

SENATE AND UNIVERSITY BOARD

STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2008

Present: Dr B Astin (Chair)  
Mrs M Barron; Mrs R Dugan; Mr A Hyland; Mr A James; Mr P Kneller;  
Mrs F McMillan; Rev Canon B Merrington; Dr E Mytton; Mr S Neaves;  
Mr N Richardson; Ms Z Zuvcenko  
Ms A Gutiérrez (Secretary); Mrs V Wood (Committee Clerk)

In Attendance: Ms J Hanson; Professor R Pope;  
Mr S Avery (Item 7); Ms C Howlett (Item 3); Ms E Stephens (Item 4)  
Student Representative: Mr D Matalon

Apologies: Mrs J Beard; Mr C Elder; Professor M Hadfield; Professor T Husband

*This was the first meeting of the newly entitled Student Experience Committee under revised Terms of Reference and with Dr Brian Astin as the Chair of the Committee.*

*The Chair welcomed the student representative Daniel Matalon to the meeting.*

**1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (13 November 2007)**

The Minutes were approved as a correct record subject to Canon Merrington being present.

**1.1 Matters Arising**

**1.1.1 Dignity Diversity and Equality Report**

Ms Hanson and Registry had discussed statements relating to Additional Learning Needs. No errors had been identified in the data but improvements to the wording would be incorporated into next year's Report.

The Secretary had discussed comments made on the presentation of the benchmarking figures with relevant staff in Registry.

**1.1.2 Proposed Changes to Student Affairs Committee**

The Secretary & Registrar advised that the Constitution & Procedures Committee had approved the Terms of Reference and the change of name for the Committee. This had also been noted by Senate. A revised Terms of Reference had been included in the Committee's papers for Members' information.

**2. REPORTS RECEIVED ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE**

2.1 The following Reports were taken as read: the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy Report; the Annual Report of the Student Counselling Service; the Annual Report from BU Medical Service; the International Office Annual Report; the Student Advice Centre Annual Review; the Mid-year Student Representatives Report; and the Report on Learning Support 2006/07.

2.2 Members thanked those concerned for producing the reports.

### 2.3 **Chaplaincy**

Dr Merrington highlighted i) enhancements to the Chaplaincy website to improve accessibility; ii) the support given to staff affected by redundancy; and iii) a current process of re-branding, including a Chaplaincy Charter, giving an opportunity to visit Schools and Professional Services to emphasise the wide range of Chaplaincy's work.

### 2.4 **Counselling Services**

2.4.1 Members were reminded there had been some issues over students at Bournemouth & Poole College being unable to make use of the University's Counselling Service, and over equity of provision for those students attending Salisbury College who lived in Bournemouth.

2.4.2 Messages would reinforce to all partners that the University expected colleges to fully engage in providing appropriate counselling services. Members were informed there were separate arrangements at the Anglo-European Chiropractic College due to its exceptional partner relationships with the University. Whilst it was necessary to manage students' expectations, Members agreed the issue was not one of provision but of clear processes with easy access and routes.

2.4.3 The Secretary & Registrar was requested to liaise with Jacky Mack, Director of Partnerships and Widening Access, to ensure Partner Colleges gave clear messages to students on the arrangements for counselling, and to liaise with the Students' Union.

**Secretary & Registrar**

### 2.5 **Medical Services**

Members learnt that the Primary Care Trust had agreed to a sexual health clinic on Talbot Campus. Felt to be largely due to the campaign by Mollie Heinrich while President of the Students' Union, this illustrated the length of time before elected officers might achieve a chosen goal. Members asked the General Manager of the Students' Union to inform Ms Heinrich of this achievement and how greatly her support was appreciated.

**AJ**

### 2.6 **International Office**

2.6.1 An initiative with Services Management, funded by the Prime Minister's Initiative 2, would give opportunities for students to create events designed to promote diversity and encourage intercultural integration. It was hoped the pilot scheme would be developed during the coming academic year as part of the Masters Event Management programme.

2.6.2 Members were also informed that from 1 March 2008, the International Student Support Team would be moved to askBU under the management of Registry whilst the Centre for Global Perspectives will focus on aspects of internationalisation.

### 2.7 **Student Advice Centre**

2.7.1 Members were informed of the significant fall in student numbers accessing the Centre since askBU had opened and that requests had been made to Estates to move the Centre to a ground floor location to improve accessibility. This situation had raised a general concern by the Students' Union that space

allocation for students' services in any new buildings should be in high footfall areas.

- 2.7.2 The Chair advised that the University was aware of such issues as they also applied to other student support areas, such as the Graduate Employment Service.

## 2.8 Student Representatives

- 2.8.1 The Students' Union Vice-President, Representation informed Members that the importance of representatives being appointed and trained earlier in the year had been recognised and opportunities to train on-line. A reward system of a £10 voucher for attending programme meetings had also been introduced. Whilst the vouchers had raised attendance levels, there had not been a significant rise in students coming forward. Members were informed some students remained unsure of the award's purpose, while others attended primarily to receive the voucher. Members felt management of expectations was a priority, including messages over the time taken to see operational improvements as a result of feedback and especially where the possibility of introducing these might not be until the following academic year.
- 2.8.2 A major issue fed back to students' representatives had been reduced contact time and specific concerns by students in the School of Conservation Sciences and in Health and Social Care over insufficient teaching to complete required learning. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) advised this was being investigated by relevant staff.
- 2.8.3 The student representative advised most students had no real enthusiasm to become a representative, seeing it as extra work and, due to a lack of feedback on achievements, perceptions they would make little impact. The General Manager of the Students' Union commented representatives tended to be older students, with greater confidence and time management, but agreed more evidence from senior management was required to reinforce the difference being a student representative could make.
- 2.8.4 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) proposed the outcomes of appropriate meetings be put on myBU, in order that matters raised, action taken and progress made could easily be identified. It was important, to ensure messages were received by students, a range of feedback techniques were used and representatives did not feel their work was onerous or damaged their student experience. It was agreed the Chair would liaise with Deputy Deans (Education) to raise their awareness, and to ensure they dealt with individual issues, monitored appropriate action was taken by Committees, and that loops within Schools were closed.
- 2.8.5 The Secretary & Registrar stressed the vital importance of the representatives' role in providing immediate feedback (as opposed to SUE and NSS which had time lags) which enabled Schools and Professional Services to take prompt action. However, it was felt this usefulness was often not made evident or effectively communicated.
- 2.8.6 The President of the Students' Union proposed that a theme for the next meeting should be an exploration of the definition of "student experience" which could also include issues highlighted in the International Student Barometer Survey.

**BA**

**Secretary**

### **3. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT BAROMETER SURVEY**

- 3.1 Caroline Howlett, International Student Adviser, attended to present a summary of the results of the Survey based on the experiences of international students, giving degrees of satisfaction and benchmarks against other institutions both in the UK and overseas. The Survey was conducted in two 'waves': in mid October/November and during the summer term. One third of BU's international students had responded with a good spread over all nationalities, apart from Norway and India. Results of the survey were available through Caroline Howlett upon request. **Members**
- 3.2 The results had generally been good, and improvements made from the previous year. Caroline Howlett particularly emphasised BU's fifth position over both learning experience and support services, being first in the formal welcome and the work of the Medical Centre. Other positive results were the quality of the lecturers and programmes, the Library and the refurbished student refectory. Overall 36% of those BU international students who responded would actively encourage the choice of BU, comparable to the national average.
- 3.3 The results relating to satisfaction over work experience was ahead of competitors, but employability generally had not been as positive although Members were advised overseas students had high expectations in this area. Less favourable results had also been received over making friends with home students.
- 3.4 Accommodation featured strongly but was difficult to manage in terms of expectations as overseas students were unfamiliar with the area and unable to make prior visits. This underlined the importance of clear information on the accommodation website to avoid disappointment. Low results for transport links could be related to issues over bus service provision at Corfe House which had now been resolved, although Members felt this issue should continue to be monitored.
- 3.5 Members welcomed the results as very positive, and felt there were marketing opportunities to be made. These were currently being considered by the Press and Communication Officer.
- 3.6 Members discussed the difficulties students had in making friends with home students. Whilst not necessarily specific to BU, it was thought it could be a reflection of UK attitudes towards other cultures, negative perceptions by UK students over working with international students and language barriers in social activities. The promotion of linguistic skills and awareness of overseas opportunities for those able to speak foreign languages might help to encourage students.
- 3.7 Members learnt that, from next academic year, enhanced opportunities for students to acquire language skills on a voluntary basis would be available including new provision in languages such as Mandarin and Arabic. On-line facilities and discussion groups led by international students would also be available.
- 3.8 As 'friendship groups' were often made in the first few weeks, orientation and induction programmes were being further developed during this year. The student representative commented the Global Café should also be promoted as being open to everyone, as it was used by, and seen as only for, international students.

- 3.9 Members were also informed that a topic at the forthcoming Senior Staff Seminar would be the embedding of internationalisation into the curriculum during the current period of extensive programme reviews and revalidation. Measures such as the international support team's move to askBU would also help to address perceptions over equality of provision with all other students.
- 3.10 Members thanked Caroline Howlett for her attendance and for reporting on the Survey.

#### **4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT**

- 4.1 Emma Stephens, the Diversity and Equality Adviser, attended to present an interim update. The first Disability Equality Duty Report had been produced as part of the requirement to embed Disability Equality throughout all BU activities and would be evaluated during the year to establish its value.
- 4.2 An updated Race Equality Scheme and Action Plan, now following a similar format to the Disability and Gender Equality Scheme and designed to achieve a single flexible approach, had been circulated for comment among staff with specific responsibilities. The final document was expected to be on the website by the end of February.
- 4.3 Plans for Diversity Awareness Month in March 2008 were well under way with information on MyBU and Nerve and with three exhibitions as core events. The "Forgiveness" exhibition would be distributed around both campuses and involved students from MA Events Management. Two other exhibitions (Dorset's Hidden Histories, highlighting the history of black culture in Bournemouth, and the Intercom Trust's exhibition on the history of Dorset's lesbian gay and bisexual community) would also be supported by workshops, events in the staff and student refectories, through IT services and with a writing competition for both staff and students.
- 4.4 Equality Impact Assessments were now in the last stages of the planning process, with the revised guidelines now established. A proposal would be presented to the next Dignity Diversity Equality Group meeting for approval.
- 4.5 Chaplaincy had launched a book club for staff and students but as the initial meeting had been attended by greater numbers of staff than students, a marketing effort would be made to improve the balance.
- 4.6 Members thanked Emma Stephens for her attendance and for the Report.

#### **5. STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

- 5.1 The Chair presented an initial draft of a paper, aimed at finding a definition and understanding of student experience.
- 5.2 The President of the Students' Union commented that it was unfortunate the paper had a primarily academic focus and omitted to show the importance of social aspects.
- 5.3 The Secretary & Registrar advised the League Table in the Times Higher on student satisfaction gave a good presentation of the links with different aspects of student experience. Members requested a copy be circulated. **Secretary**
- 5.4 Dr Mytton, outlined the "Stop Keep Start" initiative operating in the Business School which could be used as an additional method of exploring ideas around

student experience. Members were reminded that the NSS survey now included several optional questions on student experience.

- 5.5 The involvement of academic staff in encouraging life long learning and social experience, and various curriculum initiatives on employability that encouraged student interaction, were noted. However it was also felt important to gain students' perceptions of what was a satisfactory experience, as this may be different from University or Government viewpoints, and to ensure responses had been accurately interpreted.
- 5.6 Dr Mytton raised student anxieties over assessments, particularly when results were taken as personal judgements, feeling this should be further explored, as well as any possible connections with Medical Services feedback.
- 5.7 Members were requested to forward any further comments to the Chair which would be incorporated into a revised document to be presented at subsequent meetings.

**Members**

## **6. PERIODIC PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

- 6.1 The Secretary & Registrar advised Periodic Performance Reviews would be submitted to each meeting of the Committee in future to scrutinise student related indicators, and provide an opportunity to monitor relevant aspects of BU progress against the University's Corporate and Strategic Plans.
- 6.2 An overall picture was one of reasonable progress, particularly in undergraduate applications. However, although showing signs of improvement, there were some issues over drop out rates and average tariff offers.
- 6.3 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) advised the overall aims were to identify student experience and how this was determined and monitored on an on-going basis. Members were advised two new senior posts, a Dean of Student Experience and a Director of Partnerships and Widening Participation, had been made to improve coordination and enhance experience.

## **7. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS REVIEW**

- 7.1 Stephen Avery, Programme Manager for the Change Programme attended the meeting to address requests from the workshop sessions (held as part of the Administrative Process Review) to engage students and student representatives into the process.
- 7.2 A comprehensive review of administrative processes had not been undertaken for some years, so was considered particularly relevant against the identification in the Strategic Plan of efficiency savings of cf2M each year, necessitated by the difference between pay inflation and future HEFCE income funding increases. While the Review's primary aim was to improve effectiveness, there was also a duty to ensure cost efficient use of facilities and processes in order that resources could be released to deliver improvements to the student experience.
- 7.3 Consideration would be given not only to expenditure in Professional Services and non-academic parts of Schools, but also administrative processes cross-University, including those that were student related such as applications and enrolments. There were also links to other Reviews in financial management and Enterprise support. The Review also included consideration of structures and budget centres, greater standardisation, elimination of duplication and

reductions in bureaucracy, and the introduction of more on-line processes. The Review did not have a specific end date but would roll on towards 2010.

- 7.4 Members were requested to send any ideas or comments associated with this review to either the Review email address [eureka@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:eureka@bournemouth.ac.uk) or direct to Stephen Avery.

**Members**

## **8. STUDENTS' UNION MATTERS**

- 8.1 The President of the Students' Union, Adam Hyland, presented his report. The bus service to Corfe House, raised at the previous meeting, had progressed, with Estates arranging additional services into the evening to match those services provided for students elsewhere, and proposed 50:50 funding by the Students' Union and the University for a Wilts and Dorset bus service to operate between Poole and Bournemouth.

- 8.2 The other issue for the Students' Union was over semesterisation, and possible misconceptions by parents and students if reduced contact time took place simultaneously with the cap being removed from fees. Less trading weeks would also see reduced income from the Old Fire Station and effects on the Summer Ball, as a major fund raising event used to operate the Student Advice Centre. Longer summer vacation periods could also have staffing implications and affect preparation for the new academic year.

- 8.3 The Chair advised the proposed semesters did not anticipate any alteration in the number of teaching weeks, although there may be slight differences in when the academic year started and finished. The semesters were designed around 15 week periods: 12 weeks of study followed by three week assessment periods, and included short work placement periods when examinations were completed. Semesterisation did not have one universal model, but was an iterative process subject to continuous improvement on how to maximise student experience.

- 8.4 The Chair also highlighted semesters were in use in over 50% of institutions in the UK and nearly 100% in North America. The key advantage would be to facilitate student exchanges, as most did not wish to come for the whole academic year. BU students could also benefit by similar studies abroad. By enabling staff to undertake teaching activities in blocks, this would release time for engagement in academic research which would have positive effects on student in terms of improved skills and expertise.

- 8.5 Members discussed the quality of some teaching staff. Issues around effective delivery were being addressed, but quality improvements should become evident as changes towards more academic staff were made. The University was aware there were some specific problems among a few researchers from international backgrounds undertaking teaching which was being addressed through additional staff development.

- 8.6 Members also discussed accommodation issues, especially over the University only offering full year licences, where the need for greater flexibility in future had been recognised.

- 8.7 Semesterisation would be discussed at the Senior Management Team meeting on 25 February 2008 and also at Senate on 12 March 2008 with a planned introduction for September 2009 if approved. Members were asked to submit comments to the Chair for integration into the document.

**Members**

**9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**9.1 Students Union Elections**

The Students' Union Vice-President, Representation, advised Members that elections would be held in the next few weeks. A promotional DVD had been produced to improve democracy and to elect officers that reflected student opinion. The Students' Union hoped this could be shown at the start of lectures, but were advised this would need to be at the discretion of individual lecturers. It was suggested the DVD could also be promoted through myBU.

**9.2 "At Risk" students**

The University Chaplain raised risks that vulnerable students or staff could be missed due to lack of communication between various areas within the University. The Chaplain's proposal for a forum where aid providers such as Counselling Services and Chaplaincy could meet was accepted and the Chaplain was requested to take this forward.

**BM**

**9.3 myBU**

The student representative reported complaints around accessibility of myBU and enquired whether there was a user group to channel these concerns. The Head of Academic Services would follow this up with the representative.

**JH**

Ana Gutiérrez  
Secretary  
25 March 2008

Vikki Wood  
Committee Clerk  
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