BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY **CONFIRMED**

SENATE

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SENATE held on 2 NOVEMBER 2011

Present:	Prof J Vinney (**Chair**)
	Mr C Allen; Ms A Allerston; Prof M Bennett; Dr C Bond; Mr J Holroyd; Mr T Horner; Mr A James; Ms J Jenkin (**Secretary**); Mrs J Mack; Prof T McIntyre-Bhatty; Mr D Newell (for items 1 to 5); Ms J Quest; Prof J Roach; Mr J Tarrant; Prof G Thomas; Dr K Vall; Dr K Wilkes.
Observers:	Prof D Osselton;
In attendance:	Ms P Hodgson (SUBU, VP Lansdowne); Mr A Ireland (for Mr Jukes); Mr G Rayment (Committee Clerk); Ms J Williams (Policy & Committees Manager).
Apologies received:	Mr J Andrews; Ms M Barron; Prof D Buhalis; Prof P Comninos; Prof T Darvill; Prof S Deutsch; Mr D Evans; Prof B Gabrys; Dr S Jeary; Ms K Jones; Mr S Jukes; Prof P Lewis; Prof R Palmer; Mr D Reeve; Prof B Richards; Prof H Schutkowski; Prof T Sheppard; Prof R Vaughan; Prof A Webster; Mr D Willey.

1. **WELCOMES, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

   There were no declarations of interest.

2. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SENATE HELD ON 22 JUNE 2011**

   The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2.1 **Matters Arising**

2.1.1 <u>Minute 8.2.</u> The Chair thanked members for their comments on the paper on the review of the Graduate School which had been made available following the discussion at the June meeting. The formal re-launch of the Graduate School with its widened remit was scheduled to take place in January under the leadership of Prof Zhang (appointment commencing 17 January). The importance of ensuring that the changes were effectively communicated to students was recognised and would be taken into account as part of the plans for the re-launch.

3. **REPORT OF ELECTRONIC SENATE MEETING OF 12 TO 19 OCTOBER 2011**

3.1 The report was noted and the Chair drew members' attention to the responses given to matters raised by elected members. Two of the matters raised had been referred to the live meeting for further discussion (see Item 8 below).

3.2 Ms Quest raised concerns regarding on-going IT issues affecting both staff and students. These included failures of the H:/drive, the unavailability of out-of-hours IT support and slow PC response times (for example, it sometimes took up to 20 minutes to log-off of one account and onto another when using the equipment in lecture theatres). She welcomed the efforts being made to improve the service and the fact that the EIS Platform Development Manager had personally visited lectures in order to apologise to students. Nevertheless, the issues were having a negative effect on the

overall student experience and should be addressed as a matter of priority. The Chair informed Senate that the University Leadership Team (ULT) had debated the issues and received assurances from the Director of Estates and Information Services (EIS) that every possible effort was being made to resolve them. Members discussed the need for effective contingency plans and suggested that, if staff were made fully aware of potential problems in a timely manner, they would be able to ensure that they had alternative arrangements in place. For example, they could ensure that their presentations were available on a memory stick to avoid the need to log-on to the network in lectures.

3.3 The Chair drew members' attention to the revised Terms of Reference for the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC). He explained that, following feedback from members, the requirement that the Deputy Chair of these committees be drawn from the Senate membership had been replaced with a requirement that the relevant Chairs appoint the Deputy Chairs from amongst the committee membership.

3.4 Some members expressed dissatisfaction with the electronic senate process, citing the extra time required to navigate and use the on-line papers compared with the traditional distribution of printed papers. The Chair acknowledged this and recommended that members set time aside in their diaries, as they would for an 'in-person' meeting, in order to read and comment on the on-line papers. It was agreed to look again at the electronic senate process and whether any further improvements could be made to ease accessibility and make the process less time-consuming.

> **ACTION**: Review the electronic Senate process as above.
>
> **ACTION BY**: Secretary (Ms Jenkin)

4. OFFA UPDATE

4.1 Ms Jenkin provided a brief verbal update on progress in implementing the fair access agreement. £150,000 was available towards scholarships (equating to approximately 330 bursaries). Outreach activity was continuing, with some Aim Higher staff being retained to support this work. Roll-out was expected from September 2012. £3million had been committed by 2017 (increasing as fees income increases).

5. CHAIR'S UPDATE

5.1 Vision and Values: Update on Strategic Planning
5.1.1 The Chair explained that, following the internal launch of the new Vision and Values, the external launch was expected to take place in late November (date to be confirmed). Work was now progressing on identifying the key strategic headlines to be implemented by 2018, including planning for cross-cutting areas such as Finance. Consultation with staff and students (including Senate) on the strategies would take place in December/January following consideration by the University Board. Members agreed that the Vision and Values and its underlying strategies would need to be effectively embedded across all of the University's activities and that this would require effective communication. The development of the microsite was welcomed, but it was suggested that this should not be relied upon as the sole means of communicating the key messages, particularly to students. The Chair acknowledged these points and explained that Marketing & Communications staff were considering these issues and developing a communications plan.

5.2 Common Academic Structure (CAS)
5.2.1 Prof McIntyre-Bhatty thanked members for their input into the debate on the CAS at the previous meeting. Proposals had subsequently been submitted to the ULT for approval

and a Steering Group established to take forward their implementation. This would look at three specific areas, broadly defined as the calendar, the structure and communication. Deans and champions from each School would be closely involved in taking this work forward. The SUBU President emphasised that the introduction of the CAS must not be allowed to have a negative effect on the student experience and the rationale behind the changes should be clear and evidence-based. Prof Thomas suggested that a succinct statement be prepared which would clearly communicate the benefits of moving towards a CAS to help communicate these points to staff and students. Prof McIntyre-Bhatty confirmed that there was a strong case for introducing the CAS and that a pragmatic approach to implementation would be taken, with Schools themselves deciding what work needed to be undertaken and the timing of any changes. He also confirmed that the proposals included scope to continue with a 'long thin' structure for some units if there was a pedagogical reason for doing so. Further updates would be given to Senate as work progressed.

5.3 **Student Numbers 2011/12, Recruitment and 2012/13 Planning**

5.3.1 Prof McIntyre-Bhatty explained that student recruitment had been good for 2010/11 and provided a solid base for future changes within the sector. Students achieving AAB+ grades would be deregulated (removed from the student number controls) from 2012/13. Early indications suggested that the University was competitive in this market. In addition, controlled student numbers would be reduced by 8% in 2012/13 (with the expectation that further reductions would follow in subsequent years). The reduction in controlled student numbers would be used to create a pool of 20,000 which all institutions could bid for. If this pool was under-subscribed, any remaining student numbers would be returned to Universities on a pro-rata basis. It was also possible that, in future years, the AAB+ deregulated threshold may be reduced (for example, to BBB+). There was no current evidence that the deregulation of student numbers posed a threat to the University, unless our recruitment profile were to change dramatically. Schools were broadly expected to recruit to 2011/12 levels for the coming year.

5.4 **National Student Survey (NSS)**

5.4.1 Prof McIntyre-Bhatty updated Senate on the response to the recent NSS results. The University Executive Team (UET) had met with senior managers of all Schools and Professional Services to discuss in detail their plans for making gains in terms of service standards. Key measures had also been included in the corporate 100 day plan and progress in implementing this was being closely monitored. The Student Voice Committee (formerly Student Voice Steering Group) were considering how the Student Experience Survey would be taken forward and SUBU were working with students to gather information on their perceptions of 'Organisation and Management' (where the University had received low NSS scores). Members noted how operational problems, such as those recently experienced with IT systems, should not be underestimated in terms of the negative impact they had on student experience.

6. **THE BU PROMISE**

6.1 Ms Jenkin presented proposals for the development of the 'BU Promise' (working title). The proposals had arisen in response to government initiatives to ensure that clear information was provided to students and prospective students. A government working group had made recommendations to the sector for the development of student charters. The University had subsequently considered how this recommendation could be implemented in a way which delivered real benefits to both students and the organisation whilst avoiding the risk that it become a simple 'box checking' exercise. The BU Promise was designed to provide a statement of commitment by BU and SUBU to students and engage students in playing their part. Some of the promises reflected current policy and practice, whereas others were new. The BU Promise would be disseminated through an interactive website, and would be a joint endeavour with SUBU. She invited members to comment on the proposals.

6.2 Mr Horner and Ms Hodgson presented the views of SUBU. There had been wide

support for the concept which was seen as a good way of setting expectations. They felt that an element of personalisation was required to make the 'Promise' relevant to all students and to show that they were seen as individuals by the University. They informed members of their own 'Pride in BU' campaign and how this linked to the 'Promise' in terms of building a shared sense of community. They considered ways in which the 'Promise' could be maintained as a living and relevant concept. This might be achieved through the inclusion of the 'Promise' in the induction process, communication through the interactive website, plus SUBU's role in helping students to understand the expectations. In terms of possible reservations, it was noted that there was a risk that it could be perceived as patronising; it must be applicable equally to all types of students (including, for example, mature and part-time students); and it must be deliverable. Feedback also suggested that the use of the term 'Promise' should be reconsidered. 'Promise' could be perceived as being a 'one-way' agreement and also something which could be too easily broken.

6.3   Ms Quest shared the reservations about the term 'Promise' and also emphasised that private sector examples of customer charters were not directly applicable to the higher education environment which was not based around one-way transactions. She also stressed the need to build trust and commitment in order to build ongoing relationships. It was important too that the University did not over-promise and then fail to deliver. Dr Bond similarly expressed concerns about the potential commoditisation of higher education. Some elements of the proposed 'Promise' could work well for some elements of service delivery (for example, Library services) but a different approach was needed for academic relationships.

6.4   Members discussed alternatives to the title of 'BU Promise'. Suggestions include 'BU experience', 'B Us', 'BU Ethos', 'BU Deal', and 'BU Journey'. Members broadly agreed the need to emphasise that the Promise was a two-way commitment. It was important to develop a sense of the University as a community. Members discussed whether students tended to identify themselves with their particular School rather than with the University as a whole. It was suggested that the 'Promise' needed to apply at all levels within the organisation, from individual programmes through to Schools and the wider University.

6.5   Prof Bennett suggested that, whilst accepting the need for the 'Promise', the proposed document was too long and repetitious. He suggested that it should, instead, emphasise the partnership aspects of the University/student relationship by presenting the elements of the Promise as a series of couplets – each presenting the respective commitments/expectations of the organisation and the student. Members broadly supported this suggestion and agreed that it was important to keep the document concise, simple and achievable. Others suggested that, if the document was over-simplified there was a risk that it could become too broad and insufficiently specific to be meaningful. It was also felt that further consideration needed to be given as to how the 'Promise' was positioned – whether it was for a largely internal audiences and, if so, how the messages would be communicated to external audiences. It was also noted that some work was already taking place within Schools on student engagement which needed to be included in the consideration of the 'Promise'.

6.6   In Summary, the Chair said that, whatever shape the 'Promise' ultimately took, it had to be rooted firmly in the Vision and Values. Work would progress on developing the 'Promise' with a view to implementing it before Christmas. Members were invited to submit any further comments or ideas directly to Ms Jenkin.

7.   OTHER REPORTS

7.1   There were no other reports to present to Senate.

8. ISSUES RAISED BY ELECTED MEMBERS

On-line assignment handling.

8.1 The Chair explained that the Health & Safety concerns raised through the electronic Senate would be referred to the Health & Safety Steering Group for further consideration. There had been some confusion among staff as to whether on-line assignment handling was to become mandatory. Ms Jenkin explained that it was not mandatory or appropriate for all courses. However, a pilot had been undertaken to explore what options might exist for the on-line submission of assignments, marking and providing feedback. Support was now being offered to support those who wished to implement all or some of these elements. It was suggested that some staff believed that on-line assignment handling was being imposed on all staff in the School of Design, Engineering and Computing but Prof Roach firmly denied that this was the case. Others noted that student feedback showed that they preferred to receive typed feedback and that moves towards this should be embraced. Members discussed the use of mobile technology and whether this was consistently available to all staff. The Chair confirmed that mobile technology was taken into account in the ongoing implementation of the IT Strategy.

Student Entry Criteria

8.2 A question had been raised regarding student entry criteria in response to anecdotal evidence in respect of a student being accepted into one School with grades CCD, who had subsequently requested to transfer to a different School with higher entry requirements. Prof McIntyre-Bhatty explained that the average entry points in clearing were almost equivalent to those pre-clearing and that, overall, there were higher tariff entry points than ever before. Members did point out, however, that it was frustrating to have to reject some students only to subsequently accept others with lower grades through clearing. The Chair agreed and said that this was a symptom of student number controls of which ULT were very mindful.

9. MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES

9.1 **Research & Enterprise Committee, 19th October 2011 (unconfirmed)**
The minutes were noted.

9.2 **Academic Standards Committee, 21 September 2011**
The minutes were noted.

9.3 **Academic Standards Committee, 19 October 2011 (extract) (unconfirmed)**
Senate noted the extract of the minutes and approved:

The amended Undergraduate and Postgraduate Admissions Regulations and the Admissions (Taught Programmes) Policy and Procedures;

Proposed changes to the maximum credit limits for postgraduate awards, namely that APCL applications be increased to two thirds of the credits for the award for which the student is registered and APEL applications be increased to one third of the credit for the award for which a student is registered;

The addition of MEng to the list of awards offered by the University.

9.4 **School of Tourism, School Academic Board, 5 October 2011**
The minutes were noted.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 The Chair thanked the outgoing Professoriate Observers and welcomed Prof Kretschmer and Prof Rosser to the membership. He also welcomed the new Policy & Committees Manager, Jo Williams.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Electronic Senate – 9.00am, 22 February 2012 to 5.00pm, 29 February 2012
Live meeting – 2.15pm, 14 March 2012 (Boardroom)

Committee Clerk
November 2011   SEN-1112-Minutes 2 November 2011