

SENATE AND UNIVERSITY BOARD

STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2008

Present: Dr B Astin (Chair)
Mrs M Barron; The Revd Dr D Hart; Prof T Husband; Mr A James; Mr P Kneller; Rev Canon B Merrington; Mr N Richardson; Mr F Ruffle; Ms A Allen.

Student Members: Tufan Uysal; Eres Saka; Daniel Carter; Daniel Matalon; Richard Binnie.

In Attendance: Mr G Rayment (Committee Clerk).
Ms J Hanson; Dr J Palfreman-Kay (Item 4);

Apologies: Mrs J Beard; Mr C Elder; Ms A Gutiérrez (Secretary); Mrs F McMillan;
Dr E Mytton.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and received apologies (as above).

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (14 May 2008)

The Minutes were approved as a correct record subject to one amendment (In attendance: Replace 'Ms T Humphrey' with 'Ms T Humphreys').

The Chair reminded Members that 'unconfirmed' committee minutes automatically became 'confirmed' as soon as their accuracy is agreed at the next meeting of the relevant committee.

2.1 Matters Arising

2.1.1 Therapeutic benefits of sports, recreation & music for 'at risk' students (para 2.3).
This had been progressed by the Chaplaincy and a scheme had been set up between counsellors and the Sports Department. This allowed counsellors to refer 'at risk' students for free services for periods of up to 3 months, where it was agreed that these could be of benefit.

2.1.2 Promotion of 'Good News' stories to local media (para 2.4)
The University and SU continued to consider this issue and opportunities for promoting the image of the University were taken wherever possible. It was broadly agreed, however, that the press tended to publish negative stories in preference to positive ones. The Committee discussed alternative approaches to gaining good media coverage, such as whether it would be of benefit to have a regular column in the local press dealing with University stories. The Press & PR Manager will be asked to consider this further.

2.1.3 Proposals on first year student experience (para 3.4).
Ideas for progressing this were now in place, and will be taken forward once the staff resources and other appropriate mechanisms were in place.

2.1.4 Studentification (paras 4.1 to 4.5)
University and Students' Union (SU) representatives had met with the Winton Residents' Forum to discuss issues of concern. It was hoped to have further meetings with Community organisations and, to that end, Winton residents had been invited to visit the University as part of a special event in December. Local residents were also able to contact the University by telephone or e-mail (community@bournemouth.ac.uk) with any issues relating to students, which the Residential Services Manager will follow-up as appropriate. The 'I ♥ BH' campaign also continued to encourage students to look after their neighbours and respect their surroundings.

2.1.5 SU award ceremonies for clubs and societies (para 8.5)
It was noted that the Board held regular dinners on the evening before each of their meetings, and that this might be an opportunity for Board members to be involved in the awards.

3. REPORTS RECEIVED ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE

3.1 askBU Student Services

3.1.1 The Assistant Registrar (Student Policy & Support) introduced this paper and updated the Committee on changes which had taken place since it was prepared in July. There were now 11 staff working in askBU. The shortage of space in the Lansdowne facility was being addressed, and issues concerning the IT and telephone systems were being resolved through the implementation of the IT strategy. A large volume of enquiries had been received, particularly concerning the new on-line registration process.

3.1.2 A feedback system had been introduced allowing clients to report back on their experience of the service. The vast majority of feedback had been positive and the service was considered to be a valuable resource for students. The feedback also helped to highlight any inconsistencies in the University's processes, which could then be addressed.

3.1.3 It was noted that, at the Universities Open Day, there had been some confusion arising from staff misdirecting international enquirers to the Centre for Global Perspectives. This will be corrected for future enquiries. There were also some concerns regarding privacy for students visiting the askBU service in person. These points were being kept under review

MB

3.1.4 For the future, it was noted that the introduction of the points based visa system for international students was expected to create an increased workload and large number of enquiries for askBU. Further information on the new system will be disseminated in the New Year.

MB

3.2 Residences Manager's Report

3.2.1 The Chair introduced this report and invited comments from the Members. It was noted that some students on 30 week placements had to enter into 11 month contracts for their accommodation. They were subsequently finding it hard to identify students who could take over their accommodation once their placement ended. It was agreed to explore this issue further with the Residences Manager, to consider whether the University could offer more support to students in this situation.

RS/Chair

3.2.2 It was noted that some local residents had proposed that all students should be restricted to living in Halls of Residence accommodation to minimise perceived disruption to the local community, but the Committee agreed that this was not practical or desirable for the vast majority of students.

- 3.2.3 It was felt that arrivals week had run more efficiently compared to previous years, although it was suggested that the University's academic community should engage more with this process.

Chair/JH

3.3 Space Management, Timetabling and Space Planning

- 3.3.1 The Chair introduced this paper and the Committee noted that further space was expected to be released at Bournemouth House in the next academic year, and additional larger lecture theatres and teaching spaces were being planned.

3.4 Student Transport

- 3.4.1 The Chair introduced the report and invited comments from members. There was a discussion regarding the increase in Unilink bus fares. The subsidised bus fares were welcomed and very much appreciated. However, the increase in single journey fares from 0.40p to 0.60p meant that there was no longer a price incentive to purchase the '10 trip' tickets. It was also noted that there was currently no direct bus service from Corfe House to the Lansdowne campus.

SL

4. DIGNITY, DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY (DDE) ISSUES

- 4.1 The Manager of the Additional Learning Needs Service introduced this report, which set out work undertaken during the academic year and a proposed plan of work for 2008/9. Highlights included the roll-out of the enhanced Equality Impact Assessment guidelines; the University's participation in a number of events, such as 'Bourne Free'; promotion of the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) programme; and a number of new activities by the Chaplaincy team to support staff and students. Work had also continued to promote disability equality and support students with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

- 4.2 The Chair welcomed the report which was noted by the Committee.

5. STUDENT UNION MATTERS

5.1 President's Report

- 5.1.1 The President of the Students' Union (SU) introduced this report which highlighted key activities, achievements and concerns. Achievements included the success of Raising and Giving (RAG) events which have raised approximately £6,000 to date; the ongoing development of the SUBU Leadership Programme (with significant involvement from international students); 'Nerve' media activities and the volunteer programme.

5.2 Volunteering: Funding issues

- 5.2.1 The Committee discussed concerns that the ring-fenced Teaching Quality Fund grant (which is applicable to volunteering) will not be available as of next year. It was confirmed that the funding will still be available to the University, but will no longer be identified as a separate ring-fenced budget line. As a result the money will be absorbed into the funds distributed amongst the various Schools. Securing funding to support volunteering activities will, therefore, become part of the normal bidding process and a case will need to be made to support these bids. A firm evidence base should be produced to support the benefits of volunteering and activities such as PAL. It was anticipated that the total funding requirement will be between £30k and £50k per annum.

- 5.2.2 The Committee supports the case for funding to be provided to support SU volunteering activities. The Chair will take the issue forward in discussion with the Director of Finance, the Head of Academic Services and, if appropriate, with Deans at their meeting in January 2009.

Chair

5.3 E-registration/Student Loans

5.3.1 The Assistant Registrar (Student Policy & Support) explained that the new process of on-line registration had gone well, but there had been a number of problems regarding the knock-on effect for processing student loans. This resulted from a combination of factors: on-line registration had failed to trigger action from the student loans company as it should have; the student loans company had incorrectly advised students that money would be in their bank accounts on the first day of term; there were some staff training issues; and the student loans company had experienced problems with their own systems. Those factors directly controlled by the University will be resolved in time for the next enrolment session in January 2009.

5.3.2 It was noted that students commended the way that problems had been dealt with and appreciated the way that emergency loans had been made available quickly.

5.4 myBU Interface with staff and students

5.4.1 It was noted that a number of issues were still outstanding concerning the myBU portal. The Chair informed the committee that an action plan had been developed to address all known issues, and students and staff should report any problems through the IT Helpdesk in the first instance. Changes had already been instigated to ensure that similar problems will not arise next year.

5.5 Careers at Partner Institutions

5.5.1 There were concerns that there had been a reduction in the provision of careers services at partner institutions. It was agreed to investigate this.

Chair/JG

5.6 Additional Learning Needs changes

5.6.1 The Committee discussed the introduction of charges of £85 for Additional Learning Needs assessments. It was broadly agreed that the introduction of charges for the assessments was fair in principle, and that students in hardship could receive support from the Hardship Fund in meeting these costs. It was noted that there had been an increase in the students applying for ALN support and that the value of the support provided represented good value compared to the relatively small assessment charge.

5.7 Wednesday afternoons

5.7.1 Wednesday afternoon had traditionally been kept free in the academic timetable to allow students to take part in extra-curricular activities such as sports and volunteering. It was noted, however, that some academic staff were not adhering to this informal arrangement. This was causing difficulties for those students who wished to participate in these activities (particularly when such students were in the minority among their classmates). It was also causing some difficulties in co-ordinating PAL activities.

5.7.2 The Committee agreed that Wednesday Afternoons should be reserved for such activities wherever possible. It was noted, however, that some academic activities, for example field work in the School of Conservation Sciences, had to encroach on this time. It was hoped that the situation will improve as a consequence of curriculum changes being implemented, creating more spaces in the timetable. Senate had also emphasised the importance of keeping this time free, and it was agreed that student representatives should raise the issue with the relevant programme teams where necessary.

5.8 Use of University PCs for social networking

5.8.1 Some students had complained to SU representatives that Library PCs were being used to access social networking sites such as Facebook, at the expense of students who needed the PCs for academic purposes. The SU had no stance on

the issue, but had agreed to draw it to the attention of the Committee. A similar situation had been observed with the PCs provided at askBU sites.

- 5.8.2 Members discussed possible solutions and it was suggested that some PCs be clearly marked as designated for academic use only. Another option would be to explore with IT services whether some PCs could be blocked from accessing social networking sites. This will be explored further.

JH

5.9 Okeford House

- 5.9.1 It was reported that problems continued with the provision of internet services at Okeford House. The current internet connection was very slow, which was a particular problem for post graduate and media students in this residence who had a high demand for the service. The Chair agreed to raise this issue with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Resources)

Chair

5.10 Publication of timetables and timetable changes

- 5.10.1 It was reported that some students, particularly mature students with childcare needs, had experienced difficulties in accommodating late publication of, and/or changes to, the timetables. The University was hoping to resolve this through the introduction of an online timetable through myBU, which will be updated and published in real time. Some students had also been inconvenienced by last minute changes to one-to-one meetings with tutors. It was agreed that these should be arranged by mutual decision and tutors should not make last minute changes without the agreement of the student.

6 PERIODIC PERFORMANCE REVIEW

- 6.1 The Chair introduced this report which showed performance against the set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) owned by the Committee. It was noted that, in future, there will be a change to the clearing process which might impact upon the 'Average Student Tariff'. Students who received better grades than anticipated will be allowed a 5 day period in which they could decide to go to a different university. Some concerns were expressed that this could have a knock-on effect with students already signed up to courses having to make way for latecomers. It was explained, however, that this will not be the case and that an offer of a place will always be honoured, provided the student obtained the required grades.

7 STUDENTIFICATION

- 7.1 This item was taken under 'Matters Arising' (para 2.1.4 above).

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Upcoming events

The Committee noted that on 3 December the Vice-Chancellor will make awards to staff for outstanding contributions to student learning. SU representatives were invited to attend. A Scholars' Reception was also scheduled to take place on 9 December in the Students' Centre.

8.2 Student Health

The University's Medical Centre had received funding from the Strategic Health Authority to undertake a pilot project to provide a one-stop shop for a wide range of sexual health services. They were working closely with askBU to publicise this.

8.3 Thanks

The Chair thanked Prof Tom Husband for his excellent contribution to the Committee during his period of office as a University Board member. Revd Dr David Hart will succeed him as Deputy Chair of the Committee.

Ana Gutiérrez
Secretary & Deputy Registrar
November 2008

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

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Dr Brain Astin (Chair)

Date:.....