

University of Suffolk

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STUDENTS INVOLVED IN THE STUDENT MEETING AT AN INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW EVENT

These guidance notes are intended to provide information for students who are due to take part in a student meeting at an institutional review event for a University of Suffolk partner institution.

The institutional review process is used to ensure that 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 institution 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 institution (i.e. they focus more on institution-wide strategies, approaches and practices).

Why is my involvement important?

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

The meeting with students is often the most valuable part of an institutional review event, as we get to hear what it's actually like to be a student at the partner institution on a day-to-day basis, rather than just reading about it in documentation.

What happens at an institutional review event?

In the months leading up to the institutional review event, your 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 on the day.

The panel meets at the partner institution. During the event, the panel gets a chance to view facilities and meet with both staff and students. 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 expected of me?

Institutional review panels find it incredibly useful to meet with students, to get a real feel for how HE provision at the partner institution is operating and how it is viewed by students. During the student meeting, members of the panel will ask you a range of questions about your experiences at the partner institution. For example, they might ask you:

- whether your course meets your needs and expectations
- whether the way in which you are taught and assessed is effective
- whether timetables and workloads are manageable
- whether you get useful and timely feedback on your work from staff
- whether you have adequate access to resources (e.g. labs, computers, the library)
- whether there are suitable social spaces for students (for those of you in colleges, ideally separate from more general social spaces used by FE students)
- whether you feel that the course will prepare you well for future employment or future study
- whether information provided to you about your course and the wider institution (for example in handbooks or online) is clear and accessible
- whether you feel there is sufficient support (both academic and personal) to help you during your time at the partner institution
- whether you have opportunities to provide feedback on your experiences on a regular basis, and how effectively the partner institution responds to your feedback
- what the partner institution does well
- what you think could be improved.

Although it can seem a daunting prospect to meet with the panel, please do not feel intimidated. The panel will be keen to hear your views and to put you at ease. Please speak freely and honestly about your experiences, highlighting any aspects of provision that you like and any areas where you think there is room for improvement. If the panel does not ask questions about something that you feel is important, do not be afraid to bring it to their attention.

Your feedback will be treated with discretion and your views will not be individually attributed to you in either the written report of the event or in verbal feedback to partner staff.

What's in it for me?

Firstly, you will be helping to make sure that HE provision within your institution 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 student experience at your institution.

You will get to meet new people, and it will also provide an opportunity to gain new skills and enhance your CV. In particular, it's a real chance to put your communication skills into action.

Where can I go to for further advice?

If you would like further information or advice on taking part in an institutional review event, please get in touch with the University of Suffolk Students' Union, who will be happy to advise you or point you in the right direction of someone who can help. Their contact details are available at www.uosunion.org.

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 how you can best contribute to the event, please feel free to contact the Head of Quality Enhancement, Mark Lyne (email m.lyne@uos.ac.uk).