



draft:	07/03/2005
confirmed by chair:	08/03/2005
confirmed by committee	26/05/05
with/without amendments:	

Academic Planning Committee

minutes

date: 3 March 2005
time: 9.30am
location: Main Boardroom, High Wycombe

05.01 Minutes of the Last Meeting (18 November 2004)

The minutes of the meeting of 18 November 2004 were accepted as a true and accurate record by the Committee.

05.02 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

a 04.28(a): Decision Making Process

It was reported to the committee that since the last meeting Senate had now set up two working groups on annual review and evaluation and validation and some of the discussions that had taken place at APC regarding the decision making process would be continued there.

There then followed a discussion regarding the form of outline and initial proposals. It was felt strongly by the committee that there should be firmer guidelines for what a proposal should contain. There was also a view that there was a need for support with market research and that this could possibly be provided by the Planning Unit. It was also important to encourage appropriate proposals to come forward because although the validation process was working well the initial and outline proposal process was not. It was felt that scrutiny should take place at a faculty level to ensure that the proposals that reached APC were not turned back. Faculties do however need to be responsive regarding the validation of new courses and time constraints will continue to be an issue.

The committee felt strongly that all initial and outline proposals should continue to be subject to an institutional review but that minimum standards must be defined.

With regard to timescales for approving proposals, APC had held some interim meetings last year to consider proposals on a regular basis, but this had not been successful as all the members had wanted to attend each meeting and this had not been possible to organise.

The committee felt that this was an important and urgent debate and asked that it be further considered at the Validations Working Group and a report sent back to the next meeting of APC.

ACTION: Validations Working Party

b 04.30: Marketing Strategy

The committee was informed that the final draft of this document had been delayed following the appointment of the new Head of Marketing and Recruitment so that he could have some input into the strategy.

05.03 UCAS Application Statistics for October 2005 Entry

Document APC05.01

The committee were advised that compared to this time last year, the UCAS application statistics were up 9% nationally and 18% at BCUC. Applications from mature students and international students had both increased, but not significantly. All the faculties have shown increases, particularly Health Studies. The Committee welcomed this.

It was noted though that it was possible that this increase had in part been caused by the imminent changes to tuition fees but a much more detailed analysis of the statistics for BCUC was needed to assess this. Some of the increases could be accounted for by the consolidation of some specialist admissions routes.

It was also noted that nationally some BCUC key areas are in decline – Computing Science (19% decrease) and Information Systems (30% decrease). It was thought that action should be taken to counter this by promoting growth in other areas. It was felt that this information should also help to drive the marketing strategy.

Recruitment figures were requested for Foundation degrees and it was confirmed by the Head of MIS that it would be possible to produce this.

Increases in Health Studies and Social Work were of interest, as it is in these areas that bursaries are offered.

The committee were advised that when tuition fees are introduced, students will actually be better off in the short term but will have significantly more debt on leaving university. The Student Union were concerned and requested that support with financial management for students be put into place. This was currently being considered by the Directorate.

Faculties were encouraged to turn round applications sent to them as quickly as possible.

ACTION: Faculty Representatives

05.04 Faculty Annual Operating Statements

Document APC05.02

The Chair asked that in examining these documents good practice should be identified and interesting areas discussed. It was felt that these needed to come to APC for consideration earlier in the next academic year.

There was a concern that the Annual Operating Statement and the faculty action plan were only agreed half way through the academic year and that this needed to happen earlier in the planning cycle. The Risk Management Committee have identified six documents produced by the faculties that are reiterations of each other to some extent. A business plan for each faculty / department including financial details could stop duplication and consolidate information in one document. A business plan for a course would show operational viability over a period of time and this would link in with the initial / outline proposal and could help in its formulation. It was accepted however that staff development in business planning would need to take place.

There was significant support within the committee for a simple, strategic and embedded way of producing this information. It was felt that business plans could eventually replace Annual Operating Statements.

Each faculty representative then talked to their current Annual Operating Statement and the review of 2003/4 followed by questions and a general discussion.

ASSH

- Merged their action plan and Annual Operating Statement some time ago.
 - New Policing programmes were still under development.
 - The Criminological Psychology degree had received accreditation from the BPS.
 - Current Masters courses were still not recruiting. There was an expectation that the Masters course in CBT would be more successful.
 - The revalidation of the entire field-based curriculum in two departments was almost complete. This had precluded some development of new courses.
 - Timetabling continued to be an issue within the faculty and had been the cause of some complaints from the student body.
 - The part-time degree in visual and literary culture was progressing.
 - The post qualifying award in adult care has been validated and once GSCC guidance had been published more awards in this general area would follow.
 - Counselling is now running successfully.
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- Concerns were raised about timetabling and will be followed up outside the meeting.
 - It was felt that the setting of targets within the Annual Operating Statements was a positive move.

Business School

- In 2003/4 the key issue had been teaching and learning.
- Most of the actions in 2003/4 has been achieved or partly achieved.
- The CIPD Masters programme had yet to be developed.
- In 2004/5 the faculty focus had changed to the course review and revalidation cycle and recruitment.

Design

- With a new Dean the structure of the faculty was beginning to become clearer and staff roles were more defined.
 - Masters courses were recruiting well.
 - Recruitment was encouraging overall and much effort was being made to go out and interest prospective students.
 - Structures had now been put in place to make capital investment work better.
 - The faculty was now looking towards the future and new opportunities.
 - Graduate destinations were providing the best recruitment opportunities as past BCUC graduates who had gone into business were now employing recently graduating students.
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- The Committee felt that having the overarching issues outlined at the beginning of the document was very useful and the format was an example of good practice.

Health Studies

- In 2003/4 the faculty focus had been on recruitment to commission numbers.
- Widening the scope of collaborative provision was ongoing.
- Inter-professional learning was moving up the agenda rapidly. A clear strategy was needed to demonstrate inter-professional teaching and learning. This would be one of the main areas addressed in the major review and wider framework for Quality Assurance.
- Retention was another key area with a need to increase retention figures.
- Faculty-wide research activity was to be increased and various groups had been instigated. There was still a difficulty in releasing staff to undertake primary research but this was being embedded in the faculty Teaching and Learning strategy.
- Two MSc programmes were running. Student numbers were still small but increasing.
- The Foundation degree in Care Management at Uxbridge College did not recruit in 2004/5 and there was a high attrition rate from the first cohort of students. More active recruitment was needed.
- 2004/5 had similar goals and challenges.

- The Committee felt that the commentary provided was very helpful.

Leisure and Tourism

- It was reported that the AOS in Leisure and Tourism would be a live document for 2004/5 and a risk column had been added.
- The staff now knew which areas the faculty was actively looking at.
- Budgeting had been changed to follow modules rather than students.
- The marketing system had been changed to allow more relationship marketing. This was more staff intensive but was working well.
- More strength was needed in the area of Masters courses and a series of "flavoured" MBAs were being developed with the Business School.
- Collaborative provision had been a big issue in 2003/2004. This was viewed as being implicit in the AOS in 2004/2005.
- Recruitment between the two main departments had evened out over the past 2 years.
- The standard of entry qualifications appeared to be falling, causing potential retention issues. It was felt that support structures and academic tutoring must therefore increase.
- Collaborative courses must be marketed more effectively.
- Support for Foundation degree students should be consolidated as their numbers were increasing.
- Staff development should be needs focussed.
- Student support was an important and growing area. It was felt that there was a need to work across faculties on this issue to maximise development.
- Cross faculty Masters also needed further development the possibility of a Graduate School and a Foundation School were raised. It was felt that any deskilling of staff by the setting up of such schools must be avoided.

Technology

Unfortunately no representative from Technology was present. The Committee noted that:

- There had been a change of emphasis from budgetary and finance in 2003/2004 to Teaching and Learning in 2004/2005.
- The Year 0 Foundation Level - this was a valid route that Technology had taken forward.
- There were no targets in the Technology paper relating to student numbers. It was thought that targets should be included as good practice. If Business Plans are adopted targets should become more measurable.

SCPE

Unfortunately no representative from SCPE was present.

It was decided that next year headings for Annual Operating Statements would be agreed institutionally to provide guidance. A template would also be produced to assist faculties. Headings could be linked to an overarching document (for instance the Strategic Plan) to assist. Written guidelines would also be produced.

ACTION: Academic Registry/ Chair

At this point it was decided that the rest of the agenda should be deferred to a further meeting, to take place in the near future, to give the items proper consideration. The committee were advised that the Secretary would circulate some provisional dates electronically later in the day.

ACTION: Secretary

05.05 Institutional Audit Briefing

The Audit Co-Ordinator joined the meeting to discuss the forthcoming QAA audit visit.

04.36 Date of Next Meeting

To be advised as soon as possible

prepared by: Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)]
file location: