

SENATE (with Board representation)

STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2009

Present: Prof J Vinney (Chair)
Mr S Bellamy; Mrs J Dawson; The Rev Dr D Hart; Ms C Howlett; Mr A James; Mrs J Jenkin; Rev Canon Dr B Merrington; Dr J Palfreman-Kay.

Student Representatives:
Mr D Carter; Mr C Nash; Mr R Frame.

In Attendance: Mr G Rayment (Committee Clerk); Mrs J Wilson (Item 3.7).

Apologies: Mrs M Barron; Mr C Elder; Dr J Hanson; Mr P Kneller; Mrs F McMillan; Mr J Ricci; Mr N Richardson

ACTION

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (13 May 2009)

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Item 2, Minute 3.2.1: This issue concerned students in the School of Services Management who needed to leave their accommodation early in order to take up longer placements and felt disadvantaged at having to pay rent for this period or find someone else to take on the accommodation in their place. It was explained that these placements were not compulsory and students had a choice of whether or not to take them. It was noted that there had been no recent complaints about this particular problem which may indicate that fewer students were taking up these longer placements or that information about the process was clearer.

Item 2, Minute 7.3: Semesterisation was discussed under agenda Item 6 (below).

Minute 3.1.2: This issue (Scholarships and bursaries to support the SDX project) has been placed on the agenda of the January 2010 Fees Board.

Minute 3.1.3: It was noted that SDX was being actively promoted by the Global Perspectives team.

Minute 3.5.5. The Admissions Appeals Procedure had been finalised and published.

Minute 3.7.4 Further investigation had shown that the statistics relating to the availability of worship facilities did not indicate that this was a significant issue.

Item 5: Mr James informed the Committee that work was ongoing in relation to studentification and managing relationships with the local community. It was noted that more noise abatement notices were being issued due to better enforcement by Environmental Health Officers as part of the 16 week pilot (which it was hoped to extend).

Minute 8.1.1 The Chair explained that this had been a long-standing issue relating to the need for post graduate students to extend their accommodation for one or two weeks to allow them to complete their studies (dissertations). This could be problematic, however, particularly in light of the need to carry out maintenance work on some premises in advance of the new student intake arriving. The Committee discussed how changes to the start and end dates for some courses (i.e. those which run for just over one year, including the dissertation) might help to alleviate this problem. It was agreed to consider what data was available on this which might be compared with accommodation records to assess the scale of the problem.

JJ

Minute 8.1.2 The Chair explained that there was a reduced U1 Summer Shuttle between Pokesdown-Lansdowne- Talbot and students in Poole are able to use the 15 service to Talbot campus at a child fare rate.

Minute 8.2 Mrs Jenkin informed the Committee that a BU Award was being developed to recognise the development of skills outside of the academic curriculum. This would be geared towards improving employability and would be robustly assessed. It was hoped to launch the pilot scheme at the start of the next academic year.

2.1 Student & Academic Services (SAS) – Update

Mrs Jenkin updated the Committee on progress with the Professional Services Review which had lead to the creation of the new Student and Academic Services Directorate. A consultation exercise on the revised structure had recently been completed and the feedback was being considered prior to publication of the final structure. This review was designed to improve the student experience and would introduce better cross-working, flexibility and project management.

3. REPORTS RECEIVED ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE

3.1 askBU (including student finance)

- 3.1.1 This report was noted and the Chair invited comments from members. Views on the services were very positive and it was felt that it worked well with the SU Advice Centre. It had also proved helpful during the student orientation process and the introduction of confidential interview areas at the Base were welcomed. It was noted that the data in the report showed that students preferred face to face communication and that this required the appropriate level of staff resources. It was requested that higher levels of staffing for askBU be made available during the enrolment period to handle the increased demand during that period.

JJ

3.2 1st Year Student Experience

- 3.2.1 This report was noted. It was suggest that the SU Executive first year officer might also be involved in this project and that provision for postgraduate students should also be incorporated.

3.3 Annual Report from the Residences Manager

- 3.3.1 This report was noted. It was also noted that the number of students requiring accessible living space had increased. This would need to be taken account of in any future building projects as mistakes in previous buildings had required expensive retrofitting in order to be compliant with accessibility requirements. It was requested that the summary list of accommodation at page 1 of the report be amended to include details for Lyme Regis House. SU also asked that student

representation be included in the ongoing Student Accommodation Project 2 (SAP2) which aims to create 1000 to 1500 new accommodation places. It was agreed to raise this with the DVC.

Chair

3.4 Student Transport

3.4.1 The report was noted. Members welcomed the accessibility of the new buses for disabled students. The Committee discussed the possibility of bulk purchasing bicycles which could then be sold to students at subsidised rates. There was no provision currently to do this, but it was noted that the University Travel Plan included a number of measures to encourage environmentally friendly travel and the income raised from parking charges was ring-fenced to support such initiatives.

3.5 Space Management and Timetabling

3.5.1 SU supported the need for timetables to be made available as early as possible. This was particularly important for students with childcare responsibilities. The Student Representatives explained in detail some particularly difficult problems which had arisen through poor timetabling arrangements. This had caused extreme disruption during the first two weeks of a course leading to students missing lectures. The Chair agreed that this was unacceptable but suspected that this particular issue was a unique compounded problem and would hopefully not be repeated. The University continued to try to improve its timetabling and was looking at good practice within the sector.

3.5.2 Concerns were raised about the number of lectures being scheduled after 7.00pm and on Wednesday afternoons. The Chair confirmed that Schools had been advised that they should not schedule mandatory lectures on Wednesday afternoons. The Chair commented that evening lectures were common across the sector but hoped that the provision of additional lecture theatres (Kimmeridge House) would help to reduce the need for evening lectures at BU.

3.6 International Students' Orientation Programme (ISOP) 2009

3.6.1 This report was noted. The response rate to the survey was extremely good and some of the issues raised could be relevant to home students as well as international students.

3.7 Dignity, Diversity and Equality Steering Group Annual Report: Student Aspects

3.7.1 Mrs Wilson (HR) introduced this report and highlighted key activities during the year. These included the Forum Theatre staff development project which had been well received and may be extended in future to involve the SU, perhaps via the SU Leadership Programme.

3.7.2 The DisabledGo project had been well received, allowing potential students to view the University facilities on-line. Equality Impact Assessments would be rolled-out from next year, involving the assessment of all student policies and procedures. This was a statutory requirement for all public bodies and would include on-site contractors and partner organisations such as Chartwells.

3.7.3 It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of students refusing to provide data on ethnicity and disability. The reason for this was not known, although it was recognised that the response rate to these questions in previous years had been particularly good.

3.7.4 Mrs Wilson thanked Mrs Howlett and Dr Palfreman-Kay for their work in undertaking DDE work in the absence of an appointed DDE Adviser. Interviews to fill this vacancy were scheduled to take place in December.

4. MEDIA SCHOOL ACADEMIC BOARD: Issues arising from School Quality Report.

4.1 The Chair invited the SU to respond to the criticisms in this report. It was felt that the criticisms were disappointing and possibly misinformed. For example, the SU had no involvement in the 'Carnage' event and had publicly condemned it in the past. Similarly much work had been done to improve the training of Student Representatives but Schools had not always helped to publicise the availability of this training. It was agreed that SU would speak to Dr Watson outside of the meeting to correct any misconceptions and attempt to resolve these issues.

5. NSS and SUE Results and Action Plans

5.1 The Chair introduced this report and highlighted some of the progress against key targets. It was noted that, although the overall response rate remained relatively stable, it fluctuated a great deal within individual Schools. Also, it was suggested that students would continue to become more demanding and seek good value for money in future years due to the removal of the fees cap.

6 SEMESTERISATION

6.1 The Chair explained that this issue had been referred to the Academic Standards Committee for consideration and work was being undertaken (by Jennifer Taylor) with Deputy Deans (Education) to consider the issues raised. The SU paper would be shared with Jennifer so that the points raised could be included in this process.

7 STUDENTS' UNION MATTERS

7.1 SU were discussing with Wilts & Dorset buses a resolution to the issue of the discontinuation of the A bus route. A possible solution had been found through the re-direction of another route at no additional cost to the University.

7.2 Discussions were taking place with Body Positive to provide sexual health services for students. It was agreed to consider whether the Board might be able to support the argument for the provision of this service.

7.3 SU were interested in setting up an open forum for students to question Deans and/or Associate Deans. The Chair would work with SU to seek suggestions from Schools on taking this forward.

Chair

7.4 Mrs Jenkin would arrange for work to be taken forward with ICT to resolve these issues in the wider context of how the Library supported students and the need for good communications and signage.

JJ

7.5 The petition calling for a review of academic delivery was noted. The Chair would discuss this with the Deputy Dean (Education) of the School concerned.

Chair

8 PERIODIC PERFORMANCE REVIEW

8.1 The paper was noted. The current set of KPIs were being reviewed as part of the revision of the University’s Strategic Plan. The Committee discussed the KPIs for 3 week turnaround of assessments and noted the relatively small difference in percentages between postgraduate (Red) and undergraduate (amber). Mr James again raised the point that the KPIs related only to academic experience and not the wider student experience. In future the ‘Overall Student Satisfaction’ data from the NSS survey may be included as a KPI to help address this.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 There was no other business.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday, 24 February 2010, 2.15pm
Wednesday, 12 May 2010, 2.15pm

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

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Prof J Vinney (Chair)

Date:.....