

STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE



Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2013.

Present: Pro-Vice Chancellor (Professor N. Ward), the Dean of Students (Dr A. Grant), the Director of University Services (LTS) (Dr A. Blanchflower), the Academic Director of Taught Programmes (Dr A. Longcroft), the Director of Information Services (Mr J. Colam-French), the Director of Planning (Mr I. Callaghan), the Academic Officer of the Union of UEA Students, (Ms L. Withers-Green), the Community and Student Rights Officer of the Union of UEA Students (Ms B.Foday), the International Officer of the Union of UEA Students (Ms T.A. Ngo), the representative from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (Dr S. Inthorn), the Independent Member of Council (Ms Vicky Keller-Dorsey).

In attendance: the Student Support Manager (UEA Union of Students) (Ms J. Spiro)

Secretary: the Learning and Teaching Manager (LTS) (Ms C. Gray)

Apologies: the Director of Estates (Mr R. Bond), the representative of the Faculty of Social Sciences, (Ms H. Gillespie), the representative of the Faculty of Science (Dr P. Mayhew), the President of the Graduate Student Association (Ms K. Hirst-Jones)

1. MINUTES

Confirmed

the minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2013

2. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair reported that:

- (i) his priorities for his term of office as PVC (Academic) from 2013 to 2018 (SEC13D07, a copy is filed in the minute book) centred around Admissions, Student Academic Engagement, Graduate Employability, Student Satisfaction, International Student Recruitment and Experience, Student Involvement, Learning and Teaching Enhancement and the Physical and Institutional Infrastructure for Learning & Teaching & Student Support;
- (ii) the University's considerable success in scoring highly in a number of league tables, e.g. the No 1 in the Student Experience Survey in the Times Higher, 17th in the Guardian league table and combined Times and Sunday Times league table respectively as well as a place in the top 20 of the Complete University Guide, was a great achievement. Such an outstanding performance in three significant league tables was proof that UEA could be truly described as a top 20 University in the UK. UEA had also been shortlisted for the University of the Year award by the Times Higher along with the Universities of Birmingham, Newcastle, Huddersfield, York St

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John and Northampton and the winner of this award would be announced in November 2013;

- (iii) the National Student Survey results for 2013 had also been pleasing and encouraging as UEA overall ranked joint second just behind the University of Bath. Analysis of cold spots, e.g. in the category of assessment and feedback as well as school specific issues, was currently carried out to enable further improvement in NSS performance in future years;
- (iv) the Admissions round for August 2013 had been challenging, but due to hard work and thorough preparation, the University had met its recruitment targets and was awaiting the official census results on registered students which would be published by mid October 2013. The University was keen to maintain its entry tariff of 420, but due to the challenging situation, a slight slippage in tariff had occurred;
- (v) there had been some new appointments on the Executive Team of the University, from 1 August 2013, Professor Jacqueline Collier had been appointed as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Professor Neil Ward had been appointed as PVC (Academic).

SECTION A: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION

3. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS GROUP, STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE AND LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE

Received

the membership and terms of reference of the Student Affairs Group (SEC13D01), the Student Experience Committee (SEC13D02) and the Learning and Teaching Committee (SEC13D03).

Reported

the PVC (Academic) emphasised that he did not immediately want to change the membership or structure of any of these fora, but would assess in a year's time if changes should be made.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) members of the Committee agreed that there should be more academic representatives on this Committee and the DUS (REN) should also become a member of this Committee to ensure that employability issues were appropriately represented.
- (ii) consideration should also be given to scheduling a fourth meeting during the academic year and the first meeting of the Committee in the academic year should take place during the second or third week in October rather than the first week to allow for collection of business and the busy start of the academic year.

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4. INTERNATIONALISATION WORKSHOP

Received

a report from Mr Mark Hitchcock, Senior Faculty Manager, on issues discussed at the two internationalisation workshops held in the academic year 12/13 (SEC13D04).

RESOLVED

that this agenda item would be postponed to the next meeting of the Student Experience Committee in February 2014 to ensure that all relevant stakeholders had an opportunity to update the report and to include appropriate costings. The Head of the International Students' Advisory Team from the Dean of Students Office, would present a revised report building on the work which had already been carried out by Mr Hitchcock.

5. UEA UNION STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT

Received

members received part 1 of the UEA Union Student Experience Report 2013 from the Academic Officer of the UEA Union of Students. (SEC13D04);

Reported that:

- (i) part 1 focussed on the undergraduate student teaching and learning experience as captured by the National Student Survey 2013. Parts 2 and 3 would follow in due course and would centre on the postgraduate experience and the welfare of undergraduate and postgraduate students. The complete UEA Union Student Experience Report 2013 would be published on the UEA Union of Students' website as printing costs were prohibitive given the Union's precarious financial position.
- (ii) in particular, part 1 of the UEA Union of Student Experience report 2013 centred on the provision of feedback to students, examination timetabling, support for students taking joint honours degree programmes and students with disabilities.
- (iii) the UEA Union of Students wanted to concentrate on improved module feedback mechanisms to ensure that module feedback was collected effectively and widely, shared with students and used to improve delivery of modules significantly in future years. This meant that any actions arising from module review should be published and disseminated widely to students to ensure transparency and closing of the feedback loop.
- (iv) feedback on any assessment items would need to be speedy to be effective. The University's commitment to providing generic examination feedback was welcomed and it was emphasised that coursework feedback within 20 working days via the Hubs needed to be an imperative rather than an aspiration.
- (v) that the University ought to explore an earlier release of the examination timetable and to avoid close bunching of examinations which caused extra stress for students.
- (vi) students enrolled on joint honours degree courses at UEA did not experience these as coherent and interdisciplinary but rather as two separate subjects. Students also felt that they did not belong to either School in which their subjects were located and had no 'natural home'.

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- (vii) students with disabilities needed to be catered for appropriately and access to fragmented support services needed to be improved.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) it was imperative to return coursework to students as soon as is possible, only two days either end were lost through coursework administration in the Hubs, while it would seem that the major delay in returning coursework was due to the marking and moderation process in the Schools which an analysis by LTS had shown. This delay had been recognised within the University and Heads of Schools were exploring measures to speed up the marking process while the University would also have to investigate new technologies and methods, e.g. sound files to facilitate faster feedback to students.
- (ii) the PVC (Academic) had already called a meeting involving all relevant stakeholders to explore the earlier release of the examination timetable and avoiding bunching of examinations. The introduction of the New Academic Model in the academic year 2013 should also result in fewer examinations as assessment items should have been compressed which would further alleviate this situation.
- (iii) the Academic Director of Taught Programmes stressed that a considerable amount of work would take place within LTS to address the issue of the student experience on joint degree programmes as this had already been flagged up in the two previous quality assurance audits by the QAA and therefore remained a priority for the University.
- (iv) it needed to be emphasised to students that the Dean of Students Office provided a one stop shop for students with disabilities, but unfortunately, a process had to be followed, e.g. for applying for extra money for students with disabilities, which may be experienced as a rather disjointed process.

6. DEAN OF STUDENTS' OFFICE

Received

a summary report from the Student Affairs Group and Student Safety Group SEC13D06 (Document F, a copy is filed in the minute book) presented by Dr Annie Grant, the Dean of Students.