

SENATE (with Board Representation)

STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2011

Present: Ms J Jenkin (Chair)
Ms M Barron (Secretary); Mr I Carter; Mrs J Dawson; Dr B Dyer; Ms K Leech;
Dr M Humphreys; Mr A Ireland; Mr A James; Dr A Main; Mr C McIntyre; Mrs F
McMillan; Rev Canon Dr B Merrington; Dr J Palfreman-Kay; Mr T Horner;
Prof J Roach;

In Attendance: Mr A Smith (for Item 6); Mr G Rayment (Committee Clerk);

Apologies: Mr C Elder; Mr S Fletcher; Mr F Homberg; Mr P Kneller.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (24 November 2011)

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

1.1 Matters Arising

Minute 1.1 (5.1) Measuring Performance: The Chair was continuing to explore options for performance indicators and further consideration would be given to the matter in the context of the University Board's review of the Strategic Plan and its own structures and processes.

Minute 5.2 National Student Survey (NSS): Mr Ireland confirmed that the Students' Union Bournemouth University (SUBU) representatives on the Student Voice Steering Group (SVSG) had provided input into the discussion of optional questions for the NSS.

Minute 6.1 Student Experience KPIs: A paper was tabled for the Committee's information (SEC-1011-011) summarising the analysis of qualitative student feedback derived from the 2009 NSS. A further paper was tabled (SEC-1011-012) setting out the 'quick wins' to improve the Student Experience as agreed with the University Leadership Team (ULT). On Estates and IT issues, Dr Humphreys informed the Committee that the University Executive Team (UET) had requested a review of the Estates Strategy and options to provide the School of Health & Social Care (HSC) with a new building on Lansdowne Campus. It was clear that to 'do nothing' was not an option as some of the current HSC accommodation in Bournemouth House was in need of replacement. Several options were currently under consideration, including whether the HSC could be consolidated onto the Talbot campus as an alternative to developing a new premises on the Lansdowne campus. External factors, such as issues around planning permissions, would impact on the final outcome. In the meantime the implementation of the Estates Strategy was 'paused' pending a final decision (expected in approximately 6 to 9 months). Any members wishing to engage further with this process should contact Dr Humphreys.

Minute 8.6: The Chair had raised the issue of the wider use of Executive Business Centre (EBC) facilities by non-Post Graduate Business School students with the ULT. Discussions were positive and the Business School executive were receptive to the idea. It was anticipated that this matter would be progressed following the appointment of the new Dean of the Business School.

2. UPDATES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGY)

- 2.1 The Chair updated members on factors affecting the development of the Student Experience Strategy. The University leadership were in the process of assimilating the major changes taking place in the wider HE environment, including the changing funding arrangements and outcomes from the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). Guidance on the production of Student Charters would require implementation and a Government consultation exercise on the publication of key information was currently taking place. The submission of proposals to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) was due to take place by the middle of April (and it was noted that this was after the publication of the University's new fees was expected to take place).
- 2.2 Against this background, work on the main threads of the Strategy continued. Stephen Jukes (Dean of the Media School) had taken on the leadership of the 'Student Communities' aspects of the strategy and activities to date included the refurbishment of the sports pitches, the exhibition of artworks by Dame Elizabeth Frink loaned to the University, and establishment of links with Chapelgate (sports venue). A Health & Wellbeing Group had been established and would be Chaired by the Head of Student Services. On the 'Student Journey' thread, it was hoped that a Dean would be appointed to lead this work shortly. In the meantime, work was progressing on the trial of online assessments and enhancements to the Library facilities. Progress was also being made on the implementation of the Student Development Award.
- 2.3 Members discussed the concept of 'Student Communities' and the need for this to be inclusive of University staff. It was recognised that this was an important issue and that the extent to which academic staff felt part of the wider University community could impact upon the student experience. One of the priority actions arising from the strategy was the need to 'define students and staff as 'members' of BU and to reflect this in documentation etc.'. It was agreed that careful consideration should be given to the use of language in the strategy to avoid unintentionally excluding staff.

3. STUDENT VOICE STEERING GROUP(SVSG) REPORT

- 3.1 Mr Ireland presented the summary progress update report from the SVSG. The Group meets every two weeks and the minutes are available to staff and students on the I: drive (see report for the full link).
- 3.2 The SVSG was overseeing development of the NSS for BU and was introducing a self-imposed stretch-target of an 80% response rate (the previous highest rate was 70%). The Student Experience Survey project also remained on-track, although the report noted that the cost of this was higher than anticipated. Communications with students continued to be a key theme with forums taking place in all Schools along with conversation sessions with the Vice Chancellor. Other recurring issues raised by students were bus services and timetabling issues.

4. STUDENT EXPERIENCE KPIS

- 4.1 The Chair presented the Student Experience Committee KPI reports for information. KPI's 1 (qualifications on enrolment) and 2 (completion rates) remained on-track to meet the 2010/11 targets. The University also remained on track to exceed its target of 59% for the achievement of a good honours degree. Graduate employability was expected to see a slight fall in line with the rest of the HE sector. Monitoring of the 3 Week Assessment Turnaround targets remained static and it was noted that the Senate would debate assessment issues at its next meeting on 16th March. It was suggested that the Committee might also debate this topic from a student experience perspective at a future meeting.

- 4.2 Members discussed the appropriateness of the current KPIs and their relevance to the student experience. It was noted that these were part of a set of 25 KPIs arising from the Strategic Plan and delegated by the Board to its sub-committees for ongoing monitoring. It was agreed that the Board should consider reviewing the KPIs as part of the ongoing discussions of the University's vision and strategy. It was suggested that one additional performance indicator could be student satisfaction as measured by internal surveys (in addition to the NSS).

5 REPORT FROM THE SUBU PRESIDENT

- 5.1 The SUBU President updated the Committee on recent activities. The 'Have your say' student conversation events with the VC had taken place and followed a similar structure to the staff events, focusing on themes of values, expectations and ideas for improvements. A follow-up event was expected to take place in March, following the publication of the Government White Paper on HE.
- 5.2 Elections were taking place for SUBU Sabbatical Officers shortly and 12 candidates were standing. There were now 4 sabbatical officer positions following the creation of a new post specifically to represent the Lansdowne Campus.
- 5.2 The AGM was scheduled to take place on 1 March and a number of motions were proposed. These included the creation of dedicated UG student accommodation; the impact on students of the use of computer labs for teaching; and the quality/use of PhD students as teachers.
- 5.3 The second BUnique week (promoting student involvement) had taken place and proved very successful. In addition the RAG society had raised £26,000 to date this year.
- 5.4 Communications activity continued with further 'Go Out and Talk' sessions and further promotion of the 'Student Voice' tab on myBU. An issue had arisen concerning the weekly e-mail to all students sent by SUBU. Investigations revealed that many students did not notice or read these e-mails because they were becoming 'lost' amongst the huge quantity of e-mails being sent to the 'all students' mailing list. The Head of Student Services had subsequently prohibited staff from sending individual e-mails to this mailing list, but would instead issue a single weekly digest of announcements. A separate mailing list had also been created for use by students seeking participants for research projects and students could 'opt-out' of receiving these mailings if they wished. Further work was being undertaken with the Marketing & Communications team to create a student communications strategy.

6 EMPLOYMENT AND PLACEMENTS (DEBATE)

- 6.1 The Chair introduced this item and suggested that the Committee focus the debate on considering how the University could develop key strengths in the field of employability which would become a unique selling point. The Head of Student Services added that an employability project was currently underway to consider these issues.
- 6.2 The Chair introduced Mr Smith, Graduate Employment Service Manager, who provided the Committee with an overview presentation on the work of the Service (attached). This began with a discussion of a variety of definitions of 'employability' and a consideration of how it was measured. Once key measurement was through the Destination of Leavers from HE (DHLE) return which survey all graduates six months after leaving University. It was noted, however, that this was a relatively crude measurement tool. Measurements also differentiated between 'graduates in employment' and 'graduates in graduate level employment' – the latter generally including self-employment among other specific types of work. League tables and published data focused on the data for 'graduates in graduate level employment' and

BU was currently placed in the middle third of the national league table. Our position had fallen slightly in the previous year, but this was in common with the rest of the sector and reflected the economic environment. The 'top five' employers for BU graduates were public sector organisations.

- 6.3 In terms of work placements, BU had an excellent record of providing these and 3 out of 10 students ultimately return to full time employment with their placement provider after graduating. Measures to improve employability also included PDP units; employer events (including the career fair); guest speaker programmes and in curriculum careers education. Barriers included the difficulties in encouraging students to engage with the subject and issues of timing. Finally Mr Smith highlighted some of the future planned activities including the ongoing development of the Employability Action Plan; the Online Graduate Employment Placements System (OGEPS); more targeted information to students; the BU Development Award; the growing alumni network; and the development of the in-house BU Recruitment Agency.
- 6.4 The Committee discussed the issues raised in the presentation and it was noted that the availability of careers advice in secondary Schools was declining and Partner FE colleges may be able to pick up on this. Members discussed the relative merits of introducing mandatory employability elements into the curriculum. It was broadly agreed that the 'opt-in' approach was not universally successful and that a mandatory element might be added to the second year timetable. Such compulsory elements might take the form of a range of options which could be tailored depending on the students' needs. Dr Humphreys informed the Committee that a new system was in development which would hold information on all events taking place (such as guest lecturers). It was suggested that there were already positive employability activities taking place in some Schools and it may be worthwhile mapping this with a view to more effectively sharing this good practice. Members also discussed whether any compulsory 'employability' elements of the curriculum should be subject to assessment. This should also be captured in the student records and could form part of the transcripts for each course. Members considered the issue of relevant certificates to students in this context – either for accredited external activities or internal certificates to recognise achievements in employability elements.
- 6.5 The Chair thanked Mr Smith for his presentation and members for their comments and ideas. The Employability Action Plan will be presented to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration and comment.

JJ

7 SUGGESTIONS FOR THE DEBATE TOPIC FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- 7.1 It was agreed that there would be two debate themes for the next meeting: 'Assessments' (including issues relating to 3 week turnaround) and 'Personalisation'. The Chair asked Mr Ireland and Dr Main respectively to lead these discussions.

AI/AM

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Dr Palfreman-Kay reminded members that Carola Towle, UNISON's national officer for LGBT equality, would be speaking on 28th February on 'advancing LGBT equality'.
- 8.2 Members suggested that the membership of the Committee might be reviewed to ensure that staff Partner Institutions were fully represented. The Chair agreed to consider this.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday, 11 May 2011, 2.15pm

Geoffrey Rayment
Committee Clerk