

University of Suffolk

## SENATE

### Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 October 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), Professor Emma Bond (Director of Research), Dr Ellen Buck (Director of Learning and Teaching), Aaron Burrell (Associate Director, Digital Learning and Innovation, Vice-Chancellor nominee), Dr Adam Clayden (School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology representative), Professor Mohammad Dastbaz (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Dr Paul Driscoll-Evans (Dean, School of Health and Sports Sciences), Fiona Fisk (Academic Registrar and Director of Student Life and Registry Services), Alex Gooch (Students' Union President of Education), Rachel Heathershaw (University wide representative, School of Health and Sports Sciences), Professor Gurpreet Jagpal (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Business and Entrepreneurship), Dr Ross Kemble (Suffolk Business School representative), Emily Kilkenny (Students' Union School Officer, School of Social Sciences and Humanities) from Senate terms of reference, Dr Rachael Martin (University wide representative, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Professor Brian McCook (Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Dr Stuart McErlain-Naylor (School of Health and Sports Sciences representative), Connor Parish (Students' Union Officer, School of Health and Sport Sciences), Sean Preston (University wide representative, School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology), Reilly Willis (University wide representative, School of Social Sciences and Humanities)

**Apologies:** Holly Bowen (Admissions Manager), Polly Bridgman (Director of External Relations), Dr Wendy Lecluyse (School of Social Sciences and Humanities representative), Professor Alistair Mathie (Dean, School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology)

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

**In attendance:** Stuart Agnew (Representative, University and College Union), Chantalle Hawley (Assistant Director, Student Life) for item Freedom of Speech, Tim Greenacre (Chief Operating Officer), James Nial (Head of Planning and Management Information),

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 meetings held on 16 June 2021

21/001 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2021 were approved as an accurate record to be published on the website.

### **Matters arising**

21/002 All matters arising items were either completed, deferred or due for completion at a later date.

### **Students' Union report**

21/003 Members welcomed the new Students' Union representatives to Senate. It was reported that the 2021/22 Freshers' week had been very successful, with over 1,000 students attending and many events being sold-out. The Freshers' week was promoted to students through a variety of methods, but any further feedback or support from staff would be welcomed to ensure all students were aware of the event.

21/004 Elections were underway for vacant Students' Union and course representative positions. Members were encouraged to support the Students' Union by advertising the positions, as it was critical to ensure there was a course representative elected for every course.

### **Chair's report**

21/005 The Chair's report was received, highlighting the excellent results in the Good University Guide and the Guardian league tables. The effort of everyone within the institution to improve the University's standing was recognised, noting the hard work needed to get the University to that position, and the continued effort to maintain and improve for future years. It was also reported that the results had been recognised externally. Members were encouraged to cascade this to their colleagues.

### **Freedom of speech**

21/006 An update on the Freedom of Speech Bill was provided to members. If approved, the Bill would result in amendments to the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) (2017) and would include enhanced statutory duties to protect freedom of speech for both higher education providers and Students' Unions. The Office for Students (OfS) would have additional responsibilities, with a Director of Freedom of Speech expected to be appointed. Compliance with the new legislation would also form part of the OfS' conditions of registration for providers, with monetary penalties for institutions and Students' Unions for any breaches.

21/007 It was not yet known how the responsibilities of the Office for Independent Adjudicators (OIA), the OfS and the courts would intersect if a complaint was made.

21/008 Mapping had already started with the University's existing policies and procedures and they largely aligned to the proposals. However, the commitment to freedom of speech would need to be highlighted every year to those using the premises. The University would need to actively promote academic debate, noting that at times academics may intentionally present a controversial view, to encourage students to think of all the issues surrounding the topic, but this was a necessary part of academic debate that should be supported.

21/009 The statutory duties applying to Students' Union were new, but the University's Students' Union had been actively engaged in the University's Prevent guidance and had signed-up to the guidance and risk assessments for external speakers. The University would support the Students' Union in reviewing its responsibilities under the new legislation.

## League tables and NSS results

- 21/010 A presentation was provided to members on the three key higher education league tables, the Complete University Guide; the Guardian league table; and the Times and the Sunday Times Good University guide. While the league tables did not measure quality, they indirectly represented brand value as they were used by applicants and parents when researching courses and by employers who used them when hiring graduates.
- 21/011 This year, the University of Suffolk improved its ranking by 30 places within the Guardian league table, by 17 places within the Good University Guide, and by 3 places within the Complete University Guide. Each league table used different data sets to compile their rankings, with the algorithms and weightings changing each year. However, it was not known how the data would be used until the rankings were published.
- 21/012 The data used in the Guardian league table was better aligned for modern higher education institutions. This year saw a significant shift in how the Guardian used the data, with less emphasis on the overall NSS score and previous graduation outcome data being used due to Covid. However, this could revert back in future years. It was important to note that for all league tables the data would be at least 9-12 months old and could be up to 2 years old, so potentially a poor NSS result could affect standings in league tables for a couple of years.
- 21/013 The inclusion of partner institutions within the University's data had a significant effect on the Guardian league table, as it increased the weighting of the business subject area, with the weighting likely to increase further in 2023. The NSS data, entry tariffs, value added and continuation data from partner institutions was used, and it was confirmed that partners were supported and monitored through the Partner Management Groups.
- 21/014 Members discussed the influence of the NSS on league tables, noting that meetings with teams about NSS results were ongoing. The Student Experience Ambassadors were also working closely with students and the Schools to understand the results and to gain additional feedback. It was confirmed that there were a set of presentation slides that were shared with course teams to explain how the NSS scale worked, along with guidance on how the NSS could be promoted.

## Terms of reference

### Senate terms of reference

- 21/015 The Senate terms of reference were reviewed annually. Members were supportive of the proposed changes, noting that the Students' Union President of Education's job title should be updated prior to publication.

**Agreed action:** The Secretary to update the Students' Union President of Education's job title prior to publication.

### Quality Committee terms of reference

- 21/016 The revised Quality Committee terms of reference were received, noting that the London School of Commerce, Global Banking School and LD Training would be added to the membership. The Centre of Excellence for Learning and Teaching (CELT) Executive and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee would merge to create a new CELT meeting that would report to Quality Committee.

**Agreed action:** The Secretary to update the terms of reference with the additional partners to the membership and to update the Students' Union President of Education's job title prior to publication.

### **Five-year academic calendar**

21/017 The five-year academic calendar was proposed, noting that changes may be required following the post-qualification admissions consultation and when Easter breaks had been confirmed. Only two-years of the calendar would be published on the website at a time. Following a request, it was agreed that the second reading week in the double-block model could be moved a week later in 2022/23 and 2023/24.

**Agreed action:** The Secretary to update the double-block reading weeks in 2022/23 and 2023/24 prior to publication.

### **Peer review and enhancement of teaching and learning**

21/018 The approach to the peer review and enhancement of teaching and learning was received, recognising that different approaches were needed for apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship provision to provide clarity to Ofsted and ensure continued alignment to apprenticeship requirements.

21/019 It was confirmed that Associate Deans would be used in observations of apprenticeship teaching and learning as it was a requirement by Ofsted that this was conducted by a senior member of staff. For apprenticeship provision, these observations had to be in-person, while non-apprenticeship observations could be either in-person or online.

**Outcome:** Approved.

### **Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework for Apprenticeships**

21/020 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework for apprenticeships was provided, to make explicit the approach for apprenticeship provision. Following feedback, it was agreed that it should be stipulated who completed the learning walks, to provide clarity to Ofsted, showing that this would not be undertaken by members of the Board.

**Agreed action:** The Director of Learning and Teaching to update the document prior to publication to stipulate who completed the learning walks and to clarify on page one that tripartite reviews would 'normally' take place every 12 weeks.

### **Access and Participation Plan**

21/021 The Access and Participation Plan (APP) research and evaluation report was received, providing an insight into understanding the student experience and the reasons for coming to university.

21/022 The report highlighted that students chose the University of Suffolk because it was local and it was also driven by career choice. Bursaries also had an effect on the students ability to attend University and on retention. It was queried how students could engage more with Careers, especially prior to entering level 6. It was recognised that this was a sector issue, but the University Careers team were facilitating events such as 'My Future Festival' and were working more closely with the Students' Union

and with the Schools to better reach students. It was also noted the importance of reaching postgraduate students as well as undergraduate students.

- 21/023 Social connectedness was key in helping in the retention of students, with members noting that while some students were cautious about staying on campus beyond their face-to-face contact sessions due to Covid, there had been an uptake in involvement with social sports, but more needed to be done to encourage students to stay on campus for longer to help build social relationships.
- 21/024 Work that would take place in 2021/22 to support the APP included further evaluation of block and blend; development of a liberated curriculum; evaluation of the personal academic coaching model; and a review of bursaries and impact on success.
- 21/025 The report would help inform the way forward with the APP, noting that challenging targets had been set by the OfS, which, in some instances, were made even more challenging by Covid.

### **Student recruitment**

- 21/026 The student recruitment figures were received, noting these had slightly changed since they were circulated. Applications had grown, but further work was needed to improve how the University presented itself to the market and ensure the portfolio offering was right to continue to grow application numbers and further convert applications into enrolment.
- 21/027 Further work was needed to strengthen receiving applications by the January UCAS deadline.
- 21/028 Members discussed the University's approach to open days and the need to increase the visibility of the University. It was confirmed that open days on campus were more likely to convert applicants and that outreach data was available to know how many students attended and were converted.
- 21/029 Recruitment conversations were already taking place outside of Senate, but members were encouraged to think about the next 'big idea', for example, a new course, the approach to learning or marketing ideas. Members suggested that School Officers could be more involved with open days and that there could be more progression agreements.

### **Student withdrawal update**

- 21/030 An update on student withdrawal rates were provided, with an end of year figure being available following the end of block one in 2021/22 as there were some students who had not yet enrolled. The end of year figure would be compared against both the 2018/19 and 2019/20 figures, due to the effect of Covid.
- 21/031 The withdrawal figure had changed considerably since the last report. The GBS figures were also being monitored.
- 21/032 It was confirmed that withdrawal data was explored alongside demographic data as part of the APP meetings and reports.
- 21/033 Nationally, the non-continuation figures had increased, however it was unknown at this time whether this was due to Covid or other factors.

### **Graduate Outcomes**

21/034 The Graduate Outcome results were published in July 2021, with the survey taking place 15 months after graduates completed their studies. Work was being undertaken by the Careers, Employability and Enterprise team to implement initiatives to ensure careers and employability was embedded within the Schools and to support the APP work.

### **Apprenticeships**

21/035 The report from the recent Ofsted monitoring visit was shared with members, noting the positive outcome in achieving significant and reasonable progress in the two themes being reviewed.

21/036 The next Ofsted visit was expected between January to August 2022, with senior leaders meeting on a weekly basis to ensure the University is prepared and will be able to demonstrate ongoing progress.

### **OfS consultation on quality and standards**

21/037 The response that the University made to the OfS consultation on quality and standards was received.

### **Graduation 2021**

21/038 Arrangements for the 2021 graduation ceremonies was received for information.

### **Senate attendance**

21/039 The annual Senate attendance report was received for information.

### **Partnerships**

Partnerships update

21/040 An update on existing and new partnerships was provided to members.

Partnerships register

21/041 The University's register of partnership arrangements was received.

### **Academic Integrity Charter**

21/042 It was noted that the University had signed-up to the QAA Academic Integrity Charter.

### **Course proposal forms**

21/043 The list of course proposal forms approved since the last meeting was received.

### **Course suspension and discontinuation forms**

21/044 The list of approved course suspension and discontinuation forms was provided to members.

**Course validation/re-approval outcomes**

21/045 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**

21/046 The recent reports received from PSRBs was shared with members.

**Reports from sub-committees**

Quality Committee

21/047 The minutes from the Quality Committee meeting held on 28 July and 15 September 2021 were provided for information.

Research and Enterprise Committee

21/048 The minutes from the Research and Enterprise Committee held on 10 June 2021 were provided for information.

School Academic Committee

21/049 The minutes from the School Academic Committees were provided for information.

**Policies and procedures**

21/050 The policies and procedures approved by correspondence were received for information.

21/051 It was confirmed that the query raised of the timing between assessment boards and re-submissions was being explored, noting that a recovery week had been included in the academic calendar for students who needed additional time.

**Any other business**

21/052 It was noted that Senate meetings from January 2022 would be extended by 30 minutes to ensure sufficient time for discussion.

**Date of next meeting**

21/053 The next meeting is the Senate and Board workshop to be held at 09:00 on Tuesday 23 November 2021.

**Alison McQuin**

**Head of Quality (Committee and Validation)**