

University of Suffolk

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8 October 2025 at 14.00 hours in W126, Waterfront Building

Chair: Professor Jenny Higham (Vice-Chancellor)

Present: Associate Professor Stuart Agnew (Director, Centre for Academic and International Partnerships), Javiera Artenas (School of Business, Arts, Social Sciences and Technology representative), Pere Ayling (University wide academic representative, School of Business, Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities), Professor Rachel Allen (Provost), Heather Bishop (School of Business, Arts, Social Sciences and Technology representative), Chrissy Buckle (School Manager, Professional Services representative), Dr Sam Chenery-Morris (Executive Dean, School of Business, Arts, Social Sciences and Technology), Dr Mary Cornelius (Educational Development and Digital Innovation Manager, Vice-Chancellor's nominee), Rob Ellis (Director of Learning and Teaching), Mars Hardy (Students' Union School Officer), Marek Hornak (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Careers, Commercial and Academic Partnerships), Dr Ross Kemble (University wide representative, School of Business, Arts, Social Sciences and Technology), Professor Paula Kersten (Executive Dean, School of Health, Sciences and Society), Laura Pennie (Interim Academic Registrar), Danielle Ramsey (School of Health, Sciences and Society representative), Dr Marco Spada (University wide representative, School of Business, Arts, Social Sciences and Technology), Ann Teemal (Lecturer, School of Health, Sciences and Society, Vice-Chancellor's nominee)

Apologies: Dr Marco Beato (University wide representative, School of Health, Sciences and Society), Professor Emma Bond (Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange), Jo Divers (School of Health, Sciences and Society representative), Professor Eloise Ellis (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience), Fiona Fisk (University Secretary), Chantalle Hawley (Director of Student Life), Stuart Lipscombe (Representative, University and College Union), James Nial (Associate Director, Planning and Management Information), Charlie Steward (Students' Union School Officer) (*feedback provided in advance of the meeting*)

Secretary: Alison McQuin (Head of Quality)

In attendance: John Cavani (Chief Marketing Officer), Dr Kay Thompson (Head of Research Degree Awarding Powers and REF 2029) in attendance for Professor Emma Bond

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

25/001 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising

Policies and procedures – Admissions Policy (from minute 24/054)

25/002 It was confirmed that this action had been completed and the Admissions Policy published on the website.

Policies and procedures – Professorial Appointments (from minute 24/076)

25/003 It was noted that work had begun on updating terminology within the policy and a further update would be provided at the next Senate meeting.

Student recruitment (from minute 24/128)

25/004 It was reported that the re-direct button on the course pages during Clearing would be explored further in time for the 2025/26 Clearing cycle.

Student recruitment (from minute 24/129)

25/005 It was confirmed that it was not possible to use WhatsApp messages for applicants due to data governance issues, but other communication methods such as Student Ambassadors were being used.

Academic Framework (from minute 24/136)

25/006 The positioning of the almanac on The Hub was currently being explored by the Communications team and a further update would be provided at the next Senate meeting.

Partnership update (from minute 24/138)

25/007 It was confirmed that data sets were included in the partnerships report on the Senate agenda.

25/008 An update concerning the closure of the nursery was provided to members.

25/009 All other actions had been completed.

Students' Union report

25/010 An update from the Students' Union (SU) was provided to members, covering the priority areas of the SU for the year including building community within Ipswich and Suffolk, working with PhD students, development of student information on The Hub; celebrating the success of the 'Welcome Week' and confirming bi-election and course representative arrangements.

25/010 Members thanked the SU for their support at the recent Open Day.

Terms of reference

25/011 The terms of reference and membership were reviewed annually, with changes proposed to the membership to reflect the outcomes of the workforce consultation and subsequent structure and roles. It was noted that further changes may be required following the outcome of the governance review, which were due to be submitted to the Executive in November. Members were supportive of the changes.

Outcome: Approved.

Policies and procedures

Academic Appeals Procedure for Research Degree Students

25/012 The Academic Appeals Procedure for Research Degree Students was updated to reflect the outcomes of the workforce consultation and resulting changes to structures and roles.

25/013 Members queried the removal of reference to the Suffolk Doctoral College and it was explained that previously this had been a discrete group of staff but was now being used as an umbrella term, with references to specific teams to signpost student queries. It was agreed that inclusion of reference to Registry Services would provide further clarification.

Agreed action: The Head of Research Degree Awarding Powers and REF 2029 to include reference to Registry Services within the Procedure by 30 October for sharing with Senate members.

25/014 The composition of appeals panels was discussed, trying to balance the level of expertise required by the panel and the availability of staff resource. It was noted that the awarding body, the University of Essex, did not require the Chair of an appeals panel to hold a doctorate. It was agreed to include Professors to the pool of panel Chairs, with the expectation that Chairs hold doctorates. In addition, the Chair and at least one panel member should have experience of research degree student supervision through to completion.

Agreed action: The Head of Research Degree Awarding Powers and REF 2029 to update the appeals panel membership to include Professors within the pool of panel Chairs and update the expertise of panel members by 30 October for sharing with Senate members.

Code of Practice for the Delivery and Management of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes

25/015 Minor amendments were proposed to the Code of Practice for the Delivery and Management of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes to reflect the outcomes of the workforce consultation and resulting changes in structures and roles. It was noted that there was a dedicated working group overseeing transition arrangements led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Knowledge and Exchange with relevant input from the Schools and Professional Services teams.

25/016 There were a number of queries around the role of the Suffolk Doctoral College and the responsibilities of Professional Services and the Schools. It was confirmed that the Suffolk Doctoral College was an umbrella term for staff involved in supporting postgraduate research students and agreed that greater clarity about this and governance structures should be included within the Code of Practice. It was agreed that the responsibilities of Professional Service teams and Schools should be made more explicit in relation to admissions, induction, student administration, supervisory arrangements and viva arrangements.

Agreed action: The Head of Research Degree Awarding Powers and REF 2029 to include greater clarity on the Suffolk Doctoral College, governance arrangements and the responsibilities of the Schools and Professional Service teams by 30 October for sharing with Senate members.

- 25/017 It was confirmed that current workloads were discussed and agreed with the Research Institutes with a workload allocation model being developed for future implementation.
- 25/018 It was confirmed that an external examiner would always be appointed, but this would be supplemented by a senior and experienced internal examiner where the external examiner may be less experienced.
- 25/019 It was agreed that minor amendments be made to paragraph 24 and 48 to strengthen information around the conflict of interest of supervisors and concerns about supervisory arrangements.

Agreed action: The Head of Research Degree Awarding Powers and REF 2029 to update paragraph 24 and 48 to strengthen information related to conflicts of interest and supervisory arrangements by 30 October for sharing with Senate members.

Framework and Regulations for Integrated Masters' Awards

- 25/020 The Framework and Regulations for Integrated Masters' Awards was updated to set out the University's approach to standard setting and include specific variations for the proposed MPharm Pharmacy course. Members were supportive of the changes but noted that paragraph referencing needed to be updated.

Agreed action: The Academic Registrar to update paragraph referencing prior to publication on the website.

Framework and Regulations for Research Degree Awards

- 25/021 The Framework and Regulations of Research Degree Awards was updated to reflect the outcomes of the workforce consultation and resulting changes in structures and roles. Members noted that as part of the University's application for research degree awarding powers (RDAP) that it would also need to demonstrate how it continued to meet the criteria for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP).

Outcome: Approved.

Framework and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards

- 25/022 A minor change was proposed to the Framework and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards to note that level 7 dissertations would 'normally' be of 60 credits. It was noted that this change had been supported by Quality Committee and aligned with the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Characteristics Statement: Master's Degrees to support variations for professional courses. Members were supportive of the changes.

Outcome: Approved.

Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Framework

- 25/023 The Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Framework was reviewed annually to ensure continued alignment with the latest funding criteria. Amendments were proposed to reflect updated terminology and the changes to the minimum number of off-the-job hours required per standard.
- 25/024 Members were supportive of the changes but queried the removal of reference to level 7 as the University had validated a MSc Advanced Clinical Practice apprenticeship. Members also requested that reference to the University's Apprenticeship Board be included, where appropriate, along with some minor editing to provide further clarification and updates to terminology used.

Agreed action: The Pro Vice-Chancellor Careers, Commercial and Academic Partnerships to provide further clarification and updates to terminology used by 30 October for sharing with Senate members.

Intercalation Procedure for Research Degree Students

25/025 Minor amendments were proposed to the Intercalation Procedure for Research Degree Students to reflect the outcomes of the workforce consultation and resulting changes in structures and roles. Members were supportive of the changes.

Outcome: Approved.

Postgraduate Research Misconduct Policy

25/026 The Postgraduate Research Misconduct Policy was updated to reflect the outcomes of the workforce consultation and resulting changes in structures and roles. While members were supportive of the changes, they requested that reference to the University's Fitness to Practise Procedure be included along with a hyperlink to the Student Discipline Procedure.

Agreed action: The Head of Research Degree Awarding Powers and REF 2029 to include a reference to the Fitness to Practise Procedure and hyperlink to the Student Discipline Procedure by 30 October for sharing with Senate members.

New partnership proposal

25/027 A partnership proposal to re-establish a partnership with **West Suffolk College** was considered, noting that the proposed numbers were conservative and that the partnership could be developed further with additional courses. It was confirmed that the due diligence related to this partner was positive. Members were supportive of the proposal.

Outcome: Approved.

Student survey results

25/028 An overview of the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) were provided to members along with access to the PowerBI platform to allow further interrogation of the data.

25/029 Key headlines from the NSS were highlighted including the positive results for Ipswich overall and for the University's franchised partners. It was noted that Ipswich exceeded benchmark for teaching and learning and for assessment and feedback. It was acknowledged that further work was required to improve scores for course organisation and management, apprenticeships, placements and student voice.

25/030 Members noted that the overall satisfaction rate for the PTES placed the University at 30 out of 102 participating institutions but noted that further work was required to improve scores at partner institutions.

25/031 Members were concerned with the satisfaction rate for research community in the PRES and it was confirmed that an action plan with a number of planned initiatives in place to improve this metric.

Office for Students (OfS) External Quality Assurance of End-Point Assessment

- 25/032 An update on work following the Office for Students (OfS) External Quality Assurance (EQA) of End-Point Assessment (EPA) monitoring visit was provided to members, noting that enhancements for the Digital and Technology Solutions apprenticeship standard would be replicated to other apprenticeship standards.

Academic calendar

- 25/033 The institutional calendar for 2029/30 and 2030/31 were provided for information, noting this aligned with the existing five-year calendar approved by Senate in 2024/25.
- 25/034 Members were reminded of the importance of an institutional academic calendar to support data quality, course organisation and management and regulatory requirements. Variations to the 2026/27 calendar for a small number of courses would be approved through a separate process in the autumn.

Quality assurance reports

- 25/035 The annual Quality Assurance Report provided members with the outcome of the observation of assessment boards, course (re)approvals, external examiner (EE) reports and professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) activity.
- 25/036 It was noted that work was being undertaken by the Organisational Optimisation Programme (OOP) to support making assessment boards more efficient and improve data quality. This work would be reported to OOP Board and to the Executive.
- 25/037 The External Examiner reports highlighted that assessment and feedback continued to be highly rated by EEs.
- 25/038 There was a significant number of course (re)approvals in 2024/25 as the University transitioned to the 30-credit academic framework. Members thanked academic teams and Quality Assurance for their work in supporting this project.

Partnership update

- 25/039 An update on activity with partner institutions was provided to members. The anticipated enrolment numbers were shared, with thanks given to the Admissions team for processing the applications.
- 25/040 The withdrawal rates were shared with members and confirmed that they were discussed with partners at the Partnership Management Group (PMG) meetings. The SU reported that there were working more closely with partners, with the SU wellbeing services helping to support student retention. It was noted that the SU and the Directorate of Careers, Commercial and Academic Partnerships would work together to co-ordinate a calendar of events with partner institutions.

OfS activity

- 25/041 An overview of recent OfS activity was provided to members. It was highlighted that changes to the initial conditions of registration only applied to new providers wanting to join the OfS register, but the changes reflected a direction of travel for the University to be aware of.

Partnerships register

25/042 The University's register of partnership arrangements was received.

Course proposal forms

25/043 The list of course proposal forms approved by the Portfolio Oversight Committee were provided to members.

Course suspension, discontinuation and re-instatement forms

25/044 The list of approved course suspension and discontinuation forms was provided to members.

Activity since the last meeting

25/045 The policies and procedures approved on Senate Chair's action to ensure they were in place for the start of the 2025/26 academic year were shared with members for information.

Any other business

25/046 It was reported that a number of events were being planned to gather views from staff and students to inform a revised University strategy. Further information would be provided on The Hub.

Date of next meeting

25/047 The next meeting will be the joint Senate and Board workshop to be held at 09.00 on Thursday 27 November 2025.

Alison McQuin
Head of Quality