



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY
EST. 1891

Minutes for Council (Strategy meeting)

Open Minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2022 at Missenden Abbey.

Present:

Maggie Galliers (Independent [Chair]);
Irene Kirkman (Independent [Deputy Chair]);
Professor Nick Braisby (Vice-Chancellor);
Anthony Murphy (Independent);
Dr Susan Rosser (Independent);
Karen Satterford (Co-Opted);
John Smith (Independent);
Supriya Sobti (Independent);
Jackie Westaway (Independent);
Andy Cole (Independent);
Anna Crabtree (Independent);
Sadie Groom (Independent);
Steve Kennett (Independent);
Ze'ev Portner (Academic Representative);
Honor Fletcher (Students' Union President);
Professor Florin Ioras (Senate Representative);
Hilary Mullen (Senate Representative)

In attendance:

Ellie Smith (University Secretary and Clerk to Council);
Trevor Gabriele (Chief Finance Officer);
Ian Harper (Director of Commercial and Business Development);
Professor Karen Buckwell-Nutt (Director of Institute of Health and Social Care) – Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy item only
Professor David Sines - Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy item only
Dr Emma Tomsett (Secretary)

Welcome / Apologies for Absence

22.114 The Chair, Ms Maggie Galliers, welcomed members to the meeting and noted four apologies:

- Professor Rachel Cragg (Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Digital)
- Emma Binnie (PSE Representative)
- Annet Gamell (Independent)
- Juliet Anderson (Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy)

Declaration of conflicts of interest

22.115 There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

Minutes of the previous meeting

22.116 The Open minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2022 were approved without amendment as an accurate record.

22.117 The Reserved minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2022 were approved without amendment as an accurate record, but it was recommended that they be clearly marked as privileged because they contained a record of legal advice given to the University so must remain private and confidential and not distributed outside Council.

Matters arising / Status of Actions

22.118 Council noted the updates to the actions as outlined on the action sheet.

22.119 Council received a verbal update on action 22.55 'Council requested a further breakdown by School, and other relevant areas, of the University's revenue and profitability. It was agreed that the University Executive Team (UET) would determine when Council will receive this data': Council was assured that this data will be provided at a future meeting.

Chair's Action

22.120 There were no chair's actions to note.

22.121 The Chair reported that she is maintaining close attention to some areas of concern, but noted that there was much to celebrate following the appointment of the University's first Chancellor and congratulated all staff who had helped the University achieve second place in the 'Lecturers and Teaching Quality' category at the 2022 Whatuni Student Choice Awards.

Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy and Institute of Health and Social Care

22.122 Council noted a presentation on the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy (BHSCA) and Institute of Health and Social Care (ISHC) from Institute Director Professor Karen Buckwell-Nutt and Professor David Sines.

22.123 Council's attention was drawn to the following points:

- the Academy has a county-level focus and aspires to be the primary driver that brings the eight partners served by the Academy together
- the Academy and Institute are focused on preparations for the changes to the health and social care system that will result from the implementation of the Health and Care Act on 1 July 2022
- the Institute is the key link between BHSCA and the University

- some of the initial successes for BHSCA, ISHC and the University include that the University secured approval from Social Work England for its Pre-Approved Mental Health Professional and Approved Mental Health Professional programme in April 2022 and is to pilot a Social Care Trainee Nursing Associate programme from September 2022 and.

22.124 A wide-ranging discussion was held after the presentation with the following points raised:

- Independent Member Annet Gamell, who is also the Executive Sponsor of the Primary Care Faculty, is very pleased with the progress made so far and would welcome more involvement with the project
- Council sought and received assurance that the integrated care system (ICS) is more responsive, and that the Academy is increasingly being accepted as the channel through which requests for educational training will be made. Professor Buckwell-Nutt reflected that the Academy has helped BNU get ahead of other institutions in discussions with Trusts
- Council was advised that while there had been an increased interest in Nursing in the immediate aftermath of the main Covid lockdowns, this interest is now slightly declining
- Council was assured that the Academy and Institute is helping with finding more placements for BNU's Nursing, Midwifery and Physician Associate students.
- Council was assured that social care is a priority for the Academy and Institute, and is not subsumed by Nursing.
- the Academy's and Institute's measures of success include employers hiring and retaining BNU graduates; improved BNU metrics for student growth and retention; and meeting Key Performance Initiatives (KPIs) from the new Integrated Care Boards.

22.125 The Chair welcomed the Academy and Institute as a good example of a successful initiative at the University.

Office for Students

22.126 An additional item was added to the meeting agenda and considered as Reserved Business. See Reserved Minutes.

Thrive 2028

22.127 Council noted a short presentation from the Vice-Chancellor Professor Nick Braisby which advised that the University had received positive engagement and comments from its staff and students during consultation on the new university strategy.

22.128 Feedback had indicated that more consideration of how equality, diversity and inclusivity is embedded in the strategy, as either a clear theme or an enabler, was required.

22.129 A new draft of the strategy will be presented to Council for final approval at its July meeting, and will then be launched in the autumn.

Buckinghamshire New University Chancellor: Initial plans

22.130 Council considered the initial plans for the University's first Chancellor. The University Secretary and Clerk to Council, Ms Ellie Smith, reflected on the process by which the Chancellor, Mr Jay Blades MBE, had been selected and appointed. Mr Blades wants his term as Chancellor to leave a lasting legacy for the University.

- 22.131 Council was advised that the announcement of the appointment had received extensive positive national and regional media coverage. Furniture-making companies had also responded positively, giving the University an opportunity to develop some extremely helpful relationships.
- 22.132 Council welcomed the appointment and agreed Mr Blades was an excellent choice. The Chair thanked Deputy Chair of Council Ms Irene Kirkman and former Council members Dr Michael Hipkins and Mr Bob Shennan for their involvement in recruiting him.
- 22.133 Ms Smith outlined future plans for the Chancellor, which include
- formal investiture on 9 September 2022, where Council will have the opportunity to meet Mr Blades
 - launching new furniture-design programmes at the University
 - as part of the Curriculum 23 change programme, potentially developing an Opportunity module on Sustainability with which the Chancellor will be involved
 - launching a Furniture Academy that offers programmes from Further Education to Higher Education
 - fundraising and profile-raising activities
 - a Chancellor's Day

TEF Update: Subject-Level Performance and Submission Plans

- 22.134 Council considered an update on the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF).
- 22.135 The Chair informed Council that the deadline for submission to the next TEF had recently been extended to spring 2023.
- 22.136 The Vice-Chancellor Professor Braisby advised that this will be a provider-level submission but will contain some exploration of subject-level provision.
- 22.137 Council was also advised that the TEF criteria had changed: providers now need to demonstrate excellence in their submissions. The National Student Survey (NSS) still shapes the TEF, with expanded metrics on the student voice and learning resources, as do the Office for Students (OfS) measures for regulating student outcomes proposed in the B3 Condition of Registration, particularly progression into high-level employment.
- 22.138 The University aspires to a Silver award.
- 22.139 Council was presented with data that showed BNU's areas of strength and weakness. It was noted that learning resources is a weakness, but the University is putting substantial investment into this area and will continue to do so.
- 22.140 It was acknowledged that the University has faced a long-term challenge with the continuation / completion rates of its white, male students, but this is partly explained by other factors such as subject choices.
- 22.141 A TEF Working Group has been established to produce the University submission. Although the deadline has been moved, it remains a tight timeframe in which to produce the data needed.
- 22.142 The outgoing President of the Students' Union (SU), Ms Honor Fletcher, confirmed that the SU is part of the Working Group, is working closely with Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Digital

Professor Rachel Cragg and will be handing this work over to the President-Elect of the Students' Union Ms Charlotte Leighton-Woods.

22.143 Ms Smith confirmed that the SU TEF submission is an agenda item at the next meeting of the Student Experience Committee.

22.144 It was suggested that the University's Level 4 and Level 5 Apprenticeships could be useful to consider as part of the submission on the progression metric.

UKVI Student Route Compliance Inspection: Update and Action Plan

22.145 Council considered an update on the United Kingdom Visas & Immigration (UKVI) Student Route Compliance Inspection. Council was informed that the University has not yet received the report from UKVI following its inspection.

22.146 Ms Smith updated Council on the action plan currently underway to ensure the University is fully compliant with all UKVI requirements. Actions already taken and being taken include:

- closure of the International Master of Business Administration (IMBA) programme that was not compliant to new students. Options to manage current students on the programme are being considered.
- revising the University's agent contract and adding a clause that prohibits agents using sub-agents. Agent contracts are currently for two-year periods so all agents will gradually move onto the new contract.
- closing down the entry route from sub-agent MKNCC
- the University's Compliance team is checking all students' enrolment statuses are accurate on the UKVI Sponsorship Management System (SMS); the plan is that SMS reporting will be a daily priority for staff
- reviewing the Attendance Monitoring System (AMS) and the attendance and engagement process to identify improvements and communicate clearly to academics that they must use the system
- introduction of a University Panel to review any proposed withdrawals of International students as withdrawals impact the University's Basic Compliance Assessment (BCA)
- the University's English language entry requirement has been raised and ongoing English language support for current International students is being provided through British Study Centres
- all credibility interviews are now being done by University staff and recorded.

22.147 The University is carefully reviewing its relationship with EdSkills and MKNCC. It does not anticipate continuing to work with MKNCC.

22.148 The University is also reviewing its internal structure around international recruitment.

22.149 Council was assured that the University wants to complete the work in the current action plan by the summer.

22.150 Council was assured that the University is well within the UKVI thresholds on its current BCA, which was submitted on 19 May 2022.

22.151 Council queried the number of students on which these metrics were based, and it was confirmed that the completion metric was based on a small number of international students (around 12 students) while the enrolment and visa refusal metrics were based on a much larger number of students.

- 22.152 Council remarked that it is important to know if in, for example, 1-2 years the completion metric could be very different with larger numbers of International students. Council also advised that reviewing statistical data on a daily basis can sometimes be misleading as it is always historic, and that it may be more helpful to regularly consider attendance data.
- 22.153 Senate Representative Ms Hilary Mullen noted that the high number of academic misconduct cases may also distort completion rates. Students who are found to have committed academic misconduct could become non-completions.
- 22.154 It was confirmed to Council that international recruitment has resumed, but that students can currently only apply to BNU programmes, i.e., cannot be issued CAS, as the University has used up its 2021-2022 allocation of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS).
- 22.155 The Deputy Chair of Council, Ms Irene Kirkman, reflected that the University had re-entered international recruitment on a large scale quickly and this had come at some cost to the University's preparedness.
- 22.156 Council was advised that there had been a whistleblower at the University, who has now left although much of what had been raised did not relate directly to UKVI compliance.
- 22.157 Concerns were expressed by Ms Mullen about the AMS and the accuracy of the data it holds, and about the amount of planning given to the delivery of courses with high numbers of international students. The Academic Representative Dr Ze-ev Portner indicated the benefits for the University of engagement with teaching staff.
- 22.158 The Chair of Audit Committee and Independent Council member, Ms Supriya Sobti, asked if it was a possible to compile a list of BNU systems that may not be delivering maximum functionality so that actions can be tracked against them.

ACTION: University Executive Team

- 22.159 Council queried whether applicants who were expecting to join the closed IMBA in September 2022 had been informed that this cohort would not go ahead. It was agreed that the University Secretary and Clerk to Council would check this.

ACTION: University Secretary and Clerk to Council Ms Ellie Smith

- 22.160 Council reiterated its support for ensuring sufficient staff with specialist knowledge to support international students.
- 22.161 Professor Braisby also noted that the University will shortly be submitting its request for its 2022-2023 CAS allocation. The current situation may influence how many the University requests.
- 22.162 The Chair of Council requested an update at the July meeting of Council on the UKVI's report (if received) and action plan, and agreed that it was important that any statistical information given provided a full accounting of the situation to Council.

REF 2021 Outcome and Implications

- 22.163 Council considered an update on the results for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

- 22.164 The Vice-Chancellor Professor Braisby noted that historically the University had not had a sufficiently clear research strategy. The progress made in REF2021 compared to REF2014 was a testament to the BNU staff undertaking research, which enabled the University to make a strong submission.
- 22.165 Senate Representative and Director of Enterprise and Research Professor Florin Ioras reflected on the work put into REF2021, which had started over two years ago, and involved the submission of 30.0 FTE members of staff to six Units of Assessment.
- 22.166 Council's attention was particularly drawn to the fact that 44% of BNU's research was regarded as world-leading or of internationally excellent quality. The University's overall Grade Point Average (GPA), which is used in the Times Higher Education research rankings, has increased to 2.25.
- 22.167 Council congratulated the University and the REF team on the progress made and recognised that this is part of a longer journey for research at BNU. Professor Ioras noted that while the University may not rank highly for research alone, the improved results will help with University's overall league table position.
- 22.168 Council also agreed that the University needed to reflect on how it could allow staff more time to undertake research. It noted the benefit of recruiting more PhD students who could teach, which in turn would release staff to do research.
- 22.169 The Chair thanked Professor Ioras for his leadership in Research.

Any Other Business

- 22.170 The Chair thanked outgoing SU President Ms Fletcher for her excellent contribution to Council over the past year in which she had worked extremely hard to make the student voice heard, and wished her well for the future.
- 22.171 The University Secretary and Clerk to Council would shortly be inviting expressions of interest in the role of Deputy Chair of Council.

Date of next meeting

- 22.172 The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 19 July at 4.00pm at Missenden Abbey. It will be followed by the annual Council dinner.