

SENATE

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SENATE held on 20 MARCH 2013

- Present: Prof J Vinney (**Chair**)
Mr C Allen; Prof M Bennett; Dr C Bond; Ms L Bryant (SUBU); Dr C Chapleo; Ms A Gutierrez; Mr A James; Dr S Jeary; Mr S Jukes; Ms J Mack; Prof T McIntyre-Bhatty; Prof R Palmer; Dr D Patton; Ms J Quest; Mr D Reeve; Mr A Riggs; Prof J Roach; Prof E Rosser; Ms C Symonds; Dr H Thiel; Prof G Thomas; Dr K Wilkes; Prof T Zhang.
- In attendance: Ms M Barron; Ms S Chaytor-Grubb (SUBU); Ms C Cherry; Ms M Frampton (Committee Clerk); Ms K Pichlmann (Agenda Item 6.4); Mr M Simpson (SUBU); Dr A Tattersall
- Board Observer: Dr P Rawlinson
- Apologies received: Mr J Andrews; Prof D Buhalis; Prof P Comminos; Mr D Evans; Prof B Gabrys; Mr J Holroyd; Prof H Schutkowski

1. WELCOMES, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Dr Rawlinson who is a member of the University Board and would observe the meeting. The Chair reminded members of the pre-Board dinner event on 25 April 2013.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SENATE HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2012

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record, with the exception of agenda item 6.4 – Senate Committees Annual Review. It was agreed the minute should read “It was noted that Senate had been through the same annual review process as the sub committees and it had been thoroughly reviewed three years ago”.

2.1 Matters Arising

Minute No. 3 – Issue of Degree Certificates

This item was listed on the agenda for discussion.

Minute No. 6.4 – Amendment of Senate Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference had been updated and approved at the Electronic Senate meeting.

3. REPORT OF ELECTRONIC SENATE MEETING OF 27TH FEBRUARY TO 6 MARCH 2013

Minute No. 2 – Impact of Framework and Common Units on Costs

The minute would be amended to advise the initial question had been raised by the School Academic Staff Representative (HSC), instead of the Media School Representative (HSC).

Minute No. 21 – Media School Academic Board Minutes of 10 October 2012

Prof Zhang advised the wording of the minute from the Media School Academic Board was inaccurate, as the three day postgraduate teaching training is provided by EDQ rather than the Graduate School, and it was, therefore, agreed the wording of the minute should be reviewed at the next meeting of the Media School Academic Board.

4. CHAIR'S UPDATE

4.1 HE Sector Developments

The Chair updated Senate members on HE Sector Development and BU2018 Update simultaneously.

4.2 BU2018 Update

The BU2018 Strategic Plan was now making good progress and had moved on to the second year of Delivery Planning within Schools. The focus this year was to look at KPIs, targets and plans within Schools and Professional Services and look at the progress made and gaps that exist. Dialogue had taken place with the Deans of Schools and Executives within the University, and it was clear that BU had generally adapted well to external pressures and made good progress towards its realising the vision.

Overall the HE sector appeared to be fairly healthy and in a sound financial position, however, income across the sector was predicted to fall and would become unpredictable as a result of the changing student recruitment patterns. HEIs were currently funding a higher proportion of capital expenditure from their own internal cash reserves following reductions in public capital funding; therefore, it had become increasingly difficult to generate surpluses.

Although the number of student applications had increased across the sector this year, it was still an uncertain picture for the sector. Clinical subjects and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects had generally fared better than the Arts, Humanities and social sciences. The Royal Academy of Engineering forecasted that the engineering profession needed 104,000 STEM graduates per year, however there were only 82,000 UK STEM graduates each year, which meant that approximately 40,000 extra graduates were required annually.

Since 2006, there had been increased competition with the introduction of alternative providers, although financial support for students studying with alternative providers made up less than 1% of the overall student support budget. Sir Michael Barber, Chief Education Advisor for Pearson had predicted the end of traditional, middle-ranking universities in light of increased competition from online and large for-profit providers.

Prof Ebdon, Director of the Office of Fair Access (OFFA), attended the BU Fair Access and Widening Participation Conference on 13 March 2013 and spoke about the importance of equal access to Higher Education. Prof Ebdon advised the conference of a newly developed joint national strategy on Fair Access and student success, which was the new name for student retention. Evidence had suggested that bursaries and fee waivers had little effect on students' decisions about whether and where to study, therefore, there was now an increased emphasis on outreach activity.

The Government has accepted the majority of the recommendations proposed in the Lord Heseltine report, ranging across all areas of public policy that affect economic growth. From 2015, a new Single Local Growth Fund would be created; it would include key economic levels of skills, housing and transport funding. The Government would need to negotiate a Local Growth Deal with every Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which would reflect the quality of the LEP's strategic economic plan and the capacity of the local area.

In the international arena, UKBA seemed to be adopting a more collaborative approach. Changes in the regulations of post-study work are also welcomed, such as allowing all PhD students who had completed their studies to stay in the UK for 12 months before having to find a job or start a business; and an additional 1,000 visa places per year would be created for MBA graduates who wanted to stay in Britain and start up a business. Lobbying would continue to persuade the Government to exclude international students from immigration targets.

5. STUDENT EXPERIENCE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- 5.1 Ms L Bryant, Ms S Chaytor-Grubb and Mr M Simpson (Sabbatical Officers from the Students' Union) opened the debate with a presentation that showed aspects of the international student experience and gave recommendations for how BU could make improvements to the support provided to international students and to the positive development of internationalisation within the BU community. Some of the information provided within the presentation had been obtained from the research conducted by Dr Lorraine Brown (School of Tourism). A copy of the presentation slides are attached to the minutes.

Ms Barron confirmed the presentation had provided a good overview of the issues and experiences of international students studying at BU and potential enhancements. This year the induction programme had attempted to integrate activities for both international and UK students, but there had been less participation from international students. Due to the lower participation rates, it had already been agreed that the separate international student induction and orientation programme would be re-instated for the next academic year and work would be carried out to try to establish whether any further improvements could be made. It was commented that the provision of celebratory activities had been well attended in the past and such events should continue to take place in order to further improve integration. It was agreed that language support should always remain a high priority for students whilst studying at BU.

Dr Tattersall had supported international students for many years and commented that word of mouth was very important with new international students and stressed the importance of a good student experience. It was important for BU to 'create' a larger range of informal situations, as well as learning experiences, when international students were in contact with UK students. Within the Business School assisted learning had been put into place for international students, whereby a UK student would mentor an international student. This had proved to be beneficial for both groups of students.

Prof Zhang agreed that the international student experience was important and was part of BU internationalisation activity. Prof Zhang noted that BU must ensure that it remained vigilant as to whether the support provided by BU at present was sufficient and whether the support could be enhanced and co-ordinated across the institution. It was agreed that it was important that as developments progress, staff are aware of the focus of responsibility and leadership for the international student experience at BU.

Ms Gutierrez commented that when an international student had decided to study in the UK and attempted to integrate into UK culture, BU should provide sufficient support to assist the student in having a good student experience in the UK. The key issue was often language and the ability to communicate with peers informally as much as the need to have a good academic language. International students need a person they can rely on and someone who can be their guide whilst studying at BU. The Student Engagement Team (SET) for widening participation students was highlighted as a possible similar route to providing additional assistance to students with some aspects of academic life for which they might not have been prepared. The induction process was crucial to integration for international students as this was key in the creation of relationships, although it was noted that many international students feel comfortable being part of a group of people of the same nationality.

Ms Mack had received feedback as the Professional Services Representative. The main areas where international students needed support were:

- Accommodation for international students – more accommodation was needed at BU.
- The requirement to have a SUBU/BU staff member available as a central point of contact for help and advice.
- Induction for international students could be phased/lengthened.
- Documents to be published in other languages.
- Advice to be provided on the terminology to be used in rubrics and examinations.

Ms Chaytor-Grubb stated that SUBU was aiming to make the transition to studying in the UK much easier for international students. Ms Chaytor-Grubb reiterated that there should be a central point for all international students to visit for help and advice. Ms Barron would discuss this further with front line staff to establish ways of assisting international students further. The possibility of connecting future international students with current international students could be a route to explore, whereby future students could ask questions before arrival in the UK. It was agreed that students should be given the choice of the level of integration they wanted.

Prof Roach commented that it was important to make international students feel that they were able to embed fully within the BU community, that internationalisation of the academic community was appreciated, and that there was sufficient appropriate support available to them whilst they studied at BU. The induction event for international students that included a meal with the Vice-Chancellor had been well supported in the past and it was agreed this event should continue with the introduction of more events throughout the year.

Ms Quest commented that she had observed a small number of cases in the Media School where first year international students had arrived with high degrees of maturity and strong learning behaviours that they had felt had not been mirrored in some of their domestic counterparts, and as a result they had considered leaving. Whilst there was no immediate solution, it was noted that BU should reflect on how it could improve further the quality of the first year experience for the benefit of all students.

Mr Simpson suggested the reintroduction of the International Student Barometer, as it had been an important and valuable tool in the past with which to measure student satisfaction.

Dr Rawlinson (University Board Member in attendance) had enjoyed the debate regarding the international student experience and agreed that each international student should succeed on the terms that were meaningful to themselves despite any issues faced. Dr Rawlinson agreed that BU needed to provide an effective method of guiding each student to the best place in which they could obtain assistance.

The Chair summarised the debate and thanked all the speakers and contributors. He confirmed that the debate had been very powerful and timely as the executive were currently exploring ways to further enhance the international student experience. He agreed that many of the suggestions provided within the debate would help to shape and inform developing proposals and in turn enhance the international student experience.

6. OTHER REPORTS

6.1 QAA Self Evaluation Document

Ms Symonds introduced the Self Evaluation Document and thanked colleagues for their time given whilst the document was being produced. Comments had been received from various forums within the University and these comments had been addressed. The document was now in its final stage and would be ready for submission on Monday 25 March 2013, along with the 600 supporting documents.

The first visit by QAA reviewers would take place on 30 April and 1 May 2013, and those staff members who would be involved in meetings on these dates had been advised. Staff members who would be required for the visit in June would be advised after the visit in April/May. The Self Evaluation Document would eventually be made available to all staff on the staff intranet.

The Chair thanked Ms Symonds and members for their hard work.

Approved: Senate approved the Self Evaluation Document.

6.2 Standard Admissions and Assessment Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees

Prof Zhang introduced the 3A – Standard Admissions Regulations: Postgraduate Research Degrees and the 6A – Standard Assessment Regulations: Postgraduate Research Degrees.

The regulations had been approved by the Graduate School Academic Board (Research Degree sub-committee) on 22 January 2013 and the Academic Standards Committee on 14 February 2013. The regulations were presented to Senate for approval.

Approved: Senate approved the 3A – Standard Admissions Regulations: Postgraduate Research Degrees and the 6A – Standard Assessment Regulations: Postgraduate Research Degrees.

6.3 Issuing Degree Certificates Prior to Graduation

The query with regards to the issue of degree certificates had been raised at the previous meeting of Senate and Ms Gutierrez gave an overview of the current process for the issue degree certificates. Occasionally, a student may request a verification letter for employment and Student Administration were able to provide this. BU receives two or three requests per year whereby a student may need an official document for a visa application or an application to study abroad. Ms Gutierrez advised that having looked into the current process, there was no requirement to make changes. Members agreed the process should not be changed.

6.4 Fair Access Agreement 2014-15

Ms Pichlmann opened the presentation advising members that HEIs must submit a Fair Access Agreement (FAA) annually to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA); an approved FAA would enable BU to charge fees of up to £9,000. The deadline for submission of the 2014/15 FAA was 8 April 2013. ULT had approved the key principles of the FAA at the meeting held on 5 March 2013, and the paper circulated to Senate members outlined the direction of BU's access and student success plans, a draft of the 2014/15 FAA and indicative financial model. A copy of the presentation slides are attached to the minutes.

Mr Jukes questioned whether BU would increase the resource put towards outreach activity as some Schools had difficulties coping with the current workload, therefore further investment would be welcomed. Ms Pichlmann advised that there would be an increase in investment in outreach activities.

Approved: Senate endorsed the Fair Access Agreement 2014/15 document for approval by the University Board.

6.5 REF Update

Prof Bennett advised that REF preparations continued as planned and that a more substantial update would be provided at the next meeting of Senate on 19 June 2013. Should any members wish to discuss any points in the interim, please contact Prof Bennett.

7. MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES

7.1 Honorary Awards Task Group, 6 March 2013 (unconfirmed)

Senate were requested to approve the recommendation for the 2013 Honorary Awards which were set out in Items 3.1 to 3.12 of the Honorary Awards Task Group minutes. Subject to Senate approval, the recommendations would be submitted to the University Board for final approval on 26 April 2013.

The minutes were noted.

Approved: Senate approved the 2013 Honorary Award nominations.

7.2 Academic Standards Committee, 14 February 2013 (unconfirmed)

The minutes were noted.

7.3 University Research Ethics Committee, 6 March 2013 (unconfirmed)

The minutes were noted.

7.4 University Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee, 4 March 2013 (unconfirmed)

The minutes were noted.

7.5 School of Health & Social Care School Academic Board, 13 February 2013 (unconfirmed)

The minutes were noted.

Prof Thomas advised members that the School of Health & Social Care would trial electronic School Academic Board meetings and report back to Senate at the next meeting.

ACTION: Prof Thomas would report back to Senate on the trial of an electronic HSC School Academic Board meeting.

ACTION BY: GT

7.6 School of Applied Sciences School Academic Board, 13 February 2013 (unconfirmed)

The minutes were noted.

7.7 School of Design, Engineering and Computing School Academic Board, 20 February 2013 (unconfirmed)

The minutes were noted.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 None.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Electronic Senate – 9.00am, 20 May 2013 to 5.00pm, 5 June 2013

Live meeting – 2.15pm, 19 June 2013