

UUEAS STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT 2012-13: UPDATE

1. The Student Experience Committee considered the three parts of the 2012/13 UUEAS Student Experience report at each of its meetings in 2013/14. Below are the relevant minutes of the discussions and resolutions made by the Committee as a result of its consideration of the report:

2 October 2013 SEC meeting

Members received part 1 of the UEA Union Student Experience Report 2013 from the Academic Officer of the UEA Union of Students.

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'.
- (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.

12 February 2014 SEC meeting

UNION OF UEA STUDENTS: STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT 2013

Members considered the progress made on the recommendations made in Part 1 of the UUEAS Student Experience report:

- (i) **Module Evaluation:**
 - a) Dr B Milner was working on how data could be used to highlight strengths and weaknesses in module delivery and help improve performance;
 - b) staff in LTS were working with academic colleagues to ensure that students were advised of how their module evaluation feedback would be used in future delivery of the module;
 - c) in the Autumn 2013 there had been a workshop for SSLC representatives which looked at best practice in 'closing the loop' on actions taken in response to feedback given by students;
 - d) TPPG had examined a survey of module evaluation return rates and endeavoured to disseminate good practice arising from the outcomes of the survey;
 - e) UUEAS had implemented a 'How was it for you?' poster campaign to encourage students to complete module evaluation.
- (ii) **Feedback**
 - a) an Assessments Summit had been convened by the Vice-Chancellor and assessment was the subject of a policy half day attended by senior staff. These fora emphasised the importance of prompt, high quality assessment feedback. It was also hoped that electronic marking, which had been piloted last semester, would improve both the quality of feedback and turnaround times;
 - b) generic feedback on examinations had been introduced in 2012/13 and this would be extended to course tests in 2013/14.
- (iii) **Academic Support**
 - a) placements were now centrally administered by the Learning and Teaching Service (LTS). Significant work had been undertaken by colleagues in AHP and NSC to

- improve a number of aspects relating to student placements. In addition, colleagues in LTS were working with ITCS to improve how SITS dealt with student placements;
- b) in FMH staff were working with placement educators to ensure that students were well prepared for their placements;
 - c) the University had developed a Code of Practice on Placement Learning. This was being refined in consultation with colleagues from across the University who were involved with Placements;
 - d) the Dean of Students Office was increasing online resources for students who might be experiencing difficulties in their studies and were also planning to extend some services into the evening. This might help increase the accessibility of its services to students on placement;
 - e) UUEAS had been working with nursing students to look at how the Union could support them. It was planned to make a block grant bid for funds which would include funding for a union representative who could travel to visit students on placement if they needed union support or advice.

(iv) **Learning Resources**

- a) 24 hour Library opening was confirmed as long as there was evidence that it was used;
- b) a CUBS bid had been made for some digitisation software which could identify core chapters in texts, check for copyright clearance and then automatically copy the text into Blackboard.

(v) **The School of Music**

a Music Monitoring Group with staff and student representatives was ensuring that the closure of the School was being carefully managed and students' interests and their academic experience was being protected. Student representatives were very satisfied with the arrangements in place.

(vi) **Joint Honours**

A paper from the Academic Director of Taught Programmes, outlining the considerable work undertaken with respect to ensuring a more consistent experience for students registered on joint honours programmes was tabled. Initiatives included

- a) the creation of deputy Course Directors on joint degrees as part of the New Academic Model;
- b) new Course Director role descriptor clarifying the role and responsibilities, especially in relation to joint degrees;
- c) work towards developing more consistent module outline information for all students;
- d) the development of consistent expectations with regard to assessment tariffs and study time devoted to assessment.

(vii) **Examination Timetables**

A statement from the Learning and Teaching Manager for Assessments and Quality was tabled. This confirmed that:

a data modelling exercise indicated that the introduction of the NAM regulations and adoption of a 6 week examination period had made it possible for the vast majority of candidates taking examinations in May-June 2014 to be scheduled for no more than one examination per day.

It was also reported that the 2013/14 main examination timetable would be published on 7 March 2014, which was much earlier than in previous years.

(vii) **Students with disabilities**

The Dean of Students Office was streamlining its administrative structures related to the Disabled Students Allowance. However, there was more work to be done with Schools in terms of ensuring that the support or facilities identified as part of the assessment of disabled students were provided.

Noted

Some members were concerned at the impact of the new policy of allowing students to self-certify once per semester for up to seven working days. In the Arts Hub this policy had led to a 300% increase in the number of coursework extensions received in the Autumn Semester in 2013/14 compared with 2012/13. This volume of work had impacted on the return of marked work to students and there was concern that this would be reflected in responses to the National Student Survey.

30 April 2014 meeting

Received

- i) part 2 of the Union of UEA Students, Student Experience Report: a review of PGT and PGR students' experiences at UEA (SEC13D09 refers)
- ii) part 3 of the Union of UEA Students, Student Experience Report: welfare (SEC13D10 refers)

Part 2: a review of PGT and PGR students' experiences at UEA

- i) SEC members agreed that key recommendations in the report including lecture capture and investment in online resources should be a priority. However, adding flexibility by, for example, teaching twice was not deemed feasible on resource grounds;
- ii) postgraduate tuition fees and funding: this was a national issue especially for undergraduate students. It was noted that scholarships for a 50% fee reduction for UEA students with first class degrees would be offered for 2014/15 (for one year currently);
- iii) library related resources: channels that students can use to request resources should be clarified. The Head of ISD noted that Library staff were concerned that they were not provided with reading lists by module organisers. Lists to distinguish between essential and recommended reading with an example of student numbers would be very helpful to Library staff. It was further noted that, if successful, a CUBS bid would help to resolve some of these issues since the bid included the appointment of a member of staff and digitisation of reading lists;
- iv) access to social and work space for PGR students: Members were advised that space in the Library was being designed for PGT and PGR study. The Academic Director for Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes would be meeting with Senior Faculty Managers and the University's Space Management manager to discuss space for PGR students. The redevelopment of the Student Union building was also addressing social space for PGT and PGR students;
- v) teaching opportunities: there was concern that these seemed to be more available to home than international students. Members were advised that the Head of Postgraduate Research Service was undertaking work on students teaching, this included equality of opportunity and different levels of access to teaching across Schools. It was agreed that all PGR students should have access to teaching opportunities where it was appropriate for their course;
- vi) PPD: UUEAS was keen to ensure that dialogue around the PPD programme should take place. The Chair advised members that Graduate Schools and the PGR Executive were looking at this and it was being reviewed as part of PGR Learning and Teaching strategy.

RESOLVED that

- i) ensuring that research degree supervisors made sure that key readings were available should be referred to the Library Forum. The Chair undertook to take this forward;

- ii) actions from the UUEAS Student Experience report would be an agenda item for first SEC meeting of the academic year and, henceforth should be a standing item.

Part 2: Welfare

- i) faith on campus: UUEAS representatives thanked the Chair for the work he had undertaken in this area. The Chair advised members that he would be meeting with representatives from UUEAS regarding the use of the Multifaith Centre and the Islamic Centre and he would report back to the Committee.
- ii) safe space on campus: it was noted that the Dean of Students Office make available a room in Broadview Lodge overnight for students who feel they need to leave their accommodation because of an emergency. There were discussions around UUEAS creating a safe room in the Union building. It was agreed that the existence of a safe room should be publicised on the UEA website as well as in the leaflet that will be produced by the Dean of Students Office.

RESOLVED that

UUEAS representatives would liaise with colleagues in the Dean of Students Office to ensure the existence of a safe room was publicised on relevant UEA web pages.

- 2. Members are invited to reflect on the progress made as a result of the recommendations made in the report and to receive an oral update on any further actions which have been taken since the last meeting of SEC on 30 April 2014.