Academic Standards and Education Committee (ASEC)

16 October 2019, 14:00 to 17:00
The Board Room

Attendees

Board members

Prof Tim McIntyre-Bhatty (Chair and Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Adam Child (Secretary and Head of Academic Quality (AS)), Mandi Barron (Director of Student Services (SS)), Dr Carol Clark (Member of Senate), Justin Cole (Director of Marketing and Communications), Ann Fernandez (Director of Marketing and Communications), Lenrick Greaves (Vice-President (Education), Students' Union (SUBU)), Prof Christopher Hartwell (Member of Professoriate), Georgia Hill (Student Representative, Faculty of Management), Elysia Jones (Senior Student Representative, Faculty of Media and Communication), Samantha Leahy-Harland (Chief Executive, Students' Union (SUBU)), Kelly Lovelock (Senior Student Representative, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences), Jacky Mack (Academic Registrar (AS)), Prof Kevin McGhee (Deputy Dean (FST)), Corrina Osborne (Head of Academic Operations), Dr Gelareh Roushan (Head of Fusion Learning and Innovation Enhancement (FLIE)), Prof Julie Turner-Cobb (Member of Professoriate), Dr Christa van Raalte (Deputy Dean - Education & Professional Practice (FMC)), Dr Sara White (Acting Deputy Dean - Education and Professional Practice and Associate Dean Student Experience (FHSS)), Prof Kerstin Stutterheim (Member of Senate), Judy Smith (Clerk (Academic Quality Officer))

Apologies

Dr Lois Farquharson (Deputy Dean – Education & Professional Practice (FM)), Prof Michael Silk (Deputy Chair and Deputy Dean - Research & Professional Practice (FM))

Meeting minutes

1. Apologies

Information
Chair

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Declarations of Interest

Information
Chair

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meetings

3.1. Accuracy ASEC 15 May 2019

For Approval
Chair

The minutes of the meeting were accepted as an accurate record.

ASEC Minutes 15.05.2019 UNCONFIRMED.pdf

3.2. Accuracy e-ASEC 17 - 24 June 2019

For Approval
Chair

Page 2, paragraph 3 needed to be amended to read:

There was support for the proposal to introduce new mechanisms for engaging with students. There were some queries raised from SUBU representatives regarding some of the specific points in the review, namely the role of SimOn in providing strategic data and the extent of representation within committee structures. With regards to SimOn it was noted that this had been initiated to facilitate students commenting on both academic and non-academic matters relating to the wider student experience.

The minutes of the meeting were **approved** as an accurate record, subject to the above amendment being made.

e-ASEC Meeting Report - 17 to 24 June 2019 - Unconfirmed.pdf

3.3. Matters Arising/Actions Log

Information
Adam Child

The Committee noted the updates contained in the Actions Log.

ASEC Actions Log 2019-20.pdf

4. ASEC Terms of Reference and Membership

For Approval
Chair

It was noted that there had been changes to reflect updated job titles.

SUBU requested that the number of student representatives be increased to four students, allowing one representative per Faculty. The Committee agreed but discussed the importance of ensuring the breadth of student constituencies were represented including Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Full-Time and Part-Time. The SUBU Chief Executive outlined steps underway to increase engagement ahead of elections to decide the representatives on ASEC.

The Terms of Reference were **approved** subject to the above amendment being made.

Action: Head of Academic Quality

ASEC Terms of Reference - Sept 19.pdf

5. FASEC Terms of Reference and Membership

For Approval
Chair

The Committee noted the updates to role titles, in particular the introduction of Deputy Heads of Department.

SUBU representatives explained that it planned to compensate one nominated Faculty representative for participating in FASEC meetings and queried if three representatives were required. The Committee understood that it was SUBU's decision as to how many of the available places it wished to support with the flexibility to appoint up to three per Faculty.

The Terms of Reference were **approved**.

FASEC approved ToR 16Oct19.pdf

6. Ratification of Chair's Actions

6.1. FHSS Prescribing Unit - Extension

For Ratification
Dr Sara White

It was noted that this had been approved via Chair's Action due to the urgency of maintaining alignment with NHS requirements.

The Chair's Action was **ratified** by the Committee.

FHSS Prescribing Unit Extension.pdf

6.2. FHSS Prescribing Unit – Change of Names

For Ratification
Dr Sara White

The Chair's Action was **ratified** by the Committee.

FHSS Prescribing Unit Name Changes.pdf

6.3. Anonymous Marking

For Ratification
Adam Child

Changes had been made to the marking, independent marking and moderation policy (6D) in order to facilitate the introduction of anonymous marking for the 2019/20 academic year, following testing of the technical facility in Brightspace.

It was suggested and agreed that the wording for 4.2.1 be amended from “markers are unaware of an individual student’s identity” to “markers will not be made aware of an individual student’s identity”. The alteration would need to be approved via Chair’s Action.

Action A: Head of Academic Quality

It was recorded that an issue regarding submissions for students with additional learning support needs had been resolved and that the Head of FLIE would update the supporting FAQs document accordingly.

Action B: Head of FLIE

Anonymous Marking.pdf

7. NSS Results 2019

Discussion
.Russell Pottle

The Committee noted that the NSS results had been available for some time. The Head of PRIME provided headlines at institutional level noting that BU's overall satisfaction level had decreased from 81.26% to 78.31% against an improving sector average. Eighteen programmes received an overall satisfaction rate of 90% or above but six programmes received overall satisfaction rates of below 50%. Eight questions within the survey had seen improvement but nineteen had seen scores decline. The lowest performing areas were similar to the previous year: assessment and feedback, organisation and management and student voice. The scores had been noted within Faculties with actions planned through AMERs and the NSS Corporate Plan.

It was noted that recent timetabling and Brightspace issues, which had been escalated to the University Leadership Team, would likely have an impact on the NSS results for next year. This was an example of an issue that could not have been fully anticipated and was unknown until students began to provide feedback on problems. Noting the importance of communicating with students where larger scale issues were found the Committee asked if SUBU could consider the most effective way of communicating with students in these scenarios and share findings with the Committee.

Action: Chief Executive, SUBU

The student representatives commented that Brightspace had improved, but they had received mixed messages regarding applying for IT assistance via face to face contact or over the telephone. It was noted that issue reporting was channelled through SNOW and this limited the "on the spot" support which could be given to students or academics. On the spot assistance was generally preferred as it could be challenging for students to describe the issues they have and it was easier to resolve when a member of IT support is able to see their screen.

The student representatives expressed their dissatisfaction with study material occasionally not being available in advance of lectures to enable preparation. Inclusive pedagogy had previously been discussed at ASEC where it was noted that not only does BU have a legal duty to be inclusive, which all lecturers should be aware of and take responsibility for, but it was also best practice to share materials in advance. It was noted that Brightspace provided Faculties with details of unit activation but not the more granular detail of providing individual lecture materials in advance. The student representatives indicated discomfort with escalating issues where they had a good relationship with lecturers. However, the Committee highlighted the importance of doing so as the issue could not be dealt with unless the Faculty was made aware of the situation. It was noted that SimOn reports removed individual names and it was recommended that, in addition to the existing mechanisms for student feedback, issues could be reported through SimOn with the student citing which unit and which lecture was affected. Students were advised to raise concerns with lecturers and that if the situation did not improve, to escalate to the Programme Leader or Head of Department. However the Committee noted the fundamental point that lecturers should make provision for circulating materials in advance and Programme Leaders were primarily responsible for ensuring this occurred.

The Committee discussed the responses planned through the NSS Corporate Plan, where some of the issues had already led to action. Faculties noted the emphasis on assessment and feedback and organisation and management as well as work to support culture and teamwork. The development of PREP was mostly complete and it was now important to focus on how to implement it consistently. Assessment and feedback was a main PREP theme for the year. In addition further work was being conducted on the placement experience, particularly regarding the placement year. Targeted workshops were being held to support supervision and assessment and feedback. In addition, Marketing & Communications was undertaking work to support assessment literacy, with materials being developed for staff as well as supporting activity to develop skills in presenting to large groups.

The Chair noted the collective responsibility of colleagues at BU to undertake steps to improve the results in the NSS.

NSS Results 2019.pdf

8. Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

Discussion
.Dr Gelareh Roushan

The Head of FLIE reported the process for PTES had been revised based on feedback from academic colleagues and work conducted with PRIME and Legal Services. The dates for the next round of the survey would be available shortly. PRIME data analysis had identified two main aspects: a need to increase completion rates for the survey and a common theme around supervision and attempting to address this with colleagues.

In terms of the process, FLIE was working with PRIME and Legal Services so that Programme Leaders with five or fewer students would still see the results and would be able to provide feedback to students. There was work to be done to more effectively cascade data to Programme Leaders for action and this needed to be reviewed.

The timing of PTES was of concern in terms of FHSS CPD. Communications were currently being prepared, but it was difficult to market the survey to students when they had nearly finished their unit. Students who were out on practice during the survey window generally missed the opportunity to participate.There was also a potential overlap with MUSE.

The Committee understood the dissertation scale was problematic when the survey window took place before dissertations had been started fully. This was an accepted issue with the survey design, potentially making feedback on these questions less meaningful. The Chair commented that guidance and messaging was important in this regard and the Committee noted institutions had reported improvements in this part of the survey where discussions regarding student dissertations started early in the programme.

PTES 2019-20.pdf

9. Doctoral College Annual Report

For Approval
Dr Fiona Knight And Dr Julia Taylor

In introducing the report the Doctoral College Academic Managers outlined an increase in the four year completion rate, which had improved from 26% to 50% and a PRES overall satisfaction result which now stood above the sector average at 78%. The report also provided details of a reduction in PGR student numbers which was largely a result of improvements to completion rates, with this figure now down 1.5% to 593 students. In subsequent discussion it was noted that the number of non-staff Doctoral students had increased.

In response to the concern over student numbers, Faculties were addressing factors affecting recruitment noting that application numbers had fallen over the last three years. The Committee asked the Doctoral College Academic Managers whether there were broader shifts around PGR recruitment that explained reduced interest nationally. They responded that a comparison across the sector had not been undertaken and an action was raised to include this in the final report. EU figures were small and it had been expected that the availability of the Doctoral Loan would encourage student applications.

The Committee noted the work underway to respond to action 31C of the BU2025 implementation plan and report as appropriate to ULT. The research culture questions in PRES were slightly below the sector and this was being addressed, although could be further impacted by a decrease in student numbers should that lead to a lack of vibrancy in the PGR community.

The Committee discussed the gender discrepancies outlined in Figures 11a and 11b, which showed a higher number of applications from male students. It was suggested that this be commented on further within the report as there may be factors affecting the numbers of applications from females and this had been noted as an issue within the sector. Steps could be planned to support greater gender balance in applications, for example through the presentation of the subject portfolio.

The report outlined a significant difference in viva outcomes between Faculties. The Committee suggested that this be a focus for further action, particularly in the Faculties of Management and Health and Social Sciences.

The next steps for the replacement of ResearchPAD were queried as it was noted within the report that the tool was not supported by its vendor. It was confirmed that discussions with IT were underway and that contingency plans were in place should the current system become unavailable.

The low average attendance for Research Development Programme sessions was queried as this suggested some inefficiencies in delivery, which could be explored further.

The Chair noted that the report was comprehensive and thorough although some suggestions had been made for further enhancements. It was also noted that appeals and complaints data had been included for the first time.

Action: Doctoral College Academic Managers

The report was **approved** subject to the changes outlined by the Committee.

Doctoral College Annual Report 2018-19.pdf

10. Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER)

Faculty AMERs Complete.pdf

10.1. Faculty of Health and Social Sciences

For Approval
.Dr Sara White

In discussing the summary report and action plan the Committee noted that the data from SUBU's BAME research had not been provided although there was still potential to plan action on the basis of data already available.

Regarding Student Voice, the student representatives asked for a correction to be made to the capitalisation of SimOn and pointed out that invitations for Department Committee meetings had not yet been issued. The Deputy Dean Education and Professional Practice explained this was because the representatives had not been appointed at that stage of the year and every effort was made to encourage students to attend relevant meetings in their capacity as representatives. Some students had reported that they did not read their emails which reduced the likelihood of them attending. It was highlighted that the University primarily communicated with students via email and it was a concern if many students did not check their emails. The Committee noted the general expectation that students should review emails regularly and discussed how students would prefer to receive communications as this issue had been discussed previously. SUBU agreed to take this matter forward to determine what the best means of communication with student representatives would be.

Action A: Chief Executive, SUBU

It was noted that there were no actions associated with the Access and Participation Plan theme although a commentary of the available data had been given. The Academic Registrar noted that AEIC was to review actions identified within AMER and discuss further at a workshop session on 1 November 2019. It was noted that data available for AMER was primarily given at department level and that there was benefit in showing a Faculty level overview too. The Chair commented that even in the absence of Faculty summary data it was still important to comment at Faculty level, taking oversight and ownership of the Faculty's activity in order to add value to the annual monitoring process.

The Committee noted some issues with the generality of the actions and the lack of intermediate timescales within the action plan, which could be provided in the narrative sections or through additional rows in the action plan template. However, the Faculty's AMER documents indicated that action was set to take place in response to issues, which could be unpacked further to provide assurance that the Faculty was managing the actions appropriately. The Committee requested a revised version of the AMER documentation be submitted by the 30th October.

Action B: FHSS DDEPP

The Faculty AMER was **not approved**.

10.2. Faculty of Management

For Approval
Dr Gelareh Roushan

The Committee noted the work to enhance Academic Advising with an emphasis on training, with initial feedback suggesting this was having a positive impact. The student representatives endorsed this work and explained that more training and greater interaction would be valued by students and should be common practice.

The Director of Student Services indicated her team's willingness to collaborate with Faculties and would be happy to discuss further where this could support action plans.

The Faculty AMER was **approved**.

10.3. Faculty of Media and Communication

For Approval
.Dr Christa Van Raalte

The Deputy Dean for Education and Professional Practice noted her intention to amend the Faculty Review and resubmit to the Committee as there was further development work to take place. In reviewing the current version the Committee noted the issue identified for escalation regarding the replacement of equipment and asked if this had been raised with the appropriate teams. Discussions were being held and these issues would be resolved with an update included in the re-submission. The Committee requested a revised version of the AMER documentation be submitted by the 30th October.

Action: FMC DDEPP

The Faculty AMER was **not approved**.

10.4. Faculty of Science and Technology

For Approval
.Prof Kevin McGhee

In reviewing the Faculty's AMER a query was raised regarding the “lecturers, not teachers” campaign. The Deputy Dean explained that this had emanated from qualitative data where academic staff were consistently referred to as teachers and this was felt to change the nature of the relationship between students and staff. In the Faculty's view it was important for students to know that staff also conducted research and participated in professional practice. There were key differences between higher education and school and therefore students should have different expectations. The Faculty was keen to communicate this to the student body.

The Committee understood the issue but cautioned against messaging that could be interpreted as divisive, in the context of the the BU2025 inclusive values. However, the transition from school to university was an important consideration and students needed to be able to study independently with appropriate support especially in the first year. The Committee discussed the importance of minimising pervasive language that implied a school environment, for example using ‘class’ rather than ‘lecture’, ‘classroom’ rather than ‘lecture theatre’.

The Committee also supported the Faculty's clear approach to managing departmental performance, with three specific levels of monitoring.

The Faculty AMER was **approved**.

11. Partner Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER)

The Head of Academic Quality noted the reports submitted from partner institutions, which indicated good levels of engagement with the AMER process. Issues had generally been clearly identified with responses indicated within the respective action plans.

Partner AMERs.pdf

11.1. AECC University College

For Approval
.Adam Child

Provision at AECC University College was noted as continuing its teach out phase. There had been a particular issue with timetabling within the institution which had affected NSS scores. However these concerns were in the process of being resolved.

The partner AMER was **approved.**

11.2. Bournemouth and Poole College

For Approval
.Adam Child

The Committee noted that Bournemouth and Poole College had received a positive set of NSS results and was above the provider benchmark in many areas. The College had received a TEF rating of bronze but positive scores in the NSS would support a future case for a higher rating.

The partner AMER was **approved**.

11.3. Kingston Maurward College

For Approval
.Adam Child

The Committee noted the issues Kingston Maurward had identified with respect to assessment and feedback, which had resulted in low scores in the NSS. However the action plan gave a clear understanding of the steps being taken to resolve the issues.

The partner AMER was **approved**.

11.4. Wiltshire College and University Centre

For Approval
.Adam Child

In approving the College's AMER the Committee noted the significant improvements in the NSS. However the good practice sections of the template had not been completed, although details of steps taken to secure improved NSS scores would be welcomed. Wiltshire was to be invited to provide details of the good practice that had supported recent improvements.

Action: Head of Academic Quality

The partner AMER was **approved**.

12. Academic Quality Annual Report 2018-19

For Approval
.Adam Child

In introducing the item the Head of Academic Quality explained that the report provided an annual review of data and activity relating to core quality processes, including AMER. Information provided had been aligned against the OfS's ongoing conditions of registration, which were a central part of the regulatory framework.

In particular the report provided robust assurances regarding comparability of standards with External Examiners reporting clearly that standards had been maintained across BU provision. Although it was not possible to benchmark this finding against other providers, BU was likely to be in a very strong position in this respect.

The Committee discussed exceptional circumstances procedures and indicated that there was further work to do to ensure students were clear on how to evidence impact on their studies. Academic Advisers and other staff also needed to be aware of these requirements when supporting individuals. In addition it was noted that the acceptance rate for board considerations was lower than that for extensions. Experience within the Faculties suggested this was appropriate with board consideration requests generally being submitted after assessment had been taken. The Faculty of Science & Technology was trialling more regular Circumstance Board meetings in order to provide earlier resolution for students, which was potentially an area of good practice. Academic Quality and Student Services were working together to refine forms and guidance documents and would consider feedback from the Committee as part of this work.

The Committee noted the high volume of programme approval and review work and the success of recent new portfolio developments. There was generally an interest in performing early reviews, with timeliness and planning of reviews in the cycle in terms of recruitment being important considerations when this occurred.

It was noted that the Chair had provided the Head of Academic Quality with further comments as the report was to be submitted to the Audit, Risk and Governance Committee meeting on the 25th October. These focused particularly on the alignment with the OfS conditions of registration. The Committee would be informed if there were any substantive changes to the report.

Action: Head of Academic Quality

The report was **approved**.

Academic Quality Annual Report 2018-19.pdf

13. Marketing and Communications Annual Report

For Approval
.Ann Fernandez

The Director of Marketing & Communications noted that the annual report was to be submitted to the meeting of Audit, Risk and Governance Committee on the 25th October. The report covered communications with students and the importance of accuracy regarding BU communication, both published and online. In summarising the report the Director highlighted paragraph 2.3 which outlined BU's response to the OfS transparency requirement in publishing the required information.

The need to ensure staff were aware of Competition and Market Authority guidelines and updating programme information accordingly was emphasised. This was necessary to allow appropriate communications to be shared with applicants and current students. Work to improve and maintain information was proving effective and there had been no instances of errors being raised which had had an adverse impact. The audit of partners had showed good levels of compliance and ARG was to receive a verbal update on the progress of the international partner audit that was due to be completed in October.

It was also noted that work to progress a single source of core programme information was being taken forward. The Committee understood that this consisted of disparate information held by several teams and that drawing these sources together was a common challenge in the sector.

The report was **approved**.

Annual Report on CMA Compliance Accuracy of Public Information Oct 2019.pdf

14. Approval Requests

14.1. BSc Economics - Change of Award Name

For Approval
Prof Christopher Hartwell

The Committee noted that this was an unusual case where an External Panel event had recommended consideration of the change of the award name to more closely reflect the programme content. The programme review had increased focus on mathematics, statistics and financial aspects and would be implemented from September 2020 entry.

Market research had reported that the title BSc was more attractive in the job market and would encourage more international students. There was a query whether the BSc title would affect recruitment in the UK market for students with less confidence in mathematical subjects, although the Committee agreed that it was vital to ensure the award title reflected the reality of the programme content. There were no changes to entry requirements following the review, although the programme team was set to introduce further support and preparation for students at Level 4.

This proposed award title was **approved**.

BSc Economics Change of Award Name.pdf

14.2. MSc Health Research – Change of Award Name

For Approval
.Dr Sharon Docherty

In response to disappointing recruitment numbers to the MSc Clinical Research, the Faculty had been working with Marketing & Communications to consider how to promote the programme more effectively. There was an appetite in Local NHS Trusts for the programme and work had been undertaken with the international marketing team. This review had concluded that changing the programme title to MSc Health Research better reflected the programme content and widened the field of potential applicants.

The proposal also aligned with the National Institute for Health Research's (NIHR) widening remit to include social care. The previous title intended to take advantage of funded places through the NIHR. However the funding model had changed and individuals were now being encouraged to undertake CPD which was available with this programme. There were flexible delivery options and advertising via Health Education England could encourage short internships which covered a small number of units at a time.

A query was raised as to whether consideration had been given to other titles at BU, such as Health Psychology. It was noted that if there were conflicts with other programmes, it would have been indicated by Marketing & Communications. There was a clear description of unit content and how the programmes were differentiated available to prospective students. Marketing & Communications had planned for the positioning of the two programmes as clearly different from each other.

It was noted that the change of unit titles to be consistent with the programme title would need to be formally approved through FASEC, but that this could be done in a light touch way as the units were not otherwise changing.

Action: HSS DDEPP

This proposed programme name change was **approved**.

MSc Clinical Research - Award Name Change.pdf

14.3. Fast track Programme Review: UG Life and Environmental Sciences

For Approval
.Prof Kevin McGhee

Items 14.3 and 14.4 were presented together.

The fast track programme review request had been submitted as the Faculty was not recruiting as many students to these programmes as was possible. The department sought to refresh the provision for a September 2020 start. Please refer to the next minute item for further discussion points.

The Committee was supportive of some elements of this item, but as concerns had been raised under 14.4 and the items had been presented together, the requests were not approved.

The proposal was **not approved**.

FST Life and Environmental Sciences.pdf

14.4. Fast track Programme Review: UG Computing and Informatics

For Approval
Prof Kevin McGhee

The fast track programme review request had been submitted due to a decline in student numbers in Computing. Some of the units were dated and required changes alongside new units. It was clarified that the proposal was to only affect incoming students, rather than being applied to students currently on programme.

The Committee noted the risks associated with a fast track review including ensuring timely completion of the approval process and enabling students to make an informed choice regarding their programme options before the UCAS deadline. It would not be possible to communicate the changes to applicants in a timely manner by the 15th January and some prospective students who had already applied might not be in favour of the changes.

The Committee also noted the intention to introduce a compulsory placement. Compulsory placements could potentially alienate a portion of the market, especially international students and the Committee cautioned whether this was advisable. The review process undertaken during 2019/20 would have to consider this matter carefully.

The proposal was **not approved**.

FST Computing and Informatics.pdf

15. NSS Corporate Plan – Action 1.3 Placements Support Review

Information
.Mandi Barron

The paper was taken as read and **noted**.

Placement students ASEC Update October 2019.pdf

16. Initial Internal TEF Outcomes

Information
.Adam Child

The paper was taken as read and it was confirmed that other discussions regarding preparation for TEF were to be taken forward via ULT.

The paper was **noted**.

Initial Internal TEF Outcomes - ASEC - 16102019.pdf

17. Any Other Business

Chair

The student representatives advised the Committee that their positions on ASEC were subject to a forthcoming election and although they intended to stand it was possibly their last meeting. They thanked the Committee for allowing them to be involved. The Chair thanked the students for their contributions and wished them well with the elections.

The Chair also expressed his thanks to the outgoing Director of Marketing & Communications for her service to the Committee.

18. Date and Time of Next Meeting

18.1. Wednesday, 29 January 2020 at 14:00 in the Board Room