

# Senate Meeting

## Minutes

**date:** 13 March 2013  
**time:** 1.30 p.m.  
**location:** G5.05, High Wycombe Campus

### 13.01 Welcome / Apologies for absence

It was noted that the Chair had asked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) to chair the meeting in her absence. It was also noted that Naomi Franco, the President-Elect of the Students' Union was standing in for the current President who had submitted his apologies. Other apologies for absence were received and noted separately and it was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Lynette Pitt, an Observer from the Faculty of Design, Media and Management, was welcomed to the meeting.

### 13.02 Minutes of the last meeting – 12 December 2012

The minutes were approved as a true record and signed.

### 13.03 Matters arising

Updates were as recorded on the Action Sheet previously circulated. There were no other matters arising.

### 13.04 Chair's Business

#### [a] Chair's Actions

No Chair's Actions had been taken since the last meeting with the exception of external examiner nominations which were considered under Minute 13.08.

#### [b] Vice-Chancellor's Report to Senate (Paper SEN13.13)

The report had been circulated to members for comment and was noted. It was noted that feedback had been requested in section 2.3 of the report on some broad questions regarding FTUG tuition fees. A paper on fees was scheduled to be presented to the University Council on 18 March 2013 and Senate's view would be taken into consideration.

The questions related to three main areas:

- a) Enhancement of the student experience / NSS scores
- b) Implications of increasing student fees to match sector
- c) Impact of differential fees for FTUG students in different subject areas

Following group discussion comments were fed back as follows:

- a) Enhancement of the student experience / NSS scores
  - Consideration given to formation of an interdisciplinary placement unit to support employability (beyond straight learning hours)
  - Rapid response to students on issues (communications) and people to deal with on

- immediate basis (following a model run in the LDU)
- Improved platforms for delivery of online / e-resources
- b) Implications of increasing student fees to match sector
  - Concerns re competition with the private sector however a feeling that the concept of a “University experience” could account for the difference
  - Ongoing discussions regarding ‘hidden costs’. An all-inclusive approach could be of benefit
  - Work experience / incubation opportunities could assist. Lecturers taking on more of a mentoring role
  - Provision of collaborative cross-curriculum opportunities to justify an increase in fees
  - Consideration that to schools there is no difference between fees. More concerned about social impact
  - Big Deal was a good initiative and could be brought back in some form
  - Consideration that all students need to be supported irrespective of background and financial position
- c) Impact of differential fees for FTUG students in different subject areas
  - Issue of perception. Already a feeling of inequality re perceived value for money
  - Need to think about class sizes and using technician staff more

Clarity was requested on whether a £9k tuition fee, if implemented, would apply to all full-time undergraduate programmes including attendance-based Foundation Degrees.

Overall, there was broad agreement that fees could rise to £9,000, although there was concern over the pricing of Foundation Degrees. There was no strong argument for a fee differential based on discipline.

The Chair noted that the proposal to Council revolved around hidden costs, equity, and access agreements.

### **13.05 Bucks Learning and Teaching Strategy, 2013-2017** (Paper SEN13.01)

The draft was noted. The Pro-Vice Chancellor had also identified a series of questions as follows:

- Are the stated goals and objectives relevant, clear and of equal priority?
- Are there missed opportunities?
- Does the strategy leave appropriate space for local interpretation, according to disciplinary differences? Does it bring out common concerns and priorities across departments and faculties sufficiently?
- Do words like ‘community’, ‘partnership’, ‘employability’ have shared meanings across the University?
- What is the scope of the strategy in terms of our partner organisations?
- What are the best ways to implement, and measure the impact of the strategy – should we use existing processes such as individual PDR, departmental planning and review processes?

Senate considered these questions and identified a number of comments in relation to the strategy. These would be written up and appended to the strategy document so Senate’s comments would be visible in later drafts.

The Chair noted that in terms of how the strategy would be implemented, a proposal would be submitted to SMT in due course with suggestions surrounding structural and support issues. It was noted that the strategy would need to be overseen by one of the University Committees and models for this were currently under discussion.

In relation to the systems to be involved it was noted that the LDU have been asked to

compile a list of specific systems/processes that would or should contribute to the strategy; this should also be a question for future PDRs.

It was noted that the final strategy document would be presented to the June meeting of Senate for formal approval.

### 13.06 Sector Updates for Quality Assurance

A verbal update was provided by the Director of Academic Quality.

[a] Updates to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Several sections of the Code are currently under consultation, in particular Part A of the Code ("Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards") and chapters B1 ("Programme design and approval"), B6 ("Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning") and B8 ("Programme monitoring and review"). QAA was refocusing its previously published timeline in relation to these sections due to the interrelated nature of the areas under review.

Published sections of these parts of the Code would go to formal consultation in May-August 2013 with subsequent publication in October 2013. The University would receive a grace period of one year with full alignment to the revised sections by October 2014.

It was noted that the University has recently received some funding to support a review of assessment practice which would inform various deliberations. AQD also routinely monitors and reviews adherence of University processes to sections of the Code. There would necessarily be some impact to formal university processes to ensure alignment.

[b] Higher Education Review: A Handbook for Higher Education Providers

It was noted that the handbook for Higher Education Review is currently under review with a deadline for responses of 22 April 2013.

This process is the outcome of the consultation on risk-bases assessment and replaces IRENI and its FE equivalent and will take effect from 2013-2014. It is likely that HE Review will also replace REO (Review of Educational Oversight) bringing together the current range of review mechanisms under one methodology.

HE Review will have a 6-year rolling cycle for Bucks although a Partner Institution may be susceptible to an initial 4-year cycle. The review schedule has been published and Bucks will be undergoing review in 2016-2017. Partner institution reviews are scheduled as follows:

Spring 2014 Aylesbury College

2014-2015 Amersham & Wycombe College

2015-2016 Oxford & Cherwell Valley College

2016-2017 Berkshire College of Agriculture

Accrington & Rossendale College (*subject to partner approval*)

Eastleigh College (*subject to partner approval*)

The University would likely have input into these reviews and would support its partners through the process.

The HE Review mechanism is largely based on IRENI and focuses on good practice and enhancement. There will be one review visit which will be of varying length depending on the intensity of review. This will be determined by one member of the panel and a QAA representative on the basis of the Self-Evaluation Document (SED) to be submitted by the University and will determine whether the review will be high, medium or low risk. This is currently the subject of debate within the sector, but Bucks would likely be a medium risk review.

Student engagement will be key in the revised process and there will be an opportunity to feedback independently to the panel, which will also comprise a student reviewer. Other members of the panel would be 3 reviewers from other institutions, a QAA representative who will also provide secretarial support, and an international reviewer.

Review outputs will be limited to a judgement on academic standards and whether an institution 'meets' or 'does not meet' the required standard. The consultation is considering the introduction of a third category of 'needs improvement'.

Comments on the University's response were invited and should be forwarded to the Director of Academic Quality for inclusion.

### 13.07 **Extensions to Validated Terms**

- [a] FDA Health and Social Care  
(Paper SEN13.02)

The paper was noted and a one-year extension approved.

- [b] MEng Mechanical Engineering Design  
(Paper SEN13.03)

The paper was noted and the circumstances articulated in the paper considered. The Academic Dean (DMM) apologised to Senate for the oversight in allowing an additional cohort to be recruited outside the validated period.

It was confirmed that there will be no further intakes to the course in its current form. The revalidation process is underway and an Initial Proposal is being considered within the Faculty as part of the overarching issue of engineering within the Faculty. No additional extension would be permitted.

A one-year retrospective extension with effect from 1 January 2013 was approved subject to the next intake being on the revalidated programme.

- [c] FDA Air Transport with Airline Pilot Training (CAE Oxford)  
(Paper SEN13.04)

The paper was noted and the one-year extension approved.

It was noted that the Department were looking at an accreditation issue across its aviation issue and were in discussions with AQD and the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching). This had led to the voluntary withdrawal of the programme from the validation schedule following a sub-group held in January and this extension request. A revised validation schedule had been agreed with AQD.

The Director of Academic Quality noted that a delay would be timely as the accreditation issue could take account of any changes incorporated into the revised publication of Chapter B6 of the UK Quality Code in respect of accreditation of prior learning.

### 13.08 **External Examiner Nominations**

(Paper SEN13.05)

The following external examiner nominations were endorsed by Senate following Chair's Action after detailed consideration and recommendation by Faculty Quality Enhancement Committees:

#### **Ian Jones**

Extension to remit  
Certificate in Golf Club Management / BA (Hons) Sports Management and Golf  
Senate **endorsed** the extension to remit.

#### **Dominic Symonds**

Extension to term (to cover a period of suspension)  
FD / BA Musical Theatre  
Senate **endorsed** the extension to term to 30 September 2013.

**Pamela Harling-Challis**

Term of office (to cover a period of suspension)  
BA Dance and Performance / Dance and Fitness  
Senate **endorsed** the temporary cover from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013.

**Judith Redman**

Extension to remit  
MSc Advanced Spinal Care (additional modules)  
Senate **endorsed** the extension to remit

**Linda Kenward**

Extension to remit  
PGDip Education and Practice Teacher Award  
Senate **endorsed** the extension to remit

**Louise Todd**

New nomination  
Music and Event Management  
Senate **endorsed** the appointment for a period from 8 January 2013 to 30 September 2016.

**Daniel Woodason**

New nomination  
Music and Event Management  
Senate **endorsed** the appointment for a period from 8 January 2013 to 30 September 2016.

**Gavin Sandercock**

New nomination  
MSc Health and Rehabilitation Exercise  
Senate **endorsed** the appointment for a period from 1 January 2013 to 30 September 2016.

**Aydin Nassehi**

Extension to remit  
MSc Engineering Management & Design  
Senate **endorsed** the extension to remit.

**Anne Graham**

Extension to term  
BA Airline and Airport Management / Air Transport with [Commercial] Pilot Training  
Senate **endorsed** the extension to term from 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2014.

**13.09**

**External Examiner Coverage**

- [a] Outstanding external examiner coverage from September 2012  
(Paper SEN13.06)

Attention was drawn to the 3 nominations in S&H still outstanding from September 2012 and not yet replaced. The Academic Dean (S&H) noted difficulties finding replacements – although attempts are still ongoing – but asked for advice on appointing suitable replacements.

The Director of Academic Quality noted that a new commercial website had been set up in September 2012 by a third party company for the purposes of finding potential external examiners. The website had a searchable database to which academic members of staff could add themselves. To date the database contains details of over 2000 academics from across the sector, while 25 universities had signed up to use the service which was free for the initial six months. It was noted that this website has cut down significantly the time taken by universities to appoint external academics. AQD is trialling the website and asked faculties to promote the service internally to demonstrate whether a full licence would be beneficial. A link will be sent to Heads of Academic

Department.

[b] External Examiner Coverage September 2013  
(Paper SEN13.07)

The paper was noted. The Director of Academic Quality noted that some appointments had already been extended by the maximum period allowable and so must be replaced by September. In total there were 23 replacement examiners required in DMM and 11 in S&H. Nominations should be approved by Senate at its June meeting following prior approval by FQECs.

**13.10 Validation: Recommendation of awards for approval**  
(Paper SEN13.08)

The paper was noted. There were no final awards for formal approval as conditions had yet to be signed off for the 3 programmes indicated. These would be confirmed by the Chair of the respective sub-groups and formally reported to Senate at its June meeting.

It was noted that the validation schedule is about to come to its busiest period and there would be a large number of approvals to be approved at the next meeting. It was likely that there would also be a number of Chair's Actions required due to the scheduling of validations by curriculum development teams. It was emphasised that Chair's Actions should be exceptional and the teams should be setting realistic timescales for validation to meet the Senate schedule and Faculties should be monitoring slippage.

The Academic Dean (S&H) noted that there was often no time available for good curriculum development which was causing problems. S&H was looking at validations for 2014-2015 academic year but there was a need for the University to set timescales much earlier in the process especially when additional partnerships were added in to the schedule at a late stage.

**13.11 Quality & Enhancement Committee**  
(Paper SEN13.12)

The Executive Summary was noted. Attention was drawn to the following three areas of the report:

1. Validation (see minute 13.10 above)
2. Datasets for programme review
3. Partner achievement reports for SURE

In relation to datasets, it was reported that QEC is working with AQD and was drawing up a specification for the data requirement. The partner achievement report for BCA was still outstanding. The Chair of QEC had written to the partner institution outlining the University's expectations.

**13.12 Student Experience Committee**  
(Paper SEN13.09)

The Executive Summary was noted.

**13.13 Research Degrees Committee**  
(Paper SEN13.11)

The Executive Summary was noted. Attention was drawn to the following:

- A positive response has been received from Coventry University in relation to the Bucks Annual Report on Report Degrees.
- RDC is looking at possible changes to the Professional Doctorate programme and discussions have already started with both AQD and with Coventry
- The University will be participating in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) this year.

**13.14 Equality & Diversity Committee**  
(Paper SEN13.10)

The Executive Summary was noted. In relation to the comments about the University taking an inclusive approach to exams it was reported that AQD has drafted a paper responding to the feedback received. These details will be incorporated into the revised Examinations Procedures which are currently being produced for presentation to QEC in May 2013.

**13.15 Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed for Wednesday 5 June 2013 at 1.30pm in G5.05, Gateway Building.

Dates for 2013-2014 were also confirmed as follows:

- 11 December 2013
- 19 March 2014
- 11 June 2014

**RESERVED BUSINESS**

There was one item of reserved business. Student reps and observers were asked to leave.

**13.16 Honorary Awards**

The minutes from the outcome of the Honorary Awards Committee, 12 February 2013, were tabled for consideration. Senate formally approved the recommendations from the committee. The list will be published once recipients have been contacted and formally accepted the offer of an award.

Senate also noted the comment from the awards committee that the number of nominations has declined in recent years. An online form has been created which will be live throughout the year.

Following this item, the Secretary collected the papers back from members.

Signed

Date

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Chair