



Draft	28 Jan 05
confirmed by DD (Planning)	9 Feb 05
confirmed by committee	11 April 05
with amendments:	

Planning Board

minutes

date: 17 January 2005
time: 9.30 am
location: Boardroom, High Wycombe Campus

Chair's Comments

The Chairman welcomed back the Dean of Health Studies to the Board following a period of ill health.

05.01 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the 1 November 2004 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

05.02 Matters Arising

(a) Minute Reference: 04.56: QLS Implementation – Evaluation Report

The Head of MIS reported that it had been necessary to delay the meeting to discuss the evaluation report on the QLS Implementation, however this meeting had now been held and the report was currently being finalised and would be presented to the next meeting of Planning Board (11 April 2005) for information.

Action: Head of MIS

(b) Minute Reference: 04.61(a): Service Level Definitions

The Deputy Director (Planning) informed the Board that the matter of Service Level Definitions had been discussed by the Directorate, however, it was considered that there was not sufficient evidence arising from the pilot undertaken in Campus Services to recommend the introduction of Service Level Definitions across all departments of the University College. However, it had been agreed that a further pilot in the Finance Department would now be undertaken in which the benefits of Service Level Definitions would be explored further. The Head of Finance informed the Board that he would be presenting a proposed plan to the next meeting of Planning Board (11 April 2005) in respect of this proposed pilot.

Action: Head of Finance

(c) Minute Reference: 04.61(g): University College Attendance Policy

The Head of SCPE reported that the Attendance Policy had been approved by Senate and was now with the faculties to consider how it is to be implemented.

(d) Minute Reference: 04.65: Annual Operating Statement

The Deputy Director (Planning) informed the Board that all Deans of Faculty and Heads of Central Service Departments had been asked to provide copies of their Annual Operating Statement (AOS) objectives for 2004-2005 and a review of achievement of their AOS objectives for 2003-2004. The Faculty AOS's would be considered at the next meeting of the Academic Planning Committee (3 March 2005) and those from the Central Service Departments would be considered by an ad hoc group of the Directorate and Deans. The Deputy Director (Planning) reminded members that it had been agreed that the timescale for the review of these operating statements would be significantly advanced in future years. Following a request from the Head of LIS it was agreed that any discussion of CSD AOS's would take place in the presence of the Head of Department concerned.

Action: **Deputy Director (Planning), Directorate**

(e) Minute Reference: 04.66: Marketing Strategy (2004-2007)

The Deputy Director (Planning) reported that revisions to the Marketing Strategy based on the feedback received at the last meeting of Planning Board and Academic Planning Committee were now being made and it was hoped that the amended strategy would be presented to APC (3 March 2005) and Planning Board (11 April 2005) for final endorsement.

It was noted that the Marketing Strategy now incorporated the University College Recruitment Strategy.

Action: **Deputy Director (Planning), Head of Marketing**

05.03 University Title

The Deputy Director (Academic Services) informed the Board that the next meeting of the QAA Degree Awarding Powers Committee to consider University Title applications was not until 17 February 2005 following which the University College was hoping to hear a positive decision. The University Title visit (24/25 November 2005) had gone well with no single issue being raised with the Senior Management Team at the end of the visit.

05.04 Campus Development

The Deputy Director (Finance) updated the Board in respect of the Campus Development Project highlighting the following points:

- Proposals would be presented to the Tesco Board this week, following a delay in December 2004, and it is hoped that the University College would know Tesco's offer for the High Wycombe site by the end of the week.
- Work is ongoing with Laings Housing in relation to possible development proposals for the Wellesbourne and Chalfont campuses and it is hoped to finalise the preferred developer for the John North Hall site shortly.
- The architects had circulated proposals for the Hughenden Campus and meetings are arranged for January 2005 to discuss these further to enable the current development stage (Stage C) to be closed by the end of January 2005 and revised detailed cost plans produced. These will be reviewed against the overall plan prior to the initiation of the next stage of the development (Stage D).

- A draft of the Planning Application for all Wycombe sites with the exception of John North Hall will be presented to the District Council by the end of January 2005. This will therefore include the applications from Tesco and Laings. Following this further public consultation will be undertaken.

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Project Team were fully aware of the risks associated with the development, with the most significant risk relating to income and expenditure. In respect of the involvement of Tesco this created further areas of consideration including, the overall risk of affordability (ie, how much will Tesco offer for the High Wycombe site; the level of short-term financing the University College would wish to enter into and, the viability of the planning applications particularly the Chalfont campus.

In relation to the future location of the Faculty of Health Studies it was reported that discussions are currently ongoing with Uxbridge College and that following a meeting with the Governors and senior staff of both institutions next week it was hoped that an 'in principle' decision to explore the possibilities could be agreed. In addition the proposal had been discussed with the North West London Workforce Confederation and a number of the NHS Trusts had expressed a desire to be involved in the development.

The Chairman explained that the future funding for pre-registration nursing courses had now been agreed and whilst the price per student was a little disappointing the contract was now on a rolling basis which provided greater stability. The cost budgets were currently being re-run to ensure sufficient funding for any relocation project. Although there was a proposed national benchmark funding model this is yet to be approved by the Department of Health.

05.05 Tuition Fees (2006-2007)

The Deputy Director (Planning) reported that he had hoped to submit a paper to the Board in relation to a proposal for Tuition Fees, however, this had not yet been fully discussed or agreed in the Directorate. It was hoped that this would now be presented to the next (11 April 2005) or special meeting of Planning Board.

The Board was updated on the current thinking underlying the proposal as building on the work previously undertaken by the Heads of Finance, Student Services and MIS. This was summarised as three agreed principles:

- To maintain the University College's base of student numbers
- To see if the University College could increase its underlying unit of resource
- The effective fee would be less than £3000 for all students

Two models to achieve these principles were currently being considered:

- Having a headline fee of £3000 and applying a universal University College bursary
- Setting the fee below £3000

Discussions were ongoing in relation to the concept of the relationship potentially perceived between price and quality, the complexity of presenting the information on fees and bursaries to the student and the need to ensure flexibility to fine tune any agreed fee structure in light of future sector intelligence. The University College was yet to decide what its key positioning tool would be: bursary support or price.

It was further noted that under the Fair Access Agreement which had to be submitted by March 2005 35% of any additional income may need to be allocated to this area of work. This could be in the form of a further bursary fund aimed at promoting access but also directly supporting recruitment or targeting groups of courses.

Noting the points detailed above members of the Board raised the following points/questions:

- Partner colleges may request a lower fee or lower effective fee for programmes delivered in partner colleges as price is seen as crucial to recruitment in FE. There may also be scope in progression agreements for a guaranteed bursary to a student who comes through the FE partner to the University College.
- What consideration has been given to variable fees for different courses across the University College? It is currently being considered as to whether a common fee approach is taken initially with a view to developing variable fees in the future.
- The income from fees needs to be considered in the medium and long-term. It is possible that future Government funding will decrease and the University College needs to consider how income generation will be maintained. It was noted that the HEFCE Unit of Funding is only known over the life-time of the Public Expenditure Statement (3 years) and the University College can have no confidence beyond this.
- It was noted that the Head of Campus Services had recently undertaken a study-tour of USA HEIs and had highlighted the link between fees and the values of the HEI. His view was that complexity should be avoided and that the simplest model should be proposed so as not to confuse the market.
- The need to ensure that a clear picture of the true costs of studying at BCUC are presented to students, not just fees.

It was agreed that the above points would be further considered by the Directorate in their development of a clear proposal which would be presented to a future meeting of Planning Board.

Action: **Directorate**

05.06 Finance Issues

(a) Budget Update

The Head of Finance introduced paper PB05.07 detailing the current budget position of the University College which was for break-even with an expected modest surplus. The budget for 2005-2006 is unlikely to see any increase in teaching income and it will be necessary to reduce further the cost of administration and support.

Members of the Board raised the following points:

- The December 2004 HESES return showed the University College as achieving its student number contact comfortably, however, this was by less than in previous years.
- There was an urgent need for the Directorate to discuss the possible 'efficiencies' that may need to be made and develop a strategy for doing so. It

was noted that a number of efficiencies, particularly in relation to discretionary costs, have previously been made and any further efficiencies may require the ceasing of certain tasks.

- The costs of delivery have been increasing more than the core funding over a number of years and the Finance Department will be providing budget holders with 3 year indicative budgets to assist in developing a medium term plan. Planning could be linked to Service Level Definitions and the University College should agree what it wants from its central departments in the context of a limited resource.

It was agreed that this matter would be discussed further at the next meeting of the Board

Action: *Directorate, Head of Finance*

(b) TRAC

The Head of Finance reported that the TRAC Return would shortly be sent to HEFCE. The Return continues to demonstrate a further reduction in the allocation of costs to research compared with previous years and that the University College continues to move toward the desired position to comply fully with the HEFCE Financial Memorandum.

The next round of TRAC auditing will take place during the week commencing 21 February 2005 and the questionnaire has been expanded in an attempt to obtain a better picture of the level of activity in each of the areas.

05.07 Student Experience Survey

The Head of Student Services presented paper PB05.05 to the Board which detailed the action plan for the partner colleges arising from the 2004 Student Experience Survey.

Responses had not yet been received from all of the BCUC faculties or central service departments and members were asked to forward these as soon as possible in order that the University College Action Plan could be completed

Action: *Deans, Heads of Central Service Departments*

In respect of the 2003 Survey all actions identified had now been addressed. Leisure & Tourism were commended for their detailed tracking of action taken and faculties/departments were encouraged to follow this example.

In respect of the 2005 Survey it was proposed that this be conducted in April 2005. The National Student Survey will be conducted at the end of January 2005 and it would be useful to have a clear break between the two surveys so as not to confuse students. Questionnaires would be dispatched at the start of the summer term.

Publicity information on the National Student Survey had been received and the University College would be encouraging students to partake in the survey. There were however, concerns relating to the publication of the results for courses with small numbers or low response rates.

05.08 Progress Update on HERA

The Assistant Director (Human Resources) reminded the Board that the primary focus of the HR Strategy was on the modernisation of pay frameworks and that all staff had received a letter in December 2004 confirming that these would be implemented on 1 August 2005 and backdated to 1 August 2004.

The Board noted the position paper on the Implementation of HERA (PB05.06). The Library of Roles to be used in the analysis of teaching staff was yet to be agreed with the Unions, however the first meeting to discuss this had taken place. It was hoped that the matching of teaching staff with the agreed academic role profiles would take place between January and April 2005.

It was noted that there are a number of difficult areas to resolve which will require further examination, however the process is adaptable and currently being considered.

In respect of those roles which are not part of the JNCHES agreement (ie, not subject to national negotiations) these will also be considered as part of the HERA process but at a later stage.

05.09 Risk Management – Annual Report

The Head of MIS presented paper PB05.01 to the Board detailing the annual report from the Risk Management Group for 2004. The priority work areas for 2004-2005 were noted as:

- Review of the BCUC Risk Register. Members are asked to review and update the Faculty/Department Risk Register in light of their current plans and forward these to the Head of MIS
- Integration of Risk Management into existing planning processes
- Further systematic review of Strategic Risks and their reporting

It was reported that the internal auditors were overall encouraged by the University College's approach to risk management, although a few inconsistencies were found which are currently being addressed. External Auditors made no written comment on the approach to risk management taken, however, encouraged the University College to achieve full compliance with all aspects of governance.

The Board welcomed the report presented, however, suggested that it may be useful for future reports to identify what the University College's key risks are and how they are being addressed. It was agreed that this analysis would be appended to such reports in the future.

Action: Head of MIS, Deans, Heads of Central Service Departments

05.10 Wednesday Afternoon Timetabling

The Deputy Director (Academic Services) introduced paper PB05.04 to the Board for discussion. This paper had resulted following discussions with the Students' Union and would enable the Students' Union to fulfil its obligation to the national campaign in relation to 'Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free'.

The Deputy Director explained that the paper had been drafted in consultation with the Student's Union and he was aware that it differed slightly with what had been

agreed in the Client Brief for the new campus. The Board expressed the following points:

- The Dean of Leisure and Tourism applauded the policy as his Faculty currently experienced some difficulty with students partaking in sporting activities being unable to attend parts of the curriculum. The publication of student fixtures in advance would enable the Faculty to plan their teaching timetable more flexibly.
- The proposal for a Dean to personally approve any move to timetabled teaching was supported, however, it was suggested that this should be clarified to encompass that it only related to any move to a 'Wednesday afternoon'.
- It was agreed that the current volume of timetable changes made is not sustainable and the proposal for the 'signing off' by the Dean of permanent changes to a Faculty timetable was welcomed in principle but felt operationally difficult to implement.
- It was suggested that the Students' Union could assist by encouraging students to use the 'unpopular' timetable slots (ie, Monday morning and Friday afternoon).
- The need to recognise that this proposal for Wednesday afternoons covers all aspect of student activity and not just sporting activity, eg volunteering

It was noted that the Client Brief had already signed off a broad policy in respect of Wednesday afternoon teaching, however the points raised above and the paper proposed support the need for this matter to be discussed further. It was agreed that the paper would be further developed and the matter discussed again at the next meeting of the Board (11 April 2005).

Action: **Deputy Director (Academic Services)**

05.11 Progress Update on BCUC Website

The Head of Learning and Information Services reported that as the creation of the new Recruitment and Marking Department had not yet been progressed no changes had yet been made to where responsibility for design and marketing aspects of the website would rest.

05.12 Reports from Standing Committees/Advisory Groups of Planning Board

(a) Standing Committees

Academic Planning Committee (18 November 2004)

- Minutes to be presented to the next meeting of Planning Board (11 April 2005) for note.

Business in the Community Working Party

- No meeting had been held on which to report

Environmental Management Review Committee

- No meeting had been held on which to report

Equal Opportunities Committee (30 November 2004)

- The extension of Equal Opportunities Training to all members of selection panels had been agreed and training would be put in place to facilitate this.

The Board raised an issue relating to whether this policy would pertain to external members on selection panels and the Committee was asked to consider this issue further and report back to Planning Board

Action: Equal Opportunities Committee

Health & Safety Committee (16 December 2004)

- The Board noted the plan to purchase defibrillators for each of the campuses and questioned the extent to which current First Aid staff are trained to use such equipment. It was noted that this is now a standard piece of equipment for First Aiders.
- The Dean of Leisure & Tourism clarified that it was not the 'whole' fence that had been requested to be moved. It was agreed the minutes would be amended to reflect this.

Action: Health & Safety Committee

Information Strategy Steering Group (19 November 2004)

- P22 – Freedom of Information Policy (November 2004) was recommended to Planning Board for approval. Planning Board **approved** P22.

Recruitment and Admissions Group (9 November 2004)

- The communication with applicants' timeline had been revised.

Risk Management Group

- No issues were raised for report.

Staff Development Committee (10 November 2004)

- The Annual Staff Development Report was noted
- All HEIs had been asked to consider the endorsement and implementation of the AUA Code of Professional Practice. The Head of SCPE reported that the University College exceeded this code in all aspects of its work.

Student Affairs Committee (17 November 2004)

- The Board were presented with and **approved** a proposal in relation to the Funding to Support International Students with Disabilities
- P23 – Careers Education, Information and Guidance Policy was recommended to the Board for approval. The Board **approved** P23

(b) Advisory Groups

Learning Resources Consultative Group (15 November 2004)

- Faculties were asked to bring the Faculty Learning Resource Strategies to the next meeting of the Group (March 2005)

Action: Faculties

Research Strategy Steering Group

- Group is in abeyance.

05.13 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as **Monday 11 April 2005** commencing at 9.30 am in the Boardroom, High Wycombe.

Signed: _____

(Professor PB Mogford, Chairman)

Date: _____

Prepared by: Senior Registrar, Quality Assurance
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