

Additional Education Committee

Thu 22 February 2024, 14:00 - 16:00

OVC Board Room, Poole House, Talbot Campus



Attendees

Board members

Professor Keith Phalp (Chair and Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Quality),
Dr Shelley Thompson (Deputy Chair and Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience), Jules Forrest (Secretary and Head of Academic Quality),
Rosalind Ashcroft (Head of Academic Operations), Professor Katharine Cox (Member of the Professoriate),
Norah Deka (Vice-President (Education) of the Students' Union (SUBU)), Professor Lois Farquharson (Executive Dean (BUBS)),
Dr Fiona Knight (Head of the Doctoral College), Professor Ann Luce (Chair of FMC FASEC), Jacky Mack (Academic Registrar),
Rohit Pakalapati (Student Representative (BUBS)), Kerry-Ann Randle (Representative for vacant Student Services Director role),
Dr Gelareh Roushan (Head of Fusion Learning Innovation and Enhancement (FLIE)), Professor Philip Sewell (Director Of Apprenticeships & Skills),
Dr Carly Stewart (Deputy Dean (FST)), Professor Sara White (Deputy Dean (FHSS)), Professor Sabeur Zoheir (Member of the Professoriate)

Observers

Anna Burgess (Clerk and Academic Quality Officer), Ann Barnes (Access and Participation Analyst, attended for item 5.1),
Rebecca Oliver (Schools Liaison And Partnerships Manager, attended for item 5.1),
Clare West (Head Of Library Services, attended for items 5.3 to 5.7)

Apologies

Dr Philip Ryland (Associate Dean Student Experience (BUBS))

Meeting minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Clerk

Noted as listed above.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Chair

None.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1. Accuracy: Education Committee 24 Jan 2024

For Approval

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

Chair

3.2. Matters Arising/Actions Log

Various

24/01/2024 4.2 Student Outcomes Data. Information would be brought back to a later committee and the Chair and Secretary would arrange for a sub-group to meet to consider the approach to this data **Action ongoing.**

18/10/2023 6.1 Faculty Update: Responding to Gen AI. A review of the current AI groups at U will be undertaken and reported to the Education Committee. On agenda, action closed.

18/10/2023 6.2 Reflections on NSS/ PTES/ PRES/ Graduate Outcomes. It was summarized that there was an appetite for re-visiting PREP and how BU uses it. Head of FLIE to consider PREP in light of these discussions. **Action ongoing.**

03/07/2023 4.2 Assessment Review Progress Update. The Secretary was asked to add this item to a future ASEC meeting and agree with the Academic Registrar on what evidence could be presented. **Action ongoing.**

24/05/2023 4.5 Annual Report: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Secretary to review the agenda planner against the ASEC Terms of Reference for the next Academic Year 2023/24. **Action ongoing.**

4. SUBU STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES FEEDBACK REPORT

Information

Norah Deka

A summary of the SiMon Student feedback for September to December 2023 had been included in the paper pack. There had been an increase of 63% in the number of responses compared to the same time the previous year. The majority of responses were from undergraduates but compared to the student population the data showed an overrepresentation of postgraduate taught student feedback. Emerging themes were highlighted to the committee. It was noted that the committee had discussed issues of timetabling and assessment in previous meetings and the themes reflected here aligned to the areas that BU has identified as requiring improvement. SUBU had recognised the positive feedback about the campus offering and were working with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Student Experience to develop ways to encourage students on to site. Members asked whether there would be a separate SiMon report for apprentices; this was being considered by SUBU and the Vice-President (Education) would provide an update at the next meeting.

ACTION: Vice-President (Education) of the Students' Union (SUBU)

Decision: Noted

5. FOR DISCUSSION

5.1. New Access and Participation Plan Update

Discussion

Ann Barnes/Rebecca Oliver

The committee received a progress update on the preparation for the new Access and Participation Plan (APP). Objectives and priorities had been matched to the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR). The risks for BU had been grouped into five key areas; Belonging, Skills, Curriculum, Welfare and Student Voice. Intervention strategies had been developed to address these risk areas and the team were working on mapping them to the risks and objectives. Other HEIs had included schemes that were in development in their APPs and it was noted that it was possible to make changes at a later date if evaluation showed that schemes had not worked. It was emphasised that BU was required to describe how it would evaluate the success of intervention strategies. The new plan would be effective from 2025 onwards and consideration needed to be made for transition from the current plan to the new plan, however many of the fundamental gaps had not changed. The University was looking to evolve processes to be more data-focused and to allow for greater responsiveness to changing indicators in key data sets; it was noted that the APP would also need to take this approach.

5.2. Attendance and Engagement Update

Discussion

Shelley Thompson

5.2.1.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience presented an update on the Attendance and Engagement monitoring data and the pilot intervention scheme. A copy of the slides were provided in the paper pack for note. The University had begun University-wide recording of attendance data from the start of the 2023/24 academic year, following a pilot in 2022/23, and the capture rates for semester 1 had been good for all four faculties. There had been an issue with data for shared units, which had a particular impact in FHSS and FST, which had been fixed. The semester 1 data showed a pattern of attendance where there was a downward trajectory from the start to end of term. There were also drops in numbers of sessions where attendance was captured around Christmas and Graduation week. The attendance data is available for academic staff on the Jisc Dashboards, a Qlikview BU Attendance Dashboard and on the Engage App. Committee members were reminded that capture rates needed to remain high in the future to ensure rigour of the data if we are to use it meaningfully for engagement monitoring and support, including student visa compliance. Support is provided for academics and any problems experienced by users needs to be reported for investigation.

5.2.2.

A pilot scheme had been launched around engagement intervention, with an emphasis on wellbeing and supporting students with a view to improving continuation. One department per faculty is involved in the pilot and there was a focus on level 0 and level 4 students. Departments had fortnightly meetings to review student attendance data, then phone calls and personalised follow-up emails were made to students whose attendance was declining. The scheme used the new Engage App created by IT. The Computing and Informatics department in FST were trialling their own panel-based intervention scheme. The tone of communication was compassionate and encouraging for students and there were template communications on the SharePoint site. Initial findings had shown that the interventions did improve attendance but it was often short-lived. Departments where the interventions took place earlier in the semester had a slower decline in their attendance rates. Feedback from staff and students had been positive and they had been able to gain an insight into barriers to engagement. Committee members discussed that there was a lack of awareness among students of the impact non-attendance could have on their results and suggested this may be useful to highlight in personal tutor discussions.

Plans for 2024-25 included the implementation of a new Student Engagement Framework to look at student engagement strategies, raise staff awareness and ensure a consistent approach with clear definition of roles and responsibilities. The University was looking to minimise the cases of student withdrawal for non-attendance and wanted that to be a last resort.

Committee members questioned whether the operational management of the engagement data had been shared. Policy & Procedure 3K was presented to Education Committee for approval in July 2023 and the Procedures section summarises the operational processes but it does not contain the full details of operational practice. It was noted that a SharePoint site containing operational guidance and supporting materials had been launched at the start of the academic year to Faculty staff and Professional Services and updated through the year, but it was unclear whether that had been consistently engaged with by all services and departments.

Members questioned whether Policy 3K applied to or referred to postgraduate research students. It was noted that Policy 3K does apply to postgraduate research students and makes reference to the mechanisms through which their engagement is monitored.

5.2.3.

The attendance monitoring data had highlighted patterns of non-teaching/reading weeks in the faculties. There was a variance in practice across BU with regards to non-teaching/reading weeks and this meant there was a lack of clarity and equity for students. It was noted that the Common Academic Structure (CAS) did not officially have reading weeks and the guidance for graduation week was that teaching should continue on all days apart from the day of the ceremonies for that faculty. Attendance data showed there was a decline in attendance after reading weeks and there were often additional gaps in teaching when sessions were cancelled. In some faculties the non-teaching weeks were used for added value activities or online learning, however these could be scheduled without a formal reading week. It was questioned whether having a break half way through a semester allowed students to catch up if they were getting behind in their studies. It was noted that the student view of reading weeks was not known and the SUBU Vice President Education would ask for student opinions and feed it back to the committee. Members highlighted that the faculties were preparing their timetables and needed to know the decision on reading weeks to inform those plans. The committee agreed that reading weeks/non teaching did not formally exist in the CAS, and this included graduation week. It was agreed that programme teams should consider the delivery requirements for each unit in light of the clarification that BU does not have reading weeks or non-teaching week. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Head of Academic Operations would discuss this decision with the central timetabling team and then circulate communications to ensure a consistent message.

ACTION a: Vice-President (Education) of the Students' Union (SUBU)

ACTION b: Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Head of Academic Operations

Decision: The committee clarified that there are no non-teaching/reading weeks.

5.3. Generative Artificial Intelligence Update

The Chair introduced the topic and invited members to present their papers on Generative AI.

Discussion

Chair

5.4. The Impact of ChatGPT and Perplexity on Academic Integrity

The Education Committee student representatives had submitted a paper outlining the way in which new AI software could be used within assignments. They explained to members how the capability of AI software should not be underestimated and software like Perplexity now allowed students to create accurate references. Students had raised concerns about the impact on academic integrity and the difficulty in proving academic offences when it had been used. The students suggested that academics needed to teach students how to use this software and if assessments needed to be changed to reflect the existence of AI and its potential use as a tool. The committee discussed that many students were more "AI-literate" than staff and noted that this is a fast-moving area that all HEIs needed to address. BU had taken steps to make it clearer when students were allowed to use AI software and how to reference it.

Decision: Noted

Discussion

Rohit Pakalapati

5.5. Generative Artificial Intelligence: Update from Think Tank

Discussion

Clare West

From 2023/24 BU allowed the acceptable use of Generative AI by students in their work. To comply with Academic Integrity requirements students had to reference the use of AI, name the tool they used, describe how they used it, the material that was generated and the outputs that were obtained. Feedback collated from students in Semester 1 had shown that students were unclear on how to acknowledge the use of the tools in their assessments, that academics designing assessments with clear instructions did not want students to have to include additional acknowledgements and there was inconsistent understanding of effective assessment design in this context. Committee members were asked to consider these concerns and discuss how this could be clarified for students and staff.

Members questioned whether it was right to put the onus on the student to declare their use of Generative AI and whether there was a potential for students to be disadvantaged by being honest about using the software. Where the use of Generative AI was not allowed, this was specified on the assignment brief, so the committee discussed whether it would be clearer to direct students to their assignment brief and ensure that the brief had all the relevant guidance for students completing that individual assessment. The Faculty of Media and Communication (FMC) had seen an increase in suspected academic offences cases where students were thought to have used Generative AI where there had not been sanctioned use of it in the assignment brief. The faculty had experienced issues in proving the unsanctioned use of AI and had raised concerns about the staff resources it took to investigate these cases. It was noted that pre-AI, there were always a small number of cases where a student was strongly suspected of an academic offence but it was not always possible to prove this based on the evidence available. It was noted that with the emergence of AI this could create more cases like this and therefore the focus should be on designing assessments that were not open to gaining an unfair disadvantage through unsanctioned use of AI.

The Think Tank academics had reviewed a sample of assignment briefs. Where assignments were designed with GenAI in mind the marking process was clear, but with many current assignment briefs this was not the case. AI tools were changing all the time and any principles agreed needed to reflect this. Guidance was also needed to allow for the difference between science-based programmes and other subject areas. Members asked whether mandatory professional training could be introduced for academics. The committee recognised that staff development and upskilling was needed but it would take time and investment to implement. It was noted that IT were also looking at purchasing AI software for staff and students to use.

It was agreed that the Head of Library Services would amend the current guidance to direct students to the assessment brief, to remove the student acknowledgement requirements, and to state that they needed to reference their use of Generative AI. The draft text would be shared with the faculties and taken back to the Think Tank to finalise. The faculties would also be asked to capture details of any areas where there were particular issues. This revised approach will be implemented with immediate effect to provide greater clarity for semester 2 assessments.

ACTION: Head of Library Services

Decision: Update Generative AI acceptable use guidance to direct students to the assessment brief and remove the requirements for students to give a detailed acknowledgement outside their referencing instructions.

5.6. Update on Turnitin Originality for detecting academic offences

Discussion

Gelareh Roushan

Decision: Noted

5.7. Guidance for staff dealing with suspected use of unsanctioned AI and updates to 6H Academic Offences Policy and Procedure

Discussion

Gelareh Roushan/Jules Forrest

The committee was asked to approve minor amendments to the 6H-Academic Offences Policy and Procedure. The changes provided further clarification regarding what category the suspected offences sat in and reflected BU's updated position that AI platforms could be used to support assessments if they were acknowledged and not prohibited in the assignment brief. The committee discussed the difficulty in proving whether an academic offence had been committed using AI tools and how this had been a problem in the past with proving the use of essays mills. FLIE had developed draft guidance for staff on the steps that could be used to determine if generative AI had been used and were looking to test it with faculty colleagues.

Decision: Approved

6. FOR NOTE

6.1. 2025/26 UG Entry Requirements Review

Decision: Noted

Information

Tara Montgomery

6.2. FHSS FASEC Minutes 11 Jan 2024

Decision: Noted

Information

Sara White

6.3. FMC FASEC Minutes 11 to 22 Jan 2024

Decision: Noted

Information

Ann Luce

6.4. FST FASEC Minutes 10 Jan 2024

Decision: Noted

Information

Carly Stewart

6.5. BUBS FASEC Minutes 23 Jan 2024

Decision: Noted

Information

Philip Ryland

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1. Student Health and Mental Wellbeing

The committee's attention was drawn to the tragic cases of student death by suicide where the inquests had raised concerns about university wellbeing support. In a Bristol High Court Case and a Southampton Coroner's Report, the coroner had raised issues around the importance of documentation, the level of awareness and curiosity of academic staff around the wellbeing of students and the processes for reasonable adjustments. The OfS had also drawn attention to elements in the B Conditions and the Peck Report had highlighted student mental health and wellbeing as a priority for HE providers. Committee members were asked to keep communicating with their teams about this area and the need to support compassionate communications with students. BU has signed up to the University Mental Health Charter and is undergoing a self assessment to determine where actions are required based on the good practice areas in the Charter. A paper with relevant details will be submitted to Education Committee.

7.2. NMC Monitoring visit

The Faculty of Health and Social Sciences had been notified that they would be having a monitoring visit from the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) during the week commencing the 13th or 20th May 2024.

8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 20 March 2024, 14.00-16.00 OVC Board Room