UNCONFIRMED

Additional Education Committee

Wed 26 June 2024, 10:00 - 13:00

OVC Board Room

Attendees

Board members

Dr Shelley Thompson (Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience, Chair), Jules Forrest (Head of Academic Quality, Secretary), Jacky Mack (Academic Registrar), Professor Sara White (Deputy Dean, FHSS), Professor Ann Luce (Deputy Dean, FMC), Professor Christos Gatzidis (Executive Dean, FST), Norah Deka (Vice-President (Education) of the Students' Union (SUBU)), Kerry-Ann Randle (Representative for vacant Student Services Director role), Alex Caton-Bradley (Student Representative, FST)

Observers

Rosalind Ashcroft (Head of Academic Operations), Anna Burgess (Academic Quality Officer, Clerk), James Stevens (Chief Data Officer, Attended for item 6.4), Grace (SUBU)

Apologies

Professor Keith Phalp (Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Quality), Dr Carly Stewart (Deputy Dean FST), Dr Gelareh Roushan (Head of Fusion Learning Innovation and Enhancement (FLIE)), Professor Philip Sewell (Director Of Apprenticeships & Skills), Professor Sabeur Zoheir (Member of the Professoriate), Dr Julia Taylor (Head of the Doctoral College), Dr Fiona Knight (Head of the Doctoral College), Professor Katharine Cox (Member of the Professoriate)

Meeting minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted as listed above.

There had been a number of apologies for the meeting, and it was noted that there could be an issue of quoracy. It was agreed to continue with the meeting and where required any decisions could be ratified by the Chair or by e-meeting circulation.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1. Accuracy: Education Committee 29 May 2024

For Approval

Chair

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

3.2. Matters Arising/Actions Log

Information

Various

29/05/2024 5.4 Generative Academic Integrity Quiz workshops. The Head of Fusion Learning Innovation and Enhancement (FLIE) would bring the results from these workshops would back to Education Committee for further discussion at the next appropriate meeting.

Discussed at the last meeting, still be confirmed when the item would come back, it may need to go the e-meeting in the summer. **Action ongoing.**

24/04/2024 5.0 SUBU Student Representatives Feedback Report 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.

The feedback was being considered for future reports and a verbal update would be given this time to compare the feedback to last year. **Action closed.**

24/04/2024 7.2 Exceptional Circumstances Task and Finish group recommendations. 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.

The group had made amendments to the proposal and would submit it to the summer e-meeting. **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.

Item to be added to a meeting agenda in the next academic year. **Action ongoing.**

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

PREP item on the agenda. **Action closed.**

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

The Head of Academic Quality had seen the report and thought it might not align with Education Committee. They would liaise with the Chair and Deputy Chair. **Action ongoing.**

4. FOR RATIFICATION

4.1. Chairs Action - British University Vietnam approval event, panel membership

To Ratify

Chair

Decision: Ratified.

5. SUBU STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES FEEDBACK REPORT

Discussion

Norah Deka

The last SiMon feedback report summary for 2023/24 was included in the papers. The SU Vice President Education gave an overview of the report and highlighted that they had elected student representatives to 88% of undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes this year. 'Some students felt there was a lack of practical sessions in their programme. In comparison to last year the top five themes about what worked well had seen an increase in positive comments. It was noted that the negative comments had decreased but still required attention by BU. The report highlighted the work of the SUBU Officers over the academic year. It was explained that the issues students were experiencing relating to the cost of living had come up in a discussions with students across various forums. The committee thanked the students for all the work on these reports and their representation of student views in the committee across the academic year.

6. FOR DISCUSSION

6.1. Chair's business

Discussion

Chair

This year one of the external audits requested by the Board was on attendance, engagement and personal tutoring. The audit was completed by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) external auditors and the report had been shared with faculty leadership teams. No high risk or critical issues had come out of the audit but there were medium risk areas around consistency of personal tutoring. These would need to be picked up by Faculty Academic Standards Committees (FASECs) and overseen by Education Committee. The Pro Vice-Chancellors would be working with Associate Deans Student Experience (ADSEs) to decide what control points would need to look like and how to get progress reports on personal tutoring to Education Committee. A proposal would be submitted to the committee in the autumn, the Secretary would add it to the agenda.

ACTION: Secretary

The report highlighted that good practice would be to implement a systematic solution to enable a formal and transparent record of personal tutor meetings with students. The Office for Students (OfS) had raised it as a concern at other institutions and it had come up in the Southampton Coroners report. It was noted that processes at BU should improve with the introduction of the student case management system, and this would be considered in the discussions with the Deputy Deans.

Members discussed whether the case management software could include functionality to log processes such as Fitness to Practice. It was reported that BU had identified a preferred provider and they would be considering how to develop the system for BU. There would be a phased implementation for the new system starting with Student Services in the next academic year. Faculty staff had been involved in the Steering Group to engage with the development of the new system and staff would be invited as required in the future.

In the meantime, the proposed Student Engagement Framework allowed for some recording of student engagement using the 'Engage' application. The committee noted that students did not always engage with their individual personal tutor and that processes for changing tutors could be complex on some programmes. In some departments, there were staffing issues that meant that students did not always have a personal tutor who taught on their units. It was recognised that work was needed to develop a systematic record of formal process touchpoints between staff and students, and how to explain to staff the importance of using the tools to maintain the record of these interactions.

6.2. PREP: Plan for 2024/25 and longer-term

Discussion

Deputy Deans

It was reported that the University's Peer Reflection On Education Practice (PREP) policy needed to be reviewed because it was not achieving what the University wanted in terms of oversight of teaching quality. Members were asked what interim arrangements could be put in place to meet the requirements of the policy whilst the review was taking place during 2024/25. It was proposed that the new policy could split the current approach to PREP into two distinct parts including 1) teaching observation and 2) developing education practice.

The Committee noted how the implementation of the Apprenticeships Teaching Observation policy had raised concerns about creating a two tier system, one for apprenticeships and one for all other students, and whether the apprenticeship approach should be adopted across all type of provision at BU. Union representatives had had concerns about 'spot checks' and some of the wording of the apprenticeships policy. It was noted that the policy used Ofsted terminology, and it was suggested that the wording could be more supportive. Academic staff could teach on both apprenticeship and standard programmes, and it was suggested that one policy to cover all types of provision should be the aim of the review of Peer Reflection On Education Practice (PREP) policy 9A.

The committee discussed the idea of splitting the two elements of PREP and questioned whether they were intertwined, where observation should be part of the approach to enhancing education practice. It was noted that peer observation alone did not always lead to enhancement and that more structure and oversight was needed. It was suggested that having more specific criteria for observation could support a greater coherence in terms of education practice development across BU. The committee noted that it was Education Committee's role to provide a steer on priorities in terms of education practice and development at BU. PREP themes had been included in the department AMER plans in the past and it was questioned how this should be approached as part of monitoring and enhancement in the future.

It was agreed that the Pro Vice-Chancellors would develop a proposal for the policy review to share with the committee (ACTION A). In the meantime, the Deputy Deans would speak to their faculties about interim arrangement for 2024/25 to look at how to implement both the apprenticeships policy and an interim solution for other provision (ACTION B). The Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience would arrange a meeting in early September with the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Quality, the Deputy Deans and the Associate Deans Student Experience to agree the interim arrangements (ACTION C).

ACTION A - Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Quality

ACTION B - Deputy Deans

ACTION C - Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience

6.3. Mental Health Charter

Discussion

Shelley Thompson

Universities had received a ministerial mandate to sign up to the University Mental Health Charter. BU has signed up to the Charter and undertaking a self-evaluation against the principles of good practice outlined in the charter. The committee was informed about the different award outcomes, and it was explained that the award was meant to be an aspirational high standard.

The Charter was grouped into four primary domains; Live, Work, Learn and Support. The Learn domain would be overseen by Education Committee and had enabling themes around transitions, assessment and feedback that needed to be considered. Other themes that could be relevant to the committee were Student Voice and Leadership. Details about the Learn domain would be brought back to Education Committee in the autumn.

ACTION: Secretary to add to December agenda

Staff and student mental health are covered by the Charter and, as part of the self-evaluation, BU is required to outline support offered and details of how the impact of support services are evaluated. Any proposals for the Mental Health Charter framework needed to be specific to the university context and address the mental health needs of BU staff and students. There were pockets of good practice, but more work was needed to embed this approach within other processes and ensure that supporting mental health is part of a whole university approach. The University was aiming for the self-evaluation report to be submitted in 2026; BU would then be allocated a slot for a two-day audit.

The committee discussed how this work aligned to the Access and Participation plan, which employed similar language and equally required a whole institution approach. It was noted that there was a political dimension to this that may change as a result of the upcoming general election in the UK, although members agreed it was beneficial for the University to develop a whole institution approach to mental health support. An example of the types of practical schemes that could be implemented was the University's Suicide Prevention Strategy.

The committee noted that the sector research highlighted the variation in approach and understanding with regards to clinical governance. Universities need to develop mechanisms to provide assurance that the interventions used to support students are effective. BU needed to consider how staff were adhering to this and ensuring clinical practice was safe. The Head of Student Support and Wellbeing would be working with the Deputy Dean for FHSS to consider how clinical governance worked at BU. It was noted that there may need to be a new policy to support this work which covered both corporate and academic areas.

6.4. Academic Integrity, the use of AI within the assessment process

Discussion

James Stevens

The Chief Data Officer attended the meeting to lead a discussion on whether the University should consider staff use of artificial intelligence (AI) in assessment processes. Informal discussions had taken place in the ThinkTank and they wanted to get some feedback about whether there was an appetite for it to be implemented. The possible benefits of using AI were efficiencies for staff and automated feedback that was provided in quicker turn around. However, there were also risks around impacts on the student experience, reputation and trust. Consideration would need to be given as to how the marking outcomes were achieved and whether they could be replicated.

The student committee members were asked to give their feedback. On the negative side, it was suggested that some students might question why they were paying fees for lecturers who were not marking their assessments. As a positive, it was suggested that AI-marked assessments could address student concerns about fairness and accuracy in marking and reduce the 3-week turnaround for feedback. It was noted that AI software learns from humans so there could still be student perceptions of bias if the AI was trained with non-objective information. The committee considered how BU would need to develop the approach to data to train the AI software for marking. It was questioned whether marking student work gave academics an insight into how their teaching was being understood by their students and whether AI would erase the human element of assessment. It was noted that any solution would still need human oversight to check and manage the outcomes.

The committee discussed the rise in student academic offences caused by the unsanctioned use of AI tools. AI was causing challenges in education and was a “hot topic” across the sector. The committee noted that it could be used in images and videos as well as text-based submissions and the use of AI raised questions around academic integrity, intellectual property and original knowledge. It was reported that some universities were reverting to having more exams for assessment. It was reported that new assignment brief templates had been developed at BU and were to be implemented shortly. The new templates had statements about what level of AI use was permitted in the assignment, which were to be selected by the unit leader depending on the assignment requirements.

It was noted that innovations in technology were being used and developed in industry and BU needed to be responsive to the challenges and opportunities by AI as well as ensuring there were clear communications to staff and students. It was noted that if AI was trained using BU staff and student data there could be issues around commercial or personal sensitive data getting into the public domain. For programmes with PSRB requirements for assessment, staff may need to refer to their regulators before was used AI for marking. It was noted that Education Committee would need to agree the ethical and appropriate use of AI tools and ensure that the fundamentals of education were not undermined.

In the Faculty of Media and Communication one of the academics had trailed using AI to provide feedback to international students in their native languages. It had been a collaborative project with the students to ensure the translations were correct. In the NCCA department staff had been creating a rubrics for marking in AI which the programme team was finding useful. The committee highlighted the need for sharing good practice and processes to be established across the institution. It was reported that an AI Steering group had been set up and IT were preparing communications and resources for the use of tools like Co-Pilot.

Members discussed whether the University would need to seek student consent to use their work for teaching the AI software. There would need to be sector research and checks on governance requirement and student agreement processes. In the meantime, it was requested that the University seek student feedback on this proposal. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience would ask for it to be included in the Student-Staff forums discussions.

ACTION - Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience

The committee recognised that AI technology was a fast-moving sector where expertise was yet to be developed. It was suggested that the University used the next 6-12 months to complete market research and allow more time for the AI software to become more established. The Chief Data Officer was invited to return to the committee in 6 months to provide an update.

7. FOR APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT

7.1. Overview of the Student Engagement Framework operational process

For Approval

Rosalind Ashcroft

The Student Engagement Framework had been discussed by the committee at previous meetings alongside the proposed changes to ARPP3K Engagement and Attendance Policy and Procedure. The framework had been developed to outline the operational procedures and it was being brought back to the committee for consideration before implementation at the start of the new academic year. A summary of the framework had been included in the papers and members were asked to decide whether the procedures aligned with principles of ARPP3K, if the proposed actions would have impact on student experience and if the governance and reporting proposals were appropriate. The framework was an important part of how the University was looking to address continuation rates and support students to stay engaged in their studies.

The framework was designed to give a whole university approach, which aligned with previous discussions about the Metal Health Charter. The committee were shown a case study which illustrated the gap the framework had been designed to fill. The new engagement structure aimed to allow for prompt and regular checking of attendance. After the second week of teaching the programme team would complete regular reviews of student data and then decide on the appropriate responses. The main tool for monitoring this was the Engage system which had been piloted in 2023/24 academic year. The system allowed staff to view and filter attendance data. Students would then be contacted to ask them to re-engage and there could then be further follow-ups about support to study or interruptions, if needed.

The Engage system draws attendance data from JISC and links that to information from Brightspace and SITS to give the students details and data together. Programme Leaders, Programme Support teams and Additional Learning Support (ALS) staff would all have access to make notes and the Deputy Deans and Associate Deans Student Experience (ADSEs) would be able to view the data. Walk-throughs were being arranged to demonstrate the system to faculties. Students could not view their data in the current system but it was noted this was planned for future developments of the system.

It was reported that the Education Service Managers (ESMs) had raised concerns about resourcing required to implement the system by the programme support teams. It was highlighted that this was at time when the University's enhanced recruitment controls were causing increased workload pressures for staff. In the development of the framework, the Student Engagement team had taken staff work capacity into consideration. It was reported that they had set the threshold for attendance at 25% due to staff resourcing issues. The proposal aimed to introduce a more consistent approach than had been in place previously. The proposal involved emails alerts to students rather than phone calls that had been used in the pilots as it had been recognised that the phone calls would be too resource-intensive to implement at this scale. The committee questioned whether text messages may be more effective but it was reported that this was not an option with in the Engage system. The Student Agreement would be updated to place more responsibility on students to check their emails and take ownership for their attendance.

Members questioned whether the language of the framework needed to shift from prompting 'student behavioural change' because this approach was about organisational change. It was clarified that there was no punitive element to the framework and that the aim was to re-engage students. It was recognised that there needed to be compassionate communications with students that set out clear expectations from induction onwards. It was suggested that there was apathy among Home students about the need to attend lectures and this scheme may help them understand why good attendance and engagement is important.

Committee members raised concerns about the amount of work the system would require for academics and questioned whether the Student Engagement Team were appointed to do these tasks. It was reported to the committee that the team was recruited to implement the pilot and develop the Engage system and were not resourced to be able to complete all the student contact and follow-up work. It was reported that the programme teams remit was to support students and the proposed process gave more structure to the process and meant review dates could be scheduled more systematically through the year. Faculties were encouraged to embed the Student Engagement framework in their AMER plans for monitoring.

Committee members raised concern about operationalising the framework for September 2024. It was noted that staff resourcing was not within the remit of the Education Committee and would need to be addressed separately at executive level.

It was noted that the 'Engage' system allowed programme teams to send emails from the system and they would be able to add response date reminders to follow-up on individual students. The system gave an overview of student communications, and programme teams would have access so that people could cover during staff sickness or leave. Missed assessments were not included in the Engage system because assessment data went into SITS at a later stage, but Programme Support Officers would be able to use the Engage to contact students about missed assignments. In the long-term it was reported that there was the intention to develop a system that had all the student information.

Members questioned whether there could be different staff involved on different programmes and faculties. It was reported that this had to be a BU-wide approach to ensure consistency of implementation. It was reported that staff from all faculties had been involved in the development of the framework including Programme Leaders and ADSEs. Drop-in sessions were scheduled for staff to view the Engage system and training would take place in September 2024.

Decision: Endorsed in principle. The committee noted concern regarding the operationalization of the framework which would be addressed in consultation with Faculty Executive Teams.

8. FOR NOTE

8.1. ARPP 3K- Academic Engagement & Attendance update

To Note

Rosalind Ashcroft

Minor changes had been made to the draft policy and they were brought back to the committee for note before being submitted to Senate. It was noted that the definition of the programme team had been updated, along with details about non-submission and non- attendance being key indicators of non-engagement and references to other processes.

The committee asked if the policy needed to refer to practice education as well as placements, and it was noted that there needed to be consistency with Placements: Policy and Procedure 4K. The Academic Registrar and Head of Academic Operations would check the details before the draft Academic Engagement & Attendance: Policy and Procedure 3K was submitted to Senate and confirm the outcome to FHSS Deputy Dean. It was confirmed that details about occupational health were included in the policy.

ACTION: Academic Registrar and Head of Academic Operations

Decision: Noted.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- e-meeting beginning July 2024, AdminControl