

LTC12D094

Title: University's Response to the UEA Union Student Experience Report 2012
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Issue

The UEA Union of Students published the Student Experience Report 2012 in autumn 2012. The University has now replied to all recommendation made in this report.

Recommendation

Members of the Learning and Teaching Committee endorse the replies by the University to the UEA Union Student Experience Report.

Resource Implications

None

Risk Implications

None

Further Information

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Attachments

None

Background

UEA STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT 2012

On 24 October 2012, the Learning and Teaching Committee considered the UEA Student Experience Report 2012 from the UEA Union of Students. It was agreed that at a future meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee during the academic year 12/13, members would discuss how the University would address the detailed recommendations made in the UEA Student Experience Report 2012.

Stakeholders across the University were tasked with responsibility for replying to the different sections set out in the UEA Student Experience Report 2012 from the UEA Union of Students. These replies are listed below as the University's response to recommendations made by the UEA Union of Students.

Discussion

The Learning and Teaching Committee is asked to discuss and endorse the University's response to the Union of UEA Students "UEA Student Experience Report 2012".

In its Student Experience Report 2012, the UEA Union of students make the following recommendations:

1) Feedback

UEA Union of Students' recommendation	University's action taken or to be taken (Academic Director of Taught Programmes, Dr A Longcroft)
a) All Schools to follow the example of AHP and through their SSLCs work collaboratively with their students to create a feedback form that works for their School.	The ADTP has circulated examples of the AHP Feedback form to Associate Deans and requested that these are discussed by FLTQCs.
b) The University researches best practice from each Hub to discover what makes some Hubs more efficient than others and create a standardised Code of Practice for Hubs.	Heads of LTS have recently circulated to senior colleagues a reflective report on the 1 st year of operation of the LTS Hubs. This has identified key learning lessons which can be shared across Hubs with a view to enhancing the experience of the 'service users' – students and academic staff. Additional comment from C Sauverin, Acting Head of LTS: In order to establish best practice of providing efficient hub administration, suggestion boxes/questionnaires to be introduced to elicit student/academic views on this matter.

<p>c) To improve the academic standards of students, all Schools give exam feedback.</p>	<p>LTC has approved a new initiative that will result in all Schools giving generic feedback on exams. The ADTP presented proposals for the implementation of exam feedback to TPPG on 21 Nov 2012. These include some 'guiding principles' for schools to work within. The initiative will be limited to formal University examinations (not Course Tests) conducted in Year 1 and 2 of degree programmes. Third year final examinations (or finals in subsequent stages) are exempted. The ADTPs proposals were included in his report to LTC (5 December 2012). It is expected that the Students' Union will work in partnership with the University to promote the availability of examination feedback. A low take-up of less than 50% may result in LTC reviewing the initiative.</p>
<p>d) The University investigates what competitor universities such as the Institute of Education do with regards to feedback to find out which, if any, of its policies would be applicable here and how we can implement them.</p>	<p>A 'benchmarking' group has already been established by the PVC Academic and ADTP. With the support of BIU this group will be analysing competitor HEIs strategies with regard to assessment and feedback. The emphasis will be on close competitor HEIs with higher NSS scores for assessment & feedback, and other HEIs which have achieved significant improvements in their NSS and league table scores over the past 3 years. The aim is that this benchmarking group will present some preliminary findings, conclusions and proposals to LTC at its final meeting of 2012/13.</p>

2) Academic Support

<p>UEA Union of Students' recommendation</p>	<p>University's action taken or to be taken (Academic Director of Taught Programmes, Dr A Longcroft in liaison with the Dean of Students, Dr A Grant)</p>
<p>a) All Schools examine the issue of advisors and find a way to co-ordinate office hours in much the same way FTV have done so that an advisor is always available to students.</p>	<p>The Dean of Students will complete the analysis of the latest survey of students' experiences of the advisory system and will identify those Schools flagged by students as being particularly highly rated (and vice versa), following up as appropriate. The example of FTV practice will be further investigated and included in Advisor training by DOS as appropriate. The feedback from all students, including that from those in FTV will be summarised and circulated to all Senior Advisors in schools for them to consider with their respective school Advisors. Senior advisors will be expected to respond by indicating:</p>

	<p>a) how they will enhance accessibility of advisors to students;</p> <p>b) whether advisors in their School will adopt FTV practice.</p>
<p>b) The University, in partnership with the Union, research into how best to support students who are not studying on campus and implement necessary changes.</p>	<p>ISD Education Board (Chaired by Helena Gillespie) is already exploring some important and creative technology-driven solutions which will enhance mobile access to University learning resources (e.g. Library, Blackboard).</p> <p>The Dean of Students' Office will also continue to develop its range of self-help resources, including those exploiting the potential of new technologies. The potential for face-to-face appointments via Skype is also being trialled.</p>
<p>c) The University looks into setting up a form of conference calling advisor sessions for students who are not on campus in order for them to be able to talk to their advisors face to face.</p>	<p>The ADTP and Dean of Students will be liaising with CSED to develop tailored training for advisors on conference calling resources. These will be piloted in the spring semester 2013.</p>

3) Learning Resources

UEA Union of Students' recommendation	University's action taken or to be taken (Director of Library Services, Mr N Lewis)
<p>a) The University invests in IT facilities, but before doing so investigates the IT provision in comparable institutions that have outperformed us to discover what, if any, the major differences are.</p>	<p>IT provision at comparable institutions has been taken into account as part of the development of the IT strategy and this year's CUBS bids to urge further investment. As part of the development of the programme of work for 2013/14 ITCS will undertake further investigation specifically around the student experience of competitors that have outperformed UEA.</p>
<p>b) The library investigates ways in which to regulate social media use of its IT facilities.</p>	<p>In liaison with the Union of UEA Students, the Library is undertaking a pilot to look at the effects of blocking Facebook on a selected number of PCs in the Library from January 2013. An additional 72 study spaces were created over the summer 2012 of which 48 include provision of PCs.</p>
<p>c) Schools attach a library feedback section to their module evaluation feedback forms so that it can be better indicated where library resources are falling short.</p>	<p>This is being pursued via the ISD Education Board and progress will be reported through ISSC.</p>

4) The degradation of the Music experience

UEA Union of Students' recommendation	University's action taken or to be taken (Head of School of Music, Prof J Charmley)
<p>a) The University ensures that student representation in the School of Music is a priority and runs as effectively as possible to ensure that any issues are dealt with rapidly and effectively.</p>	<p>The School of Music has a Staff Student Liaison Committee which meets regularly to discuss any concerns which students have thus enabling the School to promptly respond to any pertinent issues.</p> <p>In addition, an administrative post (0.8 FTE) dedicated solely to the School of Music has been created and is based in the LTS Arts Hub. This member of staff provides together with the Head of School's PA a regular administrative service to deal with any queries which students may have.</p> <p>The School has already responded to students' concerns and has replaced all members of academic staff who have left and will replace all members of staff who are yet to leave before the School closes in summer 2014. This has resulted in additional module choices being made available to continuing students as staff with new expertise have been recruited.</p> <p>Consequently, the School has an excellent staff: student ratio and is committed to provide an outstanding student experience to all its existing students.</p>

5) UEA London

UEA Union of Students' recommendation	University's action taken or to be taken (Mr Jon Sharp, Acting Director of LTS on behalf of Dr A Blanchflower, Acting Centre Director UEA London)
<p>a) The University accepts the Union's proposal for expansion of the Union Services at UEA London.</p>	<p>The University is keen to work closely with the UEA Students Union in relation to the provision of social and other facilities to students at UEA London. Dr Andrea Blanchflower and other senior staff with responsibilities for UEA London have begun implementation of some of the proposals received from the UEA Students Union, such as support for the development of sporting clubs for example. The University will continue to maintain a regular dialogue with the UEA Students Union and is committed to the on-going development of student provision in London, the details of which will be determined in discussion with representatives of the UEA Student Union.</p> <p>Additional comment from Dr Annie Grant, Dean</p>

	of Students': A Dean of Students' provision in London has been established and is currently growing. All efforts are being made to work closely with the Union to maximise the range of student support and social activities in London.
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6) Student representation

UEA Union of Students' recommendation	University's action taken or to be taken (PVC – Academic, Prof Nigel Norris in liaison with Acting Directors of LTS, Mr J Sharp and Mrs C Sauverin)
a) All Schools abide by the University's Code of Practice for SSLCs and engage with the Union to enhance the skills of their student reps, thus making SSLCs more efficient in tackling any problems the school may be facing.	All Schools at UEA have an SSLC and Schools have been encouraged to send their reps for training by the Union. School have also been reminded that SSLC minutes need to be sent through to the Union for information.
b) The University provides funding for the post of Academic Quality Assurance Coordinator within the Union to enable the UUEAS to build a more effective course representation system.	The University is willing to formally consider requests for additional funding for a post of Academic Quality Assurance Co-ordinator within the Union on the basis of a costed business case supplied by the Union. The University is however unable to confirm in advance of such a request whether funding would be forthcoming.

7) Post Graduate Experience

UEA Union of Students' recommendation	University's action taken or to be taken (Academic Director of Postgraduate Research Programmes, Dr N Watmough and Academic Director of Taught Programmes, Dr A Longcroft in liaison with Head of PGR Students' Office, Dr V Easson and Acting Directors of LTS, Mr J Sharp and Mrs C Sauverin)
a) The University extend PhD student e-mail account and library access post-viva in order to help them making corrections.	All research students get three months of e-mail and library access after thesis submission, which is extended dependent on expected length of time to do corrections. Library access has to cease once the candidate no longer has a student relationship with UEA, although it is possible at this point to apply for visitor access. E-mail access is normally extended to continue until Congregation.
b) The University invests in a non-alcoholic space which can be a social hub for PG students where they may hold colloquial seminars and meets with PGs from other schools and faculties. c) The University invest in creating extra study space which is exclusively for the use of postgraduates.	The University has made a considerable sum of money available to upgrade existing postgraduate research student facilities and to improve study space/training areas for all UEA postgraduate research students with immediate effect. Options will be discussed at a future meeting of the PGR Students Executive in the spring semester 2013.

8) International Student Experience

UEA Union of Students' recommendation	University's action taken or to be taken (Dean of Students, Dr A Grant)
<p>a) The University works in partnership with the Union, following the Library's example, to encourage international students to engage with the Union's course representatives. By doing so, international students will be able to flag up the problems they are having, which can then be brought to the attention of those people able to make changes in order to have these issues resolved prior to the next NSS.</p>	<p>DOS will continue to ensure that matters affecting the experiences of international students are raised in all appropriate fora. Any information that needs to be brought to the attention of this group can be disseminated via the regular email bulletins sent to International students by the International Students Advisory Team.</p>

9) Student Welfare: Access agreement

UEA Union of Students' recommendation	University's action taken or to be taken (Director of Planning, Mr I Callaghan and Director of Admissions, Mr M Barlow in liaison with Assistant Head of Outreach, Dr L Bohn)
<p>a) The University takes measures to explain the notional nature of fee discounts, and how other forms of financial support are far more beneficial to students while they are studying.</p>	<p>The University aims to offer unbiased information and advice as to the range of financial support available, but not guidance as to the most beneficial form of support given that individual students' personal circumstances will differ.</p>
<p>b) The financial support outlined in the Access Agreement 2013/14 should give students the choice only between cash bursaries or accommodation discounts.</p>	<p>OFFA will not allow the University to amend our 2013/14 Access Agreement in a way that could potentially disadvantage students, i.e. by reducing the choice open to them. In addition we would be concerned about reducing student choice without clear evidence. Initial figures for 2012 indicate that 29% of support has been in the form of fee waivers, 49% as accommodation discounts and 22% as cash. The University is also currently planning research to review our bursary options; we would welcome Union input into this.</p>

10) Student Welfare: Employability

UEA Union of Students' recommendation	University's action taken or to be taken (Director of Research and Enterprise Services (REN) Ms H Lewis)
<p>a) The University work alongside the Union to promote the importance of clubs and societies in enhancing student employability, and continues to support the Union in running extra-curricular events which also enhance employability.</p>	<p>Careers and Employability are developing a very close working relationship with the Students Union and have several shared initiatives. UEA funds a student enterprise post within the Students Union staff, the purpose of which is to maximise the ways in which the activities of clubs and societies can be recognised as a means</p>

of enhancing students' employability. It is also particularly focussed on helping the enterprise and entrepreneurial societies become sustainable. A particular co-development is around social enterprise. Representatives of the Students Union including the Chief Executive are members of the University Employability Executive and Union staff regularly meet with members of the Careers and Employability team. The University has also arranged for NACUE to support relevant student societies and has funded the Management Society in attending a national entrepreneurial competition, FLUX, in which they came a commendable second. The Union should be assured, therefore, that from a practical to a strategic level the University recognises and is actively supporting the role that the Union can play in enhancing students' employability.

Additional comments from Dr Louise Bohn,
Assistant Head of Outreach:

Our Outreach Team work with the Voluntary Coordinator to support the Union's volunteering activities in local schools. We provide safeguarding training for any Union member who wants to engage with local schools as well as guidance planning activities.