

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 10 March 2022 at 4.00pm

Present physically: C Higgins, Chair
N Savvas, CEO R Hetherington, Co-opted

Present virtually: J Gazzard, Vice Chair

In attendance: E Lees, Executive Dean University Studies
F D'Costa, Registrar
L Moody, Principal Strategic Growth and Partnerships
S Gales, Governance Professional

Apologies: None

Action

1. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

The Committee welcomed Roger Hetherington to the Committee.

C Higgins and N Savvas declared their roles as Trustees of Suffolk Academies Trust. J Gazzard declared his role as a Member of Suffolk Academies Trust and as an employee of University of Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education. No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

No apologies were received.

2. Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 11 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2021 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

J Gazzard joined the meeting at 4.12pm

3. Matters Arising from the meeting on 11 November 2021

- MA2 Committee members to let S Gales know of individuals who might be interested in being Co-opted to the Committee.
- MA3 Item discussed in *agenda item 4*.
- MA4 Noted.
- MA5 Noted.
- MA7 Item discussed in *agenda item 9*.
- MA8 Item discussed in *agenda item 4*.
- MA9 Item discussed in *agenda item 4*.
- MA10 E Lees to draft the Self-Evaluation Document.
- MA15 Item discussed in *agenda item 7*.

4. Development of University Studies – Strategy and Infrastructure

The Committee received and considered the report provided which outlined University Studies strategic intent:

University Studies at West Suffolk College is re-imagining the potential of local Higher Education provision. Our aim is simple: to change lives and longitudinal (life) outcomes of students in the eastern region through widening access to outstanding higher and technical qualifications. University Studies is an integral part of the Eastern Colleges Group and West Suffolk College with the same overarching aim to provide opportunities for educational progression to employment for all students of all backgrounds, abilities, and motivations. We commit to the strapline: "Putting students and their success at the heart of everything we do, preparing students for their future" We'll succeed through our ability to marry the individual and personal learning support that's native to FE with the academic rigour of a mainstream university offer; and by building outstanding relationships with regional industries leading to employability. We seek to build our offer for learners of all ages and backgrounds—modular, part time and full time. We will encourage those from the locality and region who might otherwise

not progress to Higher Education to do so through our active engagement with Level 3 feeder routes and by identifying and encouraging those, particularly in the region who missed the opportunity to enter HE at the age of 18. Over the next five years, the USWSC will grow Higher Education at West Suffolk College to become an alternative local destination for the region, for those students for whom a mainstream University is not appropriate. We will devise learning experiences that are sustainably run, personally transformative and indispensable for learners and employers. We will secure better-than-national rates of student success, satisfaction, and graduate employment.

Governors commended this intent and noted that it is well aligned to national initiatives to support lifelong learning; upskilling and reskilling our local community to support our local economy. It also defines a role of HE in FE. Governors noted this vision clarifies, to staff and stakeholders, that we are not trying to directly compete with well established universities, but rather serve those students who (due to their personal circumstances and choice) cannot access other university provision.

Governors agreed that we need to carefully consider the course offer and expand it beyond traditional undergraduate degrees particularly flexible courses such as higher and degree apprenticeships, HNCs and HNDs.

N Savvas noted that part of our strategy is to bring together our University Studies provision with our Professional Studies provision, so that all adult learners are based on a single campus, the former Vinten's site.

E Lees and L Moody to continue to socialise and finesse the strategy; and will bring it back to the Committee in late May so it can be recommended to the Corporation in July.

E Lees
L Moody

Governors supported the proposed strategic objectives for University Studies.

Governors discussed and supported the proposed Student Support Framework. Governors queried whether an additional section should be added to outline the student enrichment and career enhancement offer at University Studies. E Lees discussed that this element is being further developed, so will be added once this offer is more established.

Governors discussed the OfS compliance report and asked if this needs Committee approval. E Lees advised that it does not. Governors noted that we are not yet fully compliant and queried what the timescale is until we will be compliant. E Lees agreed to update the Committee via email once she has met with her team.

E Lees

Governors thanked E Lees and her team for an enormous amount of careful work and planning, having taken on the role from a difficult starting point.

5. Course Offer 2022-23 (Development of portfolio 2023)

The Committee received and considered the report provided which outlined the current course offer of the direct funded provision at University Studies, and how the Group's Level 3 study maps into this course offer.

E Lees advised that this information will be used to co-develop future courses and to signpost pathways, and enhance Level 3 courses across the Group to further promote courses to our internal market.

E Lees and L Moody summarised the approach planned to inform stakeholders and proactively promote University Studies within our community to increase student numbers. This was welcomed.

6. Student Number and Budgetary Targets – 2022-23

The Committee received and considered the report provided.

Governors discussed that for 2022-23 onwards University Studies will be closely linked to Professional Studies provision in areas where they share a common regulator, the Office for Students. E Lees noted that OfS funding, enrolment targets and operational planning will include Access to HE, Direct Funded degree students, Direct Funded HNC/HND students and Higher Apprentices enrolled against degree or HNC/HND provision students.

Governors commended this approach.

7. Student Voice

The Committee received and considered the report provided.

S Gales noted that Louisa Blackaby has been elected as HE Student Governor and, subject to satisfactory referencing checks, will join the next meeting.

E Lees summarised the student feedback so far and the ongoing projects in development in response.

Governors asked what feedback we have in regard to student experience. E Lees stated that students feel supported by the curriculum team, however the students express a desire for additional access to wrap around support services (e.g. academic skills support, pastoral support, careers support). This needs to be done in partnership with support provided by FE Professional Studies. L Moody noted that we are working with external partners such as DWP and the Mason Trust to co-develop projects which will enable the expansion of the wrap around support services, and we are exploring possible project funding.

8. KPI Data Strategy

The Committee received and considered the report provided.

F D'Costa noted that following the move to direct funded provision we are working to align with the data matrices that are used by the OfS and have invested in data infrastructure to track the student journey from application to graduation. F D'Costa summarised the key priorities and anticipated timescales.

Governors asked if we now have historical University of Suffolk at WSC student data. F D'Costa confirmed that we do and we are now analysing it.

9. APP Investment Monitoring and Recommendations from 2021-22 Monitoring Return

The Committee received and considered the report. It was agreed that, in due course, our APP and associated spend needed a full overhaul.

E Lees noted that we have strengthened our internal processes to have internal auditing prior to data returns; however informed that the data for our OfS B3 submission is currently incomplete which is a key priority for F D'Costa.

J Gazzard left the meeting at 5.34pm

10. Any Other Business

- Name of University Studies

Governors queried how we should refer to the University Studies campus. N Savvas advised that we are still consulting with stakeholders and will advise once we have a preferred name.

- Progress since last meeting

Governors commended the E Lees and the Executive on achieving such progress since the last meeting and the intended next steps to improve processes and practices.

The meeting closed at 5.44pm