

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 15 June 2023 at 4.00pm

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

Present virtually: C Chua C Higgins, Chair

In attendance: E Lees, Executive Dean University Studies
F D'Costa, Registrar
L Hunt, Head of Student Success
S Appleby, Director of HE Operations
S Gales, Governance Professional

Apologies: J Gazzard, Vice Chair

Absent:

1. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

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. C Chua declared his role as an employee of University of Cambridge's Judge Business School. No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies for absence were received from J Gazzard.

2. Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 21 March 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2023 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising from the meeting on 21 March 2023

The matters arising from the previous meeting were either complete or included with the agenda.

Governors discussed MA1 relating to sourcing additional suitably qualified Committee members and discussed that the Corporation has appointed a new Governor which will join the Committee.

The Committee discussed the potential conflict of interest arising from the Governor working at UEA (our validation university partner), their concerns and possible solutions to manage this conflict. The Governance Professional advised on the process regarding the appointment and selection of Committee members and **noted** the concerns of Committee members. Committee members were asked to document their concerns and share this with the Governance Professional, to support discussions with the Chair of the Corporation and/or the Nominations and Governance Committee.

Action

Committee
Members

4. Risk Register Extract

Governors received and considered an extract of the updated Risk Register.

Governors discussed risk WSCR029 relating to compliance with Office for Students conditions, and the reasons why this risk has increased from amber to red. E Lees confirmed this was due to a 'one-off' incident (ie nothing systemic) which had identified a specific risk but that mitigations were being implemented to reduce this risk.

Governors reviewed the risks and **felt assured** by the mitigations proposed.

5. **Student Outcomes**

Governors received and considered the paper provided which provides an update on the outcomes and support provided for with Specific Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (SLDD) within University Studies.

Governors commended the report.

Governors noted the high proportion of students with SLDD and queried if this is typical. L Hunt answered that it is typical for University Studies, as well as for our Adult and Apprenticeship courses, and noted that SLDD levels throughout all levels of education has risen post-pandemic. L Moody noted that, working with marketing, we have also led a campaign to inform students of the support we offer – which might have also led to higher levels of disclosures.

6. **Student Experience update**

Governors received and considered the paper provided which provides an update on student voice, student support, the review of the student protection plan and student charter policies and preparing evidence of our compliance with the new Harassment and Sexual Misconduct condition of registration.

Governors discussed the variety of forums for student voice and noted the importance of 'you said, we did' to ensure students know how their feedback has influenced and informed decisions.

Governors discussed the role of HE Student Governor and ways to advertise it differently in 2023/24 to improve understanding of the role.

7. **Course Offer 2023/24**

Governors received and considered the paper which provided an update on the 2023-24 curriculum offer, current applications and assurance on student protection and financial viability.

Governors commended the activities and approaches being implemented to support students to experience and prepare for the transition to university.

Governors discussed the upcoming UCAS clearing period and how University Studies manage this busy period to best support students in their decision making. The new ideas and approaches were commended.

Governors commended the team on the improved admissions data presented and noted it is encouraging that applicants are placing University Studies in the same competitive set as much larger, more established universities. L Moody and E Lees to convey the praise of the Committee to the wider University Studies team.

Governors queried the importance of the College's 'access' courses in supporting students to progress on University Studies courses. E Lees noted the courses are significant and L Moody informed that we are planning to expand our 'access' course offer over the coming years.

Governors queried why the policing course has been discontinued. S Appleby said that it was due to lack of demand due to changing government policy.

Governors queried if the staffing issue for the counselling course has been resolved. E Lees said that it was a difficult problem, being addressed together with UEA, but the outcome was still uncertain.

E Lees informed how staffing of the curriculum offer will be considered further over the coming weeks to ensure ongoing course viability. Governors discussed the possible mitigations.

L Moody
E Lees

Governors discussed the process for developing new University Studies courses, which is overseen by the Curriculum Development (Executive) Board, and the possible courses being considered.

8. Compliance Update

Governors received and considered the paper provided which included the NSS action plan, information to inform the Self-Evaluation Document and the Compliance Framework.

E Lees informed that the Data, Registry and Compliance (Executive) Board is responsible for the detailed oversight of compliance and reports to provide assurance to governance.

Governors were assured that the risk of non-compliance was now low assuming the team provided updates/revisions in a timely fashion.

9. Any Other Business

- **Social and enrichment events for students**

Governors queried the social and enrichment event opportunities available for University Studies students, to engage with fellow HE students and with students and staff from across the Group. L Hunt stated that our students did not want purely social activities but were participating in high numbers in enrichment activities which included an element of social mixing, This was commended as an important step forward.

The meeting closed at 5.47pm