University of Bath

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting:	**COUNCIL/SENATE/STUDENTS' UNION COMMITTEE**
Date and Time:	**Tuesday 5 November 2019 at 2.15pm**
Venue:	**4 West Boardroom**

Present:

Professor I White (Chair)	Vice-Chancellor
Miss E Alcock	President, Students' Union (SU)
Professor P Lambert	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)
Professor C Mitchell	Elected by Senate
Miss R Osman	Education Officer, SU
Mr Alex Robinson	Student Representative
Ms K Robinson	Appointed by Council
Dr J Troyer	Elected by Senate
Mr Z Truscott	Student Representative
Mr R Tyrrell	Student Representative

In Attendance:

Mr L Alayaki	International Students Association (ISA)
Ms E Day	Secretary
Dr J Harris	Director of Academic Registry
Professor A Heath	Academic Director, CLT
Mr D Howells	Head of Undergraduate (UG) Admissions & Student Immigration Compliance
Miss A Lobo	Community Officer, SU (for minute no 1207 (1))
Mrs J Loveys	Director Accommodation & Hospitality Services
Mr A McLaughlin	Chief Executive, SU
Mrs J Medland-Kelly	Executive Officer
Mr A Payne	Director of Student Services
Miss J Zhou	Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union

Apologies:

Dr J Troyer	Elected by Senate
Mr R Tyrrell	Student Representative
Dr C Wilson	Vice-President (Student Experience)

ACTION

1203. CHAIR'S WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced himself and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

1204. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members confirmed that they had no declarations of interest.

1205. <u>**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**</u>

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2019 (Paper CSSU19/20-009) were APPROVED as a correct record of the meeting.

1206. <u>**MATTERS ARISING**</u>

The Committee received a report of actions (Paper CSSU19/20-010), which had been compiled by the Secretary.

<u>Minute 1185</u>
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) (PVC (L&T)) updated the Committee that all HODS had been reminded of the importance around proof-checking exam scripts. Any complaints would be directed to the Board of Examiners which would feed into the Board of Studies and subsequently up to ULTQC and FLTQC which would provide a more holistic way of managing across the University. Academic Registry are also going to compile how many errors are picked up by registry. It was noted by the SU Education Officer that some students, particularly those in their first year, were unaware of how to report errors. The PVC (L&T) will reiterate mechanisms for how this process to all students.

PVC (L&T)

<u>Minute 1190</u>
With regard to whether the new Chief Operations Officer would have a role in the Climate Action Framework, this was still not known as the position is not yet in place. To feed back when it is known.

CHAIR

<u>Minute 1199</u>
Departmental action plans with regard to NSS have been received but only last week. The PVC (L&T) will be looking to share these and it will be helpful to have comments on this.

PVC (L&T)

<u>Minute 1199</u>
It was queried by the Chair if any deadlines had been set with regard to a review of lecture capture and a policy to sit with this. Jenny Medland-Kelly confirmed that there was an aim for ULTQC in March, with consultation happening in February and March.

<u>Minute 1200(2)</u>
With regard to the 3G pitch, the Chair fed back that the preliminary options study being undertaken by the VP (I) was virtually completed but had not had final sign off as yet and this included key proposals for consideration. The Chair confirmed that there was a desire from the University to progress this and the Chair would discuss with the SU Sports Officer in more detail outside of this meeting.

1207. <u>**STUDENTS' UNION BUSINESS**</u>

(1) <u>Attendance Monitoring of International Students</u>

The SU Community Officer introduced Paper CSSU19/20-011 and introduced the Chair of the International Students Association who gave an overview of the paper. It was described that there was unhappiness within the international student body for a number of reasons including the communication with students in using the app not being early enough; there

had been poor implementation of the app; as well as feelings of discrimination being apparent due to the students feeling singled out amongst their peers.

The Chair thanked the SU Community Officer and the Chair of the International Students Association for the paper and agreed that it needed a detailed response.

The PVC (L&T) outlined how the University had got to where it was now with regard to attendance monitoring in terms of guidance from the UKVI audit, November 2018 which came as strong advice and had been made clear that if the University got this wrong, the consequences would be catastrophic. The advice was that the previous use of artificial contact points was no longer acceptable and timetables contact points which could be randomised, were necessary. A working group, which included the SU Community Officer, had met earlier in 2019 to look at various options. It was agreed that due to time constraints and UKVI requirements, the PowerApps Check-in app was agreed as a way forward at that stage and could be reviewed. It was agreed by the PVC (L&T) that confidence in the app had been knocked by the technical difficulties had with it at times and this was being addressed. The PVC (L&T) reiterated that it was important to understand through consultation what specifically could be done to improve this area.

The Head of UG Admissions & Student Immigration Compliance responded to the paper and the following points on the implementation of the new process for attendance monitoring were made:
- The University had to be compliant in line with Home Office recommendations and this had to be in place by the start of 2019/20 semester one;
- The department was aware of the issues which were raised in the paper and that the situation was complex;
- With regard to the technical faults raised it was felt that things could and should be done better and this was being looked at, particularly in relation to exposure of QR codes and spotty coverage. The Head of UG Admissions & Student Immigration Compliance did reaffirm that the app did have the ability to register attendance without the use of QR codes.
- The style of communication going out to students would be revisited and discussions with the SU around this would be welcomed;
- He confirmed that the app is not a tracking device and will only show check-in locations and times at a single point. It was agreed that the notification received via the app to communicate this needed to be looked at;
- The paper did not give a whole picture of the UKVI guidance but the University had considered the whole guidance in its implementation and any current arrangements were to advance the current issues, not create a future prediction as indicated;
- UKVI recommendations are explicit about the monitoring of timetables teaching activity;
- The University is committed to reviewing the methods of attendance monitoring and this review will be open to SU involvement;

- UKVI are expected to be releasing an updated version of the guidance but because external factors such as the potential exit from the European Union, this has been delayed.

The SU Community Officer acknowledged that the timeline for implementation had been short but reiterated that they felt engagement with the SU should have been more thorough in the first instance. She welcomed any improvements which could be made jointly.

With regard to the recommendations from the paper, the following points were made:

- Recommendation 1: The Head of UG Admissions & Student Immigration Compliance and the PVC (L&T) explained that in order to comply with UKVI guidance, there is no way at this time to act on this recommendation. The SU Community Officer queried whether the sampling could still be reduced, for example half of all timetabled activity. The Head of UG Admissions & Student Immigration Compliance said that it was his view that by students registering themselves at more activities, they are reducing any subsequent queries when for example there are still technical problems or the student forgets at a selection of activities. It is felt that it also affirms a habit forming behaviour if it is at every activity and the chances of forgetting are reduced but would be willing to look at this and discuss. The SU Community Officer agreed that this was all the student body was asking for. To support to arrange a meeting with the Head of UG Admissions & Student Immigration Compliance and the ISA.

  SUCOMM

- Recommendation 2: other options at different institutions have already been looked at and this would continue as a review of this whole process. Only one University had not undertaken the guidance from UKVI in the same way.

- Recommendation 3: The Chair discussed that the SU could continue to push the agenda in an appropriate way with the Home Office, if they wanted to take that option. The way in which UKVI consult on these issues is narrow and could be misinterpreted if not in full context.

- Recommendation 4: PVC (L&T) would be able to send communication out regarding this process once there was reassurance from all involved on the system but this would be likely before Christmas.

  PVC (L&T)

There was further discussion on the confidence in the app not being a tracking device in the wider sense of the term. The University had been clear in what the app was and was not used for with the priority being to protect the students subject to these processes as well as the interests of the University in line with Home Office guidance. Any data collection outside of this would be contrary to Data Protection Law. The Chair agreed that due to the sensitive nature of this matter, it would be looked into as to whether an external organisation could audit the app and this would be fed back.

PVC (L&T)

(2) <u>Create a culture where students feel confident to raise supervisory issues</u>

The SU Postgraduate Officer explained the issues with doctoral supervision, detailed in Paper CSSU19/20-012 in particular the multi-agency Task and Finish group having bene disbanded despite ongoing issues, the University ranking at 81st for supervision in the PRES results, some academics being reported to have not engaged with the ongoing #NeverOK campaign and effective training for supervisors not being rolled out as mandatory.

The Academic Director (Doctoral College) (ADDC) explained that the University was well aware of the issues highlighted in the paper and gave an overview of what had been done already. This included the setting up of the Task and Finish group which was still running as a subset of members from the Doctoral Supervision Group, face-to-face engagement through departmental meetings to improve awareness, changes of supervisor if needed, exploration of the work being done by other Universities, the development of an online resource for staff who support doctoral students which also highlights responsibilities and a joined up approach across the Doctoral College and Student Services where needed.

The ADDC raised that it can be challenging when a student raises concerns but then does not want to take it any further. She raised concerns around this and the informal submission of complaints as well as the impact of unproven allegations. The Doctoral College recognised the need to continue to work on: the supplement the training of new supervisors as well as regularly updating training for established supervisors, to support the idea that the University looks at a single point of contact for reporting and raising issues, to monitor supervision practice better and to work alongside the new university complaints procedure.

The issues were complex but options would continue to be looked at.

During questions the following points were made:
- All academic and support staff within the Doctoral College had been invited to face-to-face engagement meetings giving an outline of policy and procedure with an opportunity for questions;
- Feedback from students themselves had been incorporated and something new was learnt each time when asking students;
- Early reporting was felt to be key to the effective response of these issues;
- The SU Postgraduate Officer did not think that there were too many reporting tools causing confusion but that the quality of signposting to these tools needed to be improved;
- Feedback from some students had been that they felt if they did report an issue, nothing would be done about it; HR would need to be consulted in addressing any reporting of outcomes from staff complaints and the Chair would liaise around this in order to feed back;
- It was reported by the Director of Student Services (DoSS) that there has been a significant increase in the number of Doctoral College staff engaging with Student Services and utilising the 4321 number;
- There was an overall awareness from the University that staff require a better informed approach to support, training and guidance but there was an ongoing review into the mandatory nature of all of the above with the

impact on workload and implications of this, as well as direction needing to come in a holistic form across the University;

It was agreed that University Doctoral Studies Committee (UDSC) was the most appropriate place for ongoing discussion of these issues with this feeding into Senate. The next UDSC meeting was diarised for after the next Senate meeting but an update could be provided on scope of papers being submitted to Senate.

ADDC

The SU Postgraduate Officer was thanked for the timely raising of these issues contained in the paper.

(3) <u>Ensure students aren't financially disadvantaged by the University's business travel provider</u>

The SU Postgraduate Officer talked of the financial impact on students when they were having to use Clarity despite cheaper options often being available elsewhere, as detailed in Paper CSSU19/20-013. This was relevant for doctoral students who were having to use their training support fees to attend relevant conferences, sometimes abroad, and were keen to keep fees as low as possible but weren't always able to. She acknowledged that since the paper was submitted, the University has launched a new tool, Go2Book, which may resolve some issues but that was yet to be proven. She also raised that at the presentation on the new tool, the only provision talked about was in relation to travel, not accommodation.

The Chair informed the Committee that the Insurance Services Manager had been pleased to be able to respond to this relevant paper and had provided a written response. He was due to be in attendance for this paper but was not present. The Chair explained that he understood the University to be undertaking a full review of its travel management company and some of the reasons the University has to use a company such as this were to be detailed by the Insurance Services Manager. It was discussed that although it is not mandatory to use the travel management company, the way it is presented does not make this clear.

The paper would be raised with the finance department in order to circulate a formal response. The Chair apologised that this had not been able to happen at the meeting.

SEC

The Insurance Services Manager did attend at the end of the meeting and it was confirmed that the discussion would be taken forward outside of the meeting.

1208. **OTHER BUSINESS**

(1) <u>Accommodation rent setting process</u>

The Director Accommodation & Hospitality Services (DoAHS) introduced Paper CSSU19/20-014 which had been produced as a result of a CSSU meeting in February 2019 where it was requested that rent proposals

were discussed at CSSU. The paper outlined the process of rent setting to be transparent and collaborative but that key information was still to be gathered in order to inform the final budgets. The DoAHS detailed two key changes which were the bursary scheme to provide additional financial assistance to some students in the middle income band with demonstrable characteristics of under-representation in high education or socio-economic disadvantage as well as the new bed-stock available through Aquila Court from September, 2020.

The SU President welcomed the paper and the following points were discussed:

- The DoAHS would confirm when the accommodation bursary scheme was a definite so that the SU could publish this as a good news story;
- The DoAHS detailed that they were pretty certain that Aquila Court would be completed on time for September, 2020;
- This was the early stage of the rent setting process; AHS would need to build in consultation of SU comments as well as factoring in the financial forcast from capital such as the summer schools. The DoAHS would be doing as much as possible to keep the increase below 3%; she would keep the SU informed of any changes.
- With regard to national comparison this would not be accurate at this stage as many aren't published but AHS have bene looking at South West weekly rent comparisons to inform the process;
- University accommodation has to take into account the other services which are provided alongside a room itself which means that in comparison to a private rent, this would not be accurate;
- The increase is above the rate of inflation due to factoring in of rents and refurbishment as well as other costs. It is difficult to predict the next twenty years as a forecast due to external factors such as voids and the success of the commercial business side in the summer.

The DoAHS was thanked by the Chair for the paper.

1209.   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Student Representative, Mr Alex Robinson, raised the issue as to whether it was possible for students to report maintenance issues when they are not residing on campus. It was not clear what the process was but the PVC (L&T) would consult with Estates and report back.

PVC (L&T)

1210. **DATES OF MEETINGS**

The programme of meetings for 2019/20 was noted as being as follows (all meetings at 2.15pm):

- Thursday 27 February 2020
- Tuesday 21 April 2020

The meeting concluded at 4.05pm