

## University of Suffolk

### **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES ON INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW PANELS**

These guidance notes are intended to provide information for student representatives participating in panels for institutional reviews of University of Suffolk partner institutions.

The institutional review process is used to ensure that our partner institutions continue to offer students a high quality learning experience that meets University expectations. It also provides an opportunity for both the University and the partner to reflect on whether the partnership continues to operate effectively and whether there is scope for future enhancement of collaborative working.

Institutional reviews usually take place every five years, and are in addition to reviews of individual courses delivered by the partner (i.e. they focus more on institution-wide strategies, approaches and practices).

#### **Why is student involvement important?**

We are keen to capture students' views on higher education provision delivered within our partner institutions, and the way in which partners support students' learning and development. This is so that we can make sure students have the best possible experience studying for University of Suffolk awards. We value students' opinions and want to ensure that students are able to take an active role in developing and improving our HE provision.

#### **What happens at an institutional review event?**

In the months leading up to the institutional review event, the partner institution will prepare a self-evaluation document that reflects on their delivery of HE provision over the last few years and how they see this developing in the future. The University will also prepare an evaluative report on the operation and management of the partnership.

A panel is formed to consider the partner institution under review. There are typically around 8 members of the panel, including academic and administrative staff from the University, a representative from the partner institution, a representative from another university (to provide an external perspective) and a representative of the University of Suffolk Students' Union. There is also a panel secretary, who will be happy to answer any queries you have either leading up to the event or on the day.

Two or three weeks before the event, panel members are sent a pack which contains details on arrangements for the review event and the review documentation (usually in hard copy with supporting information available electronically). This gives panel members a chance to find out more about HE provision at the partner institution before the event and to identify any things that they would like to discuss on the day.

For the actual event, the panel meets at the partner institution. The event typically starts at around 9:30am and finishes by 4.30pm, with lunch provided. During the event, the panel

gets a chance to view facilities and meet with students and partner staff. There may also be a meeting with employer representatives. At the end of the event, the panel reaches a decision about whether the institution should be re-approved as a partner of the University of Suffolk. The panel also has the opportunity to commend positive aspects of partner provision and/or identify areas where there is room for improvement. These conclusions are recorded in a written report and action plan which is produced by the secretary. The partner institution is expected to address any issues included in the action plan, and this is overseen by the University.

### **What is my role on the panel?**

You are a full and equal member of the panel and your views will be valued by other panel members. Please participate honestly and constructively, and don't be afraid to ask questions, make suggestions or tell the panel what you believe students might feel about their experiences at the partner institution.

Although the experience may initially seem daunting, please rest assured that your thoughts and suggestions are incredibly valuable and the panel will be keen to make you feel welcome and to hear your views. Some of the things you might want to consider are:

- Does HE provision at the partner institution meet students' needs and expectations?
- Are arrangements for induction of new students effective?
- Are teaching methods appropriate?
- Do students get useful and timely feedback on their work from staff?
- Do students have adequate access to the necessary resources (e.g. labs, computers, the library)?
- Are there suitable social spaces for students (for college students, ideally separate from more general social spaces used by FE students)?
- Are students well prepared for future employment or future study?
- Is information for students (for example in course handbooks or online) clear and accessible?
- Do you feel that there is sufficient support (both academic and personal) to help students during their time at the partner institution?
- Do students have opportunities to provide feedback on their experiences on a regular basis? Do staff respond well to their feedback?
- What does the partner institution do well?
- Is there anything that could be improved?

If the rest of the panel does not ask questions about something that you feel is important, do not be afraid to bring it to their attention as you have a unique and valuable perspective on the student experience. If there is anything that you do not understand, please feel free to ask any member of the panel for clarification.

## **What's in it for me?**

Firstly, you will be helping to make sure that HE provision within our partner institutions is fit-for-purpose and meets students' needs. You get to have your views listened to and taken seriously, and you will have a real input into decisions that are made that will affect the provision that we offer through our partnership arrangements.

You will get to meet new people, and it will also provide an opportunity to gain new skills and enhance your CV. It's a real chance to put your communication skills into action, and to demonstrate your teamwork, time management, negotiation and presentation/meeting skills. As one former student panel member noted about the role, "this was truly an experience I am glad I participated in" and "I would actively encourage other students in the future to be involved".

## **Where can I go to for further advice?**

Further information on the institutional review process is available on the University website at <https://www.uos.ac.uk/content/approval-monitoring-and-review-partnership-activity>. If you would like a member of the Quality team to give you a briefing; if you would like clarification on your role or on how the process works; or if you simply want an opportunity to chat about the event, please feel free to contact the Head of Quality Enhancement, Mark Lyne (email [m.lyne@uos.ac.uk](mailto:m.lyne@uos.ac.uk)).