

University of Suffolk

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 12 March 2025 at 14.00 hours on Microsoft Teams

Chair: Professor Jenny Higham (Vice-Chancellor)

Present: Associate Professor Stuart Agnew (Director, Centre for Academic and International Partnerships), Professor Emma Bond (Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange), Dr Sam Chenery-Morris (Dean, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health), Dr Adam Clayden (School of Technology, Business and Arts representative), Dr Mary Cornelius (Head of Educational Development and Digital Innovation, Vice-Chancellor's nominee), Jo Divers (School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health representative), Rob Ellis (Interim Director of Learning and Teaching), Marek Hornak (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Commercial and Academic Partnerships), Professor Stuart Harmer (Dean, School of Technology, Business and Arts), Dr Ross Kemble (University wide representative, School of Technology, Business and Arts), Professor Paula Kersten (Dean, School of Allied Health Sciences), Abigail Morgan (OSACC Manager, Professional Services representative), Laura Pennie (Interim Academic Registrar), Shannon Pilsworth (Students' Union Officer, School of Technology, Business and Arts), Danielle Ramsey (School of Allied Health Sciences representative), Dr Pallawi Sinha (School of Social Sciences and Humanities representative), Dr Marco Spada (University wide representative, School of Technology, Business and Arts), Ann Teemal (Lecturer, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health, Vice-Chancellor's nominee), Jacob Weeks (Students' Union School Officer, Allied Health Sciences), Dr Reilly Willis (University wide representative, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Lewis Woolsten (Students' Union President of Education)

Apologies: Dr Marco Beato (University wide representative, School of Allied Health Sciences), John Cavani (Director of Marketing, Communications and International), Dr Fran Hyde (Interim Dean, London Centre), Stuart Lipscombe (Representative, University and College Union), Professor Brian McCook (Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), James Nial (Head of Planning and Management Information)

Secretary: Alison McQuin (Head of Quality)

In attendance: Fiona Fisk (University Secretary), Dr Amanda Hodgkinson (Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange, School of Social Sciences and Humanities) in attendance for Professor Brian McCook (Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities)

Minutes shown in bold italics should be treated as confidential and will be removed from the published set on the University website.

Minutes of previous meeting

- 24/050 The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising and comments for the VC

- 24/051 All actions had been completed or were included on the agenda.

Students' Union report

- 24/052 The Students' Union (SU) report was received for information. Both the SU President Education and SU President Activities and Wellbeing were leaving their roles, with elections for all the full-time and part-time representative positions being held this week. Members thanked the SU Presidents for their contribution to the institution.

Policies and procedures**Admissions Policy**

- 24/053 As part of the annual review of the Admissions Policy an additional paragraph relating to use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and virtual interviews was included. It was agreed that further guidance about AI would be developed by the Admissions team, but would sit outside the policy.

- 24/054 It was agreed that signposting to the Higher and Degree Apprenticeships Framework should be included within the policy to ensure sufficient reference to apprenticeships without duplication of information.

Agreed action: The Associate Dean, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health to work with the Admissions Manager to include signposting to the Higher and Degree Apprenticeships Framework prior to publication of the policy in September 2025.

- 24/055 Members discussed the development of English language skills for applicants, noting that the current tools used during the application process for international students complied with visa requirements. It was noted that a welcome module existed within Brightspace to support English language skills and there was further work ongoing to enhance language support for students.

Apprenticeship Sub-Contracting Handbook

- 24/056 The Apprenticeship Sub-Contracting Handbook was re-presented to Senate with comments from the previous meeting having been addressed. It was recognised that the document covered both policy and operational elements.

- 24/057 While members approved the handbook for publication, they queried whether the University's civic commitment, apprentice feedback and mandatory training should be made more explicit. It was agreed that Apprenticeships Board would explore this further for a future iteration of the handbook as it was noted that the University currently did not have any sub-contracted provision.

Outcome: Approved.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Commercial and Academic Partnerships to take member comments concerning the University's civic commitment, apprentice feedback and mandatory training to the next Apprenticeship Board meeting.

Disability Statement

24/058 The Disability Statement was reviewed annually, with only minor amendments proposed.

24/059 It was confirmed that agreed reasonable adjustments were only shared with relevant teams once students had provided their consent, otherwise the details remained confidential to the Disability and Wellbeing team.

24/060 Members queried whether the personal digital voice recorders were still needed as students had access to University recorded sessions. It was confirmed that the use of personal recorders have reduced since the University general recordings have been made available to students, however personal recorders were still needed for some students. Members were satisfied that the signposting within the Disability Statement to the Learning Session Recording (Lecture Capture) Policy sufficiently covered the acceptable use of recordings.

Outcome: Approved.

Framework and Regulations for Integrated Master's Awards

24/061 The previously retired Integrated Master's assessment regulations have been amended in response to the development of the new Master of Pharmacy course.

24/062 It was noted that there was no longer a requirement for a discrete research methods module. Members who had already implemented this approach liked the flexibility this provided when designing their curriculum, as research methods could be incorporated into the curriculum at a place and time that suited their course. It was confirmed that a discrete research methods module could still be used if needed.

Agreed action: The Interim Director of Learning and Teaching to take examples of best practice concerning research methods design to the March 2025 Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) Committee.

24/063 Subject to the correction of some minor typographical errors, members approved the regulations for implementation in 2025/26.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to correct any typographical and grammatical errors prior to publication in August 2025.

24/064 Members requested further clarification on the distinction between research project at level 7 and the extended project at level 6 (paragraph 33); that paragraphs 40, 58 and 63 regarding assessment options matched other assessment regulations; and whether further guidance on 'student engagement' was available for Assessment Boards.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to confirm these answers with the Senate member who raised these questions prior to publication of the assessment regulations in August 2025.

Framework and Regulations for Undergraduate Awards

24/065 The 20-credit assessment regulations for courses who have yet to move to the new 30-credit assessment regulations and for partner institutions using the 20-credit academic framework were reviewed as part of the normal schedule of policy reviews.

24/066 Members were supportive of the changes, noting that these aligned, where possible, with the new 30-credit assessment regulations.

24/067 Members requested clarification whether the paragraphs related to assessment optionality reflected other assessment regulations.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to confirm the answer to the Senate member who raised the query prior to publication of the assessment regulations in August 2025.

Framework and Regulations for Undergraduate Awards delivered in partnership with Unitas

24/068 As part of the cyclical review of the assessment regulations for Unitas, it was proposed to reflect the 30-credit model and degree classification algorithm in the University's standard assessment regulations. Members approved this along with other minor changes for implementation from the 2025/26 academic year.

Outcome: Approved.

Framework and Regulations for Undergraduate Awards delivered in partnership with Unicaf

24/069 Proposed changes to the undergraduate assessment regulations for Unicaf related to better management of breaks in learning and associated record keeping along with better alignment with the University's standard assessment regulations. Members approved the changes for implementation from the 2025/26 academic year.

Outcome: Approved.

Framework and Regulation for Taught Postgraduate Awards delivered in partnership with Unicaf

24/070 The same changes proposed to the Unicaf undergraduate assessment regulations were also proposed to the Unicaf postgraduate assessment regulations. Members approved the changes for implementation from the 2025/26 academic year.

Outcome: Approved.

Framework and Regulations for School Centred Initial Teacher Training Awards (SCITT)

24/071 It was proposed to include merit and distinction classification awards for the PGCE, which was available at a number of other providers. Members approved the changes for implementation from the 2025/26 academic year.

Outcome: Approved.

Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Framework

24/072 The Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Framework was reviewed annually to ensure ongoing alignment to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) rules. Members were supportive of the changes but requested further information on the use of a break in learning in paragraph 46. It was explained that to meet the ESFA rules, a break in learning must be used for block delivery or front loaded courses where there was no active learning in a 3-month period.

Outcome: Approved.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework

24/073 Minor amendments were proposed to the Framework to reflect the University's approach to referencing and it was confirmed that validation document templates would be updated to reflect this.

24/074 Members queried whether the assessment load table in paragraph 24 needed to be updated to reflect the new academic framework. It was explained that assessment loading was not as prescriptive in the new academic framework, allowing teams greater flexibility to design assessment to meet the needs of the course. It was confirmed that there were a number of partner institutions who were remaining on the 20-credit structure, for which the table was needed, but a full review of the framework would take place in due course.

24/075 Members were supportive of the changes for immediate implementation, subject to including signposting to the Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Framework.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to include a cross reference to the Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Framework by the end of March 2025 for publication.

Professorial Appointments

24/076 Minor amendments were proposed for immediate implementation, including removal of the Vice-Chancellor from Chairing the panel to facilitate an appeals route, if needed. Members were supportive of the changes subject to updating references of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to the Provost.

Agreed action: The Executive Assistant to the Provost to update references of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to the Provost prior to publication.

24/077 Further changes to the policy would be implemented following completion of a consultative piece of work led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange) looking at the appointment criteria. It was noted that approximately 70 members of staff have engaged with the consultation, which would be shared with the Provost, the Unions and staff prior to coming back to Senate for approval.

Safeguarding Policy and Code of Practice

24/078 Minor amendments were proposed as part of the annual review of the Safeguarding Policy. It was agreed that paragraph 2 should be further refined to better categorise 'at risk' groups and agreed that no further amendments were required to paragraph 33 as this reflected statutory guidance. Members agreed to change the review timeline for this policy to every two years.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to refine paragraph 2 to better categorise 'at risk' groups prior to publication in August 2025.

Student Complaints Procedure

24/079 The Student Complaints Procedure was reviewed as part of the normal policy review schedule.

24/080 Members queried the amendment to now accept anonymous complaints. It was explained that this reflected the Office of the Independent Adjudicators (OIA) Good Practice Framework as well as providers needing to have protocols in place to allow confidential, anonymous reports of sexual misconduct from both the student and other individuals (third parties). While it was recognised that anonymous complaints could be challenging, it was felt that there was sufficient balance within the policy to ensure a duty of care to all parties, which would be supported by a case-by-case review.

24/081 Members also queried the removal of the five-day timeline for notifying the complainant with details of the investigating officer. It was explained that this had been

removed in consultation with the Students' Union to better manage student expectations, reflect the increasing complexity of the cases received and the move to automated processes which provided students with details of the next steps of the process as part of the automated acknowledgment e-mail on receipt of a complaint.

Outcome: Approved.

Student recruitment

24/082 The student recruitment figures were received for information, noting the need for accurate data to be provided and the importance of recruiting students through Clearing.

24/083 It was noted that the School of Allied Health Sciences, in agreement with Marketing, Communications and International, were re-focusing efforts away from some of their halo courses to other courses where this was felt to be beneficial.

24/084 Members requested that information on postgraduate recruitment be included in the next report, as well as providing a break-down in domestic and international applications.

Agreed action: The Director of Marketing, Communications and International to provide postgraduate student recruitment figures and a break-down in domestic and international applications to the next Senate meeting.

Partnership update

24/085 An update on partnership activity was received. The current Department for Education (DfE) consultation was highlighted to members, noting that sub-contractual providers would need to register with the Office for Students (OfS) if they have over 300 students.

Senate elections

24/086 The arrangements and timelines for vacancies to the Senate membership was provided for information.

Partnerships register

24/087 The University's register of partnership arrangements was received.

Course proposal forms

24/088 The list of approved course proposal forms was provided to members for information.

Course suspension, discontinuation and re-instatement forms

24/089 The list of approved course suspension and discontinuation forms was provided to members.

Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)

24/090 Activity involving PSRBs, since the last meeting, was provided to members for information.

Activity since the last meeting

24/091 The five-year standard academic calendar, which was circulated to all members electronically for approval was received.

Sub-committees

Academic Appointments and Promotions Committee

24/092 The minutes from the Academic Appointments and Promotion Committee held on 13 November 2024 were provided.

Quality Committee

24/093 The minutes from the Quality Committee held on 11 September and 20 November 2024 were received.

Research and Enterprise Committee

24/094 The minutes from the Research and Enterprise Committee held on 5 December 2024 were provided.

School Academic Committee – Allied Health Sciences (AHS)

24/095 The minutes from the Allied Health Sciences School Academic Committee held on 6 November 2024 and 5 February 2025 were provided.

School Academic Committee – Technology, Business and Arts (TBA)

24/096 The minutes from the Technology, Business and Arts School Academic Committee held on 16 October 2024 and 5 February 2025 were provided.

School Academic Committee – Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health (NMPH)

24/097 The minutes from the Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health School Academic Committee held on 10 October 2024 were provided.

Any other business

24/098 There was no further business.

Date of next meeting

24/099 The next meeting will take place at 14:00 on Wednesday 11 June 2025 in room A110, Atrium Building.

Alison McQuin
Head of Quality