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without amendments:	

Academic Planning Committee

minutes

date: 26 May 2005
time: 9.30am
location: Main Boardroom, High Wycombe

05.13 Minutes of the Last Meeting (3 March 2005, 14 March 2005)

The minutes of the meetings of 3 March 2005 and 14 March 2005 were accepted as true and accurate records by the Committee.

05.14 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

a 05.02 (a): Decision Making Process *document APC05.11*

It was reported that a Validation Working Group had been formed by Senate to look at the processes currently in use. It was thought that the process for initial and outline proposals was not working as effectively as possible, and the Committee agreed with this. It was felt that APC should take a stronger lead in considering initial and outline proposals and that market research and resources should also be included within its remit and removed from the validation event. It was suggested that the Committee look at the outline proposal process at Bath Spa University, which was viewed as being good practice. The Committee were asked for suggestions, which the Academic Registry would include in a new pro-forma.

A discussion ensued and the following points were made:

- It was felt that the validation process was part of something much wider and needed to be examined in the context of the overall planning of portfolio development.
- Faculty Plans were becoming more like business plans and if they included a portfolio framework then proposals would not need to be approved by APC.
- APC should focus on market research and resourcing. This was thought to be a useful suggestion.
- If faculties had their own academic plans linked to the Institutional Academic Plan, then it should set a sense of direction. Proposals within that plan would therefore not need to be considered by APC.
- Responsiveness to the market and the ability to act quickly was considered to be very important, particularly to the Health Studies faculty. It was suggested that developments made outside of the Faculty Plan could be considered by APC so that it was still possible to act quickly if necessary.
- The AR&E and Validation Working Groups had remits that overlapped and it was asked whether they were going to have a joint meeting to discuss details.
- It was felt that it was appropriate for APC to look at the resource details and market research conducted for proposed new courses.
- It was felt that faculty plans needed more development.
- It was suggested that a small sub group be formed to consider the issue of initial and outline proposals and possibly the context of Faculty plans and how they influenced the process, reporting back to the next meeting of APC in November 2005. The sub group would have members from the Directorate, Planning Unit,

- Marketing, the Academic Registry, the Business School and Health Studies
- It was felt that the Bath Spa University process could be used as a starting point.

ACTION: Sub Group on Initial and Outline Proposals

b 05.03: UCAS Application Statistics for October 2005 Entry
Verbal Report

It was reported that the turnaround on applications within the faculties had been checked with Central Admissions and was found to be satisfactory. It was suggested that a report on applications and turnaround might be made available for each meeting of APC to keep the Committee apprised of the situation. This was welcomed by members.

ACTION: Head of Marketing and Student Recruitment

c 05.04: Annual Operating Statements
Verbal Report

It was reported to the Committee that there was an agreed format for the Annual Operating Statement. A template was in existence with standard headings and this had been agreed by Planning Board. It was confirmed that further guidance on completing these would be available if required.

d 05.10 (b): Initial and Outline Proposals – Update on proposals for Bratislava and Singapore
document APC05.17

It was reported by the Business School Representative that in terms of the proposals, the faculty was looking at a model based on flexible and distance learning with direct control by BCUC with assistance for the students given by the overseas partners. BCUC would support staff in the partners via workshops, with the Annual Review and Evaluation being done by the Business School. The Committee **supported both the proposals in principle** but requested more information on the demonstrated financial viability and the Due Diligence reports. It was noted that the Financial Controller of the Institution had considered the information available on Bratislava and felt that there was a sound business case in this instance. The case for Singapore had yet to be presented.

Eversheds were compiling Due Diligence reports for both Bratislava and Singapore and it was suggested that validation could proceed subject to these reports being satisfactory. The Committee were advised that there could be significant difficulties in delivering courses in the Far East and that there were also significant financial implications. It was reported that the business case had made additional provision for validation cost and staff time outside of visits. No validation date had yet been set for Bratislava but it was felt that it might be in June 2005. This was considered to be very short notice and will be discussed with the Business School. The course is currently due to commence in January 2006.

ACTION: Academic Registry and Buckinghamshire Business School

The use of Eversheds was thought to be an excellent development. It was requested that full costings should be presented to the next meeting of APC as reserved business due to the sensitive nature of the information.

ACTION: Buckinghamshire Business School

e Senate: 05.07 (a): Annual Review and Evaluation
document APC05.07

The Committee were advised that the reporting and review of Central Service Departments had been referred to APC by Senate. The Committee felt that this was outside of their remit under the current terms of reference and this function was already being carried out by Planning Board. However, it was considered that the contribution that Central Service Departments make to the delivery of the Academic Plan could be considered by APC.

05.15 Developments in Part Time Education

Document APC05.14

In the last Strategic Plan a significant commitment was made to increase the numbers of part time students at BCUC but with only limited success.

A detailed study had been undertaken and in terms of national averages for part time students the Institution was comparable for undergraduates but weak at postgraduate level. The performance of the University College was acceptable when compared to other similar sized institutions, but it was difficult to make meaningful comparisons because of differences in local markets. The numbers were quite low at BCUC for 1st Degree and Postgraduates. Other Undergraduate was the largest area for part time students in Higher Education and the most rapidly expanding. 1st Degree was the smallest. However Associate Students were included in the figures for part time 1st Degree and this was seen as an anomaly.

In terms of Postgraduate taught courses, the last 5 years had seen a significant decline in these students at BCUC due mostly to the decline in Business and Administrative studies. The withdrawal from the partnership with MANCOSA had also affected the figures.

Areas could possibly be expanded as follows:

- Other Undergraduate: Psychology, Social Work, Human Resource Management, Marketing and Building, and also Academic Studies in Education (ancillaries to teacher training eg Classroom Assistants).
- Postgraduate Taught: Psychology, Business Admin Studies, Marketing and Human Resource Management.
- 1st Degree: Accounting and Finance (but there was no resource base currently to cater for this).

Issues to be considered were as follows:

- Is the Institution content to think in terms of student numbers or should the portfolio for part time students also reflect the desired shape and profile of the University College? Should certain areas be targeted for development in a managed way?
- Should the Academic Plan include agreed targets for individual faculties?
- Should there be funds available to support part time course development where such development could make a significant contribution to strategic goals?
- Should the faculties be asked to prove that their portfolio is moving in an appropriate direction? Should the process of development be monitored?

It was felt that how the Institution viewed itself was key, and that it was important to get the vision right.

- Other Undergraduate was the category which was expanding at the fastest rate and this was thought to have implications for what the Institution offered. HND and FDs were classed as Other Undergraduate as were credit bearing modules.
- It was thought that credit bearing modules building to a certificate might present an opportunity, especially as funding for adult education was suffering cut-backs at present.

- It was felt that a stronger Credit Accumulation Transfer framework might be needed to support credit bearing modules.
- It was felt that faculties would need to have a sense of opportunity and would need to work closely and effectively with the Planning Unit to develop provision if full advantage was to be taken of this situation.
- It was suggested that if part time student numbers were to expand then there would also be a need to examine support mechanisms for them.
- Funded taster courses and part time provision together with the marketing of the support given to students needed to be more focussed.
- Some members of the Committee felt that there should be a greater emphasis given to other modes of delivery, particularly distance learning.
- It was felt that there needed to be an engagement with the faculties on these issues.
- In the future credit bearing modules and Combined Studies would become more important.

The Committee noted the paper and found it most interesting. It also integrated with the following paper. It was felt that it would be beneficial to review the provision as it stood at the moment and prepare a paper on how it could be expanded with specific proposals for future developments.

ACTION: Professor of Portfolio Development and Assistant Director (Regional Development)

05.16 Institutional Academic Plan: Proposal for inclusion in the updated plan
document APC05.15

It was thought advisable that the Institution should set some simple goals which would assist with the identification of key priorities within the portfolio aims. The Plan was the start and then key goals for each separate year should be identified in a transparent implementation cycle. In the short term the Institution needed to look at increasing student numbers from abroad and the subsequent resourcing and funding issues that would accompany it. The long-term plan was thought to be key, in conjunction with the Annual Operating Statements.

It was felt that the next Strategic Plan needed to engage more with the faculties and help them to buy in, setting targets that were realistic, not aspirational. The Strategic and Academic Plans would link more and inform each other, with the Academic Plan becoming a core component of the Strategic Plan.

It was felt that there was a need to plan the portfolio without the restrictions of the campus locations or the prism of the existing faculty structure. There was a need to understand the key questions to ask once a potential area had been identified and currently opportunities to do this were being missed. The withdrawal of courses that no longer recruit successfully was also discussed and it was agreed that this issue still needed to be addressed.

It was agreed that a summary paper of a proposed Institutional Academic Plan would now be finalised to return to APC and then go to the next meeting of Planning Board. This would include proposals for a planned implementation with defined timescales and, if endorsed by Planning Board, would subsequently go forward for the formal approval of Senate.

It was reported that the University of Hertfordshire had looked at the shape of their faculties and had changed them, and that possibly BCUC needed to undergo a similar process. Whilst noting that campus locations currently inhibited major changes to faculty structures, it was felt important that such structures should nevertheless support the potential for new portfolio development and maximised opportunities for future student recruitment. In particular, it was noted that the existing structural arrangements within which faculties operated, combined with the difficulties of separate campus

locations, did not in themselves facilitate portfolio developments either across faculties or even between academic departments within faculties. This was considered as not being helpful in promoting portfolio opportunities for the development of joint or combined awards across different disciplines and subject areas.

It was felt that it might be beneficial if these issues were discussed by the Deans, who could then identify faculty staff who could possibly assist in cross-faculty collaboration within the current constraints. It was noted that the Deans / Directorate had a meeting scheduled for the following week where this issue could be discussed and possibly be taken forward. It was requested that any feedback from such a discussion, if it took place, should come back to APC for information and also be taken to Planning Board as appropriate. It was decided to review the position further in September 2005 and to incorporate any feedback on this issue into the proposals in the final paper to go to APC and subsequently Planning Board.

ACTION: Chair and Secretary

It was felt that resources to support developments were important and could be improved upon. The development money for Foundation Degrees was well utilised and gratefully received. Time was also seen as a key resource.

It was noted that there would be an attempt to develop high level aims and aspirations that the Academic Plan should relate to. This would go to Planning Board in the early part of the next academic year.

05.17

BCUC Draft Marketing Strategy (May 2005)

document APC05.08

It was noted that the paper had been to Planning Board and was favourably received. It had also received input from the Deans.

The Head of Marketing and Student Recruitment advised that it was still in draft form and was an attempt to encapsulate his thoughts after six weeks at BCUC. The Brand Positioning Statement was the key summary.

The document was discussed and the following points were made.

- It was felt that positive aspects needed to be accentuated.
- Clear numerical objectives were also needed.
- There seemed to be a special dynamic in the way students and staff related.
- Information regarding the support available to students and good, innovative courses should be linked in.
- The document was aimed at the UK and EU markets. The international aspect needed further development.
- The document also needed to have a stronger focus on part-time students.
- The document would not be finalised until the Autumn but action planning was already taking place.
- The Committee were asked for feedback on the approach and format used at this stage, rather than details.
- The information available at BCUC was of excellent quality and quantity, but had not always been brought together before. A Marketing Analyst had now been recruited to assist with this task, and would be working closely with MIS.
- It was felt that the Brand Positioning Statement reflected the results of the student experience survey and the work done on the retention strategy.
- The Brand Positioning Statement needed to be unique and distinctive and it was suggested that comparisons with other Institutions might be of benefit. Any areas that might cause dissonance also needed to be minimised
- Motivators for students needed to be identified to persuade them to study at BCUC.

In summary, the Committee welcomed the paper and looked forward to the next iteration.

05.18 Curriculum Management System (CMS)

document APC05.16

It was reported that this project was not progressing at the intended rate. There had been some issues with the software after the application of some of the service packs. Resourcing, in particular staff time, had also been an issue and had caused delays. Additional staff had now been identified to assist but this had not yet been implemented. The Project Plan was in need of revision to take account of new timescales.

It was reported that the system could automatically generate course codes, which was currently done manually. A format for the code would need to be agreed, but it was felt by the Committee that this was not within its terms of reference and should be dealt with by MIS and the Academic Registry.

It was felt that electronic storage of documents needed to be discussed in conjunction with Blackboard and EDMS, and therefore it was suggested that LIS, MIS and the Academic Registry should liaise regarding this issue. The Committee requested that the Project Sponsor for the CMS liaise with the Head of LIS to come to a view about the status of the project and how Blackboard and CMS could interface, and then report back to APC.

ACTION: CMS Project Sponsor

The Academic Registry felt the CMS had the potential to be very powerful and to improve systems and processes, but that the Institution needed to be clear about the direction it wished to follow, either Blackboard or CMS. It was brought to the attention of the Committee that CMS was already fully integrated with the Student Records system.

05.19 Report from the Recruitment and Admissions Group Away Days

verbal report

This had come to APC for note. A paper drawn up by the Chair of this Group was circulated to the Committee and the content of the meeting was described. The action points were noted, and it was advised that there would be a further meeting on the 14 June 2005 to progress matters further.

The point was raised that there might be too many groups considering the same or overlapping areas and that this might lead to a duplication of effort.

05.20 Consideration of Initial and Outline Proposals

a Proposals for Consideration

document APC05.13

- i) BA Joint Honours Visual Culture and Journalism – **Initial Proposal Approved**
- ii) BA (Hons) Journalism with Visual Culture and Media Studies – **Initial Proposal Approved**
- iii) BA (Hons) Journalism and Visual Culture with Creative Writing – **Initial Proposal Approved**
- iv) BA (Hons) Journalism with Visual Culture and English Studies – **Initial Proposal Approved**
- v) BA (Hons) Journalism with Visual Culture and Film Studies – **Initial Proposal**

Approved

- vi) BA (Hons) Journalism with Visual Culture and Video Production – **Initial Proposal Approved**
- vii) BA (Hons) Journalism with Visual Culture and Drama – **Initial Proposal Approved**
- viii) Foundation Degree in Spa and Therapy Management (Aylesbury College) – The Committee was advised that it was planned that this would commence in January 2006. The development of the course had been heavily embedded within industry. Aylesbury College would teach the Business Management elements and the Faculty of Leisure and Tourism would teach the Spa Management modules. **The Committee approved this proposal.**
- ix) BA (Hons) Air Travel and Tourism – **Initial Proposal Approved**

b BA (Hons) Business Studies (Direct Entry to Final Year)
document APC05.12

This update had been brought to the Committee for note. This proposal had been reviewed and had successfully progressed to validation on 11 May 2005.

c Amersham and Wycombe College – Review and Revalidations proposed for 2005/2006

A paper was circulated for the Committee to note. Two revalidations (HND Fine Art and BA (Hons) Applied Graphics Studies) and a possible new Foundation Degree (Digital Arts, Design and Media) were proposed for the next academic year.

05.21 Review of APC's Terms of Reference/Membership

document APC05.09

The Chair drew the attention of the Committee members to the Terms of Reference and Membership which had been distributed with the Committee papers.

The Chair requested that members examine the documents and feed back any possible amendments to the Chair for discussion at the next meeting. A proposal would be circulated once feedback had been received. If any member wished to stand down the Chair asked that he be advised accordingly.

ACTION: All Committee Members

05.22 Report from the Foundation Degree Review and Development Group (9 May 2005)

document APC05.10

This had come to the Committee for note and no substantive issues needed to be raised.

05.23 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 17 November 2005, 9.30am, venue to be confirmed

prepared by: Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance]
file location: K:/Committees/APC/Minutes/2004-2005/Meeting 26 May 2005.doc