

**Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 11 November 2021 at 4.00pm**

**Present virtually:** C Higgins, Chair N Savvas, CEO  
J Gazzard, Vice Chair

**In attendance:** E Lees, Vice-Dean University Studies  
S Gales, Governance Professional

**Apologies:** C Meredith, Executive Dean University Studies

**1. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**

The Committee recognised Chris Higgins as the Chair and Jim Gazzard as the Vice Chair of the HE Educational Excellence Committee for 2021/22, as appointed by the Corporation at their meeting on 9 July 2021.

**2. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence**

No conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies were received from CMeredith. The Committee recognised that as many of the papers were prepared by CMeredith some detailed discussion of the papers may not be possible without him present and would have to be considered at a later date.

**3. Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 7 June 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2021 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

**4. Matters Arising from the Committee meeting on 7 June 2021**

MA1 Work continues to draft role description of the Student Council, class representatives and Student President (also to be HE Student Governor and member of HE EEC). SGales and ELees to provide update at the next meeting.

MA2 Discussed in agenda item 15.

MA3 Two potential members are under consideration by the Nominations and Governance Committee. JGazzard and ELees to let SGales know of any additional individuals who might have suitable skills and interest in being co-opted to the Committee.

**5. Committee Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset**

Governors received, considered and **approved** the draft Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset provided.

**6. Student Voice**

The Committee received and considered the report provided which outlined the NSS results and ELees summarised the key areas for note:

Overall, the NSS results were significantly less favourable than last year. Most Universities had a drop in satisfaction due to the pandemic, and there are also some WSC-specific factors including staff changes during the pandemic, the move from UoS to UEA as the validation partner, and disruption caused by a move into new and enhanced premises which students then could not take advantage of because of the pandemic. Nevertheless, in some areas those at WSC were weaker than anticipated or they should have been.

- High satisfaction in Sociology, Early Childhood studies, English and History.
- Lower satisfaction in Sport and Business.

ELees summarised the reasons for the lower satisfaction in certain disciplines and the actions being taken to improve student experience and satisfaction. Critically, ELees added that US is currently recruiting academic skills advisors to provide appropriate academic support to HE students.

Governors queried if ELees feels confident that the plans proposed are sufficient and will improve the NSS results next year. ELees confirmed that she believed the plans

**Action**

SGales  
ELees

JGazzard  
ELees

should significantly improve student experience and NSS results, and added that having the data by course and sharing this between course leaders and staff is very helpful in aiding performance management and strategic planning.

Governors expressed concern about the significant drop in overall satisfaction (21% compared to last year) and queried whether students are being canvassed to understand the real reasons for this. ELees confirmed that students participated in induction surveys and the results are being analysed to inform further areas for development, and that the US team continue to meet with student course reps to invite student feedback.

ELees shared feedback that students are anxious about the impact of on-going US staff vacancies and staffing changes, noting how this impacts their ability to access US's wrap-around support offer. ELees and NSavvas confirmed that US continue to work to strengthen the US team with appropriate appointments. The US team will regularly meet with students to improve communication, provide reassurance, and provide student voice with direct access to the leadership team to feedback their experiences/concerns.

The Committee recognised the impact of the pandemic on smaller HE institutions like US, whereby the loss of key staff (whether temporary or permanent) has had a significant impact on delivery and student experience; and roles have been very difficult to backfill during the pandemic.

NSavvas noted that to further strengthen US, it is planned to both strengthen the staffing team and, to create greater inter-connectivity of student support between the College's FE provision and US.

The Committee discussed the need to continue to communicate proactively with students about the wrap-around support offered to students, which alongside quality of education, affects student experience and therefore NSS results. Governors asked to see the wrap-around support signposting information provided to students, to be assured that US is supporting students appropriately at the next meeting.

ELees

## 7. APP Monitoring

The Committee received and considered the report provided.

Governors queried whether it is normal for the APP to be so detailed and whether it could be simplified. ELees confirmed that this is an area which US are reviewing to ensure that the APP is appropriate and will provide an update at the next meeting.

ELees

ELees added that further work is being undertaken to review and refine the reporting metrics to ensure the data are consistent and robust. The data provided by UoS were incomplete and also need to be fully integrated with data for students on other Level 4 and Level 5 courses outside US such as degree apprenticeships.

RBamford, Group Vice Principal MI and Data, is now engaged with this data cleansing exercise.

Governors queried whether the College is on-track to achieve its APP targets. ELees confirmed that we are on-track. ELees noted that she is reviewing the APP targets to ensure they are the most appropriate targets or whether resources could be better deployed to support different APP targets which might have greater impact on delivering the APP overall. Governors asked ELees to provide update at the next meeting.

ELees

## 8. KPI Report

The Committee received and considered the report provided. ELees advised that whilst many of the metrics are high risk/behind target, the data needs to be further refined (see above) to give the Committee more accurate and meaningful information.

The Committee agreed that the KPIs also need further refinement; ELees and CHiggins to work together to agree the metrics for the next report.

ELees  
CHiggins

9. **APP Investment Monitoring**

The Committee received and considered the report and ELees summarised the key areas for note:

- The APP funding model was based on student number projections which US has now exceeded, resulting in US needing to review the financial commitments and ensure that disbursements are adjusted in response to the larger cohort size to ensure that US is supporting the cohort appropriately.

ELees added that the US team are conducting a further review of the APP funding model to ensure that it reflects the current, and projected future status of US's cohort. Governors asked ELees to provide an update at the next meeting.

ELees

10. **OfS Compliance Grid**

The Committee received and considered the report provided.

Governors queried whether it is normal for the compliance grid to be so detailed and whether it could be simplified. ELees confirmed that this is an area which US are reviewing to ensure that the level of detail is appropriate and will provide an update at the next meeting. Nevertheless, governors agreed that at present it was useful to see the detailed work which is ongoing to address some of the key issues, expecting the detail of the report to be reduced within a year once a number of issues have been stabilised.

ELees

ELees explained the progress taken to address the red RAG actions. Governors asked to see a timeline for progress to address the red and amber actions at the next meeting.

ELees

11. **Self-Evaluation Document**

The data for this paper were not ready for this meeting because of a sickness absence. The Committee asked to review the paper electronically as soon as the data set was complete.

ELees

12. **Student Conduct and Complaints**

The Committee received and considered the report provided.

Governors queried how, following our move from UoS, the outcomes of complaints from UoS students are fed back and whether this is done in a timely manner. ELees confirmed that we currently receive an annual report from UoS and noted that we are working to receive more timely feedback on individual cases to best inform management and operations.

Governors asked for future reports to be presented thematically and by exception, with commentary on the work being undertaken to address issues, so the Committee can advise the Corporation how best to deploy resources to address concerns.

ELees

13. **DRC Compliance Report and Reportable Events Register**

The Committee received and considered the report provided.

Governors commended the robustness of evidence provided but requested that future reports are by exception with an accompanying summary from the DRC.

ELees

14. **IHRA Working Definition of Anti-Semitism**

The Committee received, considered and **approved** the definition provided.

15. **DOPs Compliance Sign-off Requests**

The data for this paper were not ready for this meeting, due to sickness absence, so this item was not presented / discussed at the meeting. The Committee **agreed** to delegate authority to the Chair to review this document when the data are complete.

SGales  
ELees

16. **Any Other Business**

- **APP Impact Report**

The Committee noted and commended the US team for the OfS APP provider impact report.

- **OfS Capital funding competition for financial year 2021-22**

NSavvas informed the Committee that the College has been awarded £2m capital funding by the OfS, the maximum amount awarded and with no match funding requirement, which will be used to upgrade the US estate. The Committee noted that progress on the use of this capital funding grant will be reported to the Resources Committee.

The Committee suggested the students should be consulted on the deployment of the funds, although it was recognised that the funds had to be deployed within the terms of the grant.

- **Date of next meeting**

Governors discussed whether to convene an extraordinary meeting in early Spring to scrutinise the progress made to address areas of concern. The Committee agreed to discuss further via email once data cleansing was complete.

HE EEC

- **HE Student Governor**

Governors queried the timeline for the HE Student Governor/President election. ELees summarised the progress being made to establish student reps and the student council. It is being discussed by Nominations and Governance Committee next week and SGales to provide further update on progress to the Committee via email. CHiggins is pleased to act as mentor for the Student Governor.

SGales

- **Support for US team**

Governors extended their support for the US team and offered to meet with them face-to-face to build stronger relationships with staff and provide support and guidance as appropriate.

The meeting closed at 5.31pm