

University of Suffolk

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11 June 2025 at 14.00 hours in A206, Atrium Building

Chair: Professor Jenny Higham (Vice-Chancellor)

Present: Associate Professor Stuart Agnew (Director, Centre for Academic and International Partnerships), Professor Rachel Allen (Provost), Dr Marco Beato (University wide representative, School of Allied Health Sciences), 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), 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), Dr Reilly Willis (University wide representative, School of Social Sciences and Humanities)

Apologies: Stuart Lipscombe (Representative, University and College Union), Professor Brian McCook (Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Shannon Pilsworth (Students' Union Officer, School of Technology, Business and Arts), Danielle Ramsey (School of Allied Health Sciences representative)

Secretary: Alison McQuin (Head of Quality)

In attendance: Gavin Brooks (Senior Advisor, Halpin), John Cavani (Director of Marketing, Communications and International), 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), James Nial (Head of Planning and Management Information), Laura Polley in attendance for Stuart Lipscombe (UCU representative), Lindsay Westgarth (Students' Union Engagement Officer)

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

- 24/100 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising and comments for the VC

- 24/101 All actions had been completed, were included on the agenda or were due at a future date.

Students' Union report

- 24/102 The new Students' Union (SU) Presidents will commence their role on 30 June 2025. Once in post, the initial focus will be on welcoming new students starting their courses in September.
- 24/103 Members queried whether the 'Home Away from Home' campaign would continue in 2025/26. It was reported that this was part of a previous Officer's campaign and the SU would explore what elements could be built in as part of the SU's standard offer.
- 24/104 It was noted that a part-time International Officer had been appointed during the SU election process and their work related to international students would be reported to Senate.

Policies and procedures

- 24/105 It was noted that some updates to nomenclature may be required to the policies and procedures presented to Senate as a result of the workforce consultation. It was confirmed these updates would be made prior to publication of the policies and procedures to the University website.

Dignity at Study Policy

- 24/106 The Dignity at Study Policy was reviewed as part of its normal review cycle process, with only minor amendments proposed to ensure continued alignment to the Office for Students (OfS) Free Speech duties and the new E6 condition of registration related to harassment and sexual misconduct.
- 24/107 Members were supportive of the amendments but suggested further changes to make explicit who the policy applied to e.g. members of the Health Voices Forum; to confirm the approach to receiving reports from witnesses and whistleblowers; and to consistently set out what is meant by 'reasonable' throughout the document.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to update the policy to make explicit who the policy applied to e.g. members of the Health Voices Forum; to confirm the approach to receiving reports from witnesses and whistleblowers; and to consistently set out what is meant by 'reasonable' throughout the document prior to publication in August 2025.

Fitness to Practise Procedure

- 24/108 A working group had proposed changes to the Fitness to Practise Procedure and members thanked the Office for Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct (OSACC) to being open and responsive to this work.

- 24/109 Members queried how research and malpractice applied to this procedure and it was confirmed that this area was covered by the Academic Misconduct Procedure rather than Fitness to Practise.
- 24/110 The use of the phrase 'reasonably possible' was discussed in reference to students returning to placement. It was confirmed that while the University would do everything possible to get students back into placement, this could not always be guaranteed and so it did not want to be seen as a contractual right for students.
- 24/111 Members approved the changes, which supported the procedure being completed as soon as possible, so not to disadvantage students.

Outcome: Approved.

Free Speech Code of Practice

- 24/112 The Free Speech Code of Practice had been reviewed to reflect activity across the sector. Members were supportive of the changes but requested further clarification about who the policy applied to, along with correction of typographical errors.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to correct typographical errors and include clarity on who the policy applies to prior to publication in August 2025.

Procedure for the Validation of New Courses

- 24/113 The proposed changes to the Procedure for the Validation of New Courses were discussed. Further updates to section three may be required following work undertaken by the Operational Optimisation Board, in relation to the course proposal form process, and any outcomes from the governance review, to ensure alignment with the terms of reference for the Strategic Marketing Group, Portfolio Oversight Committee and Apprenticeship Board.
- 24/114 It was confirmed that there was an expectation that student views would form a key part of the course development process, where cognate provision existed, but the changes made to the policy allowed greater flexibility on how and when this took place, for example use of focus groups with A-Level and FE College students.
- 24/115 Members discussed stakeholder involvement in the process, noting that a more holistic approach has been proposed and that stakeholders were embedded throughout the completion of the course proposal and course design and development events.
- 24/116 It was acknowledged that a specific reference to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) had not been included within section 8.6, but EDI was woven throughout all the themes for discussion within the validation documentation and the panel event.
- 24/117 Members suggested that an amendment be made to Appendix A paragraph 2.1 to include specific reference to professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. A typographical error was also noted for correction.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to include explicit reference to PSRB requirements within Appendix A paragraph 2.1 and to correct typographical errors prior to publication in August 2025.

Statement on Addressing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

- 24/118 A Statement on Addressing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct had been created in response to the new OfS E6 condition of registration. While members were supportive

of the statement, they requested that it be made explicit that it also applied to placement. It was noted that a number of typographical errors and formatting needed to be corrected prior to publication.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to embed reference to placement and correct typographical errors and formatting prior to publication in August 2025.

Student Charter

24/119 The Student Charter was reviewed as part of its normal annual review cycle. This document was jointly owned by the University and Students' Union and no formal proposals for change were being presented.

24/120 It was queried whether reference of the University's contribution to the local community could be included and it was agreed that reference to the University upholding its Civic University Agreement and pledges would be made.

24/121 Members discussed the use of the term 'British Values'. It was noted that this terminology was used by Ofsted and it would be helpful in expanding this section to list the values encompassed by this term.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to draw out the list of values covered by the term 'British Values' and reference to the civic university prior to publication in August 2025.

Student Discipline Procedure

24/122 Minor amendments were proposed to the Student Discipline Procedure as part of its normal review cycle. Members were supportive of the changes.

Outcome: Approved.

Student Protection Plan

24/123 The Student Protection Plan was reviewed as part of its normal annual review cycle and currently forms part of the OfS conditions of registration.

24/124 It was noted that the England Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) now falls under the Department for Education (DfE) and this reference would be updated prior to publication.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar to update the reference of ESFA to DfE prior to publication in August 2025.

Trans Equality Policy

24/125 Minor updates were made to the Trans Equality Policy as part of a collaborative piece of work between Student Life, People and Organisational Development (POD) and the LGBTQIA+ staff network. It was noted that the appendix checklist would not be published as part of the policy as this was for informal guidance.

Outcome: Approved.

Student recruitment

24/126 An update on student recruitment figures were provided to members, noting that clearing activity remained a priority.

24/127 Members welcomed the extended application deadline for international students and noted that the institution was trying to mitigate the challenges to the geopolitical situation the sector was operating in.

24/128 It was suggested that the 'Apply via UCAS' button on the University's course webpages could be better at directing applicants to make an application during the Clearing period.

Agreed action: The Director of Marketing, Communications and International to explore the re-direct for the 'Apply via UCAS' button on the University's course webpages during Clearing to make it easier for applicants. An update should be provided at the next Senate meeting.

24/129 Members discussed communication methods with applicants, suggesting using voice notes and WhatsApp. It was noted that course teams could still be involved in contacting applicants as well as student ambassadors during clearing.

Agreed action: The Director of Marketing, Communications and International to explore further communication methods to be used with applicants and provide details at the next Senate meeting.

Student attrition update

24/130 Members were provided with the final attrition rates for 2023/24 and an update on the 2024/25 figures, noting that further withdrawals were expected after the summer boards. The improvement of the data quality was highlighted, which was result of the work from a number of teams across the institution.

24/131 It was confirmed that student transfers were not included within the withdrawal data, but that it may include students who were back-set. Non-enrollers and non-starters were also split out from the withdrawal data presented to Senate.

24/132 Members thanked the Partnership and Management Information team on the development of the new data dashboards, allowing easy access to usable data that supported conversations with partners.

Institutional Apprenticeship Self-Assessment Report

24/133 The Institutional Self-Assessment Report, highlighting strengths and areas of improvement for apprenticeship provision was presented to members, noting that this had been considered by the Apprenticeship Board.

Academic Framework

24/134 An update on progress to the 30-credit academic framework was provided, noting that communications to students were being developed jointly with the Students' Union and that staff communication was ongoing.

24/135 The main area of focus was currently the progression assessment boards and providing Chair's of these boards with guidance to ensure a smooth transition for students moving to 30-credits in 2025/26.

24/136 A set of apprenticeship academic calendars were being developed to meet employer needs and, where possible, standardisation with University processes. Members

suggested that the almanac, which contained the academic calendars, be made more prominent on The Hub for staff.

Agreed action: The Interim Academic Registrar and the Director of Marketing, Communications and International to explore positioning of the almanac on The Hub to make it more prominent. An update should be provided to the next Senate meeting.

- 24/137 Half the course portfolio at Ipswich has been re-approved in the 30-credit structure for a September 2025 start, with the rest due for re-approval for a September 2026 start. It was noted that some of these courses had been franchised to international (TNE) partners and work was ongoing to also re-approve these into the 30-credit structure.

Partnership update

- 24/138 An update on partnership activity since the last meeting was provided. Members requested that further data sets, for example retention figures, be included in future reports.

Agreed action: The Director for the Centre of Academic and International Partnerships to include data sets, such as retention figures, in the next report to Senate.

Sector activity

- 24/139 A summary of headlines from across the sector was provided to members.

Senate elections

- 24/140 The outcome of the Senate elections was reported, noting that Dr Pere Ayling had also been elected as the University wide academic representative.
- 24/141 Updates to membership may be required following the outcome of the workforce consultation and this would be communicated to colleagues as necessary.

Partnerships register

- 24/142 The University's register of partnership arrangements was received.

Course suspension, discontinuation and re-instatement forms

- 24/143 The list of approved course suspension and discontinuation forms was provided to members.

Activity since the last meeting

- 24/144 The policies and procedures related to postgraduate research were approved on Senate Chair's action and shared with members for information.

Sub-committees

Quality Committee

- 24/145 The minutes from the Quality Committee held on 5 February 2025 were received.

Research and Enterprise Committee

24/146 The minutes from the Research and Enterprise Committee held on 26 February 2025 were provided.

School Academic Committee – Allied Health Sciences (AHS)

24/147 The minutes from the Allied Health Sciences School Academic Committee held on 12 February and 30 April 2025 were provided.

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

24/148 The minutes from the Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health School Academic Committee held on 20 February 2025 were provided.

Any other business

24/149 The successful five-year re-accreditation of the PgC Academic Practice and PASSPoRT course by AdvanceHE was reported to members.

Date of next meeting

24/150 The date of the next meeting was to be confirmed.

Alison McQuin
Head of Quality