SEC17D028

Title:	**UEA Response to the 2017 Student Experience Report**
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Issue

The University's response to the 2017 Student Experience Report from the Students' Union.

Recommendation

Recipients are invited:

To receive   the University's response.

Resource Implications

There are no additional resource implications associated directly from this response. However, some work streams described do have budgets associated with them and resource implications which will be agreed by budget holders in the normal way.

Risk Implications

The paper does not contain any new proposals**.**

Equality and Diversity

The paper does not contain any new recommendations.

Timing of decisions

The work described is ongoing during 2017/18.

Further Information

The Students' Union produce a Student Experience Report annually which is responded to by the University.

The UEA SU Student Experience Report 2016 was considered by SEC on 24.11.16 (SEC16D15) The University's response considered by SEC in May 2017 (SEC16D031).

The 2017 SU Student Experience Report to which this paper responds report was presented to SEC on 3.10.17 (SEC17D003).

At the SEC meeting on 23.11.17 the Committee received:

a) The University's response to the SU's critique of the University's performance following the 2016 report (SEC17D023).

b) The SU's response to this University update (SEC17D024).

Background

The Students' Union produce a Student Experience Report annually which is considered and formally responded to by the University.

The 2017 UEA Students' Union Student Experience Report was presented to Student Experience Committee (SEC) in October 2017. The University welcomes the Report and the opportunity it provides to consider with the Students' Union's ideas and the areas it identifies for improvement.

The 2017/18 report is a departure from previous years is two respects. First, it reviews progress on implementing recommendations from last year's Student Experience Report (2016/17) and includes a RAG rating system. The University has responded separately to the RAG rating of last year's report with its own assessment of progress and this was included in the papers for the November 2017 SEC. Second, it includes a larger number of recommendations than in previous years – around 75 to 80 recommendations in all. These are organised into chapters on: student voice and representation; space and resourcing; support and welfare; assessment and feedback; and a set of general recommendations.

The recommendations are detailed and extensive and the University welcomes the SU's approach that focuses on suggested actions rather than just identifying problems. Technically, the report calls for multiple UEA-wide reviews, plans, and additional resource/groups or bodies, but following further constructive discussion it is clear that many of the recommendations are related, can be combined, or can be considered via existing processes/groups. Following discussions it was therefore agreed that the University would produce a rounded summary response at the chapter-level rather than detailed responses to every recommendation in the report.

A key development, which is partly in response to the Student Experience Report, is the new system of Teaching Excellence Plans (TEPs), discussed at SEC, LTC and Senate during Autumn 2017. TEPs in each School will annually cover the following: student satisfaction (teaching quality, academic support, learning opportunities and community and organisation and management); assessment and feedback (criteria, fairness, timeliness, helpfulness); employability (embedding employability, careers engagement, work-based opportunities, career path awareness); inclusive education (continuation, attainment gaps, TEF split metrics); teaching practice development (teaching qualifications, innovation, digital learning); and student voice and communications (acting on feedback, communications, SSLCs). The introduction of TEPs therefore implement several of the Report's recommendations.

Discussion

1. Student voice and representation

The designation and resourcing of Student Partnership Officers in each School of Study represents a significant investment of resources to support student representation in Schools. The election process for 2017/18 student representatives did not run smoothly and further communications and clarifications of the process will be disseminated ahead of the 2018/19 recruitment process. The new system of TEPs for each School, created and updated with student involvement, will also enable annual prioritising and planning of actions in Schools on student voice, representation and communications.[1] It is recognised that the University needs to do more to strengthen internal communications with students because where improvements are being made there is often insufficient awareness of them by students.[2] It is also recognised that the partnership work between the Students' Union and HSC has been positive and beneficial, and the University is open to considering where this model might possibly be extended to another Faculty. The SU might prefer to focus effort in parts of the University where the culture of student representation is least well-developed, but the University might prefer to focus effort in areas where educational KPIs (e.g. TEF negative flags, or NSS scores) need most improvement.[3]

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[1] LTC has lead responsibility for TEPs. This work has already commenced. Annual cycle.

[2] ARM and LTS will work together on strengthening student comms. This work has commenced.

[3] PVC ACAD will initiate these discussions with the Faculty PVCs (by end of Feb 2018)

A review of the Student Charter is on the LTS programme of work, and it was agreed that the outcome of consultation on the OfS's new regulatory framework will be important in helping to frame what a review at UEA might cover.[4]

2. Space and resourcing

We take the provision of learning and teaching facilities and spaces seriously and have a dedicated Learning and Teaching Spaces Working Group which includes student representatives to consider feedback on rooms and facilities, determine which rooms should be priorities for improvement/ refurbishment and/or new equipment and plan ahead so there is sufficient capacity for future student numbers. An additional new system of text alerts for drawing attention to problems in teaching rooms has been established, but it is recognised that there is a need to improve communications to raise awareness among students of this system of feedback and this is being worked on with the Students' Union.

The LTS Timetabling Team monitor the demand and utilisation of teaching spaces, and the changing pattern of need is informing the design of new buildings on campus which will enable poorer quality teaching rooms to be decommissioned. Through the Learning & Teaching Spaces Working Group and Space Planning and Management Group, the University is considering the changing nature of teaching spaces over the medium term and insights are being generated from reviewing experience elsewhere in the sector. There is also a commitment to strengthen student involvement and input on capital building projects. Student representation on University Committees is being reviewed by Council's Governance Committee and this will include the Space Planning and Management Group.[5]

During 2018, short online training resources will be developed to improve staff confidence in the IT and AV equipment provided in teaching rooms.

Space for faith is being considered as part of wider discussions centred initially on Islamic prayer

3. Support and welfare

The provision and monitoring of the uptake of mandatory staff training in the University, including Advisor training, is being reviewed and the limited ability to generate data on compliance with Advisor training has been recognised. The Student Support Service is playing a key role in both Adviser Training but also the development of training on other student welfare issues such as mental health and the 'changing the culture' agenda. It is accepted that when new policy is devised in University Committees, sufficient emphasis should be placed on their management, monitoring and implementation. While this is generally the case, in the sphere of academic policy management there is a shared responsibility between the University and the Students' Union to prioritise proposed changes to policy and practice to ensure deliverability and in so doing recognise that whilst desirable some proposals will need to be deferred to a future year. This will include identification of practice which we would consider to be mandatory/baseline at UEA, and practice that would be considered enhancement and may be developed bespoke within a School or Faculty.

A Student Finance Working Group has been set up and can be asked to undertake some further exploration and reviewing of the cost of living for students by looking at costs of participation on a range of typical and large courses across the University, on a course by course basis, and thereby making the costs visible to all Schools and professional service areas. The 2016-2020 UEA Plan includes an objective of growing student numbers by 1,500 for 2020/21 and this has been discussed with key external stakeholders such as the local authority to consider the impact on housing, buses, traffic etc so that their plans can be developed accordingly. Internally, the University is planning for this number and anticipating the impact this will have on teaching facilities, social learning spaces, the library, the provision of catering outlets and accommodating the additional academic staff which will be invested in

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[4] LTS will commence this work after the OfS Framework has been published.

[5] This issue is the responsibility of Council's Governance Committee.

to support this growth. We accept that this planning process might usefully include more student representation and can be better communicated to students as a whole.

During the last year there has been much activity in developing the University's provision for mental health and some new communications with students can be expected early in the New Year. A 'healthy building' approach is already being taken with the design of new buildings and in refurbishments of existing buildings and developing this as a theme more broadly is something that can be considered for the future.

4. Assessment and feedback

Since the production of the report, the University has taken clear and decisive action on assessment and feedback, issuing directions to schools focussed on making assessment criteria clearer, usefulness of feedback, enhancing understanding of the processes around marking fairness and ensuring that formative assessment is used to enhance student learning. The Students' Union has spent some time communicating and disseminating these expectations to students such that they and their reps can ensure they are being met, and has carried out some monitoring research around these expectations which indicates some progress.

The uptake on e-marking is continuing apace and the next dilemma will be whether at some point the University may choose to make e-marking mandatory. The view from the Students' Union on this question is that it should be seen as the default, with Schools asked to implement or explain within Teaching Excellence Plans. The NUS Assessment and Feedback Benchmarking tool was absolutely integral to the University's last major review of assessment and feedback policy and informed the development of strengthened guidance in partnership with the SU. It is also recognised that there is scope to make advice and guidance for academics on assessment and feedback more pithy and focussed, and the Academic Director Taught Programmes is working on this in conjunction with the SU.

The University is not currently in a position to commit to ensuring exams do not occur on consecutive days, but does commit to avoid more than one exam on any single day as far as is practicable and also to avoid timetabling exams on Saturdays. The Senate scale has recently been reviewed but there remain concerns about student understanding of it. We will ask Schools to review communication around how the scales work to students. Finally, practice around SPLD is under review as part of a wider project on inclusion being led by WP.

5. General

The University has noted the success of the "I love HUM" programme and will consider future University wide initiatives on transitions in due course.

Several of the recommendations in the SU's Student Experience Report relate to initiatives already underway, which have been agreed in partnership with the SU at SEC and LTC.

- The LTC and LTS Plan of work went to the October LTC - LTC17D023 https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/21947903/ltc17d023+update+on+the+ltc+plan+o f+work.pdf/a7f47754-ecd1-0baf-75be-04777c4c0bcc . An update is usually sent to LTC on this Plan of work. (November LTC LTC17D055 - https://learn.uea.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/pid-2081293-dt-content-rid-3229082_1/orgs/PLN_LTC/ltc17d055%20update%20on%20the%20ltc%20plan%20of%20wor k%202017%2018.pdf)

- The Student Support Service Plan of Work went to SEC SEC17D006 https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/23006262/sec17d006+document+f+Student+Su pport+Service.pdf/17bfcf14-8e7f-73f3-9ade-05427cc7f8e3

- And the Mental Health Strategy and associated Plan of work went to LTC - LTC16D127 https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/21435853/ltc16d127+divider+e+mental+health+p olicy.pdf/5bfb6078-d781-4163-a0bb-c7e57aaf1f9c

As members of these Committees the SU are party to signing them off. If the SU wish to add items to these Plans, then this can be considered – but we may ask what would be prioritised and what gets dropped.