

SENATE AND UNIVERSITY BOARD

STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2007

Present: Mr M Riordan (Chair)
Mrs M Barron; Mrs R Dugan; Prof M Hadfield;
Mr A Hyland; Prof T Husband; Reverend Canon B Merrington;
Dr E Mytton; Mr N Richardson; Ms Z Zuvcenko
Student Representatives: Mr D Clark; Mr S Delamare; Ms T Humphreys;
Mr D Matalon

In Attendance: Dr B Astin; Ms J Hanson; Professor R Pope
Ms E Stephens (Item 3)
Ms A Gutiérrez (Secretary); Mrs V Wood (Committee Clerk)

Apologies: Mrs J Beard; Mr C Elder; Mr A James; Mr P Kneller; Mrs F McMillan;
Mr S Neaves

The Chairman welcomed the Dean of Student Experience, Dr Brian Astin, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) Professor Rosemary Pope, and the student representatives David Clark, Simon Delamare, Terri Humphries and Daniel Matalon to the meeting.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (9 May 2007)

The Minutes were approved as a correct record.

1.1 Matters Arising

1.1.1 Council Tax Payments by Students

The Secretary and Registrar had received a reply from the Chief Executive of Bournemouth Borough Council stating that, whilst individual cases would be treated sympathetically, Council Tax regulations could not be altered.

1.1.2 Voluntary Work for 2012 Olympics

Volunteering will continue to be considered as opportunities arise.

1.1.3 Careers Service

A suitable internal candidate for the post of Head of Careers Service was currently being sought. This position would include responsibility for the renamed Graduate Employment Services, as well as Placements.

1.1.4 askBU and talkBU Projects

Both Projects were now up and running and, after various initial problems, working well with positive feedback. Incomplete signage had led to some unawareness of the location of the Projects, although this was now being addressed.

The askBU for future students would be launched on Monday 19 December 2007.

2. REPORTS RECEIVED ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The following Reports were taken as read: the Annual Report of the Residential Services; Report on University Student Transport; Report on Space Management, Timetabling and Space Planning; and the Fund and Bursary Awards Summary for 2006-07.
- 2.2 Members thanked those concerned for producing the reports.

3. DIGNITY DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY REPORT

- 3.1 The Report was presented by Emma Stephens, Diversity and Equality Adviser, who highlighted the introduction of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) this academic year. New processes to ensure compliance and to establish good practice would be required. During the next month preliminary work undertaken by James Palfreman-Kay, Manager of BU's Additional Learning Needs Service (but seconded part time to as a second Diversity and Equality Adviser) would be completed and the Guidelines launched. By drawing together all diversity strands: race, gender, disability, faith, religious belief, sexual orientation and age, previously unconsidered areas would be included. Staff training and support to ensure evidence was pulled together was planned.
- 3.2 The University was now legally required to have both a Gender and a Disability Scheme sitting alongside the existing Race Equality Scheme, for students and staff. Mr Palfreman Kay and Ms Stephens were shortly to visit all Schools and Professional Services with each specific area's summarised Action Plans for all three Schemes.
- 3.3 Also highlighted were the Chaplaincy's work which enabled and maintained multi faith dialogue and BU's participation for the first time at Bournemouth's Bourne Free Festival, a local gay pride event celebrating diversity. This had proved useful in raising awareness and promoting the University.
- 3.4 The International Office had obtained two grants for projects to research the integration and interaction between UK and international students, and to promote diversity within the curriculum. Specific work was being carried out to embed this into the curriculum of Events Management programmes within Services Management. A new cultural stimulation exercise with students, Bafa Bafa, aimed to raise awareness and encourage greater cross-cultural communication.
- 3.5 The diversity events held between 19 and 23 March 2007 had been a success, particularly the eye-catching poster campaign to raise awareness and reach those who might not have previously signed up to a diversity and equality ethos. A similar campaign would be repeated in 2008. The Dean of the Media School, Stephen Jukes had become the new Chair of the Dignity Diversity and Equality Steering Group, and the Group had drawn up revised Terms of Reference to strengthen their monitoring responsibilities.
- 3.6 The University's student profile had remained broadly similar to previous years. The introduction of EIAs would enable the University to improve the monitoring and evaluation of these student profiles and the impact of policies and procedures.
- 3.7 Members discussed the University's good reputation for religious inclusivity and interfaith coordination and agreed that the influences of the Students'

Union, the Student Centre and askBU team to provide support or information were important.

3.8 Additional representation from other faith leaders on Board Committees such as the Student Affairs Committee was discussed, but the Chair advised most gave their time on a part time and voluntary basis which could raise difficulties over availability. The University had no major race problems, although the Institution could benefit from greater integration between home and international students and more participation by academic staff. The students' representatives commented on the genuine interest in different cultures, but, as with other Institutions in the South, the University's student profile made it difficult to obtain a broad range of views on diversity.

3.9 The Head of Academic Services and Mr Palfreman-Kay would discuss statements relating to the Additional Learning Needs mentioned in the Report. **JH**

3.10 The Secretary will follow up with Registry comments made on benchmarking on the figures presented. **Secretary**

Members thanked Ms Stephens for her report and attendance.

4. RESULTS FROM THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2006-07

4.1 The Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) presented the summary of the results from the National Student Survey (NSS). Whilst changes to the analysis and data presentation had made direct comparisons difficult, student satisfaction had seen a marked improvement, with the University's position nearly above the bottom quartile. It was expected clear targets through the University's Key Performance Indicators would see further improvements over the Strategic Planning period. However, some significant issues remained to be addressed, particularly assessment feedback and organisational management.

4.2 As it was important to address student issues at ground level throughout their experience, and to supplement the NSS data, the University had implemented the Student Unit Evaluation (SUE). SUE surveyed students at the end of every unit, with academics accessing the data to establish good practices at both corporate and local level.

4.3 The Dean of Student Experience would examine the results in detail, including issues over organisational management, and, when the Head of Graduate Employment was appointed, over employability. Feedback from Deputy Deans (Education) and Associate Deans on specific School issues would also be obtained. It was emphasised that the results were tightly clustered, which meant even modest progress could significantly improve results

4.4 The Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) commented that the relatively poor result from the School of Health and Social Care, particularly over organisational management reflected some short term difficulties, the time spent in practice, and the greater number of part time students with their different expectations. However, a pilot on-line SUE within this School had proved to be successful.

4.5 The Secretary and Registrar commented on the low responses to NSS (around 10% below the national average) with some instances where the rate had been close to not achieving the 50% benchmark that enabled a University's results to be published.

4.6 The student representatives commented on the students' general unawareness of the NSS's purpose, its place at the end of their programmes, where it was

considered to be of no benefit, issues over timing and the numbers of surveys students were expected to complete. Those that made comments tended to be in the minority and as a result of individual experiences. Members learnt the University had been unable to alter times when several surveys coincided or were due during busy periods, and was one of the reasons the SUE had sufficient flexibility to be held at different periods during the academic year.

- 4.7 The Students' Union was making efforts to communicate the purpose of surveys, and students' responses would lead to improvements. However Members recommended student representatives give more direct feedback; askBU, as well as on-line myBU, be used to promote and provide feedback mechanisms; and, to give greater relevance, messages communicate subject based results to particular student groups.
- 4.8 All Schools received information on the results, with Action Plans drawn up involving academic staff and monitoring procedures through the Academic Standards Committee. However, until the new academic structure was introduced, cascading down to an individual level had not been sufficiently coordinated.

5. PROPOSED CHANGES TO STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Members noted the proposals to change the membership and the title of the Committee (to the Student Experience Committee), and to re-format the Terms of Reference to reflect the wider student experience, quality assurance and enhancement. The Secretary and Registrar informed Members these proposed alterations were seen as an interim measure until the completion of the review on Senate and its Committees.
- 5.2 Members commented that, under the Terms of Reference, the proposed Student Experience Committee's function should be "monitoring and promoting" rather than "ensuring" the on-going enhancement of the overall student experience.
- 5.3 To underline the importance of the Board's commitment and awareness of the student experience, it was agreed the numbers of Board representatives should be changed from "up to" to "at least" four Members.
- 5.4 The number of students nominated by the Students Union, and the definitions of the groups these should be drawn from, was discussed, especially the need to have representatives from international and post graduate students. However, it was felt this could be too prescriptive, and affect attendance. Students' representatives and the Students' Union officers on the Committee had a duty to put forward issues on behalf of the whole student body. It was agreed the Terms of Reference should ensure as much flexibility as possible over representation.
- 5.5 Members recommended for Senate's approval the proposals to change the title of the Committee to the Student Experience Committee, to alter its membership and to the revised Terms of Reference, subject to the comments made. **S&R/Secretary**

6. STUDENTS' UNION MATTERS

6.1 President's Report

The President reported that the Annual General Meeting held a short time ago had highlighted two major issues: transport provision to the Unite residences at

Poole and the proposed redundancies among the academic staff, which was discussed by Members in detail.

6.2 Bus Service to Corfe House

6.2.1 Students felt the bus service was inadequate, and presented particular problems for students studying late or taking part in evening recreational activities. The number of postgraduate and Media School students at Corfe House, with their different patterns of study, was also highlighted. Details were given of a recent survey showing academic performance could be affected if there was not a balance of study and social interaction. Whilst recognising current bus provision was expensive until Poole had a critical mass of students, the Union felt there needed to be “damage limitation” to avoid students choosing not to take a place at Corfe House.

6.2.2 Members were advised the University outsourced its bus service provision to Wilts and Dorset buses, and that the Students' Union vehicles were fully utilised by the Clubs and Societies. It was agreed the Dean of Student Experience would discuss the issues raised with the Deputy Vice Chancellor over ways to increase the level of provision.

DofSE/DVC

6.3 Proposed Academic Staff Redundancies

6.3.1 As a result of concerns raised at the Annual General Meeting over the proposed academic staff redundancies, a motion for an Extraordinary General Meeting had been passed to decide student reactions. The final decisions from this meeting had been presented to University Board Members and included a motion of no confidence in the UEG/ Vice Chancellor's mission statement. A protest demonstration would be organised on the University Open Day on 17 November 2007 to support these issues.

6.3.2 The President advised the action was also directed at changes to the National Centre of Computer Animation which students felt would affect the quality of their studies and subsequent value of their degrees. The Vice Chancellor and the Executive Group, on behalf of the Board, would be responding to each issue through the Students' Union Executive at a meeting the following week, and the Union would then be charged with the responsibility for ensuring these were communicated.

6.3.3 The Chair advised the outcome of the consultations with the four affected Schools would be known shortly.

6.3.4 Members were concerned students were not presented with the whole picture and were being misled by the views of a minority of academic staff. Concern was also expressed over the accusations the Union had been biased towards management, despite its efforts to be neutral. However, it was agreed clear, accurate messages should continue to be communicated through the Students' Union and the University Executive Group to reassure students of the University's commitment to substantial investment.

6.3.5 The Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) advised the recent Institutional Audit had expressed confidence in the strength of the University's academic standards and robustness of its structure. Communications had emphasised the aim of the Strategic Plan was not reductions in contact time, but to enhance student experience.

6.3.6 Dr Mytton, in her capacity as a Board staff representative, reinforced the positive commitment of academic staff to the overall student learning experience and that, while there were issues by some staff within the Media School, this represented only one of the University's Schools.

- 6.4 Other matters included in the President's report were the positive comments received from new students on the additional activities provided between their arrival and Freshers Week; Jenni Winter (the previous Students Union Vice President, Representations) had been appointed Partnership Officer with responsibility for increasing contact with Colleges; and, after a good response from the new student cohort, there were now 54 Clubs and Societies.
- 6.5 The numbers attending the Personal Development Scheme ("Your Best You") on presentation skills and public speaking had risen again this academic year. The President was also holding initial meetings with Academic Development and Quality over the Union's contribution to the Institutional Audit in 2008.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 BU Access Agreement 2007-2011

Members noted the tabled document on the BU Access Agreement, which had been updated to bring the University in line with comparable institutions and to reflect University Policy.

The document had been coordinated from a variety of sources by Registry and would be submitted to the Office of Fair Access. It included fee limits, bursaries and other financial support for students, Scholarships and outreach activities. Implementation would be through linked Policies and sources.

Members noted the Agreement, which would be attached to the Minutes of the meeting for the Board's information.

Secretary

Ana Gutiérrez
Secretary
7 January 2008

Vikki Wood
Committee Clerk
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