted that it was essential that Welcome Week ensured students were given the best possible start to their time at the University and that some students would have anxieties, particularly around the cost of living.
- 22.203 Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) was reviewing its hardship fund to ensure it was fit for purpose given the current cost-of-living crisis.

## Financial Position

- 22.204 Senate was assured that the University was in a good financial position as it prepared its end-of-year financial statements. A healthy surplus was anticipated.

## Clearing

- 22.205 Clearing was progressing steadily, albeit perhaps somewhat slowly. There had not been a surge of unplaced applicants this year, but data suggested Clearing recruitment was up year-on-year and that BNU was on track to recruit to the budget target for 2022-2023. The Chair thanked all teams for their efforts throughout Clearing.
- 22.206 There were some indications of a change in market conditions for BNU, particularly in Nursing as there had been a significant decline in applications prior to Clearing. While Nursing applications were now moving again, they were not catching up to previous levels. The University would review the data to try to ascertain why this had happened. However, overall Clearing was going well.

## United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI)

- 22.207 Much work had been done over the summer, led by the University Secretary and Clerk to Council Ellie Smith. The University had successfully convinced UKVI not to impose any severe sanctions following its inspection in April, but UKVI had given BNU an Action Plan to complete by January 2023. The actions were significant.
- 22.208 The University Secretary advised Senate that UKVI will return for another inspection in January 2023. Complete data records must be kept for all International Students. Attendance monitoring was now critical and must be fully completed by all academic staff. All International students had been informed that they must attend every taught session; if one session was missed, BNU would begin withdrawal proceedings. Legal firm Penningtons had been asked to come on site to also review student records and to deliver training for all staff involved with International students. This training was most likely to occur on 18 or 19 October. Ms Smith would investigate whether the training can be recorded.

**Action: Ellie Smith**

- 22.209 The Chair reiterated the importance of completing attendance monitoring and acting on non-attendance.
- 22.210 Mr Tester sought clarification on whether an International Office would be created. The University Secretary advised that BNU still needed to decide how International recruitment and activity would be structured in the long term, but noted BNU effectively already had an international office as multiple staff across BNU worked to support international activities, but were not located in one place on campus.

#### High Wycombe Estate Development

- 22.211 The development remained largely on track and on budget. Senate was advised that there would be some noise disruption over the first weeks of term and that staff must flag if the noise was too disruptive to teaching as it might be necessary to move some teaching to quieter areas. It was important that staff apologised to students for any disruption.
- 22.212 The University Secretary noted that as well as apologising it could be worth also highlighting the long-term benefits of the works.

#### High Wycombe Engine Shed

- 22.213 BNU was continuing to discuss the tenancy of the Engine Shed as a community-facing space, including gallery space. One Innovation Hub would also be housed in the Shed, releasing space in the South Wing for teaching. The University remained Wycombe Council's preferred tenant.

#### Sector developments

- 22.214 The Chair noted that Andrea Jenkyns remained the Minister for Higher Education, although it was expected she would be moved in due course. The new Secretary of State for Education Kit Malthouse was somewhat of an unknown quantity. The new Prime Minister was rumoured to dislike quangos, but any changes to the Office for Students (OfS) would likely take years.
- 22.215 It was difficult to identify any source of further government money for higher education.

### **Matters for Approval / Discussion**

#### Cost-of-living crisis: Students' Union (SU) support to students

- 22.216 Senate considered a report from the SU Vice-President (Education & Welfare - High Wycombe) Brandon Tester on the SU's plans to support students. Mr Tester drew Senate's attention to several key points:

- the impact of the crisis on students' mental health, success and attainment, retention and continuation, sense of satisfaction and belonging and well-being and physical health was serious;
- the SU had launched a booklet of money-saving tips and budgeting advice and would be launching a rolling cost-of-living survey to help understand students' experiences and challenges;
- food prices were being reduced across campus and free hot meals provided three times a week under the Big Bucks Meal Deal initiative;
- the SU had launched, having received funding from Buckinghamshire Council, a Monthly Monday Meal project where students would be given free ingredients for a meal that they could cook along with the SU Vice-Presidents (Education & Welfare) through social media. The project had proved very popular, demonstrating the extent of the crisis;
- the SU wanted to thank the University for the funding it provided towards the Big Deal and the reduced food prices on campus as both proved very beneficial for students;
- the SU proposed issuing a joint statement with the University recognising the crisis and outlining what the SU and the University was doing to help students at this time.

22.217 Senate warmly congratulated Mr Tester on the excellent report and initiatives being undertaken by the SU.

22.218 Senate agreed the following in subsequent decision:

- it was welcome that Mr Tester was a member of the Directorate for Student Success's cost-of-living working group;
- the current actions were also welcome, but it was important that the response to the crisis continued and that even more was done to help students;
- Senate was concerned about what extra support was being given to students in private accommodation rather than Halls of Residence, for which BNU had kept its fees fixed, as this was causing real anxiety amongst returning students.

22.219 Mr Tester informed Senate that the SU was discussing a bursary scheme for students in private accommodation with the Directorate for Student Success. A bursary or hardship scheme for students struggling with commuting costs was also being investigated.

22.220 Director of Student Success Kirsteen Coupar informed Senate that the Directorate would shortly be holding a cost-of-living workshop with the SU and senior BNU managers to explore ideas to support students through the crisis, from which proposals would be brought to the University Executive Team (UET).

#### Thrive 2028 Strategy - final draft

22.221 Council received the final draft of the new University Strategy, which had been approved by Council in July 2022 subject to one amendment to clarify that the plans outlined in the strategy were intended to make BNU more competitive with other providers.

22.222 It was noted that staff had been asked to align their 2022-2023 performance objectives with Thrive28 so the final strategy would need to be published very soon.

### Curriculum23 (C23)

22.223 Senate received a verbal update from the Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital) Professor Rachel Cragg. Professor Cragg informed Senate that

- the programme was progressing well; the next significant target was programme validations. Monthly project meetings were being held at which timelines were carefully reviewed and risks associated with the programme managed;
- a three-stage fast-track validation process had been agreed that complied with the Quality and Standards requirements from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and OfS, but allowed BNU to validate changed courses quickly;
- the validation process consisted of three stages:
  1. Programme Development and Approval Groups, which would begin to meet shortly, in which the programme and module documentation would be developed by Programme Leaders, and scrutinised by critical friends
  2. School Development and Approval Groups (SDAG) for each course cluster, which will begin to meet from 21 October, in which the programme documentation would be reviewed and either approved or feedback provided for a resubmission
  3. a University Validation & Approval Panel (UVAP) for each School which aimed to approve programmes without conditions as much as possible;
- documentation templates had been sent to staff and development training had been delivered over the summer;
- All UVAPs were planned to have met by 11 November 2022 so that the 'subject to validation' note could be removed from programme webpages;
- the project team was aware of the delays being experienced within the School of Business and Law and was working with the School to address these;
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB)-accredited courses would be part of the change process ahead of their next accreditation event;
- a new Opportunity Module Lead had been appointed to develop these modules;
- the Staff Development workstream, which focused on pedagogic work, would continue to work with staff through the 2022-2023 year, led by Head of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Ben Brabon;
- considerable planning was being given to the operationalisation of the new curriculum. An amended academic year calendar would be signed off shortly and work would begin to determine how students would choose their optional modules, to address timetabling requirements and support for placements;
- C23 programmes would not be offered to partners before September 2024 as BNU still needed to decide what its partner offer would be;

- Apprenticeship programmes would follow the C23 structure from September 2023, but start dates would be negotiated with employers.

22.224 The Chair noted that C23 would result in a dramatically changed curriculum and that BNU had lost substantial market share by not altering its curriculum for many years.

22.225 Senate agreed that it was essential that this process did not stop with the formal end of C23 in September 2023. Programmes should be constantly kept under review by programme teams.

22.226 Professor Cragg informed Senate that a Legacy workstream was part of the programme. She also advised that there was no current plan for a formal review of C23 as all standard review processes after September 2023 should refer back to C23, but it might still be necessary to review whether BNU had too much curriculum or too many programmes with low numbers in the future.

22.227 Senate sought clarification on plans for the Foundation Year (FY). Professor Cragg confirmed that the FY had not been taken through the C23 programme, but review work on the FY would begin afterwards, with Apprenticeship programmes. New learners will start on the current FY and then join the C23 structure at Level 4.

22.228 The Chair congratulated Professor Cragg and the C23 team for a very well organised programme of activity. Professor Cragg also thanked all those involved in the programme.

#### Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

22.229 Senate received a verbal update from the Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital). Professor Cragg informed Senate that she had recently delivered an all-staff briefing on changes to the TEF. Senate's attention was drawn to the following points:

- the TEF now operated on a four-year cycle with no submissions in between;
- TEF awards were now Gold, Silver, Bronze and the new category of Requires Improvement;
- the University's submission had to focus on what it had done over the past four years and not what it planned to do in the future;
- the TEF now covered all Undergraduate Taught programmes for core and registered students. Partners were now included in the TEF;
- The TEF panel would be assessing BNU's performance over four years against OfS metrics on continuation, completion and progression into highly-skilled employment/further study and in five areas of the National Student Survey (NSS): teaching, learning resources, assessment and feedback, academic support and student voice;
- a BNU narrative submission and a separate student submission was now required. SU Vice-President (Education & Welfare - Uxbridge and Aylesbury) Emily Crawshaw was the Lead on the student submission;

- full guidance on the TEF was expected by the end of September; BNU was currently unaware of exactly what would be required in the submissions ahead of the submission date in mid-January 2023. It was clear, however, that the submissions would need to be completed by Christmas;
- preparatory work had already begun with a focus on defining what BNU meant by 'educational gain' and hypothesizing what a submission showing academic excellence would contain;
- it would be vital to have data to evidence the submissions: Schools had been asked to provide data on each assessment point and some data could also be drawn from previous preparations for a subject-level TEF;
- staff were asked to respond promptly to all requests from the TEF team;
- BNU would target a Silver award.

- 22.230 Senate held a broad discussion around the update. Senate noted the importance of the narrative submission and the tight timeframe and queried if the TEF team had sufficient resources in place.
- 22.231 Professor Cragg informed Senate that BNU's new Head of Teaching and Learning Enhancement had worked on the TEF in a previous role and would be offering an effective 'external scrutiny' of the submission. Critical friends would also be asked to review it.
- 22.232 The TEF team was currently reviewing how it could obtain additional resource to deliver the project, particularly for the work needed with partners. A TEF working group was also operational.
- 22.233 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council Ms Smith noted that it was unclear if the OfS would require the submissions to be approved by Council, but it might be necessary to plan for this.
- 22.234 Professor Cragg confirmed that the current intention was to finalise the submission at Senate's December meeting before seeking Council's approval in January.
- 22.235 The Chair reminded Senate that a poor outcome would weigh on BNU's reputation for several years, while a good outcome would elevate BNU.
- 22.236 Senate agreed that there was much outstanding activity, and evidence of change and improvement, at BNU that could be showcased in the submission.

### Students' Union Report

- 22.237 Senate received a verbal update from SU President Charlotte Leighton-Woods. Senate's attention was drawn to the following achievements in 2021-2022:
- the SU had been ranked second in the UK in the NSS 2022, achieving a top-5 ranking for the sixth consecutive year;
  - the SU had achieved a 69.8% satisfaction score, above benchmark;

- the SU had reviewed its Sabbatical Officer provision to ensure it was fit for purpose, which had led to the decision to elect a fourth Sabbatical Officer;
- the SU Advice Centre had been reviewed and it was pleasing to discover that the majority of students would recommend it to friends;
- the SU had been shortlisted for Whatuni SU of the Year for the sixth year in a row.

22.238 The SU's plans for 2022-2023 included:

- work on the cost-of-living crisis;
- inclusivity, with a particular focus on encouraging kindness on campus and ensuring students felt included and cared for;
- the initiation of the Big Conversation during enrolment: the SU had met with students in The Room after enrolment to give them lanyards, discuss their concerns and what support students particularly needed;
- the launch of an International Student Guide and the introduction of more international cultural and celebratory events;
- a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) leadership drive;
- a collaboration with the previous Mayor of High Wycombe and the mother of Libby Squires to promote safety on BNU's campuses, for which the SU also hoped to get help from Buckinghamshire Council;
- a new SU strategic plan.

22.239 Mr Tester noted that Thames Valley Police had recently visited The Venue and had been impressed with the SU's anti-spiking strategy.

22.240 The Chair commended the SU on their programme of positive activities.

22.241 Professor Cragg suggested the SU's work on inclusion could perhaps be linked to an Opportunity Module in C23.

22.242 Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) Professor Paul Morgan congratulated Ms Leighton-Woods on her meeting with the former Mayor and Libby Squire's mother, which had resulted in some community-project funding and demonstrated the local impact BNU could have.

22.243 Head of School: Creative and Digital Industries Dr Russel Stone informed Senate that the School would be hosting the Kindness in Education Awards as part of activities to mark World Kindness Day on 13 November.

## Degree Classification Algorithm and Academic Assessment Regulations

- 22.244 Senate considered final changes to the Degree Classification Algorithm, which had been under consultation, and associated amendments to the Academic Assessment Regulations. Academic Registrar Miriam Moir highlighted to Senate:
- the proposal being considered was the culmination of a series of papers that had come to Senate over the past 12 months;
  - there had been concern that the previous algorithm had not been reviewed for many years and that it might be disadvantaging BNU students;
  - the initial proposal had been to introduce a discounting mechanism based on the best 200 credits across Level 5 and Level 6; 40 credits would be discounted from either Level 5 or Level 6, causing some concern that it would not account for students' 'exit velocity', and that it would be possible for a student's dissertation or final major project (FMP) to be discounted from their final degree classification calculation;
  - Academic Registry had consulted staff and students about the proposal and concern had also been raised about the clarity of the change, as it was hard to explain how the discounting mechanism worked;
  - the proposal now being considered by Senate contained a subtle amendment: the new algorithm was still based on the best 200 credits at Level 5 and Level 6, but the credit to be discounted would now be split equally across the relevant levels, i.e. 20 credits at Level 5 and 20 credits at Level 6. Restricting discounting at Level 6 to 20 credits would ensure that dissertation / final major project modules still contributed at least in part to a student's degree classification (minimum 10 credits after discounting has been applied);
  - the changes required to the Academic Assessment Regulations were on pages 11 and 12 of the Regulations;
  - the paper also addressed concerns raised at Senate from the School of Aviation and Security: a review was undertaken with the School regarding some anomalous programmes that operated outside the standard algorithm, either in terms of the weighting of credits at Levels 5 and 6, or the volume of credit to be involved. It was agreed that one programme would be amended to enable the new algorithm to be applied to its awards, while no discounting would be applied to a second programme.
- 22.245 Ms Moir also confirmed to Senate in subsequent discussions that students would still need to pass 120 credits at every level to attain an award, but only 100 credits at level 5 and 100 credits at level 6 (in a standard Bachelor's programme) would count towards the final degree classification. This would mitigate against students deciding to 'not try' on some modules because they would be discounted under the new algorithm.
- 22.246 Senate expressed some concern about potential grade inflation resulting from the change. Ms Moir advised that the amended proposal was anticipated to have a reduced impact on the awarding of

good honours compared to the original proposal, but that it was likely to bring the awarding of good honours back to levels seen under the Covid-19 pandemic No Detriment Policy.

- 22.247 Professor Cragg noted that it was important to explain why this change was being made: a paper was accordingly being written outlining that this had been done following a review of algorithms across the sector.
- 22.248 The Chair commented that the OfS expected providers to ensure awards were credible and credible compared to what was previously awarded. The University did not expect to see a sudden step change in the awarding of good honours, but a gradual / slight increase might occur. Discounting was now an accepted mechanism as it had been recognised that it was highly likely that current students would have at least one module in their degree adversely impacted by challenging life events or circumstances.
- 22.249 The Chair also noted that the OfS would always identify unexplained variance that it required providers to account for, but BNU had much less of such variance than other providers.
- 22.250 The Academic Registrar informed Senate that it was theoretically impossible for a student to be disadvantaged by the new algorithm compared to the previous algorithm, but the new algorithm could potentially advantage a student who had one extremely poor module compared to a student whose results had been more consistent. Academic Registry would be monitoring this through the Student Records System.
- 22.251 Senate approved the changed Degree Classification Algorithm and the amended Academic Assessment Regulations for immediate use. The new algorithm would apply to students with a 2022-2023 enrolment session and onwards.

#### Universities UK Report: 'Closing the ethnicity degree awarding gaps: three years on'

- 22.252 Senate considered the report from Universities UK (UUK), which provided an update to UUK's 2019 report. Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Digital) Professor Cragg highlighted the following points to Senate:
- BNU's overall BAME awarding gap had fallen to 4% from 11% in 2017/18, but BNU's Asian awarding gap was significantly higher than the sector's, and the BAME awarding gap also varied significantly by School. The School of Nursing and Midwifery had almost no awarding gap;
  - the report contained recommendations around the need for strong leadership, conversations about race and culture, developing racially diverse and inclusive communities, gathering and analysing data, and understanding what works in order to continue to reduce the awarding gap;
  - BNU was working to join the Race Equality Charter;
  - C23 had a focus on inclusion;

- there was also a link between inclusion and retention and engagement;
- the report would also be considered by Education Committee.

22.253 Senate held a wide-ranging discussion of the report. Senate agreed it was essential that the University continued to reflect on what more it could do to address the gap, as well as broader equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) challenges. Senate also agreed:

- it was essential to create an inclusive community, to have conversations about how staff could be more inclusive and to empower staff to have conversations about race and culture. Development training for staff and students was critical to enable this;
- School EDI Leads and the C23 programme's focus on inclusivity and accessibility could also be effective ways to move forwards with reducing the gap;
- there was a need for more diverse role models at BNU and to celebrate BNU's diversity more;
- decolonising the curriculum was essential;
- School staffing should be diverse across all Schools;
- there were pockets of good practice across BNU but these needed to be widened to incorporate the whole BNU community;
- it would be helpful for Senate to see an Action Plan following consideration of the report by other teams at BNU;
- committee membership needed to be diversified;
- it could be helpful to confer Honorary Awards on more diverse recipients and to make those recipients more visible to BNU, but staff would need to nominate such recipients.

22.254 The Director for Student Success advised that she would be proposing transition sessions from summer 2023 onwards for students new to higher education to UET shortly; Illume could be used to track whether these activities helped address the awarding gap.

22.255 Senate would await with interest the outcome of Education Committee's discussion of the report.

#### Sustainability Committee

22.256 Senate received a draft of the committee's Terms of Reference presented by Head of Sustainability Steve Edge. Mr Edge informed Senate that

- BNU had had a Sustainability Committee in the past and now wanted to reintroduce it;
- the new Committee would be focused on achieving carbon net zero by 2030, but beyond this on BNU's broader sustainability strategy and embedding sustainability into its education programmes and research;
- it would meet three times a year with the Vice-Chancellor as Chair;

- its membership was still being confirmed, but the intention was to include stakeholders from across BNU as sustainability was a cross-university consideration;
- the University's new Sustainability Strategic Plan was being developed, with work ongoing to quantify targets and ensure objectives were achievable and challenging;
- the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals would inform BNU's sustainability activities;
- the Committee will report into Senate and Council.

22.257 The Chair advised Senate that extensive discussions had been held regarding where the Committee should report to and confirmed that Senate's focus would be on oversight of the Committee's work to embed sustainability into BNU's research and educational programmes. Professor Cragg welcomed the Committee reporting into Senate.

22.258 Senate agreed that a specific reference to the educational and research aspects of sustainability should be included in the Terms of Reference.

**Action: Steve Edge / Sustainability Committee Secretary**

22.259 Senate agreed membership should include the SU Sustainability Ambassador or Green Officer.

22.260 Mr Edge confirmed a draft of the Sustainability Strategic Plan would be shared with Senate at its December meeting, following consultation with the new Head of Estates.

NSS Action Plan and 2023 Campaign

22.261 Senate received a report on the NSS 2022 Action Plan and the planned 2023 campaign from Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) Professor Paul Morgan. Professor Morgan shared a slide deck with Senate that highlighted

- the 2022 results had been extremely pleasing after the disappointing 2021 results, with improvements in all areas;
- the 2022 campaign had been very successful, with the achievement of an 81% response rate;
- BNU should be confident, and expect, it could consistently achieve good NSS results going forward;
- BNU was above benchmark for all areas apart from Learning Resources, although Learning Resources had still achieved a 10% increase in satisfaction from 2021; a Learning Resources Working Group had been established to support this area;
- all Programme Leaders needed to become experts in their NSS data;
- BNU had outperformed many larger providers across all areas of the NSS;
- the rapid return to full face-to-face teaching after the pandemic had been appreciated by BNU students, but it must be expected that the rest of the sector would

respond to a set of national results in 2022 that showed no return to pre-pandemic satisfaction levels for the sector;

- the long-term goal was to achieve a consistent year-on-year improvement in BNU's programmes and results;
- planning for NSS 2023 was underway, but this should not involve substantial new activity: it should involve continuing what was done in 2022 as BNU had achieved a high performance level;
- School NSS Action Plans should demonstrate that Schools were prioritising items effectively and continuing to review and respond to student feedback promptly and informing students what action had been taken;
- The OfS had launched a short consultation over the summer about changes to the NSS, which included proposals to remove the Likert Scale and move to direct questions, the removal of question 27 for English providers about overall satisfaction and moving the survey window back to February, rather than allowing providers to launch it when they chose. The sector pushed back strongly, but the outcome was not expected until autumn.

22.262 Head of School: Creative and Digital Industries Dr Stone expressed some concern that areas of the University did not always work together effectively as they could; the focus should always be on the student experience.

22.263 The University Secretary Ms Smith thanked the Dean of Students Emma Binnie and Professor Morgan for their efforts which had transformed the University's approach to the NSS.

22.264 The Chair agreed that if the University could reach the point where the NSS felt like business as usual, the NSS would no longer be such a source of anxiety.

22.265 Senate agreed that it was important to use the NSS 2022 results effectively in marketing campaigns.

22.266 The Chair thanked all staff involved with delivering the NSS and satisfied students.

## Reports to receive

22.267 The following items had been deemed starred items which would not be discussed at the meeting unless any member had raised an issue with any of the items in advance of the meeting. As the Secretary had received no comments, the following items were received without comment:

- \*Council Report: the minutes of the meetings of Council on 31 May and 10 July 2022;
- \*Academic Planning Committee: the minutes of the meetings on 19 May and 7 July 2022;
- \*Education Committee: there had been no minutes of Education Committee since Senate had last met so there were no minutes to receive;
- \*Research and Enterprise Committee: the minutes of the meeting on 30 May 2022;
- \*Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee: the minutes of the meeting on 14 July 2022.

## **Matters for endorsement**

### External Examiner Approval Panel

- 22.268 Senate endorsed the External Examiner appointments approved by the Panel over 2021-2022, particularly noting the appointments approved by the Panel at its meeting of 14 June, which had followed Senate's last meeting.
- 22.269 The Panel had been pleased by the improved standard of nominations during the year resulting from a stricter stance on returning nominations that were inadequately completed back to course teams for revision. Providing an exemplar of strong nomination paperwork had been extremely helpful for staff.
- 22.270 A proposal was made to raise the external examiner fee as this fee had not been reviewed since 2013. Academic Registrar Miriam Moir acknowledged that external examiners do not undertake the role for the fees, but BNU was not as competitive with other providers as the University's fees were low. Benchmarking against the sector had been undertaken. It was proposed to increase the fees to a minimum of £300 and a maximum of £600. The proposal was in budget.
- 22.271 Professor Cragg supported the review of the fees and confirmed that the increased fees were already in the budget allocated to Academic Registry. The increase would enhance BNU's ability to extract more effective performances from external examiners.
- 22.272 The University Secretary noted that it might be necessary to consider how BNU makes honorarium payments to external appointees at all levels.
- 22.273 Senate approved the fee increase for immediate use.

### Validation Report

- 22.274 Senate endorsed the report, noting that there had been no new approval events since June and that programmes had met all approval conditions since Senate's last meeting.

### Partner Franchise / Validation Report

- 22.275 Senate endorsed the report without comment.

## **Any other business**

- 22.276 Senate was advised that the process to appoint a new Senate representative to sit on Council following the conclusion of Professor Florin Ioras' term would be launched shortly.
- 22.277 A member of Senate would also be nominated to join the Honorary Awards Committee for 2022-2023.
- 22.278 Both processes would be undertaken by correspondence.

### **Date of next meeting**

- 22.279 The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 7 December 2022.