

## SENATE

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SENATE held on  
11 MARCH 2009**

- Present: Prof P Curran (Chair)  
Ms A Allerston; Dr B Astin; Mr S Bellamy; Prof M Bennett; Dr A Biscoe; Dr S Eccles; Mrs K Everett; Prof N Hemmington; Mr A James; Dr P Johnstone; Mr D Newell; Mr N Richardson; Mr M Riordan; Prof J Roach; Mr F Ruffle; Mr J Tarrant; Dr G Thomas; Dr K Vall; Mr D Willey; Ms J Woodcock.
- Observers: Prof D Buhalis; Prof P Cominos; Prof T Darvill; Prof B Gabrys; Prof P Lewis; Prof D Osselton; Prof B Richards; Prof T Sheppard; Prof R Vaughan; Prof A Webster;
- In attendance: Mr G Rayment (Committee Clerk)
- Apologies: Mr C Allen; Ms M Barron; Dr C Bond; Dr G Daborn; Prof S Deutsch; Prof S Ersser; Dr J Hanson; Prof B Hough; Ms S Jeary; Mr S Jukes; Mr P Kneller; Dr E Mytton; Prof N Petford; Prof J Vinney; Dr K Wilkes.

*The Chair welcomed new members John Tarrant and David Newell to the meeting.*

**1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SENATE HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2008**

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

**1.1 Matters Arising**

- 1.1.1 Minute 1.1.2: Business School Fast Track Degree.  
Development of this programme will now proceed next academic year, rather than in the current year.
- 1.1.2 Minute 5.5: Internationalisation Strategy.  
This has now been published and is available on-line.
- 1.1.3 Minute 6.2: Sampling requirements for second/double marking.  
The sample size has been reduced to 15.
- 1.1.4 Minute 7.1.6: Good practice providing feedback on assignments.

*The following written response was provided by Janet Hanson.*

The Assessment Feedback Project Group have sought examples from Schools of good practice on the ways in which academic staff provide feedback to students. Although not many examples were forthcoming, all will be followed up and details made available on the Assessment Feedback web pages. Three focus groups have been held with students to get their perspectives on feedback and how well it is working. Feedback is still largely received in the form of written comments on coursework, either handwritten or word-processed. Students much appreciate the efforts made by staff to meet the three week turnaround but some expressed regret that feedback appeared to be reduced in some cases in order to

meet the deadline. Some students had experience of staff using myBU to provide feedback, either by accessing marks, or listening to podcasts or getting generic feedback posted to the whole group. Further use of technology to support feedback will be welcomed by the majority of students. The Project Group is also monitoring the progress of a pilot project in three Schools to use a new piece of software designed to assist the process of providing feedback against assessment criteria. Early results look encouraging. A report of these activities will be submitted to ASC at its meeting on March 25th. It was agreed that an interim report will be circulated to Senators.

JH/AB

1.1.5 Minute 7.1.3: 3-week Turnaround time:

It was clarified that 'from 2009' meant the next academic year (2009-10), not the current calendar year.

## **2 UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

2.1 The Chairman gave a verbal report on progress on the Strategic Plan, which was now at the 'half way point' in achieving the 2012 vision for the University. Highlights to date included last summer's wave of 150 new academic staff and the recent RAE results. These showed BU to be the 4<sup>th</sup> most improved university in terms of research quality in the UK. Ten submissions were made to the exercise of which eight included world leading research. BU was now placed among the top 10 new universities and the top 10 of all UK universities in terms of the rate of improvement. The BU brand was now stronger, IT facilities greatly improved and the estates backlog was now being cleared. Attendance at open days had tripled and the University had proved very successful at obtaining research funding.

2.2 In taking the plan forward, key activities were the Professional Services Review, the Executive Business School development and ongoing improvements to the Student Experience.

2.3 Members asked about the impact of the RAE results on the plan. SMT were currently considering how to allocate the QR money and it was agreed that objectives included increased PhD studentships and citations. Research & enterprise income was also a priority. Members noted that Senate had considered the issue of rewards for PhD students and academic staff who perform particularly well. Staff were already benefiting from the *Releasing Potential* programme, which was expected to lead to improved advancement opportunities. Further consideration of these issues will form part of the discussions around the QR funding, but it was too early to say more at this time.

2.4 In terms of the ongoing planning process, the aim was to move towards a 5-year rolling plan and consideration was now being given to planning for the years beyond 2012.

## **3. REVIEW OF ACADEMIC SCHOOL STRUCTURE**

3.1 The Chair introduced a paper setting out the proposed Terms of Reference for groups to develop ideas emerging from the report into academic structure. Three Groups were proposed to consider: cultural ideas arising from Adrian Newton's report; Applied Science Strategy; and Business and Management. The paper set out their proposed terms of reference, membership and reporting arrangements.

3.2 Members queried whether the membership included enough academic representation and whether greater external input will be necessary to obtain an objective perspective. The Chair pointed out that the membership proposed in

the paper was simply an initial proposal and that group leaders will be free to select whatever membership they felt was needed. Wide consultation on the outcomes will also take place. Members also noted that Adrian Newton's group had obtained a lot of external input, however much of the information arising from this was 'commercial in confidence' and not, therefore, included in his report.

#### **4. PROFESSIONAL SERVICES REVIEW (PSR): Update**

- 4.1. The DVC updated Senate with developments on the PSR. The PSR report had been published on the 18 November following wide consultation. Five new services had been created, (Financial & Commercial, Human Resources, Student & Academic, Estates & ICT, Marketing & Communications) and had come into being on 5 January 2009, this being the end of Phase 1 of the review. Phase 2 was now underway. It was hoped that where Directors were not yet in place, these will be appointed by the end of April.

#### **5. CONFIRMATION OF RESEARCH AWARDS**

- 5.1 The Senate noted this research award.

#### **6. MATTERS RAISED BY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES**

*The following written responses were provided by Janet Hanson.*

6.1 Access to myBU for part-time staff.

The process for providing access to myBU for part time hourly paid staff was improved in October 2008, when instead of waiting for the trigger of a submitted pay claim to add the staff details to the HR database, HR now enter the details onto the HRInfo as soon as the contractual paperwork is received from the School and the NT user account is set up. The NT account is set up after the School has sent details to IT Services. Once the details are in HRInfo, access is typically available within 24 hours. For other part-time staff who do not fall into this category, such as sub-contracted staff or lecturer-practitioners, who do not fall within the remit of HR, Schools can request access by emailing Educational Development Services. This typically takes 24 hours following receipt of the request. A paper summarizing routes for staff access has been circulated to Schools for comment via the E-learning Enhancement Group, although Schools were informed about the pthp staff process change in January.

6.2 myBU: editing problems.

Following further investigation with BS, this was reported to be related to a need to have a shared space where documents can be uploaded and then edited by multiple parties and revised versions saved and tracked. For example, two dissertation supervisors in remote locations off-campus needing to comment on a student's draft and save the outcomes. The detailed requirements for this are being scoped in collaboration with colleagues in the Business School in order to determine if current systems can meet the requirements or whether alternatives should be considered.

#### **7. MINUTES – STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE – 26 November 2008**

- 7.1 The minutes were noted.
- 7.2 On studentification, it was noted that a further meeting had taken place with Winton residents to discuss local issues. Complaints against students related

mainly to excessive noise. The Students' Union was working with the university, police and environmental health to address these issues, which resulted from the activities of a very small minority of students. It was also noted that the local council were seeking joint sponsorship for a scheme which will provide additional out-of-hours support for environmental health officers in dealing with noise complaints.

7.3 Members supported minute 5.10.1 calling for more notice to be given of timetable changes.

## **8. MINUTES – RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE – 30 October 2008**

8.1 The minutes were noted.

## **9. MINUTES – EXTRACT FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 28 January 2009**

9.1 The extract of the minutes was noted.

9.2 A Member asked that future extracts should include a note of the attendees at the meeting to which the extract refers.

**BA**

9.3 The Senate noted that a 15% fee discount had been introduced for all alumni embarking on new programmes at BU (including MPhil) and work was currently being undertaken to publicise this, including via the website. The increased discount applied for the current year only, with no decision on future years having been taken yet.

## **10. MINUTES – INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY GROUP – 28 January 2009**

10.1 The minutes were noted. Senate discussed potential difficulties in administering joint diplomas with overseas HEIs. However, it was agreed that this should not present a problem in principle, as a scoring mechanism was in place which could be used to assess any potential risks in working with these institutions.

## **11. MINUTES – EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE – 26 November 2008**

11.1 The minutes were noted.

## **12. MINUTES – SCHOOL ACADEMIC BOARDS**

### **Business School**

12.1 5 November 2008

12.2 4 February 2009

The minutes were noted.

### **Conservation Sciences**

12.3 12 November 2008

The minutes were noted.

**Design, Engineering & Computing**  
12.4 25 February 2009

The minutes were noted.

**School of Health & Social Care**  
12.5 25 February 2009

The minutes were noted.

**Media School**  
12.6 21 January 2009

The minutes were noted.

**Services Management**  
12.7 11 February 2009

The minutes were noted.

**13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**13.1 Library resources**

Members noted that there appeared to be general concern amongst students about a lack of resources in the Library. Subject Librarians work very closely with schools to ensure that they have stocks of the right publications, however it was clearly not possible to have large stocks of a particular book which may be needed for just one assignment. Students also needed to be aware of the other resources available, such as those available on-line, journals etc.

**13.2 Student communication**

SU representatives commented on the need for students to feel that their issues and comments were being heard and acted upon. Members agreed and it was suggested that the practice of Associate Deans meeting monthly with undergraduates to discuss issues of concern might be replicated across all schools.

**13.3 NHS University Trusts**

Dr Thomas informed the Senate about a proposal for linking the University to NHS Foundation Trusts to enable them to become designated University Trusts. Although BU did not have a medical school, it was possible to achieve this by working with local NHS Trusts to produce a portfolio of evidence on the benefits of such a partnership. A precedent for this already existed at Anglia Ruskin University. The process will involve the faculty and NHS trusts agreeing to pursue University Trust status and then establishing a panel to agree the portfolio of evidence (which will include governance arrangements). UEG had already lent its support to the proposal and commended it to Senate. No direct costs were involved and, if the Senate agreed, a full paper on the proposals will be presented to its next meeting.

13.4 Senate agreed the proposal and that a paper will be submitted to the next meeting.

GT

**13.5 Semesterisation**

The SU President reported concerns, discussed at the most recent Student Experience Committee, that increasingly heavy workloads were being placed on students in January (particularly where students were studying on "short fat" units), having an adverse affect on students and also their ability to act as student representatives. This was seen as being effectively 'quasi-semesterisation'. It

was agreed that SU will submit a paper on this to the next meeting of Senate in June.

SU

**13.6 Pay negotiations**

The UCU were expected to decide whether to go to ballot on strike action on 13 March 2009.

**13.7 Student numbers**

The Senate noted that students can now 'trade up' their University places and that this could place a strain on many HEIs to meet their targets. This will be a particular challenge as DIUS has also indicated that HEIs must seek to maintain 2009-10 student numbers at the 2008-09 level.

**14. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday, 17 June 2009.

Noel DG Richardson  
Secretary & Registrar  
March 2009

Geoffrey Rayment  
Committee Clerk  
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Approved as a true and accurate record:

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Prof P Curran (Chair)

Date:.....