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Senate

Open Minutes

Date of meeting: **Wednesday, 16 December 2015**

Duration of meeting: **14:00 to 16:00**

Location: **G5.05 High Wycombe Campus**

Attendance

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Rebecca Bunting	Vice-Chancellor's Office	Ex-officio (Chair)
Miriam Moir	Academic Quality Directorate	Secretary
Marcus Wood	Academic Quality Directorate	Minute Secretary
Ian Plover	Vice-Chancellor's Office	Ex-officio
Tim Middleton	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise)	Ex-officio
Lorraine Watkins-Mathys	Design, Media & Management	Ex-officio
Sue West	Society & Health	Ex-officio
Ruth Gunstone	Student Services Directorate	Ex-officio
Ellie Smith	Academic Quality Directorate	Ex-officio
Barbara Dexter	Learning & Teaching Directorate	Ex-officio
Sue Procter	Society & Health	Ex-officio
Phil Wood	Design, Media & Management	Ex-officio
Lauren Griffiths	Society & Health	Ex-officio
Allen Stroud	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Richard Jones	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Roland Radaelli	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Julian Lukaszewicz	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Sue Axe	Society & Health	Elected
Ciaran O'Keeffe	Society & Health	Elected
Steven Pearce	Society & Health	Elected
Nasreen Akhtar	Society & Health	Elected
Christine Brooks	Society & Health	Elected
Jo Rixon	Society & Health	Elected
Joe Collins	Students' Union	Student Member

Jenny Wade	Students' Union	Student Member
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Apologies

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Jake Kaner	Design, Media & Management	Ex-officio
Frazer Mackenzie	Design, Media & Management	Ex-officio
Carol Pook	Society & Health	Ex-officio
Lois Drawmer	Design, Media & Management	Elected
Carlo Lusuardi	Design, Media & Management	Elected

Absent

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
None		

Welcome / Apologies for absence

15.166 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted that Senate had been reconstituted following changes to the committee structure in September 2015.

15.167 Five apologies for absence were noted. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Minutes of the previous meeting

15.168 The minutes of the meeting of 10 June 2015 were approved as an accurate record.

Status of actions from the previous meeting

15.169 Senate reviewed the action sheet. All actions had been completed.

Chair's Actions taken since the previous meeting

15.170 Senate endorsed Chair's Actions taken since the previous meeting. The Chair noted that this was a long list and reminded members of the need to ensure that business was conducted within the timescales of the committee cycle.

Committee Business

15.171 Senate reviewed its terms of reference for the year 2015-2016.

15.172 The following nominations to Council committees were confirmed:

- a) Phil Wood was confirmed as the Senate representative on Council.
- b) Richard Jones was confirmed as the Senate representative on the Honorary Awards Committee.

Strategic University Review & Evaluation (SURE) Reports 2014-2015

Quality & Standards / Education Committee Joint Overview Report (SEN15.42)

15.173 The Director of Academic Quality, as Acting Chair of the Quality & Standards Committee, introduced the report. The role of the joint committee was highlighted as providing an opportunity to focus on both quality (QSC) and enhancement (EDU) matters. This had worked well and had generated positive discussions.

15.174 In summary, the report confirmed that the University's awards were comparable to others in the sector and aligned to national frameworks. Quality issues also aligned to UK Quality Code expectations. A base of evidence had been considered and had identified good practice from across the University. It was agreed that these reports would be shared with colleagues across the University via Blackboard.

Action: Ellie Smith

15.175 Actions derived from the 2013-2014 report had been reviewed in the report and in most cases had been achieved; work was ongoing in remaining areas.

15.176 Areas of good practice were identified. Commendations were also identified as follows:

- a) Reports from the Student Services Directorate in their first full year of the process
- b) Operation of Boards of Examiners
- c) Partnership working with partner providers
- d) Improvements in the statistical data available to underpin and support the process
- e) Levels of student engagement in University processes, especially approval and review of programmes
- f) The joint meeting of Quality & Standards and Education Committees itself

15.177 Nine recommendations were identified for the University to take forward. Senate agreed these and allocated responsibilities to members as below. Progress would be monitored by QSC.

#	Recommendation	Responsibility
1.	Consider the allocation of further dedicated resource for the investigating of student conduct matters	Ruth Gunstone / Sean Mackney
2.	Evaluate the implications of the Consumer Market Authority (CMA) legislation in relation to student complaints and monitor the increasing level of financial compensation being awarded to students in relation to failures of University process or service delivery	Ian Plover / SMT
3.	Explore the reasons for the variances in relation to ethnicity that have been demonstrated from the analysis of the data in relation to academic appeals and academic misconduct	Sean Mackney / L&T Directorate / Deans
4.	Explore the reasons for the proportionally high levels of academic misconduct allegations relating to overseas students and investigate methods to address this	Sean Mackney / L&T Directorate / Deans
5.	Explore the reasons for the increase in repeat offenders of academic misconduct allegations and request the Learning & Teaching Directorate to investigate methods to improve support for curriculum and assessment design and potential work with students to address this	Sean Mackney / L&T Directorate / Deans
6.	Explore the reasons behind missing marks at Boards of	Deans

#	Recommendation	Responsibility
	Examiners which result in the high level of Chair's Actions	
7.	Ensure access to MIS reports remain accessible at all times and has no single point of failure as this is critical to the effective operation of the assessment process	Ian Plover
8.	Consider the sustainability of continuing to validate high numbers of courses which may not result in viable recruitment numbers	Academic Planning Committee
9.	Promote ERASMUS more widely across the University to increase the numbers of Bucks students participating	Marketing / AQD / Deans

15.178 Senate also made the following comments in relation to these recommendations:

- The Education Committee has approved a Task & Finish Group to be led by AQD and the LDU to support recommendations 3-5. It was agreed that this would be extended to include similar concerns identified through the Fitness to Practise process
- For recommendation 6 it was agreed that the target for missing marks should be 0. However, it was noted that missing marks may relate to issues of timing or mistakes
- Recommendation 7 related to the need to ensure that key responsibilities are shared between staff, to avoid the risk of losing vital knowledge when a member of staff leaves the University. Senate noted that this recommendation arose from unforeseen circumstances but trusted that in future the process would be smooth. It was agreed that this minute and response would be forwarded to the Directors of Strategic Planning and Development and Information Systems Technology

Action: Secretary

- ERASMUS activities (Recommendation 9) should be designed into curriculum plans and this should be encouraged by Deans. Senate noted that language issues need not be a disincentive given the number of European programmes now being run in English. It was further noted that funding was available for staff exchanges. A Bitesize presentation has been scheduled for 13 January 2016 where staff will speak about their exchange experiences. This will be re-advertised to staff.

Action: Secretary

External Examiner Annual Reports: University Summary (SEN15.43)

15.179 It was noted that Senate maintained direct responsibility for the appointment of external examiners and for the operation of the external examining process. The Paper contained a review of the process during 2014-2015; this had also been considered by QSC as part of the overall SURE process.

15.180 Key points for Senate to note were the overall RAG ratings for reports as follows:

- Green – 108 (95%)
- Amber – 3 (3%)

- Red – 3 (3%)

It was noted that this was in line with ratings in previous years. QSC would review progress against all reports graded Red and Amber at its February meeting.

- 15.181 Deans noted a challenge in reducing the number of Chair's Actions during the nomination process which was criticized in the report. Departments were finding difficulties in recruiting examiners in some specialist discipline areas while delays in nomination approval had led to some examiners withdrawing their nomination. The Chair reminded Faculties that terms of office were clearly specified for appointments so there was a need for programme teams to start the recruitment process earlier. This should be supported by the institution of an appropriate panel for approving nominations between larger meetings.

Action: Ellie Smith

- 15.182 It was noted that the University's threshold for interim visits was unrealistic. Senate noted that while an interim visit was an example of good practice there were other ways that could be recommended to improve engagement with external examiners throughout the year, particularly during quieter periods. The external examiners handbook would be updated accordingly.

Action: Ellie Smith

- 15.183 Senate discussed the number of external examinerships held by Bucks staff. It was noted that there were no sector benchmarks against which to monitor performance; however, Senate considered the number to be low, especially as this could be useful in terms of staff professional development. It was noted that it would be useful to explore setting expectations in this area.

Members updating University profiles (which included such appointments). The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) noted that the University was looking at ways to simplify this process and allow staff to update their scholarly profile directly.

Review of Research Degrees (SEN15.44)

- 15.184 The Academic Review of Research Degrees Report had been considered by the Research Degrees Committee and the Research and Enterprise Committee, and was now recommended to Senate.

- 15.185 Attention was drawn to the following parts of the report:

- Most part-time students are completing their MPhil/PhD transfer interview in ~23 months within the expected timeframe of 18-24 months. One full-time student had been affected by personal circumstances and had transferred outside the normal timeframe
- The examination process was good. In terms of outcomes these were largely positive with most students passing with minor amendments.
- The number of withdrawals was relatively high (10) in comparison to the overall numbers on the programme. When investigated, however, there were good reasons for withdrawal in each instance although this needed to be monitored
- PRES results were either at or well above the sector average. One issue had been identified around personal development. RDC has agreed a framework of programmes to support this; the framework has been aligned with Vitae
- The 2014-2015 Action Plan has been reviewed and most actions have been completed. A new Action Plan has been agreed for 2015-2016

Maintenance of academic standards 2014-2015

15.186 Following consideration of the evidence and in particular recommendation from the Joint Committee of QSC and EDU and, separately from REC, Senate agreed that academic standards had been maintained by the University for 2014-2015.

15.187 Members were asked whether they would like to receive any additional evidence to support their judgement in future years. Following discussion it was agreed that the following should be provided:

- A high level overall view of key data including in particular progression and achievement statistics; this should be produced at both University level and broken down by Faculty; data should also be accompanied by a narrative prepared by the Director of Strategic Planning and Development contextualizing the information presented
- An overview of the numbers of student appeals and complaints and other key quality data (recognizing that detailed reports would be considered earlier in the process)

It was agreed that the Director of Academic Quality would liaise with the Director of Strategic Planning and Development to ensure that information was presented for the next iteration of the process.

Action: Ellie Smith

Vice-Chancellor's Report (SEN15.45)

15.188 The report was noted. The main item related to the recent publication of the Higher Education Green Paper (see minute 15.190ff. below).

15.189 An update was provided on the UKVI. The QAA will be visiting the University on 4 February 2016 under an amended Educational Oversight process. The University will also be visited by the UKVI when processes for the recruitment and monitoring of international students will be reviewed.

HE Green Paper Consultation: "Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice" (SEN15.46)

15.190 Senate discussed the HE Green Paper. It was noted that the paper contains wide-reaching proposals for the University. In particular, there were key themes around:

- **Teaching Excellence** – including the importance of gaining a set of good metrics as TEF was directly linked to future increases in student fees.
- **Competition around new entrants to the Sector** – and in particular the lowering of barriers to entry and the impact for the University's Partnerships Strategy. The Green Paper also addressed issues relating to providers exiting the sector either by choice or through market forces.
- **Quality considerations** – including: grade inflation; the introduction of a Grade Point Average system (to sit alongside traditional degree classifications); the robustness of the external examining system; and the role of the QAA

15.191 Senate noted the existing impact on recruitment caused by the admission of new providers offering courses with lower fees. It was emphasized that there is a need to ensure quality is maintained through processes to admit new providers. However, the marketization of Higher Education is a key part of the Government's agenda and the University will have to respond accordingly as the market sets its own levels of quality in relation to patterns of delivery.

- 15.192 Members were disappointed that the Paper did not directly list staff teaching qualifications as a metric for the TEF. It was noted that the University performs well in this area (currently 74% of staff with a formal qualification) and it would be of benefit if this were to be introduced as a criterion as the TEF develops. Senate also noted UCEA concerns about the number of staff on a permanent contract being used as a metric and rejected the implication that this can be used as a measure of quality.
- 15.193 Members also considered the proposed link between student fees and quality. It was noted that the introduction of a £9000 fees cap had seen the vast majority of providers set fees at the maximum; meanwhile, providers offering lower fees were considered by applicants to be of lesser quality. It was noted that the NUS has strongly rejected the proposal although the Bucks Students' Union is still considering its approach to the consultation.
- 15.194 The University would be submitting a formal response to the consultation ahead of the deadline in January 2016. The response would recognize the importance of and need for continued excellence in Higher Education; however, it would echo sector concerns about the timescale in which the proposals were expected to be delivered. Further comments for inclusion should be forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor.

Compliance with conditions for the validation of research degrees by Staffordshire University (SEN15.47[A])

- 15.195 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) introduced the paper. It was a condition of validation by Staffordshire University that this documentation came to Senate for confirmation that the conditions set had been met.
- 15.196 The documentation was in two parts. Paper SEN15.47 set out the University's actions taken in response to each condition and / or where revisions had been made to documentation. Paper SEN15.47A consisted of a document pack of the related documentation, including Regulations for the Award of MPhil and PhD by supervised research (Staffordshire University), Code of Practice (Staffordshire University) and the Research Student Handbook. The pack also included: Schedule A (the Quality Agreement); a Marketing Approval Statement; a list of PGR supervisors; a transition plan; and updated statistical information.
- 15.197 Senate considered the Conditions set and actions taken in each instance in response. It was noted that Action 6.2 (relating to Quality and Legal Agreements) is still in progress and subject to agreement by Staffordshire University. Senate confirmed its approval that the conditions had been met.
- 15.198 Documentation would be submitted to Staffordshire University before the deadline of 18 December 2015.

Extensions to Validated Term

BA (Hons) Dance and Performance (SEN15.48)

- 15.199 Senate was asked to approve a one-year extension to the validated term (to September 2017) due to long-term staff sickness and a desire to revalidate the course alongside the cognate Dance and Fitness programme. The extension was approved.

Independent and Supplementary Nurse Prescribing (SEN15.49)

- 15.200 Senate was asked to approve an extension to December 2017 due to upcoming changes to sector standards for prescribing to be published in 2016. Approval had already been granted by the NMC as accrediting body. The extension was approved.

External Examiner Update (SEN15.50[A-C])

- 15.201 Senate noted the report and endorsed Chair's Actions taken since the previous meeting formally to approve nominations, changes of remit and / or extensions to term as listed.
- 15.202 Senate also approved the termination of appointment of Nigel Halpern (withdrawal of the programme) and Peter Camilletti (perceived conflict of interest). It was noted that reports had not been received from Ian Arnott and Claire Louise-West which would normally lead to termination of appointment although these appointments had now come to an end.
- 15.203 Four resignations were noted for David Briggs, Zaigham Mahmood, Joan Mulholland and Edith Moon. Faculties were seeking replacements.

Nomination of Mr Wai Mo, BA (Hons) Security Consultancy (SEN15.50A)

- 15.204 It was noted that Mr Mo, although qualified to Master's level, lacked previous external examining experience. He had worked in HE for 10 years but this was mostly on a part-time basis. It was also noted that his employer, the University Centre at Blackburn College, does not have its own Taught Degree Awarding Powers, and that its awards are validated by the University of South Wales.
- 15.205 The Faculty noted that this had been a difficult position to fill as it was in a niche area. Provision had been allowed for Mr Mo to be formally inducted into his role and closely mentored by a senior member of the Department in the first year of his appointment. It was confirmed that Mr Mo is currently assessing work at Level 6 as part of his current appointment.
- 15.206 The nomination was approved subject to the mentoring provisos outlined.

Nomination of Dr Kevin Pollock, MSc Organisational Resilience (SEN15.50B)

- 15.207 It was noted that Dr Pollock had a strong professional background and a number of HE qualifications. However, he had only recently started working in Higher Education and had not previously externally examined. The Faculty explained that this was a growing area and thus as with the security area above it had been difficult to find a nomination. Again, mentoring arrangements would be put in place.
- 15.208 The nomination was approved subject to the Faculty reviewing all its external examiner appointments in this department with AQD and adjusting remits as appropriate to appoint a team of externals to cover the breadth of programmes. This would provide additional support to individual external examiners.

Action: Phil Wood

Nomination of Mrs Joanna Jenkins, BSc (Hons) Sports Therapy (SEN15.50C)

- 15.209 The nomination was approved.

Validation Update (SEN15.51)

- 15.210 Senate reviewed the outcomes of validation events held since the previous meeting and approved the decisions in each case. It was noted that Conditions for four courses were due by 13 January 2016. These would be approved by Chair's Action.

Committee Reports (SEN15.53 – SEN15.59)

- 15.211 Executive Summaries from Senate Committees were received.
- 15.212 Attention was drawn to the outcome of a Higher Education Review at the City of London College, a new partner, in September 2015 (SEN15.53). In all four judgement areas it had been deemed that the College "did not meet UK expectations". It was emphasised that these failures related to programmes prior to

the University's involvement under a previous validating body. The Director of Academic Quality reported to Senate that the University had established heightened quality assurance mechanisms at the College and all marking and moderation was being undertaken by the University. The Director of Academic Quality was also a member of a Task and Completion Group to help the College to meet requirements. The situation would be monitored by QSC.

- 15.213 The Chair asked about the unsuccessful Review of Process pilot undertaken by QSC (SEN15.53). It was noted that this had been instigated by QSC as a quick check of processes as part of the University's preparations for HER. Pilots had been set up in two areas but reports had not achieved the anticipated results or had not been provided. The process would be revisited with review teams to explore reasons behind the failure.

Any Other Business

Amersham & Wycombe College

- 15.214 It was noted that Amersham and Wycombe College, a partner of the University, has gone into "administered status" following concerns around its financial position and quality. The University currently has ~50 students registered at the College, all in Design, Media and Management. The Dean of Faculty has written to all students to provide reassurance and will be visiting the College in due course. It was confirmed that the University is managing its responsibilities in respect of both the Partner and its registered students.

Retirement of Director of Learning and Teaching

- 15.215 It was noted that Barbara Dexter, the Director of Learning and Teaching, is retiring on 17 December 2015. Senate wished her well on her retirement and thanked her for her role in leading the Learning and Teaching Directorate.