

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday 27 February 2025 – 2.00pm to 4.00pm, Board Room, Talbot Campus

Attendees

Committee Members (9)

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), Grace Ehiosun (SU Vice-President – Education – SUBU), Professor Ann Luce (Deputy Dean - FMC), Jacky Mack (Academic Registrar), Professor Lee Miles (Deputy Dean – BUBS), Dr Gelareh Roushan (Head of Fusion Learning Innovation and Enhancement (FLIE), Dr Philip Ryland (Associate Dean Student Experience BUBS), Professor Philip Sewell (Director Of Apprenticeships and Skills), Dr Kate Terkanian (Member of Senate), Professor Sara White (Deputy Dean - FHSS), Professor Sabeur Zoheir (Member of the Professoriate)

In Attendance

Osaruese Asemota (FHSS Student Representative), Rosalind Ashcroft (Head of Academic Operations), Eniola Agbeniga (BUBS Student Representative), Melanie Coles (Deputy Head of the Computing and Informatics) (FST), Catrin Morris (FST Student Representative)

Apologies

Professor Lois Farquharson (Executive Dean – BUBS), Esther Isaiah (SU President - SUBU), Dr Fiona Knight (Head of the Doctoral College), Kerry-Ann Randle (Representative for vacant Student Services Director role), Dr Carly Stewart (Deputy Dean - FST)

Meeting Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Information
Clerk

Apologies were noted as above.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Information
Chair

There were no declarations of interest.

3. FOR DISCUSSION

3.1.1 AI, Academic Offences and Assessment Design

For Discussion
Dr G Roushan

The Head of FLIE shared an update on the University's current position regarding academic offences and whether the tools available were able to detect academic offences and work was continuing with Faculties on assessment design. With regards to concerns about the high level of academic offences being identified in international, postgraduate students' assignments, interventions were in place and work was ongoing around the design of postgraduate assessments and assisting Faculties with the different approaches. It was hoped improvements would be seen in the data next year. The Chair commented he recently joined a QAA online quality insights session and the keynote speaker had spoken about reframing AI and adopting a very different approach to AI in UK HEIs. As part of the BU2035 strategy, the University would ensure staff and students were able to use AI effectively as part of learning and teaching.

A number of next steps would be implemented e.g. targeted review of assessments, ensure consistency in the decision-making of Academic Offence Panels (AOP) and central training for staff and to be able to use data to help identify areas of concern. These areas would be included in the Academic Offences Policy update.

The Academic Integrity ThinkTank had met four times this academic year and the next meeting was due to take place on 12 March 2025 to share updates of the ongoing work. The group considering the required updates to the Academic Offences policy had been established to consider the policy and any required updated and/or operational guidance as it included core representation from key staff from across the University as well as including staff members who regularly attend AOPs. The next meeting of that group was taking place on 9 April 2025 would include an update of all work carried out which would then be submitted to Education Committee in May or June 2025 for approval, in order information was available for students in September 2025. It was suggested that this group could form the Academic Integrity Group, as highlighted in the most recent Quality and Standards report and endorsed by Senate. The Chair would consider whether the current group considering Academic Offences could provide the membership for the reinstated Academic Integrity Group.

Action: Chair

The Chair would consider whether the current group consideration Academic Offences could provide membership for the reinstated Academic Integrity Group

The Committee discussed the Academic Offence Panel pre-meetings. It was noted that these meetings were generally not minuted and were often stressful for staff and students. The committee also noted of the importance of staff being well prepared before attending the pre-meeting. Committee members queried whether the pre-meeting needed to take place as it often meant that the same questions were often put to the student twice. An aide-memoire had been prepared by BUBS staff which guided staff through the pre-meeting and followed the route of an informal conversation. Following a discussion regarding penalties for committing academic offences, it was noted that within BUBS, if a student admitted to committing an offence, the student would have a more lenient outcome due to the admission of an offence. Those students who denied committing an academic offence during the pre-meeting would proceed to a formal AOP. Committee members agreed that the main issue for staff was having the time to identify the offence and provide evidence.

It was reported that during the summer 2024, in collaboration with Academic Quality and Programme Leaders, FMC staff had reviewed assessments whilst following AI guidance. In terms of assessment design, FLIE resources regarding the design of assessments for academics was updated annually. There were now a number of examples available for staff to consider different types of assessments and to see the assessments that BU colleagues and sector colleagues were putting in place.

It was reported that the Academic Offences Roadshows had been taking place where the BUBS Associate Dean Student Experience and Professor Jeff Bray were meeting with each programme cohort to provide information regarding academic offences and using AI. The Head of FLIE reminded members there were staff and student versions of the AI literacy tool for all to use and learn from. The Deputy Dean for FMC thanked the SU VP Education and SUBU for their good work around academic offences, providing academic integrity training and for helping staff during Faculty Education Committee meetings. In light of this work, it was reported that there were fewer academic offences being committed across all Faculties. It was noted that the data would be analysed in the annual Quality and Standards report to understand if there had been a positive impact this year based on the action taken.

3.1.2 FLIE AI-Integrated Pedagogies

For Discussion
Dr G Roushan

The paper was discussed under item 3.1.1.

3.1.3 Turnitin AI Detector Tool Review and Authorship Dashboard Pilot

For Discussion
Dr G Roushan

The paper was not discussed at the meeting.

3.1.4 Assessment Regulations: Failure & Reassessment and Assessment Regulations

For Discussion
Prof K Phalp/
Dr S Thompson

It was noted that failure and re-assessment had been discussed at a previous committee meeting as well as the high number of first time fails. The Chair reported that discussions had taken place regarding the requirement for students to pass all individual elements and having an aggregate mark/minimum mark. Committee members reported that other Universities had different pass rates compared to BU and some offered more generous compensation. It was suggested that Education Committee should revisit compensation rules for Level 4 students as carrying credit was challenging for students. The Director of Apprenticeships and Skills advised that other Universities were also revisiting their compensation rules and agreed that the University's compensation rules were strict, although it was recognised that each University's regulations were finely tuned and where there was generosity in places, there was increased strictness in other areas.

With regards to carrying credit, the Chair reported that he was unsure whether this worked well as it had been problematic and following an analysis in FST, the results were not positive about carrying credit. The SU VP Education advised of a case last year where a student needed three more marks to pass the programme and this was not permitted. This resulted in the student having to extend her Visa and then having to exit with an interim

award. It was reported that some students had personal circumstances and there is limited flexibility in assessment regulations to support these scenarios.

The Head of Academic Quality provided information relating to first time failure and unit monitoring, and observations from the Academic Quality team who had oversight of the process. It was reported that units with a high failure rate should be highlighted and discussed at Unit Boards and also included in Unit Assessment and Monitoring Reports (UAMRs). It was suggested that there may be a number of reasons why high failure rates were occurring and it was important for Unit Leaders, Programme Leaders and Unit Boards to have a good understanding of the data, to establish the cause of the reason for failure and take effective action to mitigate this for future cohorts. There are a broad range of actions available to unit boards and programme teams to address high failure rates that don't require a modification to the unit. The Head of Academic Quality provided examples of sections of a unit that could be amended without the need to submit a modification e.g. assessment methods, rubrics, support communications of criteria to students, formative feedback, assessment criteria, indicative content of the unit, sequencing of unit content, learning strategies, interactive quizzes/discussion forums, etc.

The committee discussed the need for staff to understand the assessment criteria for Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and staff should be providing more guidance on developing ILOs as there were many ILOs which led to a lot of assessment and the Chair asked members whether this should be considered more as an institution.

Action A: All Members

Members were asked to agree whether more guidance should be made available for staff to understand the assessment criteria for ILOs.

The Deputy Chair had recently had a discussion with the Head of PRIME regarding the need to have non-submission data readily available as to date for the 2024/25 academic year, there were approximately 1,900 non-submissions. A team in PRIME was in the process of being assigned to work on this data and to also look at the entry criteria for these students as well as the characteristics.

The Chair asked members what was considered to be an acceptable pass rate, the current acceptable pass rate was 80%. The Deputy Head of Department for Computing and Informatics (DHoD C&I) advised the current structure for assessments and following the rules of ARPP 6C for Computing programmes, the rules were quite restrictive as assessments were mostly 100% assessment, and for Level 4 assessments it was difficult to ask students to complete 100% assessment and it was suggested that Level 4 students would benefit from small packages of learning and have phased assessment. It was reported that currently in Computing and Informatics, students had a rolling assessment on alternative weeks and then receive formative feedback. It was reported that students having to pass both elements was a challenge for the department. The Deputy Chair advised that those students failing units or repeating units year on year, would then incur additional maintenance loans and student loans which was hugely expensive for these students and not the experience the University wanted for its students.

The Head of Academic Quality advised members that the rules of ARPP 6C did not state a minimum assessment. It was noted that discussions were needed to agree whether the University needed to summatively assess students at Level 4 whilst still ensuring that level 4 ILOs were met. The Deputy Dean for FMC suggested that the University should consider assessing students over semesters where a student could build up a body of work across units and would be more relatable to real life work as well as addressing the issue of over-assessment which impacts staff and students. The Chair advised that committee members needed to agree to this suggestion before any work continued on assessments. In addition, members would need to decide the credit structure of units which may be a larger piece of work before work started on assessment regulations. It was noted that if the University moved to allowing more phased assessments, some understanding of the impact on aggregated work would need to be clarified.

Action B: All Members

Members were requested to agree to the suggestion of assessing students over semesters where a student could build up a body of work across units/change to phased assessments

The Student Representative for FST advised that students often became disengaged with their programmes as there was a lack of interesting content and the slides used by lecturers were uninteresting and lacked any detailed information related to assignments. Committee members also heard that a number of students with additional learning needs or mental health issues were often disengaged due to their additional learning needs and personal reasons and lectures were not always recorded to allow students with additional learning needs to view the recording at a later date. Some ALS students had unsuccessfully attempted to contact their lecturer and no response was received to provide students with support.

The Committee noted that a small number of postgraduate students do not submit their work on time, however they do use the 72 hour rule for submissions. There was an instance of a student who did not submit two pieces of work and was advised to repeat the year and only needed to complete one piece of work each semester. The student should have been received more support as the student had submitted the work, just not before the deadline. In addition, members noted that this student was not given sufficient support to complete the Board Consideration

Form and therefore did not continue with the programme. Many students had difficulty submitting their work on time, and the process to help students with the next steps was difficult for students. It was noted that in instances such as this, the Programme Support Officers were able to assist students to complete Board Consideration Forms. The Chair advised that this process was being reviewed with the intention of making it easier for students and to also give students a point of contact to support them, in particular if any student has a long-term issue.

The Student Representative for FST highlighted a case where a student passed all units in a level except one unit which had a mark of 40% and it was queried why the student could not continue. It was noted that students do not have a good understanding of assessment regulations and what are the options in the case of failure. It was agreed there was a need to improve communications to students with regards to assessment regulations, especially in the cases of unit failure, so there was a good understanding of what the implications of unit failure in their individual circumstance.

The Chair sought feedback from the Committee whether students should be required to pass all elements and whether the University should have multiple elements. The DHoD (C&I) advised that in-year retrieval was embedded in Semester 1 of level 4 and queried whether retrieval of a failed assessment could be enabled immediately and a resit before the end of level in order to support continuation. The Head of Academic Quality advised that this had recently been a debate across the sector with a number of Universities seeking to permit students to retrieve a failure earlier in the year. There were advantages and disadvantages of this approach as outlined in a paper to Senate in 2024; advantages were that students were given the opportunity to retrieve failure at an earlier point in the year whilst the learning was still fresh, but this approach meant that retrieval was taking place at the same time as learning for new units which could be a distraction from new units and impact performance at that point.

In order to progress the suggestions with regards to assessment regulations, PRIME would be requested to model the data with regards to compensation, removing the requirement to pass all elements of a unit, in-year retrieval and review the impact of carrying credit.

Action C: Chair to contact PRIME to request data modelling

The Student Representative for FST advised that the cost of living for students had resulted in students submitting their work late due to working part-time and mental health issues, resulting in non-engagement letters being sent without sometimes considering ALS needs. The Chair explained that non-engagement letters were sent to ensure students were receiving sufficient support and to ensure there were support mechanisms in place if needed. In order to ensure students did not feel they were being reprimanded for non-attendance; the letters would be reviewed to ensure they were framed with supportive language. In order to make attendance at lectures/seminars more accessible to students, work was ongoing to make the timetable more constrained.

Action D: Deputy Chair and Head of Academic Operations The wording of non-engagement letters would be reviewed

The SU VP Education suggested introducing a small number of sessions for students who had failed an assignment to work through the feedback provided alongside the assignment submission and to discuss areas for improvement. It was noted that some students felt they were not intelligent enough to understand the assignment and it was noted that this was an area where greater support could be provided to students. The Head of Academic Operations advised that staff needed assistance in order to provide the required support to students around assessment regulations and there was already a large amount of material in place. The Achieve Team had been speaking to students who had failed an assessment and they were encouraged to speak to their Unit Leader as early as possible to ensure they were able to progress. A map of the progression process would be created to ensure staff and students were aware of the process and clearly understood.

Action E: Head of Academic Quality/Head of Academic Operations A map of the progression process for students who had failed a unit would be prepared

3.2 Review of 'Reading Week' in FMC

For Discussion
Prof A Luce

It was reported that following the decision to not offer a 'Reading Week' in 2024/25, FMC received 333 student complaints compared to zero complaints the previous year that specifically referenced 'Reading Week'. The comments made by students included: three months without a break was too long to not see family/friends, students needed a week to increase work hours to help with the cost of living, needed a week to catch up on assessments, felt burned out, felt homesick, etc. In addition, there were 54 instances of academic staff absence which was higher than the previous year and comments from staff included: no opportunity to catch up on work, prepare for the rest of the semester/ teaching, to support students with complex needs, marking, etc.

The committee discussed the timing of the 'Reading Weeks' and whether they should take place during school Half Term weeks or during Graduation Week. If 'Reading Week' took place during half-term in late October and

Graduation Week the following week, this would impact teaching but could ensure there was a sufficient number of staff attending the graduation ceremonies. The Deputy Dean for FHSS advised this could not be confirmed for FHSS as some students would be in practice and would therefore affect practice partners, so some flexibility would be needed.

The committee agreed the 'Reading Weeks' needed to be consistent across all Faculties and needed to be referred to by the same title, e.g. 'Reading Week', Research Week, Hackathons. It was noted that Hackathons had helped with students' mental health and students were very engaged with the Hackathon week in FST. It was noted that the experiences across all Faculties were very different. The Chair confirmed there was a consensus to have a 'Reading Week' during the first semester with scheduled activities taking place, however there was no agreement for a 'Reading Week' in the second semester at present. The Chair asked Deputy Deans to meet and agree a week in the first semester, second semester and FHSS would arrange a week in FHSS in June/July to suit staff/students. 'Reading Weeks' should be arranged to ensure the Graduation Ceremonies were managed so staff were able to attend and celebrate with graduates. Historically, 'Reading Week' had taken place during Graduation Week, and moving the 'Reading Week' to half-term may be too early and would advantage some staff more than others.

Action A: Deputy Deans (FMC, FST, BUBS)

FMC, FST and BUBS to meet and agree on a 'Reading Week' and FHSS would fit their 'Reading Week' as best positioned for students/staff during the 2025/26 academic year

It was noted that for students who would remain at University during the break e.g. international students, apprentices, care leavers, or students estranged from their families, it was important that staff and students continued to be on campus so students did not feel isolated. It was noted that activities should still take place on campus, and that Reading Week should be positioned as allowing students to catch up with assessments and work extra hours to help with the cost of living and therefore could be framed as a week for other activities with no teaching taking place.

Deputy Deans were asked to discuss communications to students in order the information around 'Reading Weeks' was very clear. Members were reminded that 'Reading Week' needed to be pedagogically driven.

Action B: Deputy Deans

Deputy Deans would discuss the communications sent to students to ensure the information was clear

Deputy Deans would provide the Education Committee with the dates in the first and second semester, criteria, rationale and the term the University would adopt for 'Reading Weeks' moving forward to provide staff and students with some consistency. Each Faculty should then provide a paragraph to explain activities/events taking place in Faculties.

Action C: Deputy Deans

Deputy Deans would provide the Committee with the 'Reading Week' dates in the first and second semester, criteria, rationale and the term to be adopted for 'Reading Weeks'

Action D: Deputy Deans

Each Deputy Dean would provide a paragraph to explain activities/events taking place in Faculties

It was noted that the Space Planning Manager had requested confirmed dates of 'Reading Weeks' as soon as possible. As the Deputy Chair had been having discussions with the Timetabling Team and the discussions were ongoing, the Deputy Chair agreed to update the Space Planning Manager to confirm a decision was not yet available.

Action E: Deputy Chair

The Deputy Chair would contact the Space Planning Manager to advise dates were not yet available

Action F: Deputy Deans

Deputy Deans would provide the Chair and Deputy Chair with an update by Friday 7 March 2025

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

5. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING:

In-Person Meeting:	Thursday 27 March 2025
e-meeting:	Week commencing 7th April 2025