

University of Suffolk

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 3 March 2021 at 14:00 hours via Zoom

Chair: Professor Helen Langton (Vice-Chancellor)

Present: Dr Suha Al-Naimi (School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology, Vice-Chancellor nominee), Daniel Betts (Students' Union School Officer, Suffolk Business School), Holly Bowen (Admissions Manager), Dr Ellen Buck (Director of Learning and Teaching), Aaron Burrell (Head of Learning Information and Environments, Vice-Chancellor nominee), Dr Sam Chenery-Morris (University wide academic representative (School of Health and Sports Sciences)) until item 16 (Student recruitment update), Adam Clayden (School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology representative), Professor Mohammad Dastbaz (Deputy Vice-Chancellor) until item 15 (Partnership proposals), Dr Paul Driscoll-Evans (Dean, School of Health and Sports Sciences), Fiona Fisk (Academic Registrar and Director of Student Life and Registry Services), Marianne Flack (Director of Quality, Teacher Development, Student Progress and Foundation Learning, Suffolk New College), Daniel Goulborn (President, Students' Union), Rachel Heathershaw (University wide representative, School of Health and Sports Sciences), Professor Gurpreet Jagpal (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Business and Entrepreneurship), Dr Wendy Lecluyse (School of Social Sciences and Humanities representative), Professor Alistair Mathie (Dean, School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology), Professor Brian McCook (Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Dr Stuart McErlain-Naylor (School of Health and Sports Sciences representative), Chris Meredith (Executive Dean HE, West Suffolk College), Reilly Willis (University wide representative, School of Social Sciences and Humanities) until item 16 (Student recruitment update)

Apologies: Professor Emma Bond (Director of Research), Dr Daba Chowdhury (University wide academic representative (Suffolk Business School)), Robert Price (Suffolk Business School representative)

Secretary: Alison McQuin (Head of Quality (Committee and Validation))

In attendance: Stuart Agnew (Representative, University and College Union), Polly Bridgman (Director of External Relations), Tim Greenacre (Chief Operating Officer), Dr Mark Lyne (Head of Quality Enhancement), Jane Murray (Head of Graduation and Assessment) for item 5 (Framework and Regulations for Undergraduate Awards), James Nial (Head of Planning and Management Information), Laura Pennie (Deputy Academic Registrar) for item 5 (Framework and Regulations for Undergraduate Awards), Dr Kay Thompson (Head of Quality (Assurance and Partnerships) for item 5 (Framework and Regulations for Undergraduate Awards)

Minutes of previous meetings held on 14 October and 16 December 2020

20/090 The minutes of the meetings held on 14 October and 16 December 2020 were approved as an accurate record to be published on the website.

Matters arising

20/091 All matters arising items were either completed, deferred or due for completion at a later date.

Students' Union report

20/092 Standardising academic feedback was discussed with members querying whether a template had been developed. It was explained that this was a campaign manifesto to ensure there was a commitment to high quality feedback and it was felt that a rigid template was not necessary.

20/093 The 'Good Night Out' campaign was highlighted, this was in response to students indicating that they had not always felt safe on a night out in Ipswich. The Students' Union were working with an external provider to provide training.

Chair's report

20/094 The Chair's report was received, highlighting key activities across the sector including the most recent White Paper from the Department for Education.

Framework and Regulations for Undergraduate Awards

20/095 A working group, consisting of academics, student representatives and representatives from professional services, had been established to review the assessment regulations. Sector benchmarking had also taken place along with receiving feedback from external examiners. The discussion points focused on the undergraduate assessment regulations, noting that variations would be required to cover professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. The final proposals would be brought to the summer committees for approval.

20/096 The number of assessment attempts was discussed, with some concerns about third attempts and the number of retakes allowed, noting that the University provided more attempts than some benchmark universities. However, there had been a positive impact on progression for students who had completed a third attempt.

20/097 The use of condonement was discussed, with broad support for allowing 20-credits of condonement across undergraduate provision but not postgraduate provision. A further review of the data was needed to see how this change would impact on students.

20/098 Members discussed the progression requirements, noting that it was proposed that this was changed to trailing one module, either 20 or 40 credits, between levels. It was queried how this would work in the block delivery model and the outcome of the block delivery pilot would help inform this proposal.

20/099 The classification algorithm was discussed, including the weighting between level 5 and level 6 modules, noting that there was a mixed view in how degree classifications should be calculated. It was explained that Universities UK (UUK) had published a paper on degree classifications that highlighted the need for a measured approach to

discounting modules to limit grade inflation. It was noted that modelling was taking place from the last three years to understand the impact of changing the algorithm.

- 20/100 It was confirmed that any changes to the assessment regulations would be supported with plans for training, communication to staff and students and changes to computer systems.

Evaluation of learning during Covid

- 20/101 The evaluation of the block and blend pilot was provided to members, noting this drew on student and academic feedback along with achievement data.

- 20/102 It was queried whether the roll-out of block delivery could be delayed by a year to allow for comparison with a control group. However, it was noted that this would potentially be more disruptive to students and that there was data and feedback from other student cohorts that were studying in semesters.

- 20/103 A double-block system or alternative block structure could be used, where there was a robust rationale to so and appropriate support mechanisms were in place. Alternative delivery methods were also being explored for masters level study.

- 20/104 Learning hubs were discussed, with the idea that these could run throughout the academic year, if needed, to help support students. These could be delivered by team teaching with academics and staff from Learning Services to deliver specific sessions. It was noted that additional support for students entering level 4 may be required in 2021/22 due to the disruption in schools from the pandemic.

- 20/105 It was confirmed that feedback from the evaluation would be shared with the Academic Management Group and the working group reviewing the assessment regulations. Professional services teams continued to receive support with any changes, noting that the Learning Design Team met regularly with Academic Administrators.

- 20/106 Members discussed the impact of block delivery on part-time students and it was noted that the University were committed to exploring how the model could provide a good experience for part-time students.

- 20/107 Discussions with the Deans and the Academic Registrar would take place to ensure that applicants and students were made aware of the block delivery model. It was noted that the change to block delivery had not affected the content within the definitive course records.

University RiME report

- 20/108 The institutional RiME report was received, with members thanking the Head of Quality (Assurance and Partnerships) and the Educational Developer in collating the progress and issues raised by Schools, Partner Colleges and relevant professional services teams. The report highlighted that during the pandemic, students continued to achieve and had progressed. The importance of this document in demonstrating the University continued to meet academic standards was reinforced to members.

- 20/109 The increase in the proportion of the number of good degrees (page 11) was highlighted, but it was explained that this was still significantly lower than the sector average and did not pose any risk of allegations of grade inflation.

20/110 It was queried why there was a large number of low skilled graduates recorded within the School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology and it was suggested this could be due to the diverse nature of the courses within the School.

20/111 It was queried why BAME students (page 14) reported as being more satisfied with their experience given data received for other factors. It was suggested that this could be due to the relatively low numbers of students included in the survey.

Annual OSACC report

20/112 The annual Office for Student Appeals, Complaint and Conduct (OSACC) report was provided to members.

20/113 It was queried whether the deadlines to respond to cases could be extended. It was explained that although they could be extended, where there was good clear communication with the student, the timescales were set by the OIA.

20/114 The OSACC team were exploring expanding the pool of investigative officers and how the workload allocation model may be used to facilitate this.

20/115 Members thanked the OSACC team, those involved in Chairing, being a panel member, an investigating officer and the Students' Advice Centre for their work over the year.

Student withdrawal update

20/116 It was noted that it was difficult to compare the withdrawal data with the same period as last year due to the pandemic and the next update should provide a clearer picture. It was also highlighted that withdrawals within the School of Health and Sports Sciences could be delayed due to changes to the timings of placements during the pandemic, however, this was being closely monitored by the School.

20/117 'Personal reasons' and 'other' were the top reasons provided for withdrawal, followed by 'academic failure. There had been a concerted effort across the institution to improve the withdrawal rate with members agreeing that this needed to continue and noting that it was important to ensure that applicants were making the right course choice at the beginning of the process.

20/118 Members thanked the Head of Planning and Management Information for the detailed report.

Access and Participation Plan

20/119 It was reported that the 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan Monitoring Return required Senate and Board approval prior to being submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) in mid-April. Work had already begun on the Monitoring Return using data generated by the University, with the official OfS data still to be received. It was requested that a sub-group of Senate be convened to approve the Monitoring Return prior to going to Board.

Agreed action: The Director of External Relations and the Secretary to convene a sub-group of Senate by the end of March.

20/120 Members thanked the Students' Union for their work on the student submission.

Graduation

- 20/121 The opportunity to mark the graduation for the class of 2020 was due to take place the week commencing 17 May but the timing was being reviewed in light of government guidance. It was anticipated that the 2021 graduation ceremonies would take place in October on the Waterfront, although they may be in a different format to previous years.
- 20/122 The University remained committed to providing a meaningful celebration for 2020 graduates, even if a large congregation was not possible.

Senate representative election process

- 20/123 It was reported that the terms of office for three academic staff members of Senate would be ending at the end of the academic year. The election process would start with finding the School academic representative and then the University-wide representatives.
- 20/124 Members agreed to extend the current Vice-Chancellor nominees term by a further year.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee terms of reference

- 20/125 Minor changes to the LTAC terms of reference were proposed. Members were supportive of the changes but noted that the date of review should be updated along with the job title for the Head of Student Services.

Agreed action: The Deputy Vice-Chancellor to update the date of review and the job title for the Head of Services on the terms of reference prior to publication.

Policies and procedures

Admissions Policy

- 20/126 The Admissions Policy was subject to annual review. Members queried whether the changes had been considered within the context of the wider access and participation strategy. It was explained that the policy was already flexible to cover this, with details covered in paragraph 11 of the policy and further information on the use of contextualised offers on the University website.

Outcome: Approved.

Apprenticeship Framework

- 20/127 The Apprenticeship Framework was updated to reflect changes within the sector. It was agreed to update 'should' to 'will' in paragraphs 17 and 27 to better emphasise responsibilities. It was noted that training should be provided to relevant staff members who were affected by these changes.

Agreed action: The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Business and Entrepreneurship to update paragraphs 17 and 27 from 'should' to 'will' prior to publication and no later than 30 April 2021.

Higher National procedures

- 20/128 Following discussion with Pearson, a number of changes were made to the Higher National procedures to clarify responsibilities and marketing of courses.

Outcome: Approved.

Intellectual Property Policy (Research and Scholarly Outputs, and Learning and Teaching Materials)

20/129 Minor changes were proposed to the Intellectual Property Policy. It was confirmed that support was available to staff submitting material for publication, paragraph 10, and that links could be included within the policy to increase awareness of the benefits of Open Access, paragraph 23. It was agreed that paragraph 22 should be updated to show that the changes made the submission REF compliant.

Agreed action: The Director of Learning and Teaching to update the policy prior to publication and no later than 30 April 2021 with the following:

- Include links within the policy to increase awareness of the benefits of Open Access (paragraph 22)
- Update paragraph 22 to be specify that this makes the submission REF compliant

Student Charter

20/130 The Student Charter was subject to annual review, with changes proposed to reflect the University's revised strategy along with the commitments to anonymous marking and quality feedback. The revisions had been discussed and supported by the Quality Committee.

20/131 Members queried whether the statement 'assessing anonymously wherever possible' needed further clarification. It was explained that there needed to be some flexibility to facilitate assessment components, such as presentations, that could not be marked anonymously. It was noted that students were increasingly requesting anonymous marking and so teams should consider moving to components that could be marked anonymously whilst being mindful of the need to not compromise the variety of the assessment diet within the course.

20/132 It was queried whether 'critical thinking' should be added to the core values, however the statements were taken from the 2020-2030 Strategy and so no changes would be made at this stage.

Outcome: Approved.

Assessment Moderation for Unicaf

20/133 It was proposed to change the moderation process for Unicaf to better reflect the intensive delivery model and increased student numbers. The use of sample moderation for the Dissertation module and the number of markers was discussed. It was explained that the University would be taking a measured approach and would have its own auditing process.

Outcome: Approved.

Framework and Regulations for Unicaf awards

20/134 It was proposed to introduce a bespoke set of assessment regulations for Unicaf to better accommodate their complex delivery module. Members queried whether retaking the Dissertation module would result in a better pass rate and suggested that a third attempt may be beneficial, however, it was confirmed that students have not yet reached the Dissertation stage yet and so this would be kept under review.

Outcome: Approved.

Framework and Regulations for Undergraduate Awards delivered in partnership with Unitas
 20/135 It was proposed to amend the Unitas regulations to allow in-module compensation to align with the standard University regulations. Members queried whether the use of 10 credit modules should be included in paragraph 7 but it was noted that currently Unitas courses were delivered in 60 credit modules. It was also noted that the use of 10 credit modules were only used in exceptional circumstances within the standard University regulations.

20/136 Members queried whether the issuing of a posthumous award, in paragraph 67, should be amended to show as guidelines with the decision to be discussed and agreed at the Assessment Board. It was agreed that this should remain as proposed and would be considered further as part of the assessment regulations review.

Outcome: Approved.

Partnership proposals

20/137 It was explained that the partnership strategy was to have a few partnerships with reasonable numbers rather than lots of smaller partnerships. It was suggested that, after LD Training, the University had reached capacity for large UK partners, although there was still capacity for overseas partners.

LD Training

20/138 It was proposed to enter into a new partnership with LD Training. Members queried whether the partnership was a risk with the University's other partners, Global Banking School (GBS) and the London School of Commerce (LSC), in London and the level of support needed by the University. It was confirmed that LD Training operated in a different part of London than GBS and LSC and that all three partners had been made aware of each other. Support for this partnership would be provided from the Suffolk Business School with their Director of Partnerships having strategic oversight. Request for additional support for the Suffolk Business School and for professional service teams have been made.

Outcome: Approved.

Success Point College

20/139 A proposal to enter into a new partnership with Success Point College, based in the United Arab Emirates, was approved.

Outcome: Approved.

Student recruitment update

20/140 Applications had increased from the previous year, with all Schools, except the School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology, receiving more applications. It was confirmed that further course by course analysis was being undertaken. The decline in the number of EU applications was highlighted, along with the promising application figures from international students. It was noted that the proportion of applications from young students remained stable and that the University was receiving a greater proportion of applications from young students from the wider region and the rest of the UK.

20/141 It was reported that the University was no longer able to make pre-qualification unconditional offers, a change from previous years.

REF and RDAP

20/142 An update was provided to members on progress with REF and RDAP.

Attrition/withdrawal data

20/143 The outcomes of the 2019/20 attrition/withdrawal data was provided to members.

Partnerships

Partnerships update

20/144 An update on existing and new partnerships was provided to members.

Partnerships register

20/145 The University's register of partnership arrangements was received.

Course proposal forms

20/146 The list of course proposal forms approved since the last meeting was received.

Course suspension and discontinuation forms

20/147 The list of approved course suspension and discontinuation forms was provided to members.

Course validation/re-approval outcomes

20/148 The list of courses that were approved/re-approved so far in 2020/21 was provided to members.

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) reports

20/149 The recent reports received from PSRB was shared with members.

Chair's action

20/150 Members received the list of items approved on Chair's action since the previous meeting.

Academic calendar

20/151 The approved 2021/22 academic calendar was received.

Reports from sub-committees

Honorary Awards Committee

20/152 A report from the Honorary Awards Committee was received.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC)

20/153 The minutes from the LTAC meeting held on 18 November 2020 were provided for information.

Quality Committee

20/154 The minutes from the Quality Committee meeting held on 2 December 2020 were provided for information.

Research and Enterprise Committee

20/155 The minutes from the Research and Enterprise Committee held on 25 November 2020 were provided for information.

School Academic Committee

20/156 The minutes from the School Academic Committees were provided for information.

Any other business

20/157 Members thanked the Head of Quality Enhancement for their faithful service to the University and to Senate, noting that this was their last Senate meeting prior to retirement.

Date of next meeting

20/158 The next meeting is due to be held at 14:00 on 16 June 2021.

Alison McQuin

Head of Quality (Committee and Validation)