

SENATE

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SENATE held on 24 OCTOBER 2012

- Present: Prof J Vinney (**Chair**)
Mr C Allen; Prof M Bennett; Dr C Bond; Prof D Buhalis; Mr D Evans; Mr J Holroyd; Mr A James; Dr S Jeary; Ms J Jenkin (Secretary); Prof T McIntyre-Bhatty; Ms J Quest; Prof J Roach; Prof E Rosser; Dr H Thiel; Prof G Thomas; Prof T Zhang
- In attendance: Ms M Frampton (Committee Clerk); Mr G Rayment (Committee Clerk), Dr L Sheridan [Agenda Item 5]; Mr M Simpson (SUBU); Ms C Symonds
- Apologies received: Mr J Andrews; Ms L Bryant (SUBU); Dr C Chapleo; Prof P Comninos; Prof B Gabrys; Mr S Jukes; Prof M Kretschmer; Ms J Mack; Prof R Palmer; Prof H Schutkowski; Dr K Wilkes

1. WELCOMES, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Prof Bennett confirmed he was a Director of BU Enterprise Ltd.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SENATE HELD ON 20 JUNE 2012

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2.1 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. REPORT OF ELECTRONIC SENATE MEETING OF 3RD TO 10TH OCTOBER 2012

The issue of providing students with degree certificates prior to graduation had been raised by a member of staff. It was agreed that it was not completely clear whether this was a significant concern, therefore it was agreed a summary paper would be prepared and discussed at the next meeting.

ACTION: A summary paper to be submitted for discussion at the next meeting of Senate.

ACTION BY: J Jenkin

4. CHAIR'S UPDATE**4.1 HE Sector Update**

- 4.2 The Chair gave a brief sector update and summarised the key changes which had taken place during the past year. There had been a great deal of financial pressure on public sector budgets, and the impact of student fee increases had yet to be fully understood. Government funding for HE had been secured until the next Comprehensive Spending Review and the 'core and margin' model of student number controls had now been implemented. Societal factors had also contributed to a change in demand for undergraduate provision. There were fewer 18 year olds, and there had also been a 2% drop in the cohort of students studying for A Levels. With fewer students achieving higher grades, there were for 2012/13 significantly fewer students within the newly created partially deregulated market. As a result, competition within HE had become fiercer and supply/demand patterns less predictable.

4.3 The Chair highlighted that the picture across the sector was mixed. Many universities were reporting under recruitment whilst a limited few had expanded, notably Bristol and Exeter.

4.4 BU Strategic Plan 2012-2018: Implementation Update

4.5 The Chair invited members to read the Annual Review brochure which had been distributed at the meeting. The Annual Review had been posted to around 1,000 VIP contacts and was available to read on the Staff Intranet.

4.6 Following Board approval of the BU Vision in July 2011, there had been a busy period of creating the Strategic Plan for BU2018. BU2018 provided a clear roadmap for the next six years. Budgets had been set based on the School and Service Delivery Plans which mapped directly to the Vision of the University. The University had under-recruited this year as reported in previous VC updates to staff. One impact was a reduction of approximately £5m in income. While this was a significant sum, it was manageable and budgets had been reprioritised accordingly. Every effort had been made to minimise impact on progress towards BU2018.

5. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Commercial in confidence

5.1 The Chair had earlier given an overview of current issues with regards to student recruitment, and highlighted issues surrounding the potential fee deterrent and the impact of deferrals. The reduction of A Level achievements this year had also had an impact on recruitment particularly in terms of the difference between predicted grades and actual results.

5.2 Dr Sheridan gave an overview of current student numbers and advised that recruitment had been lower this year compared to target. Home and EU recruitment to Hefce programmes (not NHS) was under target by 474 students. Recruitment positions for individual institutions were not yet publicly available, but anecdotally, Southampton University had declared they had under-recruited by approximately 500 undergraduate students this year.

5.3 Prof Roach commented that his School, DEC, had adjusted tariffs to a range for 2013/14 recruitment, on the basis that this sends a positive message to potential students that BU is flexible and adaptable. It was noted that tariff points may be adjusted in some areas of the portfolio to ensure that we were appropriately positioned. In some quarters, there was a perception that it was disproportionately difficult to secure a place at BU. Prof Roach also advised that he had made links with two local Grammar Schools, and stressed the importance of BU concentrating on building relationships with local schools.

5.4 Ms Quest suggested that consumer attitudes may be fundamentally changing and the University should think creatively in order to succeed in this new environment. BU might start to explore and investigate flexible learning proposals in order to improve its competitive position.

5.5 Dr Bond advised that operational issues could be a barrier to flexible approaches, for example the provision of support facilities for evening courses.

5.6 Members discussed January student intakes. These students may require additional support as they missed out on some elements of the student cycle such as Freshers' Week. It was noted, however, that commencing in January may prove attractive to some students as it allowed them more time to consider their options and select their choice of University.

5.7 Members discussed the role of mature students, the numbers of which had declined nationally. This may be due to concerns about acquiring debt, and the Government was continuing to work on better communicating the financing arrangements for Higher Education.

5.8 Open Days were being enhanced to increase student conversion rates. A range of marketing activities were taking place. The fact that approximately 50% of students were recruited from within a 50 mile radius of the University indicated that more direct marketing to local high-performing schools may pay dividends. Mr Simpson highlighted the importance of creating the most attractive atmosphere at open days. He suggested that the courses, facilities and accommodation were the highest priorities for potential students. It was mentioned that at a recent Housefinder Day, accommodation buildings and the Media School building were locked and therefore this had not made a good impression to prospective students. Members agreed on the importance of focusing on facilities and accommodation at open days.

6. OTHER REPORTS

6.1 Research Ethics Review and Revised Terms of Reference

Prof Bennett advised that, in February 2012, with the assistance of the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee, a Research Ethics Review had been initiated. The resultant report recommended a change in composition of the Research Ethics Committee and revised Terms of Reference were presented for Senate approval. The full report of the review also included proposals for a new on-line ethical approval process and repository as well as improved training and communications around research ethics issues.

Approved: Members approved the revised Terms of Reference and noted the report of the Ethics Review.

6.2 Institutional Audit Update

Ms Symonds updated members with regards to preparations for the Institutional Audit Review, and advised of plans for the preliminary meeting with the QAA Assistant Director on 6th December 2012. The first visit of the audit team would take place on 30th April and 1st May 2013. The Institutional Review Audit would take place week commencing 10th June 2013. The first draft of the Self Evaluation Document had been prepared and would ultimately be reviewed by Senate.

6.3 Research Excellence Framework (REF) Update

Prof Bennett provided a REF update confirming that the end of October 2012 would be twelve months until the census day. Data is currently being evaluated and a detailed update would be presented to Senate at the meeting in March 2013 at which point BU would be into the second summative assessment prior to submission.

6.4 Senate Committees Annual Review

Ms Jenkin introduced the Senate Committees Annual Review which incorporated comments from Committee Chairs and Secretaries. It was confirmed that Committee processes were going well and the changes previously made had been embedded. It was noted that Senate had already been thoroughly reviewed three years ago and the next review would be some time in the future.

Prof Zhang advised that the Senate Terms of Reference did not include the Graduate School. It was agreed to add the Graduate School to the Senate Terms of Reference.

ACTION: Consider proposals for reviewing Senate effectiveness to present to the next meeting (and amend Terms of Reference as above)

ACTION BY: J Jenkin

6.5 Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee – Amendments to Terms of Reference

Prof Bennett informed members that the Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee had previously held formal meetings each term, with informal RKE Forums meeting monthly. It has now been decided that as both groups had identical membership and similar Terms of Reference it was appropriate to bring the two groups together into the formal Senate RKE Committee. The revised Terms of Reference were approved.

6.6 Public Information

Ms Jenkin gave a summary of the ongoing debate within the HE sector. Guidance received from various bodies with a remit for public information was complex and in some cases contradictory. BU was in the process of ensuring that it meets its requirements for the Institutional Review in June 2013. The Chair encouraged members to review the detail of the report in the context of their own areas of interest.

7. MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES

7.1 University Research Ethics Committee, 3 October 2012 (unconfirmed)

The minutes were noted.

7.2 Academic Standards Committee, 14 September 2012 (confirmed)

The minutes were noted.

7.3 School of Health and Social Care, School Academic Board, 30 May 2012 (confirmed)

The minutes were noted.

7.4 School of Health and Social Care, School Academic Board, 12 October 2012 (unconfirmed)

The minutes were noted.

7.5 Media School, School Academic Board, 10 October 2012 (unconfirmed)

The minutes were noted.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 None.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Electronic Senate – 9.00am, 27 February to 5.00pm 6 March 2013

Live meeting – 2.15pm, 20 March 2013