

Governing Body
HE EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 12 March 2021 at 3.30pm

Present: C Higgins, Chair E Lawrance, HE Student Governor

In Attendance: C Meredith, Executive Dean of HE
 E Lees, Vice Dean of HE
 N Coules, Director of HE Operations
 S Gales, Board Secretary

Apologies: J Gazzard
 T Elkin, Clerk

Absent: None

No interests relevant to items on the agenda were declared by members.

	Action
<p>1 <u>Apologies for absence</u> Apologies for absence were received from JGazzard and TEIkin.</p>	
<p>2 <u>Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair</u> The Committee recognised CHiggins as Chair and JGazzard as Vice-Chair of the Committee.</p>	
<p>3 <u>Terms of Reference</u></p>	
<p>3.1 <u>HE Educational Excellence Committee Terms of Reference</u> The Committee reviewed and approved the Terms of Reference subject to the amendment of the title wording to read 'Educational Excellence Committee' rather than 'HE Standards and Excellence Committee', to note that the Committee will take responsibility for all OfS submissions, including those for students outwith University Studies, and removal of the Executive Dean and staff governor from the Membership and the inclusion of wording that the 'Executive Dean, Vice Dean and Director of HE Operations' will be expected to attend unless otherwise requested'. Clerk to update</p>	Clerk
<p>The Chair and Executive Dean for HE to consider whether the CEO should also be added to the Membership.</p>	Chair Exec. Dean
<p>3.2 <u>US Leadership Team</u></p>	
<p>The Committee reviewed and endorsed the US Leadership Team's Terms of Reference.</p>	
<p>3.3 <u>US Academic Development Quality</u></p>	
<p>The Committee reviewed and endorsed the US Academic Development Quality and Assurance Committee's Terms of Reference and supported the proposal to invite colleagues from the FE provision as appropriate to advise on Level 4 provision.</p>	
<p>4 <u>KPI Schedule</u></p>	
<p>4.1 <u>HE Educational Excellence Committee KPI Schedule</u></p>	
<p>The Committee reviewed and approved the KPI Schedule which will be reported and considered by the Committee in each term.</p>	
<p>The Committee discussed the KPIs which, going forwards, will be monitored in the spring term meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Voice; E Lawrance and C Meredith are discussing the best way to engage the student voice and will keep the Committee updated on progress. • APP Impact Return; the OfS only released the data-set on 11 March 2021 and the APP was not ready for this meeting. It will be circulated by the end of next week. 	

- Numerical KPI Update; *discussed within item 7.*
- DOPs Compliance Sign-off Report; *discussed within item 6.*

4.2 **US Monitoring Framework**

The Committee considered and discussed the report. The Committee endorsed the US Monitoring Framework.

4.3 **US Policy Framework**

The Committee reviewed and **approved** the policy framework, with the acknowledgment that this will be reviewed again as part of the Governance Review wherein delegated authority for the approval of those policies will be ratified the Corporation.

5 **Policies**

5.1 **Admissions Policy**

The Committee discussed whether reference to unconditional or contextualised offers should be included and agreed that this addition was not required at this stage. The Committee discussed item 10, Additional Support Needs, and **agreed** to add subsections to provide further clarity and to align to the recommendations to the APP in regard to supporting students' needs. The Committee **approved** the Admissions Policy, subject to the proposed amendment above to be made by the Exec. Dean.

Exec. Dean

5.2 **Student Disciplinary Policy**

The Committee considered and **agreed to recommend** the Student Disciplinary policy to the Corporation for approval. The Committee discussed whether to include a more informal stage to the disciplinary process but agreed that this addition was not required – informal resolution should always be a first step and the policy only used proportionately.

Chair
Exec. Dean

5.3 **Student Protection Plan**

The Committee considered and **approved** the Student Protection Plan.

5.4 **Student Transfer Plan**

The Committee considered and **approved** the Student Transfer Plan.

The Committee discussed the reasons documents refer to University Studies and/or to University Studies at West Suffolk College. E Lees and E Lawrance to consider how best to explain this to students to reduce confusion between the Department (University studies) and the legal Entity (WSC).

6 **Draft CMA Compliance**

As US has direct funding status and is transitioning away from its partnership with University of Suffolk, the Corporation has increased obligations to comply with the Office for Students regulations, of which the CMA is a significant part. As part of ensuring compliance with OfS's Condition C1 of registration, and in response to the regulator's request to all Higher Education Providers (on 15 January 2021), the College undertook an internal evaluative exercise to assess our compliance with Consumer Protection Law as it relates to Higher Education, and to create action plans in order to remedy any areas of weaker compliance.

The Committee reviewed the report and agreed to **recommend to the Corporation** that no notification to the OfS of CMA breach is required. CMeredith to confirm with JGazzard that he also supports this recommendation.

Exec. Dean

However, because this internal evaluation was, by necessity, undertaken rapidly, the Committee endorsed the recommendation that, next academic year, the Corporation's internal auditors assess US provision against the OfS frameworks/guidance to provide further assurance to the Corporation of our compliance.

7 **Curriculum Update**

US transferred from blended delivery in Semester 1, to on-line delivery in Semester 2 to comply with current Government Covid-19 restrictions, and following Government

announcement and OfS guidelines 23 February 2021, US reopened for blended delivery through on-campus and on-line learning on 8 March 2021.

There are ongoing concerns about student mental health and well-being, with students reporting feelings of isolation with increased anxiety. US staff have provided additional course tutorials and drop-in social sessions to facilitate enhanced peer support and continue to monitor student engagement through Course Team Meetings, where-upon specific students, as appropriate, are identified and contacted to provide additional Tutorials and/or to facilitate engagement with Pastoral Support Tutor. Students continue to access support through Pastoral Support Tutors and Academic Skills Advisor with online personal support and academic skills sessions available. There are several students who continue to report connectivity issues due to insufficient Wi-Fi and limited access to IT facilities. In these instances, students have been sign-posted to additional financial support (available via student bursaries) and hardship funds (administered by University of Suffolk subject to means testing).

The assessment schedules have been reviewed regularly to respond to the latest guidance and in Semesters 1 and 2, examinations were replaced with alternative modes of assessment. Moreover, in response to student feedback in the ISS, the submission deadline for dissertations was extended by 2 weeks to alleviate perceived pressure and to enable additional Tutorial support.

Governors queried how student feedback has been captured during this period of remote and blended delivery. ELees reported that Level 5 and 6 students adapted more quickly to online learning and that Level 4 students initially found it challenging as they had not established peer support groups pre-lockdown. ELees observed that the drop-in coffee sessions had been very helpful in nurturing peer support groups and as a way for staff to gauge student satisfaction. ELawrence feedback that students have reported that they are happy to be receiving live lessons and have embraced the use of break-out rooms, and appreciate the recorded delivery as this has provided greater flexibility for students with caring commitments. CMeredith noted that several cohorts which are able to (under current guidance) return to onsite delivery but have opted to continue remote delivery citing their satisfaction with the provision.

Governors noted the need to consider the learnings from, and feedback from students of, the shift to remote and blended delivery to shape US's future teaching and learning strategy. CMeredith agreed and noted the need to join up US's academic pedagogy with student voice feedback and consider the physical/virtual resources we need to develop.

8 **Student Governor**

The Committee thanked LHunt for the excellent draft Student Governor documentation. The Committee discussed how best to align the HE Student Governor role with the US Student Association and asked CMeredith to bring a proposal on how this could be achieved. The Committee **agreed** to postpone the election of HE Student Governor into the Autumn term when students would be on-site again and more fully engaged. Consideration was being given to ensure an effective handover between ELawrance and the newly elected Student Governor.

Exec. Dean

9 **Any other business**

- **Student submission within the APP**

ELawrance and CMeredith confirmed that the student body do not wish to submit an accompanying piece to the APP this academic year.

- **Thanks to the US team**

Governors thanked the US team for the quality of the papers received.

Date of next meeting:

- TBC

The meeting closed at 5.16pm

Clerk