

From: [John Vinney](#)
To: [All Staff](#)
Subject: Update from the Vice-Chancellor
Date: 09 December 2019 15:05:26
Attachments:



Dear colleague,

This time of year is a time to reflect on the year just passed as well as looking forward to the future.

External developments

2019 has been a turbulent year politically. Apart from anything else we had three changes of Universities Minister (although only two Ministers) and the results of this week's election may not bring any more stability to government. Continued uncertainty about Brexit both in the immediate future and its longer-term implications has had a particular impact on staff and students over the last year. I want to emphasise how much we value our EU and international staff and students at BU and the contribution that you make to our vibrant learning community.

It is hard to make predictions about 2020 before we know the outcome of the election. We are operating in a different regulatory environment now that the Office for Students has taken its full powers, and the sector will see ongoing intervention across a range of issues. A change of government could mean significant change for the sector - our policy team have published [a short comparison](#) of the English party manifestos as they relate to HE and research.

I encourage everyone to make time to vote on Thursday.

Celebrations

As we approach the end of 2019 we have a lot to celebrate. In November, we celebrated with more than 4,000 graduates, with almost 14,000 guests, and on-line viewers around the world. Meeting graduates as they cross the stage and with their families and friends afterwards is a great privilege. Thank you to all the staff from across BU who supported the huge effort in planning, preparing and delivering [our nine ceremonies](#) this year.

In preparation for next year, please take time to [nominate someone inspirational](#) for an honorary award by 8th January 2019. You can read about our 2019 [honorary graduates here](#).

More recently I was delighted to present the awards at the [ninth annual VC staff awards](#). This year, we had more teams than ever nominated. Congratulations to everyone nominated, shortlisted and of course the winners. Thank you to all those involved in the preparation for this event and on the night - and to everyone who made time to nominate their colleagues. And the celebrations aren't over yet - we are preparing to celebrate in January with staff

who have achieved qualifications relevant to their role and with our new Professors and Associate Professors. We are also holding a tea party later this month for programme leaders whose programmes exceeded 90% in the NSS – and for colleagues that they work with.

Internal developments

While there were some positive stories in our NSS results in 2019, there were also some disappointing results, and this has been a major area of focus for staff across the whole of BU since the summer. As we prepare for the NSS to open for students in 2020, I ask all staff to consider what they could do differently now to ensure that students receive a more consistently excellent experience. Many of you will have MUSE or other feedback to help you target your efforts.

One aspect of Fusion Learning at BU is our focus on employability – by bringing research and practice together with excellent education, we can make our students more employable. It was good to see this recognised in the recent Global University Employability Ranking 2019 published by Times Higher Education. BU was ranked 15th in the UK and 230th in the world.

We continue to focus across BU on the BU2025 outcomes and on ensuring that we carry out our BU2025 strategic plan. The plan was updated over the summer and [you can read more here](#).

We are making good progress with our strategic investment areas – you can [read more about them here](#) as well as about the call for expressions of interest for internal, pump-primed research projects, which is open until 6th January.

As well as the strategic investment areas, we are focussing on our areas of disciplinary strength. We have now completed the departmental reorganisation, which was an important step in the implementation of BU2025. I would like to congratulate our new Heads of Department and the newly appointed Deputy Heads of Department, and welcome those who are new to BU.

I would like to announce the retirement of Graham Beards from his role as Finance Director. I trust that you will join with me in wishing him all the best for the future.

This year we have seen an increase in undergraduate enrolments with 4,401 students (388 European & international students) joining BU in September, representing an uplift of 4.8% compared to the previous year. Our postgraduate taught enrolments are also on the rise, with 462 UK and 592 European & international students choosing BU - an increase of 9% and 23% respectively compared to the previous year.

I would like to thank everyone who is involved in supporting recruitment, admissions and student induction at BU. From the welcome at open days, to ongoing work on recruitment, through admissions and clearing, to welcoming our students and helping them to settle in, the positive and supportive approach of our staff makes a real difference. Of course, it is not just when students start with us in the first year that we have an opportunity to have a positive impact on student experience, and the renewed focus on student experience through their transitions from year to year and during placements is also important.

Looking forwards at BU

In 2020, I am looking forward to continuing our focus on excellence in everything that we do, prioritising inclusivity and innovation as we work towards our BU2025 strategic

outcomes. It was fantastic recently to visit Research Development and Support and the Doctoral Colleges and hear about how their work supports BU2025. They have also developed their Fusion profiles, demonstrating that Fusion at BU is inclusive and relevant to staff across BU. I look forward to meeting staff next year as we continue our informal BU2025 meetings - you can sign up [here](#) or provide feedback or suggestions by e-mailing [BU2025VisionandStrategy](#).

And finally

Thank you for everything you have done this year. You are invited to join me for a festive celebration on Friday 20th December from 3pm. Food and drinks will be available in the Fusion Building on Talbot Campus in addition to some craft activities and stalls to help get you in a festive mood.

Best wishes,

John Vinney
Vice-Chancellor

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