
Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2014 at 2.00pm in the Board Room

Present:

Prof T McIntyre-Bhatty (Chair)	Deputy Vice Chancellor
Dr S Eccles (Deputy Chair)	Head of Education (FMC)
Ms D Sparrowhawk (Secretary)	Academic Administration Manager (HSS)
Ms M Frampton (Clerk)	Policy and Committees Officer (AS)
Ms M Barron	Head of Student Support Services (SSS)
Mr J Cooke	Head of Student Engagement (SUBU)
Prof V Hundley	Member of the Professoriate (HSS)
Mr A James	General Manager of the Students' Union (SUBU)
Ms J Mack	Head of Academic Services (AS)
Dr A Main	School Student Experience Champion (SciTech)
Ms E Mayo-Ward	Vice President (Education) of the Students' Union (SUBU)
Canon Dr B Merrington	University Chaplain
Prof J Parker	Member of the Professoriate (HSS)
Prof K Phalp	Deputy Dean (Education) (SciTech)
Mr R Pope	Vice President (Welfare), Students' Union (SUBU)
Prof E Rosser	Deputy Dean (Education) (HSS)
Dr G Roushan	Associate Dean (Education) (FM) and Chair of the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy Forum
Dr P Ryland	Deputy Dean (Education), School of Tourism (FM)
Ms C Schendel-Wilson	SU President 2014/15, Students' Union (SUBU)
Ms C Symonds	Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships (AS)
Mr J Ward	Director of IT Services
Prof T Zhang	Head of the Graduate School (GS)

Student Representatives:

Ms A Bruijnzeels	BU International Undergraduate Student
Mr R Garza	BU Postgraduate Taught Student
Mr B Sansom	BU Undergraduate Student

In attendance:

Ms K Goodwin	Senior Lecturer In Sports Management (FM)
Ms S Green	Space Planning Manager, Estates
Ms M Mayer	Lecturer - Study Skills & Language Support (FMC)

Apologies:

Apologies had been received from:

Dr F Cownie	School Student Experience Champion, Media School (FMC)
Dr A Diaz	Student Engagement & Co-creation Theme Leader (CEL)
Dr B Dyer	School Student Experience Champion (FHSS) & Chair of Student Voice Committee
Associate Prof G Esteban	Member of the Professoriate (SciTech)
Mr S Jones	Head of Facilities Management
Ms A Lacey	Student Rep Champion (FHSS)
Mr S Laird	Director of Estates
Dr S Minocha	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement)
Ms J Quest	Senate Representative
Mr M Ridolfo	School Student Experience Champion, Business School (FM)
Dr C Shiel	Associate Professor (SciTech)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed the group to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies were noted as above.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 23 September 2014

2.1 Accuracy

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting with the exception of the last sentence of the fourth paragraph of the SUBU President's Report section which should have read "SUBU would be looking into ways of reducing the costs associated with clubs and societies". This would be amended.

Action: MF

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 Minute 2.2.1 of 23 May 2014 – Academic Advisor Role

Prof Rosser questioned whether there had been any further progress with the Academic Advisor roles within BU. It was noted that the Faculty of Health & Social Sciences' (HSS) Academic Advisor model was acknowledged as good practice to be considered by other Faculties. Further details would be shared in due course.

2.2.2 Minute 5.1 – SUBU President's Report

The SUBU President's Report was in the process of being added to the staff intranet. DDEs would continue to disseminate the SUBU President's Report within the academic community.

Action Completed: The SUBU President's Report was circulated to DDEs and Amy Blackham in M&C, and added to the staff intranet.

2.2.3 Minute 2.1 – Student Charters

Dr Diaz asked whether the Student Voice Committee (SVC) could discuss and evaluate the sections of the Student Charter which worked/did not work, and which sections were the most appropriate for best student practice. Dr Dyer confirmed she would discuss this proposal further with the SVC and report back to the Committee.

Action Ongoing: Response received from Joff Cooke who is leading the SVC sub group on this topic. SVC discussed the subject of the Student Charter at their meeting in October 2014. SUBU stated a keen interest in looking more deeply at the concept of Charters and offered to co-ordinate a sub group to look at the possible options for the future of a charter at BU. Joff Cooke agreed to lead on this. Currently, a trawl of research papers and examples of charters is being carried out by SUBU with a view to taking these for discussion at a meeting of the sub group before Christmas 2014. SUBU hoped to produce some options for possible ways forward and possible options for evaluating the current BU approach to charters early in 2015.

2.2.4 Minute 3.1.1 – NSS Results - Timetabling

The Estates Department would look into the issue of issuing timetables as early as possible, although it was accepted that there remained some problems with regards to Faculties and academics not providing information in time, as well as confirmation and clearing creating uncertainty in terms of final student numbers and cohort sizes.

Action Completed: Mr Jones met with Prof Rosser (who had raised the matter at ESEC), and members of FHSS on 22 October 2014. A summary of the matters discussed and conclusions were recorded in Appendix 1 attached to the Actions Log. No further action at this stage.

2.2.5 Minute 3.1.3 – Education & Student Experience Plans (ESEPs)

A small Working Group would be set up to discuss innovation and share good practice. Dr Roushan would arrange a date for the Working Group for DDEs.

Action Completed: Two meetings of DDEs took place to discuss ways of sharing good practice and proposed the need for a generic guideline for academics when devising assessment briefs, accompanied by discipline-specific examples. SUBU engagement was agreed as necessary and therefore Dr Roushan would work with SUBU to progress this.

2.2.6 Minute 7.1 – Any Other Business – Inductions Working Group

A Working Group would be established to discuss improvements in Faculty Inductions for next year's inductions. Any members who wished to be involved in this Working Group should contact Mr Ridolfo.

Action Completed: The first meeting of the Induction Working Group met on 27 October 2014. Members of the working group are: Mark Ridolfo, Andrew Main, Philip Ryland, Mandi Barron, Alan James, Julie Perrett, Chloe Schendel-Wilson, Ellie Mayo-Ward, Barbara Dyer and Fiona Cownie.

The main outcomes in relation to the Faculties/SUBU Welcome Session were that:

- These sessions would still be centrally timetabled by Julie Perrett.
- The sessions would normally be delivered by the Faculty (Dean and/or ADSE) and SUBU only, with approximately 20-25 minutes each.
- Other services (Library, SDA, etc.) would be invited to feed into courses on an invitation basis (e.g. at Framework/Programme level).

3 PART 1: FOR DISCUSSION

3.1 Debate Item: Transforming Assessment Practice

Dr Roushan and Ms Mayo-Ward had recently worked together to discuss assessment and feedback given to students and potential improvements which would help students' learning. Dr Roushan questioned how BU could make assessment engaging and sufficient in order to allow students to manage their own learning and raised the idea that we should refer to "assessment for learning" rather than "assessment of learning". Formative feedback was felt to be necessary for students and that this should be included in any assignment design.

Assignment design was listed within the Top 6 concerns of the Student Opinion Survey (SOS) along with the quality of assignment information, and the quality of feedback. Comments were grouped as ('Keep', 'Stop', 'Start') and it was noted that assignment information briefs received the lowest 'Keep' score and could be significantly improved upon. Members were requested to contact Ms Mayo-Ward for further information.

Group work was acknowledged as being hugely beneficial for learning as long it was well supported. Students generally welcomed collaborative work although it was noted that often students were not entirely clear on what was required of them and the breadth needed. Members agreed that an improvement of assessment briefs would provide a greater contribution to the National Student Survey (NSS) scores.

It was suggested that examples of good practice in assessment design should be collected and shared with colleagues, as ideas for improvements. It was also suggested that students should be asked for good examples of assessment design (with the permission of the academic).

A discussion took place regarding flexibility regarding the timing of feedback and also the suggestion made by Phil Race regarding giving feedback within 24 hours, at a specially arranged session. Members agreed that this was difficult due to the processes in place for students to hand in their work. Members agreed that the suggestions made by Phil Race were formative and could help as part of assessment design and to consider ways of providing more flexible feedback.

A comment was raised in relation to group work for postgraduate students where academic staff believed that postgraduate students should already be aware of what was required in collaborative working. However, this was not always the case as at postgraduate level there was a diversity of individuals from different backgrounds and cultures where group work was not always included in previous study. It was noted that this makes it challenging for others within the group as it takes a lot of time to bring all individuals up to the same level of understanding.

It was suggested that it was not until students start their assignments that questions arise. Therefore one area of good practice identified was in the form of an annual review of assignment briefs in order to re-shape the assignment brief for the next academic year, using student feedback as part of co-creation. It was agreed that this was a very useful exercise.

SUBU acknowledged their support of co-creation and suggested that all students should have the opportunity to comment on their education development. They noted that following the analysis of 20,000 responses to a recent survey, it was clear that students felt there were gaps in their assignment briefs.

Members were advised that *6C – Assessment Design, Handling and Submission: Policy and Procedure* focused on generic assessment and was process driven and it advised that there should be discussions and review assessments to share good practice.

Members agreed that it was the responsibility of academic staff to create an environment for students to feel comfortable to admit they do not understand their assignment brief and can ask for assistance or further explanation.

The debate was drawn to a close and members were requested to cascade the discussion within Faculties to consider how we can make assignment design take into account the diversity of all entrants.

3.2 Debate Item: How can we easily manage identifying students most at risk of attrition in semester 1 and followed up in semester 2?

On behalf of the Centre for Excellence in Learning (CEL), Ms Mayer shared the details of the work undertaken on retention and withdrawal of students from universities. In England the average number of students who remain at university is 91.4%, the average number for BU was 92.5%; above sector average. The reasons for withdrawal centred around personal reasons. It was suggested that further work could be carried out to investigate more specific reasoning.

The HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Record) project carried out a three year study into reasons for students withdrawing from university. It was established that most students tend to withdraw from university around the Christmas period, possibly due to their first deadline for a piece of work, or feedback has been received which was not as expected causing students to doubt their academic ability. Members agreed that it was important to identify students at risk of withdrawing from BU and the importance of students being encouraged to engage with their programmes.

It was proposed that during their first week at BU, students should be encouraged to attend all events during induction week as research has suggested that involvement in induction week improved commitment to attend lectures and encouraged a commitment to learning. The introduction of a formal attendance register was suggested for the first three or four weeks, as a way of identifying those not engaging and therefore may be at risk of withdrawing.

It was noted that in the FHSS, attendance registers were taken for all NHS programmes. Any students who failed to attend two consecutive sessions were followed up, and this process appeared to work well. It was noted that the FM currently writes a formal letter to students who do not attend lectures.

Mr Cooke advised he had undertaken research over the past three years with regards to monitoring student attendance and if attendance registers were introduced generally to be able to identify those students at risk of leaving university, the reasons behind this should be made very clear to students.

The Committee were asked whether there were other routes students could take to get assistance if they were worried about approaching academic staff for help. It was noted that there were many areas where support could be accessed by students, including the Student Engagement Team (all former students) who were available to support Widening Participation (WP) students and other students and have a good understanding of students' issues. Community Champions were also available to help and talk through issues and experiences with students, as well as PAL leaders and student reps.

The Committee was in favour of the content of Ms Mayer's presentation and agreed the proposals.

3.2.1 Arrivals and Induction Annual Review

The Arrivals and Induction Annual Review had been discussed by the University Leadership Team (ULT) on 19 November 2014 and it had been agreed that induction should not be a short term initiative, with the extended induction as the model that BU should deliver in order to encourage students to engage with their programme.

A working group would be set up to look at the induction period and how students could be best integrated into their new environment. It was suggested that a new title should be given to the induction period and a phased programme of activities would be introduced to guide students through their first semester.

Members agreed with the phased programme of activities as it would give students advanced notification of induction events and extra-curricular activities. Further discussion would take place at the working group meetings to agree on the new titles given to activities.

Mr Cooke shared an innovative idea introduced at Loughborough University, whereby new students were encouraged to unite and connect with each other. Upon acceptance to Loughborough University each student was sent a postcard with a 'cut out' quoting 'I Got In' and upon arrival at university, received a postcard with a 'cut out' stating 'I've Arrived'. Students could then share their photograph holding the 'cut out' on Twitter. The new idea had created a very good community on Twitter for new students.

Concern was raised regarding the statistics presented on page 27 of the meeting papers with some being particularly low; e.g. only 50% of SciTech students believed the Study Skills Workshop were useful. It was agreed that Ms Mack would ask the Working Group to look into this further.

Action: JM

3.3 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2013/14

The key points of the national Postgraduate Taught (PGT) student experience survey 2013/14 were highlighted. This was the second year the Graduate School had co-ordinated the PTES. The response rate had increased to 23% this year, compared to 10.7% last year. However, it was noted that response rates through the sector were low. For the sector as a whole, a total of 67,797 responses were received from a total survey population of 239,364 which equated to 28.3%.

With the help of Academic Services a comprehensive quantitative analysis had been carried out. In most cases there was an improvement in this year's results in comparison to last year; however BU's score was still below sector average.

The report was presented to Dean's Forum in September 2014 and it was agreed the PTES results should be incorporated into the Education and Student Experience Plans (ESEPs). Discussion at the Graduate School Academic Board had agreed that the actions would be incorporated into the Faculties' and Professional Services ESEP review.

It was noted that the PGR research survey would be completed by Christmas 2014 and much more detail would then be available.

3.4 Centre for Excellence in Learning (CEL) Update

Dr Roushan provided a summary of recent developments from Centre for Excellence in Learning.

- CEL had been awarded Fusion funding and some projects had been successfully completed to date.
- New personnel had been appointed to work on the new website.
- Assessment and feedback was being followed up by a smaller working group.
- The first unit of the PG Cert in Investigating Education Practice was coming to a close and had been well received by 30 students.

3.4.1 Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy Forum Update

There had been some developments since the last ESEC meeting, with the emphasis now on providing Faculty based support through the CEL website and working with academics to build confidence with technology tools, with the main focus on assessment and feedback.

The branding of the mobile app would soon be available and publicised to students. It was noted that the mobile app had been funded by Academic Services.

Further work was still to be carried out on the myBU VLE review, which was now titled "Vision for Learning".

An external consultant was due to be recruited to develop the excellent work already carried out around how the platform for learning might look in the future. The project would report back to CEL with its findings in the Spring 2015.

3.4.2 BU/CEL Employability

A paper entitled 'Focus on Employability within the Curriculum' was tabled and the Committee were asked to consider the contents and its potential to assist academic understanding of key important foci which were currently in place. The content of the document was expected to be used in conjunction with existing documentation; *Appendix 2B - Curriculum Review* and would provide the links that academics need in order to shape and change their curriculum in line with BU priorities.

The Committee agreed the document would be very helpful at Faculty/Programme level and could possibly be used as part of the Student Handbook and at Open Days in order to confirm what BU was committed to providing.

It was suggested that the Committee should further explore the key areas listed on the first page of the document and agree items which could be taken forward across BU.

The Academic Services team would further consider the document and assess how the contents could be used going forward.

Action: JM

3.5 SUBU President's Report

The SUBU President's report was presented and highlights were:

- Nerve, the student-led radio station recently won four awards at the National Student Radio Awards and received one gold and three bronze awards.
- Ms Mayo-Ward has been working on the myBU student feedback tab and ensuring it was updated regularly.
- Mr Pope has been working on improving public transport to and from both campuses. An additional U1 bus route before 9.00am had now been introduced.
- Mr Pope has also been looking into improving the experiences of international students after the arrivals period.
- Mr Briant has been working with Estates regarding student parking at the Lansdowne campus and smoking shelters.
- Six teams of 41 volunteers recently worked on 'The Big Feed' and collected 1.9 tonnes of food for the local food banks.
- 94 students took part in the LEGGIT event and a total of £10,000 was raised for Diverse Abilities Plus.
- The most successful Freshers' Fair took place with over 7,000 students attending.
- A Christmas Fair would take place on 2 December 2014.
- 64 part time officers were recently elected.

The issue concerning Wednesday afternoon lectures was raised again as SUBU wanted to highlight the importance of students having Wednesday afternoons free from lecturers in order that students can take part in varsity sports, clubs and societies, and volunteering. It was noted that BU students were having great success in these activities.

A recent three day survey took place to ask students of their opinions of keeping free Wednesday afternoon free for extra-curricular activities, and 350 responses were received.

The survey revealed that:

- 72% of students believed that free Wednesday afternoons were important for their own personal development.
- 73% of students believed that free Wednesday afternoons were important for enhancing their own student experience.
- 31% of students did not take part due to Wednesday afternoon lectures.

The Committee noted the report and confirmed they were committed to ultimately removing the barriers in order to free up Wednesday afternoons. A step towards this was increasing the teaching rooms available with the completion of the FB1 building. This would continue to be monitored.

4. PART 2: FOR APPROVAL AND ENDORSEMENT

4.1 There were no items for approval and endorsement.

5. PART 3: FOR NOTE

5.1 Student Support Services Annual Report

It was agreed that there were some areas of the Student Support Services Annual Report which lacked detail.

As examples, it was noted that the numbers of students attending the Careers Fair had decreased, however there was no information included in the report to explain how attendance numbers would be increased upon moving forward.

There was also some information missing from Table 6 on page 98 of the report with regards to WP students. The table stated that there had been 1,124 student interactions with Grow@BU which was less than one fifth of student numbers. A more detailed evaluation was required as this was seen to be a critical point within the report.

As the report did not include sufficient analytical information, members requested the additional information be included in the report and re-presented to the Committee.

Action: MB

5.2 Staff Development Annual Report

The report was **noted**.

5.3 Student Counselling Service Annual Report

The report presented to the Committee was the last annual report from the current provider.

The report stated that the introduction of 'time limited therapy' - which provides a limit of eight sessions of therapy - had an impact on student satisfaction. Members queried whether this was positive or negative impact and requested that the implications of limited sessions be stated within the report.

The majority of students using the service were female (68%) and UK domicile students (81%). Members requested additional information be provided, e.g. Level C, I or H students, what support mechanisms needed to be evoked, and the time of year the therapy was required.

Members requested the additional information, identified above, be included in the report and re-presented to the Committee for further evaluation and discussion. Ms Sparrowhawk would request this via the Author of the report.

Action: DS

6 REPORTING COMMITTEES

6.1 Student Voice Committee Minutes of 1 October 2014

The minutes were **noted**.

6.2 Student Voice Committee Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were **noted**.

6.3 Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy Forum (TELSF) Minutes of 11 November 2014

The minutes were **noted**.

6.4 Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy Forum (TELSF) Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were **noted**.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted by a member that some programmes identified Reading Weeks in the timetables and that perhaps this may be suggestive that all reading should be saved for that week in the year, rather than a practice to be encouraged of reading around the subject throughout the study period. It was noted by a member that many students considered the week to be a holiday.

It was also noted that the FMC had renamed Reading Weeks to Independent Study Weeks and students are advised this week should be used for specific pieces of work. Some areas of the FM have a Reading Week for semester 1 only as they were considered to be beneficial to students for independent learning and to gather thoughts around specific subjects. Other areas within the FM had withdrawn Reading Week entirely.

However, for Postgraduate study, it was noted by the student representative that the Reading Week was welcomed as it gave an opportunity to catch up on various projects and assignments/group work.

Following discussion, it was agreed that Reading Weeks were not stipulated institutionally and Faculties should consider the requirement to ensure that students were fully engaged throughout the period of their study.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 28 January 2015, 2.00pm to 4.00pm in the Board Room