

COU14D026

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Admissions position (Confidentiality status: Open)

Current signs continue to be positive and will be reviewed in more detail once the UCAS deadline is reached.

League Tables (Confidentiality status: Open)

The REF results were published on Thursday 18th December. As expected, the Times Higher produced a ranked league table on the basis of Grade Point Average. UEA moved up from 35th to 21st among mainstream universities on this measure. A ranking was also produced on the basis of scores for research outputs only and on this measure UEA ranked 10th nationally. We anticipate that there will be a positive impact on the Complete Guide league table, which currently ranks research using the REF GPA.

Learning and Teaching (Confidentiality status: Open)

The end of autumn term is the peak period for handing in coursework, especially in the ARTS Hub which looks after humanities and parts of social sciences. Last year (2013), this process suffered as a result of a significant increase in the number of students self-certificating in order to benefit from extensions, which caused disruption to marking and return of marks as well as administrative processes in the Hubs. This year, following a tightening of the self-certification procedures, the process of handing in coursework has proceeded much more smoothly.

We also have preliminary indications of significant improvements in the timely return of feedback on assessments so far this academic year compared to last year. Of 323 assessment items (i.e. a set of coursework for a module) that have been marked and returned so far, 11% took more than the stipulated 20 days maximum (compared to 30% last year), while 35% were returned between 15 and 20 days and 54% were returned in less than 15 days. We continue to push hard on this issue and there is still room for more progress to be achieved, but this is a significant step in the right direction.

It is hoped that this absence of significant problems with self-certification, along with the apparent improvements in turnaround times, will help improve our scores on assessment and feedback in the National Student Survey, which will commence for final year students in February.

Research (Confidentiality status: Open)

The REF2014 results were released in December. The outcome for UEA was very positive, with an improvement in all components and, as a result, in league table position. The REF2014 results are described in more detail in a paper to be considered in this meeting of Council.

Finance (Confidentiality status: Open)

Finance: Latest forecast outturn for 2014/15

- The original budget for 2014/15 (approved in June 2014) showed a deficit of £0.6m. The updated forecast approved by Council on 1 December 2014 and reported to HEFCE, revised this to a deficit of £3.5m, including £3m in respect of a grant to the Students Union to fund refurbishment of Union House. The £3m had previously been included as capital expenditure within the original plan, so the change in approach represented an accounting technicality rather than any change in the cash position.
- The latest updated forecast, reported to ET in mid-December shows the forecast deficit reduced to £2.6m; £2m adverse to the original budget. Taking into account the £3m adjustment for change in approach to Union House refurbishment costs, the latest forecast represents a £1m favourable variance against the original budget position. This underlying improvement has arisen despite the shortfall in student recruitment for 2014/15 and reflects:-
 - savings in certain faculties to mitigate student recruitment shortfalls: SSF shortfall fully mitigated; SCI shortfall reduced to £0.5m adverse impact,
 - the release of contingency budgets that had been included in the original plan,
 - savings generated by a number of departments ahead of the 2015/16 target date (as part of the drive to generate 3% cost savings).

Student experience (Confidentiality status: Open)

The Students' Union have produced their annual report on the student experience with 16 recommendations. The report is a helpful contribution to the University's efforts to maintain and improve the quality of the student experience and the recommendations will be discussed and taken forward through the University's Student Experience Committee, chaired by PVC-Academic.

The Students' Union have submitted a paper to the University posing ten questions or challenges in order to contribute to discussions around the next Corporate Plan.

Higher Education Landscape/the National Picture (Confidentiality status: Open)

BIS will be consulting on a loan scheme for postgraduate taught students to take effect (if approved) from 2016 entry. Consultation will occur after the General Election. In the meantime, a fund of £50m has been distributed to Universities by HEFCE (on a matched funding basis) to support students with awards of £10,000 to enable them to undertake postgraduate study. The University intends to take part in this scheme and more detailed plans are being formulated.

Faculty of Medicine and Health (Confidentiality status: Open)

Professor Michael Frenneaux has taken up post as Dean of the Norwich Medical School. He was previously Regius Professor of Medicine at Aberdeen University

The School of Health Sciences has been selected to run a Diploma in Higher Education programme to train further paramedics, in collaboration with the East of England Ambulance Trust and Health Education England.

Professor Chiangjiang Dong has been awarded a prestigious Wellcome Trust Investigator Award, the second now held in the Medical School.

Faculty of Science (Confidentiality status: Open)

Update on STEM Teaching Laboratory Building

Following the disappointing news that the £5M HEFCE bid in capital funding was unsuccessful to contribute towards the new state-of-the-art teaching laboratories. Benefitting from a slightly longer lead time, the Faculty and Estates are busy re-drafting the design to deliver a project, without compromising space required for teaching, for £18M (as allocated in the capital plan). We would be looking for the building to open in September 2017.

Faculty of Arts and Humanities (Confidentiality Status: Open)

A UEA Alumnus (Emma Healy) has won the Costa First Book Prize. Dr Chris Hanretty in the School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies is helping BBC Newsnight predict the result of this year's General Election.