

Education Committee Minutes

Wed 29 January 2025, 14:00 - 17:00

OVC Board Room



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 Fiona Knight (Head Of Doctoral College),
Professor Sara White (Deputy Dean Faculty of Health and Social Sciences (FHSS)),
Dr Carly Stewart (Deputy Dean Faculty of Science and Technology (FST)),
Professor Ann Luce (Deputy Dean Faculty of Media and Communication (FMC)),
Kai Peters (Interim Strategic Portfolio Lead for Education (BUBS)),
Dr Gelareh Roushan (Head of Fusion Learning Innovation and Enhancement (FLIE)), Dr Kate Terkanian (Member of Senate),
Grace Ehiosun (SU Vice-President Education, SUBU), Kerry-Ann Randle (Interim Head Of Student Services),
Eniola Agbeniga (Student Representative BU Business School (BUBS)),
Catrin Morris (Student Representative Faculty of Science and Technology (FST))

In Attendance

Anna Burgess (Academic Quality Officer (Clerk)), Rosalind Ashcroft (Head of Academic Operations),
Liam Sheridan (PRIME Manager, attended for item 6.4)

Apologies

Professor Philip Sewell (Director Of Apprenticeships and Skills)

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 11 Dec 2024

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

For Approval

Chair

3.2. Accuracy: e-Education Committee summary Dec 2024

The summary was ratified as an accurate record.

To Ratify

Chair

3.3. Matters Arising/Actions Log

11/12/2024 4. SUBU Student Representatives Feedback Report. The SU Vice-President Education had attended the Faculty Education Committee meetings and had flagged a few issues raised by students, including concern about the use of Citygate for teaching. The Deputy Dean for BUBS was asked to work with Estates to evaluate the use of the space and bring the outcome back to the Education Committee. A review was underway, and the faculty were considering how to support students in semester 2. It was anticipated that the space would not be used next academic year. Education Committee would receive an update once the review was completed. Action ongoing.

11/12/2024 5.2. Student Engagement update and Personal Tutoring progress reports. Attendance monitoring was a requirement for apprenticeship provision, and this was currently managed through an appendix to the Student Engagement policy, monitored by the Apprenticeship Board. It was highlighted that all the faculties were looking to introduce apprenticeship provision in the next 12 months, and it was suggested that Head of Academic Operations brought together the reports in future for Education Committee. Discussions were underway about the format of the report. Action ongoing.

11/12/2024 5.3.2 2023-24 APP Funded Projects The committee was asked to consider whether the Maths diagnostic project for Foundation year students should take place in 2024/25. The Chair and Deputy Deans for FST and FHSS would consider the proposal after the meeting. It was reported that the Maths project would not take place in 2024/25 because other arrangements had been made. Action closed.

11/12/2024 5.4A Peer Reflection on Education Practice (PREP) proposal. The Committee asked Deputy Deans to send the details of their interim PREP plans to the Head of FLIE for oversight and to support production of the observation form. The Deputy Deans had agreed their own approaches with FLIE for 2024/25 and were adapting the form with their own questions. Action closed.

11/12/2024 5.4B. Peer Reflection on Education Practice (PREP) proposal. It was agreed that a sub- group would be created to plan for the future of PREP. The Chair, Pro Vice Chancellor Student Experience and the Deputy Dean for FMC would meet in January 2025 to discuss the plans and a new ARPP. A proposal would then be brought back to the committee in March 2025 and then submitted to Senate for approval in May 2025. A meeting had been scheduled and Education Committee would be updated on progress in due course. Action ongoing.

11/12/2024 6.1. Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER) Review Panel Report. The Deputy Deans asked if there was any Faculty-specific feedback they could receive about the AMER plans the Review Panel considered. The Secretary would share these with the Deputy Deans.

The notes were being prepared by Academic Quality. **Action ongoing.**

4. FOR RATIFICATION

4.1. Chairs Action ARPP 3N Enrolment: Procedure

To Ratify

The appendices showing the ARPP changes were not included in the paper pack, the Secretary would circulate them by email after the meeting.

Chair

ACTION: Secretary

Decision: Ratified

5. SUBU STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES FEEDBACK REPORT

Information

Grace Ehiosun

The SimOn report for September to November 2024/25 was included in the papers and presented to the committee by the SU VP Education. It was reported that there had been an increase in the number of comments compared to the same period the previous year. Common themes from students included the challenges regarding the cost of living, clarity of course content and campus facilities. Some of the faculties had seen less positive feedback than previously. SUBU asked Departments to encourage their staff to be academic patrons for student societies and asked whether the University could consider incentives for academics to become patrons. The committee discussed how it would be useful to hear feedback from staff that were engaging in this work. Faculties reported that they had promoted the patron roles to staff but explained that they currently had limited staff resources.

6. FOR DISCUSSION

6.1. Chair's business

Discussion

Chair

The Chair and Deputy Dean for FST encouraged Faculties to consider the use of the facilities at Chapel Gate, particularly for staff events and space requirements. The Faculty of Health and Social Sciences were piloting a scheme to use it for their students. Travel and infrastructure restrictions limited it for student use, but it could be used for staff meetings and events in the meantime.

It was reported that a review would be taking place of the Academic Governance across BU. The new Vice Chancellor wanted to consider governance across the organisation and issues had been identified around reporting lines, the timing of committees and the level of scrutiny required for the same report across multiple committees. In the interim, the Chair and Deputy Chair were considering the structure of the remaining Education Committees in 2024/25. They were looking to have alternate meetings based on a discussion theme. Members asked for more time to review papers if there were going to be larger paper packs.

6.2. Update on Access and Participation Plan

Discussion

Chair

It was reported that the Access and Participation Plan had received approval from the Office for Students (OfS) on the 23 December 2024 with no queries. The accessible summary of the plan had been signed off by UET and was published on the BU website and the intervention strategies were being launched. Thanks were given to the teams involved in writing the strategies. BU would be considering the Access and Participation Plan as part of the BU2035 strategy and the wider educational strategy. The Chair and Academic Registrar had been in contact with the OfS about the inflationary statement and setting fee levels. The APP Equality Impact Assessment was included in the papers to note.

Decision: Noted

6.3. OfS Quality Assessments Reports

The OfS had produced a number of quality assessment reports and a recent OfS Insights Brief. The Head of Academic Quality presented a summary of these reports to the committee because they set out the main risks to quality in the sector. Key issues included the need for student monitoring to be a core activity, consideration of whether annual monitoring processes were effective, ensuring staff at all levels had a good understanding of the data and that action taken had the intended impact. Other considerations included whether unit monitoring was effective and whether universities understood the differing needs of student groups. Some of the OfS reports noted the positive benefits of revalidation as a quality assurance process, and therefore whilst there are plans to move away from periodic review/revalidation in its current form at BU, it was important to ensure any process changes retained the benefits of revalidation/periodic review.

Committee members discussed whether the AMER plans were effective in making change and whether Education Committee had effective oversight of the data and was able to take effective action to address any issues or risks highlighted in the data. It was noted that the Access and Participation Plan gave structure to the intervention strategies for issues like the awarding gaps.

Committee members requested that role descriptors for Programme Leaders and Level Tutors were established and discussed the disparity of programme leadership across differently sized programmes. BU was relying on the programme teams to deliver the interventions outlined in the AMER plans and they had to do this alongside personal tutoring and student engagement activities. It was reported that there was a need to effectively reward and motivate staff, and to ensure that progression opportunities were available. It was noted that many of these points were being considered as part of the BU2035 strategy in development.

Committee members queried whether the university needed to reinstate a more systematic approach to unit level feedback. The Student Representatives suggested including it in SimOn rather than adding an additional task for students to complete, but it was noted that this was a SUBU-owned process rather than BU-owned system. It was noted that the current process was for Unit Leaders to gather feedback directly from students, but it was reported that the lack of a BU system meant there was no higher-level oversight or quantitative data to consider. It was reported that FHSS had to collect unit feedback as part of their PSRB requirements.

6.4. Student Outcomes Report (PRIME)

The annual Student Outcomes Data report was included in the papers and the PRIME Manager attended to present it. The OfS had outlined priority categories of the data for additional scrutiny, including Full-time Undergraduate provision, Business and Management programmes, Partner programmes and Foundation Years. Committee members requested that the risks be set out more clearly in the Executive Summary for the report in the future. It was reported that the data was also available in the PRIME Student Outcomes Dashboard and training sessions were being arranged for faculty staff.

Action: PRIME Manager

6.4.1. Student Outcomes - Foundation years

Foundation year data was of concern for BU as it was below threshold for 2020/21 and was expected to be low for the following two years. The committee discussed the high failure rate for foundation year students, concerns were raised about whether students required more support on academic skills and if the foundation year included enough discipline relevant content to support student engagement. It was reported that there were common units across foundation years which did not appear to be delivering the outcomes anticipated; it was also reported that the FST foundation year was not preparing students who progressed to an FHSS programme sufficiently the challenges of level 4. It was questioned whether there were opportunities to work more closely with FE colleges to deliver foundation years. The committee suggested reviewing the Student Engagement data to help understand the issues with Foundation Years, including gathering direct feedback from students about their reason for non-engagement. The Deputy Dean for FMC and the Head of Academic Operations would meet to consider this and bring the details back to a future meeting.

ACTION A: Deputy Dean for FMC and the Head of Academic Operations

The committee agreed that there was a need for a BU evaluation of foundation years to focus on getting a consistent philosophy, approach and delivery. The Chair/Deputy Chair would set it as a theme for one of the remain committee meetings this academic year. At the meeting committee members would agree a paper for UET outlining the business case for the future of foundation years and the development of links with FE Colleges, linking in with the BU Student Engagement and Transitions Project and investigate whether it could be picked up by PMO.

ACTION B: Chair and Deputy Chair

6.4.2. Student Outcomes - Completion rates

In parallel with continuation data, it was reported that completion rates had decreased and these would fall further before rising again, due to the 4 year aggregated data set. It was noted that the overall rate was above the OfS threshold, but the split indicators were in danger of falling below threshold, particularly for foundation years. The report outlined programmes with completion rates below threshold for 2023/24; it was noted that a number of these were the programmes with foundation years but BSc Sport and Exercise Science was also highlighted as a large programme below threshold. FHSS reported that they had been looking at possible reasons for this, including low attendance rates and lower entry tariffs.

6.4.3. Student Outcomes – Unit-level data

A report of units with a pass rate below 80% was also included in the appendices. The data showed post-resit pass marks, and the Chair raised concerns about the high numbers of students that were re-submitting for a second time and still failing the assessment. The Chair encouraged Faculties to use the unit board process to identify units with high failure rates and take meaningful action which could be implemented through the UAMRs and the AMER plans. It was noted that BU guidance required that if the failure rate was higher than 20% then action was needed. The committee discussed the impact on staff and students if students did not pass first time and whether earlier interventions were needed. The committee also considered the link to assessment design, the issues of common units across disciplines and consideration of student performance across assessment types. The Chair and Deputy Chair would share the list with the Learning and Skills hub and ask for support to be offered to the unit tutors.

ACTION: Chair and Deputy Chair

6.4.4. Student Outcomes - Degree classification and the BAME attainment gap

The committee noted that the proportion of Good Honours had decreased since 2020/21 but the attainment gap between black and white students had increased. Committee members discussed the need to evaluate whether previous interventions had been effective, and whether there was a good understanding of why the BAME attainment gap was widening. It was noted that the APP included details about the need for an inclusive curriculum, consideration of barriers to learning, changes to delivery models and support for transition to university. It was also reported that those working on the Race Equality Charter had found recurring feedback from students that they struggled to navigate the support information offered. Committee members also raised that literature showed that students needed to be taught by people that looked like them and questioned whether BU needed to consider more inclusive hiring policies.

6.4.5. Student Outcomes - Degree classification, grades

The data showed that the proportion of 1st and 2.1s was decreasing. Committee members questioned whether this was a concern, there was a correlation between the decrease in higher outcomes and the drop in entry tariffs. The committee discussed whether there was a faculty view on the data and how they would know if there had been grade inflation. For example, FMC had higher marks when compared to BUBS. The Deputy Dean for FMC and the Head of Academic Quality would meet to discuss the proportion of Good Honours in FMC.

ACTION: Deputy Dean for FMC and the Head of Academic Quality

6.5. AMER Good Practice Report

It was reported that the recent B3 audit had shown that the good practice section of the AMER plans was inconsistently completed. In order to better support this activity, the Academic Quality team had produced a report on the good practice sections of the AMER plans and it was included in the papers. Committee members discussed the need to draw together good practice in order to influence practice and not just highlight risk. New Programme Leaders would find example plans helpful in understanding what was required and highlighted the need to positively acknowledge when programme teams had achieved a positive outcome. It was reported that there was a need to make space to allow time for academics to share good practice and discuss education development. It was noted that a "good practice" example had been published on SharePoint and Academic Quality would be involving Deputy Deans in future Good Practice review reports.

Discussion

Jules Forrest

7. FOR NOTE

7.1. Pearson Institutional report

The annual quality report had been submitted to Pearsons and was included in the paperpack for note. Members requested that a more detailed commentary was included on the cover sheet for these reports in the future.

Decision: Noted

Information

Jules Forrest

7.2. Partner Activity Report

Decision: Noted

Information

Jules Forrest

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1. FHSS PSRB Updates

The Deputy Dean for FHSS gave the following PSRB updates for their faculty:

- The Health Care Professions Council (HCPC)'s normal 3 - 5 yearly monitoring documentation was due in February 2025. It had been seen and agreed at Faculty Education Committee.
- Social Work England (SWE) would be coming to monitor BIA (Best Interest Assessor) and AMHP (Approved Mental Health Professional) training and BU's compliance with the new standards. The visit would be in October 2025 and pre-monitoring documentary evidence would be submitted a couple of months before the visit in October.

8.2. Possible Programme Development Proposal – Paramedic Sciences in FHSS

FHSS was interested in tendering for Paramedic Science CPD with the ambulance service. The Faculty had received the details from the NHS with a deadline of the 14 February and requested for it to be considered by an Education Committee Chairs Action. The Chair would discuss the proposal with the Executive Dean for FHSS.

8.3. Student Engagement framework - staff workload

Committee members raised concerns about the impact the new Student Engagement framework was having on faculty staff workload. The Chair and Head of Academic Operations advised members that concerns needed to be raised with the Student Engagement Project team and the escalation route for staffing and resource concerns would be via UET and not Education Committee.

8.4. Three Week Turnaround (3WAT) for marking

Faculty members had been struggling to meet the 3WAT and it was questioned whether Education Committee could consider changing it to 4 weeks. It was reported that lower staff numbers due to the Voluntary Severance Scheme had made the timescales difficult to meet and HR had suggested extended time scales as part of a stress risk assessment for some FMC staff. The Chair would raise the concern with UET.

ACTION: Chair

8.5. New Programme Development Proposals

FEC members queried the process for the approval of new Programme Development Proposals (PDPs). The Chair clarified that all new programme developments, including those with partners, needed to be approved by UET first. UET and the Vice Chancellor needed to consider all proposals in light of resource limitations.

8.6. Reading week

The Deputy Dean for FMC reported that the removal of the reading week in semester one had been implemented this academic year, but that staff and students had been unhappy about this change. Student Representatives had raised their dissatisfaction at the January FEC meeting and it had also been reflected in the SimOn feedback. The committee discussed the concerns that having a reading week negatively impacted continuation as students did not return from the break created by reading week, however it was reported that this approach was out of line with the sector. Committee members questioned whether graduation week could be an informal reading week. It was noted that the issue was only in the first semester because semester two included the Easter break. Committee members discussed the staffing impact and concerns around increased staff sickness and inabilities to meet the 3WAT marking requirements due to limited resource. It was suggested that a review of the engagement data for students could help to understand whether there was an impact on continuation. The Secretary would add the item to a future Education Committee meeting for discussion.

ACTION: Secretary

9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- e-meeting Week commencing 10th Feb 2025
- Thursday 27/02/2025
- Thursday 27/03/2025
- e-meeting Week commencing 7th April 2025
- Monday 28/04/2025
- e-meeting Week commencing 12th May 2025
- Wednesday 28/05/2025
- Wednesday 25/06/2025
- e-meeting Week commencing 7th July 2025