CONFIRMED

Additional Education Committee

Wed 24 April 2024, 14:00 - 16:00

OVC Board Room, Poole House, Talbot Campus

Attendees

Board members

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

Observers

Anna Burgess (Academic Quality Officer, Clerk), Robin Walsh (Head Of Residential Services attended for item 6.1 International Student Barometer),
Jack Guymer (Academic Quality Policy and Project Manager attended for item 7.2 Exceptional Circumstances),
Dr Milena Bobeva (BUBS External Engagement-Internationalisation Lead attended for item 7.3 British University Vietnam (BUV)),
Dr Alastair Morrison (Head of International Partnerships attended for item 7.3 British University Vietnam (BUV))

Apologies

Professor Katharine Cox (Member of the Professoriate), Dr Gelareh Roushan (Head of Fusion Learning Innovation and Enhancement (FLIE))

Meeting minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted as listed above.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1. Accuracy - Education Committee 20 March 2024

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

3.2. Matters Arising/Actions Log

20/03/2024. 4.2. Graduate Attributes. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and the Head of Careers & Employability would develop a roadmap proposal and present it to a future meeting. Scheduled for May meeting. **Action ongoing.**

20/03/2024. 4.3. Student Voice update. The committee were asked to consider what the next steps should be, whether a short "Supporting You" survey should employed and whether the trial projects should be embedded. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Student Voice Lead would work on this and prepare a paper for a future meeting. Scheduled for May meeting. **Action ongoing**

20/03/2024. 5.1. Appeals and Complaints report. Deputy Deans would provide the written feedback to be added to the cover sheet for the report before it was submitted to Senate. The request had been sent to the Deputy Deans and the details would be updated for submission to Senate. **Action ongoing.**

20/03/2024. 7.3. Assessment Design and Generative AI. It was requested that a BU approach be developed to help unit leaders with their assessment design for the next academic year. This item would be added to the agenda for discussion at a future Education Committee. **Action ongoing.**

22/02/2024. 4.0. SUBU Student Representatives Feedback Report. 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. This had been discussed with the SUVU manager and they advised that it would not be possible for the current academic year but they will look at how to do this for the next academic year with the new SUBU officers. **Action closed.**

22/02/2024. 5.5. Generative Artificial Intelligence: Update from Think Tank. 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.

Action ongoing.

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 Academic Quality was reviewing the AMER processes and this action was being picked up as part of that work. **Action closed.**

18.10.2023. 6.2. Reflections on NSS/ PTES/ PRES/ Graduate Outcomes. It was summarised 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. An item would be added to the Education Committee agenda for May or June. **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. A report went to the Finance and Resources Committee and the Head of Academic Quality would consider whether any sections needed to also be submitted to Education Committee. **Action ongoing**

4. FOR RATIFICATION

To Ratify

Shelley Thompson

4.1. Chair’s Action – BSc (Hons) Psychology in Education

Decision: Ratified

4.2. Chair's Action – BSc (Hons) Games Programming (with Foundation Year)

To Ratify

Shelley Thompson

Decision: Ratified

5. SUBU STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES FEEDBACK REPORT

Information

Norah Deka

The latest report on student feedback was included in the papers and members were reminded that they could see the student comments in the dashboard. The committee noted how useful the report was and considered how they could ensure that faculties were responding to the data. It was confirmed that the data was considered at Student Voice meetings and monitored at FASEC, who could then escalate any concerns to the Education Committee. The Student Voice lead was also including reflections on the data in their work. Members asked if it was possible to add a slide detailing what had changed since the last report received at Education Committee. The SU VP Education would consider this.

ACTION – SU VP Education

6. FOR DISCUSSION

6.1. International Student Barometer

Discussion

Robin Walsh

BU had participated in the first phase of the International Student Barometer survey and were given a summary of the results. BU International students had been surveyed in November/December 2023 and the results showed a 9% response rate. The response rate was much lower than the UK sector benchmark response rate. The committee discussed that the low response rate was in line with other survey response rates at BU and this aspect was being considered as part of the Student Voice project. The response data for BU students showed issues around the cost of living and sourcing accommodation which were in line with responses seen in other BU student feedback channels. Members discussed that visa restrictions might mean that International students could not work to earn funds to supplement their income whilst they were studying, leading to greater financial issues for this group. The Education Committee focused on the academic elements of the survey, including learning experiences, and what it showed about education practice across BU.

6.2. Faculty analysis of Student Outcomes and AMER updates

Discussion

Deputy Deans

Additional AMER Scrutiny panels had taken place in April 2024. The panel had seen some positive improvement in the plans compared to earlier in the year, as well as attempts to address the issues raised by the November panels. It was noted that the Faculty AMER plans remained stronger overall than the programme-level action plans. There were some indications that, in certain circumstances, the Head of Department had supported their programme leaders to develop AMER plans. The Deputy Deans were asked to reflect on the next steps to continually enhance quality of the AMER plans and whether the Executive Deans could be involved to support the Heads of Department (HODs) with this work. It was questioned whether Departmental AMERs would be better placed to drive activity and strategy rather than programme plans. It was reported by some that removing the Department action plan had disengaged the HODs from the process. In contract, in FHSS it was reported that the removal of the Department plans had improved the engagement of HoDs with the AMER process and given them the time to support Programme Leaders (PLs). Committee members questioned how effective a department plan could be where there was a diverse range of programmes in a Department and suggested that the Faculty plans would provide the strategic leadership actions that applied to all programmes.

A consistent finding in the AMER Scrutiny panels was that many of the plans reviewed by the scrutiny panels had not responded to the data in a meaningful way. Members questioned whether the data could be presented in a way that was easier to understand and suggested that some staff found the impenetrable spreadsheets a barrier to engagement. A summary data report had been provided to the panels and it was suggested that it would be easier for programme teams to review that rather that the dashboard. The university was developing a new set of KPIs for student experience which could be incorporated into the AMER process, such as the attendance data. Members queried whether Programme Leaders could have workload time allocated to AMER; it was noted that this being considered by the Executive Deans and was not within the remit of the Education Committee.

The Faculty AMER plans and Student Outcomes data response reports had been included in the papers. A reflection on the Postgraduate Research (PGR) data had been included in the reports, but it was noted that the data was limited and there was not enough detail for Education Committee to be assured about the quality of PGR provision. Work was ongoing to bring the PGR provision into the more standard quality structures.

It was highlighted that the outcomes data did not contain a breakdown for Apprenticeship provision. The data for apprentices needed to be disaggregated so it could be reflected on. PRIME had been contacted about this.

The Chair informed the committee that the Board had requested an external audit of processes and data relating to condition B3 of the OfS regulatory framework.

To Endorse

Rosalind Ashcroft

7. FOR APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT

7.1. Draft Student Engagement Framework

The committee were asked to consider proposed changes to 3K- Engagement & Attendance: Policy and Procedure and the update on the work on the Student Engagement Framework. The policy amendments were designed to align to the standard ARPP model and contained the principles of student engagement and details of reporting. The edits had removed the more procedural aspects that would be part of the Student Engagement framework. The policy's scope included PGR provision and was designed to be student-facing as it included information for students that was highlighted on the "Important information" webpage and reference was included in the Student Agreement'.

Members discussed the language used in the policy, in particular subjective terms such as "appropriate attempts" and "reasonable academic progress". It was questioned whether this was clear from a student perspective or could it be reasonably open to interpretation. Members noted that the language needed to be inclusive and invite discussions with students about how they could engage and maintain good communications with the University, but also be clear about consequences of non-engagement. It was not proposed that attendance data would be the main driver but would be used as a tool alongside other markers, for example non-submissions or multiple exceptional circumstances requests. Ideally this could developed for other purposes, such as PSRB requirements or apprenticeship provision, where attendance was mandated.

It was highlighted that the OfS B2 condition relating to engagement did not reference 'attendance' and the University may want to consider broader definitions of student engagement, and more in line with the intention of B2 which was about 'supporting to students to succeed' in HE. It was also queried how it linked in with policies like *5B Student Engagement and Feedback: Policy and Procedure*. It was reported that 3K was about 'academic engagement' rather that wider 'student engagement'. The committee noted that renaming the policy "Academic Student Engagement policy" might make this clearer. Absence was also a safeguarding flag for BU and the committee asked whether students understood what expectations were for attendance and the impact of non-attendance of their academic progress. The Head of Academic Operations would consider the feedback and circulate the proposed updates.

The Student Engagement framework was still in development and an update would be brought to the May Education Committee meeting. It was noted that the Framework would only cover taught provision but they would be considering whether anything could be learnt to apply to PGRs.

ACTION - Head of Academic Operations

Decision: Endorsed in principle. The committee recommended consideration of a change to the title.

7.2. Exceptional Circumstances Task and Finish group recommendations

For Approval

Philip Ryland/Jack Guymer

The University Appeals and Complaints report for 2022 reported a continued rise in appeals on the basis of grounds 3, which related to Exceptional Circumstances. A 'Task and Finish' group had been created to consider ways of reducing appeals based on this ground. The group met in the autumn of 2023 and included faculty and professional services representatives. The group's recommendations were submitted to the Education Committee for consideration and endorsement. Some of the recommendations involved policy changes and it was proposed that they be introduced from September 2025. The recommendations included changes to the following: "Fit to sit" approach, Exceptional Circumstances guidance, Self-certification, Extensions and Exceptional Circumstances boards.

The committee discussed the proposals and the need to communicate to students in a language that students understood. It was noted that there were instances in which Exceptional Circumstances were not always appropriate, for example, for chronic conditions that impacted students over longer periods of time, but were not worsening, reasonable adjustments could be put in place. Student feedback and sector research had shown that there was confusion around the definitions and issues of signposting to the correct policy. The Task and Finish group agreed a priority was to make the processes more straightforward from a student perspective and remove the need for students to submit evidence repeatedly if it had already been submitted for another claim. The group had found that there was variation in practice across the faculties and their suggestions Included the centralisation of Exceptional Circumstances boards to drive consistency in decision- making as well as being more efficient. More work was required on the operationalisation and implementation of that specific proposal. Additional sector research would be conducted on the proposed 'Fit to sit' approach to find out how it could be operationalised. It was confirmed that Apprenticeship provision had been considered by the 'Task and Finish' group and this type of provision wasincluded.

Members discussed the link between this area of work and the Student Engagement Framework. It was noted the University is in the process of procuring some case management software that would allow personal tutors to access a range of data flags for their students, including self- certification and low attendance. Whilst this was t still under consideration by the Finance and Resources Committee, any policy changes required relating to both areas could be implemented at the same time as a newsystem.

There was broad support for the recommendations and members asked if any of the changes could be implemented for September 2024. The plan was to introduce the update to the guidance and supporting evidence as well as the consistency of applying extensions to assignment deadlines. The committee requested that updates to the length of time a student can self-certify, and the definition of self-certification also be implemented. The Head of Academic Quality agreed to review the request and inform the committee if these policy changes could be brought in for September 2024.
ACTION: Head of Academic Quality

Decision: Endorsed

7.3. New Partner Approval: British University Vietnam (BUV)

For Approval

Jules Forrest

The BU Business School had proposed a new partnership with British University Vietnam for a Transnational Education (TNE) partnership under the validated/subcontracted model. The Supplementary Academic Due Diligence was presented to Education Committee for approval and consideration of the recommendations. Supplementary Financial and Legal Due Diligence would be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee for their consideration and progression to the next stage would also be dependent on that outcome.

The Head of Academic Quality had completed the academic due diligence by reviewing documentation provided by the partner. BUV had undergone a QAA Quality Review in 2022 and had existing UK Partners and were looking to expand. The findings had been broadly positive of them being a credible academic partner, with some further investigation needed at the next stage of the approval process. In addition to this there was an action noted in the paper "to undertake a review of the current processes for partnership oversight and monitoring, that includes governance arrangements for partner provision, and is benchmarked against standard sector approaches. This review should be completed and any recommendations implemented before BU programmes delivery commences with a new partner, and that consideration should be given to ensuring that there is capacity at BU to support new governance oversight." This was required due to the growth in new, complex and diverse partnerships emerging at BU and the risk associated with expanding subcontracted provision without a sufficient model of governance to ensure effective oversight.

The BU Business School had partnered with BUV over the last three years and had found them to be very reliable, had a similar strategy for fusion and were student focused with a strong community connections. They felt BUV was credible partner in Vietnam, and the proposal increased the international footprint for BU as well as providing income and further opportunities for staff development. It was noted that BUV was a small-scale with a partner that had recognised accreditation and was therefore a good place for BU to start in relation to TNE. It was reported by the Head of International Partnerships that BUV had been granted autonomy from MOET to set up partnerships without need to seek ministry approval each time.

The Head of Academic Quality highlighted to members that there had been a change in regulatory environment with the OfS identifying sub-contracted partner provision as a priority area for their scrutiny. BU would need to review its processes for partner monitoring to ensure appropriate governance in this area. The committee were assured that the two BU Business School undergraduate programmes included in the partnership proposal had long-term investment and the Executive Dean was supportive of the development. It was questioned whether BU had capacity to support this type of partnership when it was already looking to review the existing partner models. Members commented that this type of provision only really worked for the organisation if it was done on scale. It was noted that this would need to be considered as part of the recommended review of governance for partnerships.

Decision: Approved for the next stage.

8. FOR NOTE

8.1. FMC FASEC Minutes

To Note

Ann Luce

Decision: Noted

8.2. FHSS FASEC Minutes

To Note

Sara White

Decision: Noted

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 29th May 2024, 14.00 to 16.00 OVC Board Room