

COUNCIL (STRATEGIC MEETING)

Open Minutes of the meeting held on 4 and 5 February 2025 in the Carrington and Chiltern 3 Rooms, Missenden Abbey and on MS Teams.

Present:

- Maggie Galliers (Pro Chancellor and Independent Member [Chair]);
- Karen Satterford (Co-opted member [Deputy Chair and Chair of Governance, Staff Reward and Vice-Chancellor's Remuneration Committees]);
- Professor Damien Page (Vice-Chancellor);
- Justin Sullivan (Independent [Chair of Resources Committee]) – 4 February only;
- Brian Lewis (Independent [Chair of Audit Committee]);
- Dr Annet Gamell (Independent [Chair of Student Experience Committee]) – 4 February only, attended virtually;
- Andy Cole (Independent) – 4 February only;
- Adam Honor (Independent);
- Jackie Westaway (Independent);
- Francine Goodrich (Independent)
- Ze'ev Portner (Academic Representative) – 4 February only;
- Peter Robinson (PSE Representative);
- Dr Russel Stone (Senate Representative);
- Dr Kevin Campbell-Karn (Senate Representative)
- Amy Pile (Students' Union President)
- Joy Dellah-Gu (Student Co-opted Member)

In attendance

- Professor Paul Morgan (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education));
- Trevor Gabriele (Chief Financial Officer);
- Ian Harper (Commercial and Business Development Director);
- Dr Emma Tomsett (Minute Secretary)
- Rachael Cornwall (Director of Human Resources) – A View from the Bridge and Session for Independent Council Members items only
- Louise Harvey (Director of Vice-Chancellor, Communications and Civic Engagement) – A View from the Bridge and Session for Staff and Student Council Members and University Executive Members items only
- Ciara Walsh (Governance Officer) – Staff, Student and University Executive Members session only
- Zahara Chowdhury (Human Resources Business Partner – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) – EDI Deep Dive item only
- BNU students: Erin Cook (third-year student on BA (Hons) Acting (Film, TV and Stage), Ellie Lee (MSc Applied Positive Psychology student), Dee Whyte (third-year student on BSc (Hons) Early Childhood and Primary Education with Foundation Year), Adriana Flores (International Masters in Business

Administration) and Euan McGinness (third-year student on BSc (Hons) Computing and Web Development) – for the Student Life at BNU item only

Apologies

- Sadie Groom (Independent);
- Shaun Crawford (Independent);
- Marek Pruszewicz (Independent);

Day 1: 4 February 2025

Introduction and Overview of Agenda

- 25.01 The Chair warmly welcomed members and thanked them for their time. The meeting was not a decision-making meeting as Council's business meetings were, but it was a timely and exciting opportunity for the new Vice-Chancellor to outline his vision and plans for BNU with Council, and for Council to provide expert advice and guidance to enhance it.
- 25.02 Members were reminded that all discussions must remain confidential as there was a clear communication plan to inform BNU staff of the plans later in the month.

Sector opportunities and threats under the new government

- 25.03 Council received a talk from Vivienne Stern (Chief Executive Officer, Universities UK) about sector opportunities and threats under the new government:
- a) there was increasing pressure on Higher Education (HE) governing bodies given the financial instability in the sector; many were having to discuss how to navigate imminent disaster, but it was heartening that BNU was not
 - b) data collated by the University and College Union (UCU) and Queen Mary University of London on their 'UKHE Shrinking' tracker showed that 87 providers had announced cost-reduction programmes. The reduction in International Students, long-term fix to the Undergraduate (HG) Home tuition fee and increasing inflation had abruptly tipped many providers into considering how they could become a different provider in order to survive. It was important to maintain some optimism bias while navigating institutions through difficult times; leadership teams would need to ensure that their institutions did not exit a period of difficulty less able to evolve and grow
 - c) Universities UK (UUK) felt that the relationship with the current government was more positive than the previous government. Labour had declared its intention to stop using the sector as a political football during the general election and that now appeared to be translating into a different tone of engagement, including a greater sense of partnership as the government tried to harness UK equity to achieve its objectives. The government had been willing to take a political risk by increasing the UG Home tuition fee, but was also willing to think strategically about long-term solutions. The sector had an opportunity to influence the government's policy to ensure HE was embedded within the infrastructure that the government wanted to put in place
 - d) UUK felt the new approach to freedom of speech was a reasonable compromise
 - e) public finances were a clear challenge: UUK anticipated that the summer Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) would be difficult as the government's aspirations met economic realities. There was a risk that the sector might receive a net-negative settlement although the Department for Education was aiming to secure an ongoing inflationary increase to the UG Home tuition fee. It was essential that the sector engaged with the CSR process to try to shape government thinking early in a situation with many moving parts
 - f) the CSR was also likely to reveal that government ministers wanted to be slightly more interventionist in how the sector worked. There was more interest in how limited resources could be used and vertical

interventions might be expected on types of Level 4 and 5 provision and provision in specific areas of the country such as industrial clusters and investment zones. This would be a challenge to the sector as the current funding arrangement supported a more supply-deal approach

- g) the Secretary of State for Education's five priorities for HE (access to HE and student outcomes; contribution to economic growth; playing a civic role; raising quality and standards; and efficiency and reform) presented a challenge over how funding was funneled to these priorities, and how funding was devolved to local governance structures
- h) an HE reform package was being developed and a white paper was anticipated in the summer. The package was set in the context of the government wanting to create a tertiary education system that was more aligned with skills and employer needs. The government had produced a vision document that identified three shifts it wanted to see: consideration for those sidelined by the current system; creating a more coherent education landscape; and a move towards collaboration between providers rather than competition
- i) another challenge for the government was how it could influence the sector without giving it more funding; this risked the sector being given a set of commitments that made governing bodies' and executive teams' jobs harder. Resources were also being put into HE for purposes that arguably graduates should not pay for such as the civic mission. The funding agreement should reflect the extent to which HE delivered private benefits to the individual student and the extent to which HE delivered public benefit and supported public infrastructure
- j) the government also needed to address the underfunding of research
- k) providers needed to ensure the sector was as efficient as possible. UUK had established a Transformation and Efficiency Taskforce to consider what the sector could achieve through collaboration, noting that the sector had a history of collaboration through the establishment of UCAS and JISC. More widely, the sector was discussing mergers, groups, multi-institutional trusts; sharing resources; and institutional transformation
- l) while it was not an easy time to lead a university, it was a creative opportunity to do things differently.

25.04 In response to Council's questions, the Chief Executive Officer commented that

- a) it was unclear where Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) sat in the current government's agenda as the government had rolled back from streamlining the qualification landscape, but equally was dissatisfied with the lack of brand recognition for HTQs and the associated impact on outcomes
- b) she believed Skills England had a more nuanced and evidence-based approach to funding Level 7 apprenticeships provision so there remained a possibility that the government might continue to fund them
- c) there was no appetite to revisit the decision to not allow international Masters' students to bring dependents to the UK, but the Departments for Education and Business and Trade and the Treasury had recognised the consequences of declining international student numbers and had no desire to make the situation worse. A new international student strategy could be expected and the UK's new Soft Power Council might lead to a softening of the visa policy. However, it always remained possible that the Migration Advisory Committee would declare that the Graduate Route visa should be removed as it did not meet employability / labour needs. The introduction of international student number caps in Australia and Canada was also concerning as it was possible that the UK might also introduce a cap one day
- d) UUK was trying to take a targeted approach in its discussions / lobbying of the government over the CSR. The UG Home tuition fee uplift was the bare minimum UUK wanted, along with an increase in maintenance. UUK was arguing that the UK's GDP could be boosted by increased research funding and quality research about impact

- e) UUK expected the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) to be cut. The government would put funding into parts of the SPG to incentivise certain behaviours but UUK was arguing that the government needed to do more
- f) providers needed to demonstrate efficiency, transformation and that all public funds received were spent well. Providers also needed to demonstrate how they added local value to help local sectors. UUK had seen examples of collaboration such as the University of London creating a collaborative network to sustain modern languages provision across London; more discussions of how groups of local universities could share services; and more discussions of federations and multi-institutional trusts. UUK's Transformation and Efficiency Taskforce was seeking volunteers for shared services at a national level, for example on energy procurement, technology services and one student record system (SRS). JISC was leading work on the latter
- g) UUK was attempting to prevent the government from making drastic changes to the sector regulator. It was a key concern for UUK: the government had originally talked about streamlining the Office for Students' (OfS) role, and there had been modestly encouraging changes initially, but the new draft OfS strategy and the decision that staff could bring complaints about freedom of speech to the OfS suggested the regulator still wanted to have more responsibilities rather than become more focused
- h) the government wanted to close the gap between the opportunities for a typical 18-year-old entering HE and those who did not engage with the current system. UUK was trying to encourage a bottom-up process and to ensure recognition that collaboration was more effective than competition, as well as recognition that in areas such as franchise partnerships some of the collaborations had local and regional benefits
- i) progress on the Teachers Pension Scheme was slow. The Treasury did not want providers to leave it, but was beginning to understand that this was not entirely under their control: institutions were considering their own solutions. The next valuation of the Scheme could lead to another increase in employer contributions. UUK was advising the Treasury to support providers on it. The Chair noted that it was an unfunded scheme, which relied on providers paying into it
- j) the publication of UCAS data after the 2025 equal consideration deadline was likely to show slight evidence of softening demand for HE. The Vice-Chancellor advised Council that BNU's applications were up 48% year-on-year (YOY). The Chair noted that this was due to the work by Heads of School and the Vice-Chancellor when he was Deputy Vice-Chancellor to identify what BNU's most marketable courses were, and improved quality
- k) the government would not want to see some providers fail and experience a disorderly exit if the cost of compensating impacted students would be extremely high. The government had observed some recent 'near misses' closely, but university leadership teams had also done significant work to prevent failure. There was no insolvency scheme for the sector. UUK thought the government might introduce one as the current student protection plans regime was ineffective
- l) there was an opportunity for providers to address the market of 18-year-olds who were not in education, employment or training if providers could identify how to access it. The Chair noted that BNU's Apprenticeships provision only broke even, which suggested there was a flaw with the model or the funding mechanism
- m) there had been a huge diversification in how students could engage with HE, with the introduction of degree apprenticeships and two-year intensive degrees, and this was likely to be just the beginning. The introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) would also increase flexibility but there was a question around supply and demand. Pilots for modular short courses had indicated low demand, as was also the case with two-year intensive degrees, but it was still her view that flexibility was the right direction.

25.05 The Chair thanked the Chief Executive Officer for an excellent and illuminating talk.

A View from the Bridge: Challenges / Priorities for BNU

- 25.06 Council considered a presentation from the new Vice-Chancellor about the challenges facing BNU and his priorities. The Vice-Chancellor had held 18 back-to-the-floor meetings with staff which had informed his vision.
- 25.07 BNU was an institution of contradictions: it was excellent at many activities but faced challenges in other areas. Examples of this included feedback from a customer service survey in which students had rated BNU's customer service as excellent, but staff had rated it as poor; excellence in the National Student Survey but poorer performance on other metrics; and a financial surplus but a dependency on partner income.
- 25.08 BNU had areas of clear strength. It was financially sustainable. Student outcomes were improving following the recent focus on first-attempt pass rates and it had experienced a reduction of 50%YOY on student withdrawals in 2023-24. Applications for September 2025 had increased significantly but this was with a caveat that data issues persisted. This was partly due to the establishment of a Growth Group that had identified what programmes the market wanted and had validated and marketed those programmes within 3 months, instead of the normal 18 months, which had helped to increase international student numbers. 80-90% of staff were now undertaking research and there was an increasing talent density as more staff with doctorates who were already research active were being recruited. Student support services were excellent, with students with a declared disability outperforming those with no declared disability. There was a belief in BNU's mission, values and an appetite for change.
- 25.09 BNU also had clear areas of challenge. Staff were not engaged by the Thrive 28 Strategy. There was a financial reliance on franchise partnerships; a complex structure of nine Schools; imbalanced staffing between teams; ineffective communication between teams; and poor data quality. One-fifth of BNU's programmes had only 1 registered student; 200 courses had only 5 students; and only one-third of programmes broke even. Programmes needed a minimum of 15 students to break even. The Aylesbury campus only had 10% occupancy during the week. BNU also had challenges around its historical data considered by the OfS, although the VC was confident about BNU's internal academic quality and standards; lack of student accommodation; and competition for student numbers.
- 25.10 There were also clear opportunities for BNU in the government's skills agenda as BNU had many vocational courses that fitted that agenda; in the expansion of Uxbridge into a full campus (BNU London); in developing more flexible delivery (weekends, evenings, and online through working with external partners); in adopting a 'preferred partner' model of franchise in which BNU worked more closely with partners to deliver collaborative teaching and research, which would enable more effective monitoring of quality; in the use of Artificial Intelligence for back office functions; and in expansion into transnational education (TNE).
- 25.11 Future focus both financially and operationally would be on three areas: students, research and talent, built on foundational excellence in finance, digital, estates, data and communications. All resources would be used to enhance those three areas of core business because when BNU focused on its core business, it was extremely successful. The Vice-Chancellor's year 1 priorities included prioritising students when making decisions on spend, strategy and use of time; reviewing structures; gaining financial independence from franchise partnerships while also building high-quality, ethical partnerships; developing staff; and creating a student-focused estate.

- 25.12 There would be radical transparency: Council would be informed of an issue and the proposed solution rapidly; transparent internal communications across BNU; and a focus on continual feedback. BNU would try new initiatives and learn from those that failed as well as those that succeeded.
- 25.13 There would be a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and discrimination.
- 25.14 Council welcomed the presentation and the Vice-Chancellor's candour. Council agreed there was a need to do things differently.
- 25.15 In response to Council's queries, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that
- a) prioritising students meant considering the impact and value for students when deciding how BNU used its financial resources and its time. It involved reducing unnecessary bureaucracy that hindered good teaching and ensuring that the best teachers were in classrooms. From this, academic quality and student outcomes would be enhanced even further
 - b) the number of Schools would be reviewed
 - c) suggestions for small enhancements by staff could be considered by the BNU Employee Forum, but three future-thinking groups (students, front-facing staff and the University Management Group) would be established to consider the impact of new ideas at the conceptual stage to prevent staff time being lost on proposals that never materialised
 - d) the University would make a shift from civic engagement to civic impact to ensure civic activities enhanced both the local area and the University, for example by presenting opportunities for research.
- 25.16 In response to queries from Council regarding partnership activity, the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Finance Officer confirmed that partnerships contributed £20m net profit per financial year without which the University would have a £10m deficit. The Vice-Chancellor wanted to remove BNU's current financial dependence on partnership income to ensure its long-term financial sustainability by reducing partnership income to £10m per year, increasing BNU's non-partnership income by £15m per year through growth in student numbers and improved student retention and finding £5m to cover costs per year. It had already removed £5m from partnership income in 2024-25 and was still forecasting a £3.8m surplus. In response to a further query from a member of Council, the Vice-Chancellor advised that it was worth continuing with some partnership activity as partners could access student markets BNU did not have the current resources to do and some also delivered excellent student experiences. If BNU could remove its financial dependence on partnership income, the partnership income it received would fund investment at BNU.
- 25.17 Council requested a breakdown of income, expenses, and profit by BNU-taught and partnership franchise activity.

Action: Chief Finance Officer

- 25.18 The Chair of Council commented that Council wanted to be fully and clearly informed about what was going well, but also about what was presenting a challenge as soon as it occurred in order that Council could provide advice. Council understood and respected that it did not manage BNU, but the OfS was clear that Council was the accountable body, and was requiring more of governors, so Council wanted to be made aware of challenges earlier. The Vice-Chancellor advised that his Vice-Chancellor's report would cover early indications of opportunities and challenges.
- 25.19 The Vice-Chancellor advised that if Council was content with his proposals, more detailed plans would be developed and shared. One member also requested a risk analysis on the proposals.
- 25.20 Council then divided into two groups to consider if the priorities were right and the barriers to achieving them.

Session for Independent Council Members

25.21 This session was treated as Reserved Business. See Reserved Minutes.

Session for Staff and Student Council Members and University Executive members

25.22 This session was treated as Reserved Business. See Reserved Minutes.

Plenary feedback from both groups and Reflections on Day 1

- 25.23 The Director of Vice-Chancellor, Communications and Civic Engagement reported that the staff and student Council members and the University Executive members supported the priorities but wanted retaining students to be added to prioritisation of students. The group had also agreed that a priority should be 'work towards' rather than achieving financial independence from partners in year 1; the Vice-Chancellor clarified that financial independence was planned to be achieved in three years. The group had also identified some 'quick wins' on estates and had noted that committee work required a lot of staff time. They had requested further clarity about needing a minimum of 15 students for a programme to break even. They had agreed it would be important to support staff through year 1 as it could be a challenging year and to make clear which staff members were responsible for doing what, but they also agreed that BNU could be even braver: if it was a commercial business it should act like one. The Student Member had also suggested a number of different ways in which BNU could capture student feedback.
- 25.24 The Deputy Chair reported that the Independent Members were absolutely agreed that the priorities were right, innovative and exciting. They absolutely supported the Vice-Chancellor's plans, but had agreed that they needed more details, although recognising that this more detailed information would follow at future meetings. The members had agreed that a risk analysis was also required.

Action: Vice-Chancellor

- 25.25 The Independent Members had also noted it was a very ambitious, wide-ranging programme and had expressed some concern about whether there was sufficient bandwidth to maintain the pace of change. They had agreed it would be important that the Vice-Chancellor had staff support for his plans as they entailed a cultural change for the organisation to move towards being an even more high-performing organisation that staff wanted to perform well in.
- 25.26 Council endorsed the Vice-Chancellor's priorities and plans. The Vice-Chancellor thanked Council for its frankness and support. It would be a challenging period, but he was heartened to see that staff at BNU were already ready for change.
- 25.27 Council looked forward to receiving full business papers on those proposals where Council was the decision-making authority, but recognised that the Vice-Chancellor also had delegated authority to undertake many of the changes he had proposed.

Day 2: 5 February 2025

Reflections on Day 1

- 25.28 The Chair commented that the external speaker's session had been very helpful for members who did not work in the sector. Council was interested in comparators which would influence the future speakers invited.
- 25.29 Council had endorsed the direction of travel outlined by the Vice-Chancellor and had been excited about the Vice-Chancellor's vision tempered by the awareness that this would be a cultural change for BNU. It had recognised the Vice-Chancellor's delegated authority to implement many of the changes in his plan.

- 25.30 The Vice-Chancellor commented it had been a very productive session with a combination of challenge and advice, energy and support. The senior team had felt supported.
- 25.31 The Chair commented that change started with Council and that Council had conducted its business extremely well: it had supported but also provided challenge and critical advice.

Student Life at BNU

- 25.32 Council welcomed several BNU students to the meeting. The session had arisen out of Council's interest in what student life was like today at BNU at its previous Away Day. It would help Council put students at the centre of its work.
- 25.33 The Students' Union (SU) President thanked Council for the opportunity for students to address Council. They would present an unfiltered account of their journeys at BNU.
- 25.34 Council received an outline of each students' experience at BNU. The students highlighted a range of experiences including
- a) being the first generation in their families to go to university, which had been extremely daunting
 - b) needing to work to support themselves alongside studying, sometimes in two jobs; having to budget extremely carefully; and worrying if they would be able to afford their rent
 - c) inconsistency of communication by lecturers, particularly around placements; inconsistency in staff support; the cancellation of lectures at short notice or lectures ending before they were scheduled to; and the challenge of undertaking unpaid placements where they had felt underprepared in their core skills. One student had also experienced a difference between the career opportunities they had been informed of when they were applying versus the opportunities they had actually had which they felt was hindering their preparation for post-university life
 - d) anxiety about life after BNU as many graduates would have similar degrees so they needed to find a way to distinguish themselves from others
 - e) mental health challenges such as anxiety, social isolation and grief
 - f) poor Wi-Fi in Hughenden Student Village
 - g) a difference in the student experience at High Wycombe (HW) campus compared to Uxbridge: HW had a lot of extracurricular activities that were not replicated at Uxbridge or Aylesbury
 - h) the difficulty of finding accommodation after Year 1 as private landlords did not always want students as tenants, and it was not always possible to find a guarantor or a three-months deposit. One student commented that BNU's Accommodation Office was not resourced sufficiently to help
 - i) extremely positive experiences with BNU's Disability Services, who met with applicants before they were even enrolled to agree the adjustments they would need and also supported students to get diagnoses
 - j) the culture shock of being an International Student, including extreme financial challenges (where one student had lived on a diet of eggs, bread and milk for one year) and facing discrimination as one student had been asked to show his passport and visa when applying for private accommodation in order to prove that he had not crossed the Channel on a small boat.
- 25.35 Council then undertook small group work to discuss ways in which to mitigate the challenges the students had experienced. The plenary feedback raised a number of key points:
- a) the insufficient provision of information to students was a risk to equality of opportunity: a lot of information was given but not in an effective way. BNU needed to use more succinct, clearer messages for example through BNU WhatsApp that provided simpler and more effective pre-arrival information
 - b) BNU could use learning resources more, for example could it identify external technical partners to work with to further improve learning resources

- c) the need to revise bureaucracies and for targets to be more continuously reviewed
 - d) the need to consider condensed timetables
 - e) Uxbridge was currently a teaching space with no accommodation, social spaces, spaces for societies, a proper canteen area or study spaces. The building currently closed at 6.00pm and students were asked to wait outside for an hour until the campus shuttle bus arrived at 7.00pm. Students could not access the library in the evenings. A future Uxbridge campus should be more like HW with accommodation, social and relaxation spaces, study spaces, improved changing facilities and lockers, and an improved library.
 - f) resources to support placements needed to be expanded and not reimbursing fees for travel was putting more financial pressure on students. Placement providers expected students to have more knowledge than they did. Nursing students needed to have key theoretical knowledge before they undertook observations. The SU President commented that she had been told that NHS trusts wanted BNU students as they were good role models; the University would not want that demand to decline
 - g) the need for BNU's student services to explore a range of therapeutic approaches beyond just talking therapies and for the Counselling service to be more transparent in deciding the order in which they assigned appointments. A walk-in/drop-in clinic where it was not necessary to book an appointment would be helpful along with an expansion of the number of staff who were trained Mental Health First Aiders
 - h) the need to significantly improve BNU's personal tutoring as students did not always know who their personal tutors were, and introduce either a service level agreements or consistently timetabled sessions where students could meet their personal tutors
 - i) more support for international students such as the provision of welcome packs containing core essentials and guides to the UK. The SU President commented that a proposal to provide welcome packs was being considered by the Student Experience Forum.
- 25.36 Students then outlined the interventions they had found or would find most supportive at BNU: the SU's free meals; the jobs offered by the SU; BNU's bursaries and hardship funding; more transparency about the funding criteria for BNU's bursaries and other financial support; expansion of the number of Mental Health First Aiders; improved Wi-Fi at student halls of residence; student societies; the campus bus service; and BNU offering internal placements.
- 25.37 The Chair commented that the session would make a huge difference to Council's thinking now and in the future. It was extremely pleasing that students had also experienced some outstanding support and that they were glad to be at BNU.
- 25.38 The Vice-Chancellor reiterated that all the decisions BNU made going forward needed to be student focused, and that students would form one of the future-thinking groups he would be establishing.

EDI Deep Dive

- 25.39 Council received a deep dive on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at BNU from the Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The HRBP presented a detailed breakdown of the composition of BNU's staff and student communities by ethnicity, disability status, age, faith and gender compared to available sector data and actions BNU had taken to improve its representation as part of its equality strategy. Thirty percent of staff were from a global majority heritage while seventy percent were racialised as white, and the majority of staff were aged 35-64. Sixty-six percent of BNU's students were mature (aged 25 and over). Fifty-five percent identified as global majority versus forty-one percent who identified as White. Half of BNU's students were the first in their family to go to university and sixty-five percent had a qualification other than a BTEC or A Levels.
- 25.40 Challenges remained about representation particularly of women and staff from a global majority heritage in senior posts, but a particularly effective action to improve staff representation had been the

introduction of an inclusive recruitment policy. Recent sector research had also shown that staff aged under 35 were leaving HE as they could not see any path to progression; BNU had redeveloped its academic pathways into three contracts (Teaching and Learning, Research, and Leadership) and was promoting to staff that while they might be on one particular contract there were pathways to progression. BNU had also redeveloped its reasonable adjustments process and taken a social model approach to disability to encourage more staff to declare any disability, which had resulted in more staff coming forward. BNU's gender pay gap had fallen by 2% from the previous year. Such incremental gains would have a macro-impact.

- 25.41 BNU needed to continuously ensure that its curriculum and teaching and assessment methods matched the needs of its students and were representative of the student body and that it provided the support students needed. BNU would be commencing work shortly upon supporting staff with their cultural competence / intelligence. Students were also able to declare disabilities throughout their programme and the University would write to students' doctors to support their request to gain an official diagnosis.
- 25.42 Council could support BNU's equality strategy by questioning if the University had made enough progress. It could also help address the 'leaky pipeline' by identifying if there were things BNU could do to disrupt barriers to recruitment and career progression. Council members could share their expertise and best practice from their own industries and suggest how BNU could continue to improve. Council could also undertake BNU's reverse mentoring if they wished.
- 25.43 In response to a query, the HRBP advised that the reverse mentoring was undertaken by student volunteers, although they had been paid in the pilot scheme, recruited via course leaders and involved six sessions with a member of the Executive who had been matched to the students' interests and experience.

Reflections on Day 2

- 25.44 Council reflected on the highlights of the meeting which included the high-level session with the external speaker which would inform future strategic thinking and the powerful student experience session. Council also noted that the government was perhaps unlikely to start advocating for the sector despite having moved from a negative to a neutral position. It also noted that there were benefits to partnerships such as surety of timetables alongside the challenges.
- 25.45 The Chair commented that a feedback form would be circulated to Council members for their further comments.

Action: Minute Secretary

- 25.46 The Chair advised Council that it had been the intention to present the Estates Masterplan but there had been insufficient time. Council had heard the headlines, but the Director of Estates would be invited to present this at a future meeting.

Action: Minute Secretary

- 25.47 The Chair thanked members for their engagement with all the sessions.