

Council

Strategy Meeting Notes

Date of meeting: **Tuesday, 10 October 2017**

Duration of meeting: **4:00pm to 6:00pm**

Location: **G5.05, Gateway Building, High Wycombe Campus**

Attendance

| Name | Role | Category of membership |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Michael Hipkins | Chair | Independent |
| Jenny Newton | Deputy | Independent |
| Rebecca Bunting | | Vice-Chancellor |
| Joanna Boardman | | Elected PSE |
| Gurdeep Chadha | | Independent |
| Anna Crabtree | | Independent |
| Maggie James | | Independent |
| Irene Kirkman | | Independent |
| Lise Llewellyn | | Independent |
| Ken McCrea | | Co-opted |
| Tim Marshall | | Co-opted |
| Ben Parmar | | Students' Union President |
| Cheryl Pitt | | Elected Academic |
| Susan Rosser | | Independent |
| John Smith | | Independent |
| Sue West | | Senate Nomination |
| Phil Wood | | Senate Nomination |

Officers

| Name | Role | Category of membership |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ellie Smith | Secretary | Clerk to the Council |
| Marcus Wood | Minute Secretary | |

In attendance

| Name | Role |
|--------------|------------------------|
| Nick Braisby | Deputy Vice-Chancellor |
| Sean Mackney | Pro Vice-Chancellor |

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| Rod Mercer | Director of Finance |
| Steve Lake | Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment (Item 4 only) |
| Shane Roadnight | Principal Lecturer, Operating Department Practice (ODP – item 6 only) |

Apologies

| Name | Role | Category of membership |
|----------------|------|------------------------|
| Baljit Dhillon | | Independent |
| Bob Shennan | | Independent |

Notes

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted that it was the first meeting for Anna Crabtree and Cheryl Pitt as new Independent and Elected academic representative member on Council respectively. The Chair also welcomed the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor

2. Sector Developments (Presentation)

The Vice-Chancellor gave an update on the key sector developments including the following:

- Office for Students (OfS)
- Widening Participation
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- Student finance
- The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

A copy of the presentation was saved with the notes.

3. National Student Survey 2017 – Outcomes (Presentation)

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor presented the outcomes of the NSS 2017 student survey. A copy of the presentation was saved with the notes.

It was noted that the University's performance within the NSS is important since the results are factored into a number of sector-wide league tables including the Good University Guide, the Complete Guide, the Guardian league table as well as being used within the TEF itself.

It was noted that the University's results have dropped this year; however the overall drop mirrors a corresponding drop across the sector as a whole. This may have derived from the use of new questions in this year's survey which have subtly changed wording.

There were positive messages for Bucks around the Learning Community, the Student Voice and the Students' Union who finished equal 7th overall. The University is close to achieving a good NSS performance and is above average in a number of areas. Some key positive messages were also hidden by the NSS.

Critical areas identified for improvement included:

- Course organisation
- Valuing student opinions
- Communicating changes effectively
- Teaching well

These areas will be key foci at an institutional level and will also be developed at departmental level.

Were there any surprises regarding top scoring courses? Were any courses scoring worse than expected?

It was noted that in the NSS generally arts courses tended to do less well than science-based courses since historically arts students tended to be harder to satisfy (more subjective, high sense of criticality) and were more aware when things went wrong. Scores for some arts courses were pulling the University's overall scores down. In particular there were low ratings for course organisation.

There were no particular surprises in the results. Some courses achieved perfect scores, but these tended to be areas with very small numbers. Some departments had worked very hard to improve their scores (e.g. Psychology, Business School) and had put in place good feedback mechanisms; these had seen results improve. Following intense activity, the Business School was now placed in the 39th NSS percentile.

What was the overall response rate?

The University wants to encourage as many students to participate in the NSS as possible. However, no correlation has been identified between response rates and student satisfaction. The University will push for a 75% response rate this year but needs to avoid creating resistance among students this year by pushing participation too much – since this may end up being self-defeating.

Is there a correlation between student destination data and student satisfaction?

The University does not have an answer to this as yet and it is not easy to answer at an individual level. We will be looking to drill down into the data at a subject level.

4. Recruitment update

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Director of Marketing presented an update on the University's latest recruitment position for courses starting in 2017-18. A copy of the presentation was saved with the notes.

The sector is facing a challenge with recruitment as a whole. Early UCAS data from January 2017 demonstrated the volatility of the cycle and was showing an overall 5% reduction in applications (EU: down 8%). However, there was wide differentiation by course entry tariff with a much higher drop from lower tariff institutions where there was an 11% reduction (EU: down 13%). Other factors included a large reduction in applications to nursing programmes and from mature students (~7-22% reduction with wide variation between demographics).

The update included the following areas:

- Recruitment forecast – which was marginally up on the budgeted position

- Clearing performance
- Recruitment strategy, including information provided by DataFiltr to evaluate the impact of previous promotional activity
- Key prospects for international and EU recruitment and work to improve conversion
- 'Customer journey imperatives' to help make more 'sales' and build on increased web traffic and social media presence

Is there any evidence that lower tariff students are finding it harder to study at higher ranked institutions?

There is some evidence of this. Retention rates are dropping and there is a consideration that students will struggle at higher ranked institutions where the necessary levels of academic support are not in place.

It was noted that it used to be the case that some high tariff students would choose to attend lower tariff institutions where there might be a better cultural 'fit'. This is now no longer the case as high tariff students are pressured to apply to high tariff institutions.

Why doesn't India feature among the target areas for international activity?

India has been identified as a 'high risk' area by the UKVI and following restoration of the Tier 4 licence the University gave an undertaking not to actively recruit Tier 4 students from such areas albeit that students are still able to apply. This undertaking will remain under review.

5. Transformation Programme Update (Presentation)

The Pro Vice-Chancellor updated the position from the previous meeting covering the following areas:

- FTUG recruitment and overall recruitment forecast
- Year 0, top-up and apprenticeship recruitment
- Retention
- Restructure (attributed to the Transformation Programme)
- Work underway

A copy of the presentation was saved with the notes.

6. Operating Department Practitioner (Presentation)

Shane Roadnight, Principal Lecturer ODP, gave a presentation on ODP as an area of activity within the University following initial setup in 2011 through to a current cohort of 60 students. A copy of the presentation was saved with the notes.

There was one additional item of Reserved Business – see Reserved Minutes.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Michael Hipkins (Chair of Council)

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| Drafted (Minute Secretary): | 19-Oct-2017 |
| Checked (Clerk to the Council): | 20-Oct-2017 |
| Checked (Vice-Chancellor): | 24-Oct-2017 |
| Confirmed for circulation (Chair): | 25-Oct-2017 |