

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
EXTRAORDINARY ACADEMIC ASSURANCE COMMITTEE****THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2024
13:30PM VIA MS TEAMS**

Present:

Dr Nick Gee, Executive Dean of Faculty (NG)
Max Gordon, Students' Union President (MG)
Professor Marianne Howarth (MH) (Chair)
Professor Andrew Jackson, Executive Dean of Research and Knowledge Exchange (AJ)
Rev'd Canon Dr Sarah Lawrence
Elise Temple
Dr Claire Thomson, Executive Dean for Teaching, Learning & Student Success (CT)

In attendance:

Leanne Chancellor, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office (*minutes*)
Tom Dannatt, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations)
Phil Davis, Head of Student Success

Action**1. Welcome**

- 1.1 The Chair, Professor Marianne Howarth, welcomed and thanked members for their attendance to the extraordinary meeting of the Academic Assurance Committee (AAC).
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed to the meeting Phil Davis.
- 1.3 The Chair noted that the reason for the extraordinary AAC meeting had been scheduled, to ensure the Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2025-2029 had been reviewed, scrutinised and approved by a committee of University Council and Senate. It was NOTED that the submission deadline for the APP was 1 October 2024.

2. Apologies

- 2.1 No apologies for absence were received, as all members were in attendance.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no new declarations of interest to raise for this meeting.

- 4. To Sign Off the Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2025-2029 for Submission to the Office for Students (OfS)**
- 4.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the APP 2025-2029 and the separate Students' Union submission.
- 4.2 The Chair THANKED Dr Claire Thomson (CT), Executive Dean for Teaching, Learning & Student Success and Phil Davis, Head of Student Success for their comprehensive and informative APP 2025-2029 report, and INVITED them to present the APP to members.
- 4.3 CT REITERATED that the submission date to the OfS for the APP 2025-2029 was 1 October 2024, and this was for the provider submission, the appendices that support the APP, and the Students' Union submission.
- 4.4 CT NOTED that the APP is driven by the OfS and is a key piece of our regulatory compliance. The APP is required as part of our institutions registration to be able to charge the higher fee level (£9,250). It was NOTED that if the institution did not succeed with an approved APP, delivering it or have not engaged with the process, BGU would only be able to charge the lower fee level (£6,165).
- 4.5 CT NOTED that the APP was significant for BGU as a Widening Participation (WP) institution to ensure the institution adheres to the vision of access and participation and equity of access to higher education – for BGU that is ethically important.
- 4.6 CT NOTED that the APP process had been around for several years and BGU's first submission was in 2019-20, and since then there had been different variances and iterations that the institution has had to deliver on.
- 4.7 CT NOTED that the new APP 2025-2029 is a new iteration, and the guidance and requirements institutions must provide had changed slightly.
CT HIGHLIGHTED the key changes:
- inclusion of 'Equality of Opportunity Risk Register' (EORRs) – identifies 12 sector-wide risks that may affect a student's opportunity to access and succeed in higher education (*p10 of draft APP*);
 - inclusion of 'Theory of Change' (TOCs) (*Appendix B, p39 of draft APP*); and
 - inclusion of 'Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education' (TASO) evaluation of impact.
- 4.8 CT and PD NOTED that the OfS have identified some student key characteristics, which are the students that they want institution to target and try and make sure they have this equality of access to and success within higher education, for example some of the main characteristics were:
- ABMO (Asian, Black, Mixed, and Other) – was once known as "BAME".
 - Care leavers
 - Estranged students
 - Known Disability (including mental health)
 - IMDQ1-2 (the areas of greatest deprivation)
 - POLAR1-2 (which will be replaced by the terminology of Tundra)
 - Mature
 - Male

- 4.9 PD NOTED that to undertake a credible assessment of performance, a provider is expected to consider 'access' to higher education and to consider the following three elements:
- **Continuation** of the study of higher education qualifications
 - **Attainment:** achievement and the awards made to higher education students at the end of their studies
 - **Progression** into the labour market, further study and other destinations after leaving higher education
- 4.10 CT NOTED that the OfS are asking that institutions to think about those students where the different datasets collide in terms of the demographic of BGU's student population:
- Are there different things that need to be considered for students from key characteristics?
 - Are there challenges or additional barriers?
 - Are there more than one or other areas of equality where students might be challenged or disadvantaged in.
- 4.11 CT HIGHLIGHTED the seven OfS' Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS), which measures all the stages of the student lifecycle (*p.11 of draft APP*):
1. **Access:** Access to higher education
 2. **Continuation:** Continuing in full-time higher education
 3. **Continuation:** Continuing in part-time higher education
 4. **Attainment:** Completing full-time higher education
 5. **Attainment:** Completing part-time higher education
 6. **Progression:** Progressing from full-time higher education
 7. **Progression:** Progressing from part-time higher education
- 4.12 CT talked members through the APP 2025-2029 journey to date:
- Reviewed against previous APP submission and targets.
 - Think about our own demographic and understand BGU and the Lincolnshire context.
 - Analysis of data to identify gaps:
 - to help identify BGU specific EORRs.
 - thereby inform identification of interventions.
 - Whole institution approach.
 - Interventions identified – business as usual (BAU) and then targeted enhancements.
 - Intervention Leads appointed.
 - 'Evaluation of Impact' developed for each intervention – TOCs.
- 4.13 CT NOTED that following the analysis of the data, this informed the identification of the five key intervention strategies (TOCs) as a whole institutional approach, which CT talked through and explained to members, along with the identified leads:
1. Aspiration Raising Intervention;
 2. Contextual Offers Intervention;
 3. Continuation and Retention Strategy;
 4. Enhanced Personal Tutoring Intervention; and
 5. Graduate Attributes Framework (GAF) Enhancement

PD NOTED that to help frame the APP, they have had help and support from an External Consultant, Karen Heard-Laureote, as the methodology for this APP had changed quite significantly for past reiterations.

- 4.14 PD PRESENTED and DESCRIBED to members an example of a TOC, so that they understood what this was and EXPLAINED the FIT document (fees, investment and targets).
- 4.15 CT NOTED the Students' Union draft submission, which was written by Emily Allden (EA), the former Students' Union Vice-President, Education.
- 4.16 Max Gordon (MG), Students' Union President, NOTED that the student submission was to provide verification that the students had been involved in the process, they recognise the submission was representative of the institution and they agree with the identification of the five interventions.
- 4.17 MG NOTED that before EA's departure, she had gone through the student submission with the new Students' Union Leadership Team and confirmed that they were content with the submission.
- 4.18 CT NOTED that the development of the APP had been regularly reported at relevant groups and deliberative committees:
- Access and Participation Committee;
 - Teaching Excellence Committee;
 - Academic Enhancement Committee;
 - Senate;
 - Presented at BGU's Learning and Teaching Committee; and
 - University Council's Academic Assurance Committee.
- 4.19 CT NOTED her thanks to Karen Heard-Laureote, External Consultant; Phil Davis, Head of Student Success; Carolyn Dean, Senior Planning Officer and the Data Team; Kim Holmes, Admissions Manager and the Admissions team; Peter Roe, Student Recruitment Manager and the Outreach Team; Heads of Programmes and Faculty colleagues; Amy Hare, Head of Finance and the Finance Team; Emily Allden and the Students' Union.
- 4.20 The Chair also ADDED her thanks to CT, for her work and leadership on the APP.
- 4.21 The Chair NOTED that the presentation of the APP had been extremely detailed of what was an extraordinarily comprehensive and informative document. She NOTED that she was conscious of the responsibility that this document places on the whole institution – it was a very important document for access and participation, core to the institutions mission and our sense of identity for which the institution will be judged.
- 4.22 The Chair ALSO NOTED that it was felt that the team had set realistic aims and objectives, and she was reassured that this was building on established practice and enhancing where appropriate.
- 4.23 Members RAISED the following comments and questions:
- Acknowledged that they identified with the document with regards to BGU and was who the institution was and was in our culture.
 - Acknowledged that the document was comprehensive and extremely detailed.
 - With the whole institution approach, have apprenticeships been taken into account within the APP?
 - PD CONFIRMED that apprenticeships were not in scope for the APP – he noted that the APP was driven by the £9,250 fee paying student, so the APP includes undergraduate and postgraduate students.

- On page 2 of the draft APP, it refers to Rutland as an example of an area in Greater Lincolnshire – Rutland was an area in Greater Lincolnshire. Could Stamford be considered instead?
 - PD CONFIRMED that he would review this and amend the document.
- Had the new partnership work that BGU delivers through ICON and The Language Gallery (TLG) included in the APP?
 - PD and CT CONFIRMED that TLG was included in the document as they had a franchise relationship with BGU.
 - CT NOTED that ICON was not included as they were a validated partner only.
- Acknowledged the five interventions and saw the elements of the overall strategy.

4.24 PD NOTED that once the APP is submission on 1 October 2024, it is expected that any questions/feedback the OfS have would be received in the Autumn Term, with final feedback in December 2024 (earliest).

4.25 The Chair asked members, that following the documents they have received, and the presentation provided by CT and PD, were they content to approve the APP for submission to the OfS.

4.26 Members were **CONTENT** to **APPROVE** the APP 2025-2029, with the amendment regarding Rutland.

4.27 The Chair THANKED all involved once again for their hard work in pulling this document together, and looked forward to receiving the progress updates at future AAC meetings.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 The Chair noted that she had spoken with Anne Frost, Chair of Council, to potentially appoint a Co-opt Governor to this committee, to increase external Higher Education representation and expertise.

5.2 The Chair noted that she would be approaching Hilary Grainger, who has a wealth of experience in academic assurance.

6. Date of Next Meeting

6.1 The date of the next full meeting of the Academic Assurance Committee was scheduled for:

- Wednesday 6 November 2024 at 2pm.

The Chair also THANKED members for their attendance and contribution.

Signed *Y. Howard*

Date *06-11-2024*

