University of Suffolk

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 March 2024 at 14.00 hours in room A206, Atrium Building

Chair:	Professor Mohammad Dastbaz (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
Present:	Dr Marco Beato (University wide representative, School of Allied Health Sciences), Professor Emma Bond (Pro Vice-Chancellor Research), Dr Ellen Buck (Director of Learning and Teaching), Jo Campbell (Deputy Director of People & OD, People and Organisational Development, Vice-Chancellor's nominee), Dr Sam Chenery-Morris (Dean, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health), Sam Clarke (Students' Union Officer, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Dr Adam Clayden (School of Technology, Business and Arts representative), Jo Divers (School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health representative), Fiona Fisk (Academic Registrar and Interim Director of London Centre), Professor Stuart Harmer (Dean, School of Technology, Business and Arts), Deana Hazeldene (School of Allied Health Sciences representative), Professor Gurpreet Jagpal (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Business and Entrepreneurship), Dr Ross Kemble (Leadership and Management Academy representative), Ella Macartney (Students' Union Officer, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health), Dr Rachael Martin (University wide representative, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Professor Brian McCook (Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Abigail Morgan (OSACC Manager, Professional Services representative), Dr Felix Ngobigha (Senior Lecturer, School of Technology, Business and Arts, Vice-Chancellor's nominee), Dr Pallawi Sinha (School of Social Sciences and Humanities representative), Reilly Willis (University wide representative, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Lewis Woolsten (Students' Union President of Education)
Apologies:	Professor Helen Langton (Vice-Chancellor), Tim Greenacre (Chief Operating Officer), James Nial (Head of Planning and Management Information), Shannon Pilsworth (Students' Union Officer, School of Technology, Business and Arts), Sean Preston (University wide representative, School of Technology, Business and Arts),
Secretary:	Alison McQuin (Head of Quality)
In attendance:	Associate Professor Stuart Agnew (Director, Centre for Academic and International Partnerships), John Cavani (Director of Marketing, Communications and International), Rob Ellis (Associate Dean, Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, School of Allied Health Sciences representing Dean, School of Allied Health Sciences), Stuart Lipscombe (Representative, University and College Union), Laura Pennie (Deputy Academic Registrar)

Minutes shown in bold italics should be treated as confidential and will be removed from the published set on the University website.

Minutes of previous meeting

23/058   The minutes of the meetings held on 11 October and 28 November 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising

23/059   All other actions had been completed, were due for completion at a future date or were included on the agenda.

Students' Union report

23/060   The Students' Union (SU) report was received, highlighting recent activity. It was reported that a new Chair of the Board of Trustees had been appointed, as well as a new Chief Executive Officer. Voting for the officer elections were taking place 13-19 March 2024, with some positions being uncontested.

23/061   It was confirmed that the food banks would continue to operate until the end of the year. Other activity included the ongoing 'Home Away from Home' campaign, engagement with International Women's Day activities and the SU Presidents being part of an all Party parliamentary group discussion with members of parliament.

Chair's report

23/062   The Chair's report provided members with an overview of University and sector activity. It was noted that the official Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) report covering the audit activity was still awaited.

New academic framework

23/063   A new academic framework, moving to a 30-credit module structure, was proposed. Benefits of moving to this new structure included better design for the block delivery model, opportunities for inclusion of enrichment weeks within the academic calendar and alignment to the government's Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) proposal.

23/064   The scope of the project was discussed, with the move to the new structure taking place over a couple of years. This allowed course teams to re-design their course to incorporate the outputs from the Liberating the Curriculum; Assessment; and Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship task and finish groups.

23/065   It was agreed that exceptions, such as use of 15-credit optional modules, may be necessary to meet particular Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) requirements. Members discussed the use of optional modules, noting that their use would have to be balanced for postgraduate courses delivering September and January intakes.

23/066   A task and finish group had been established to keep the project on track and would incorporate system and timetabling changes. Further guidance about the new academic framework would be provided to Heads of Subject at a scheduled meeting in May 2024.

23/067   Members were supportive of the proposal, recognising that additional questions would arise and be addressed as the project progressed.

Outcome: Approved.

Policies and procedures

Admissions Policy
23/068   The Admissions Policy was reviewed annually, with minor amendments proposed following experiences in the previous cycle.

23/069   Members were supportive of the policy, noting that it aligned to sector benchmarks but queried whether the age for mature disabled students should be amended to 25 years to reflect the SEND Code of Practice. It was explained that UCAS defined a mature student as individuals over the age of 21, but a query would be lodged with the UCAS Policy team.

Agreed action: The Director of Marketing, Communications and International to confirm the outcome from the query with the UCAS Policy team regarding the age of mature disabled students and, if necessary, update the policy by end of May 2024 for publication.

Data Management Policy
23/070   Following Quality Committee Chair's action on the Data Management Policy, the policy was subsequently updated to take into account recommendations by the internal auditor and from the Director of Digital to reference the 'Acceptable Use' policy for IT and shredding of confidential information. It was confirmed that training would be issued to staff members.

Outcome: Approved.

Disability Statement
23/071   The Disability Statement was reviewed annually and minor amendments to update terminology and contact details at partner institutions were proposed. While members were generally supportive of the amendments, they noted that some students may not have the required evidence due to delays outside of their control. It was agreed that greater flexibility should be provided in paragraph 12 to include evidence of a referral for assessment(s).

Agreed action: The Deputy Academic Registrar to update paragraph 12 to provide greater flexibility of acceptable evidence by end of May 2024 for publication.

23/072   It was confirmed that a similar document for staff may be developed as the University explores accreditation from 'Inclusive Employers'.

Framework and Regulations for SCITT Awards
23/073   It was proposed to introduce an exit award within the Framework and Regulations for SCITT Awards for students who had successfully completed 60 credits at level 7 but had not completed the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) element.

Outcome: Approved.

23/074   It was confirmed that other teacher training providers offered exit awards and could support students with an exit award to progress into alternative masters provision.

23/075   While there was some concern about the introduction of an exit award with retention rates, it was confirmed that existing policies and mechanisms, such as Fitness to Practice and the Student Complaints Procedure, were in place to support students.

Framework and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards

23/076 Minor amendments were proposed to the Framework and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards to introduce a Master of Laws (LLM) and to provide clarity on the expected course structure for full-time masters courses that include an extended practice or placement.

Outcome: Approved.

Freedom of Information Code of Practice for Managing FoIA Requests

23/077 The Freedom of Information Code of Practice was reviewed as part of the normal cycle of reviews. Minor changes were proposed to provide greater clarity to readers and had been shared with the internal auditor prior to submission to Senate.

Outcome: Approved.

Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Framework

23/078 Proposed amendments to the Higher and Degree Apprenticeships were largely to reflect the change of language used within the ESFA and provides course teams with further clarification about breaks in learning.

Outcome: Approved.

Principles for Academic and Pastoral Support

23/079 Following approval of the Personal Academic Coaching Policy for use by University of Suffolk students at Ipswich, a set of principles had been developed for use by all partner institutions. It was confirmed that the Principles for Academic and Pastoral Support had been discussed with partner institutions and would ensure a similar student experience.

Outcome: Approved.

23/080 It was confirmed that escalation routes would follow existing University of Suffolk policies and procedures and that students were able to access support staff at each of the partner institutions if they wanted to speak to someone independent from the course team. Students could also access support services from the SU, noting that further discussions were taking place on how the SU could best support students at partner institutions.

Safeguarding Policy and Code of Practice

23/081 The Safeguarding Policy and Code of Practice was reviewed annually. As part of the review, the Criminal Convictions and Safeguarding Suitability Procedure has been removed from the Admissions Policy and the General Regulations and appended to this document.

23/082 Members were supportive of the changes, but queried whether a similar policy was available for staff and whether the scope should include reference to disabled children and young people up to 25-years. It was also requested that paragraph 49 be updated from 'will be' to 'may be' and that reference to the Office for Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct (OSACC) administering the panels be removed.

Agreed action: The Academic Registrar to update the Safeguarding Policy to remove reference to OSACC administering the panels and to update paragraph 49. The revised policy should be submitted to the June Senate meeting with confirmation whether a similar staff policy was available and whether the scope should include specific reference to disabled children and young people.

Support to Study Procedure

23/083   Only minor amendments were proposed to the Support to Study Procedure, but expected further amendments were likely in the future to respond to a recommendation by the Office of Independent Adjudicators (OIA).

Outcome: Approved.

London Centre

23/084   Members received details of the London Centre, noting this had also been covered within the all-staff briefings. It was confirmed that it would be called a 'London Centre' but it was a campus for the purposes of applying to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and the Office for Students (OfS).

Apprenticeships

Institutional Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

23/085   The institutional apprenticeship SAR was provided to members. While members were pleased to note the progress the University had made over the years, they queried the high withdrawal rate for the Healthcare Assistant Practitioners. It was explained that this course had closed and so only existing students remained on the provision. In addition, a deep-dive would be undertaken in this area, which was outlined within the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Members approved the SAR.

Outcome: Approved.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

23/086   The institutional apprenticeship QIP was provided to members, noting this had already been discussed through the sub-committee structure. Members approved the actions and timelines listed on the QIP.

Outcome: Approved.

Compliance report

23/087   Relevant extracts from the University's annual OfS compliance report were shared with members. Members were supportive of the content but noted that some hyperlinks needed to be updated.

Agreed action: The Deputy Academic Registrar to update the hyperlinks prior to submission to Board.

Honorary awards

Nominations

23/088   The Honorary Award Nomination Form was updated in response to feedback received from the last Senate meeting. Members approved the revised form.

Outcome: Approved.

23/089   The list of nominations for honorary awards at the 2024 graduation ceremonies was noted by members.

Honorary Awards Committee terms of reference

23/090 A minor amendment to update job titles was proposed for the Honorary Awards Committee terms of reference.

Outcome: Approved.

Assessment Task and Finish Group

23/091 A progress update from the Assessment Task and Finish Group was provided. Guidance was being created for course teams and a video for students, featuring the SU, detailing how artificial intelligence (AI) should and should not be used.

23/092 Designing assessment with AI in mind would continue to be a work in progress for the sector due to the speed in technology development. It was highlighted there was a good set of assessment resources available on the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) website and the QAA would be hosting an assessment week, which was open to all staff and students.

OSACC annual report

23/093 The OSACC annual report was received, noting this had already been disseminated to Schools and Partners along with some mid-year data for 2023/24. Members thanked OSACC for their work.

Student recruitment

23/094 A recruitment update was provided, highlighting that a propensity modelling dashboard was being implemented to better forecast enrolment figures. A number of initiatives were in place to support conversion and late applications.

23/095 It was confirmed that School marketing plans had yet to be shared with Schools and were being finalised.

OfS B4 and B5 condition of registration

23/096 There is an expectation within the OfS conditions of registration that institutions retain appropriate records of assessed work for a period of five-years. Additional guidance was issued by the OfS and shared with members.

23/097 For Ipswich courses, work was automatically retained within Brightspace. It was confirmed that exam scripts were retained in line with data retention policies. Where students are required to create an artefact, which cannot be submitted online, students should be requested to submit a photo of their artefact in Brightspace. Information about retention of assessment would be shared further with course teams.

23/098 Members discussed retention of oral exams, noting that not all had been recorded and that recordings in Bongo were no longer available following the move to Panopto. It was explained that all assessed work should be retained, where possible, but there needs to be a clear rationale where there are exceptions to this.

23/099 Discussions were taking place with partners who did not use Brightspace to understand how they complied with this condition of registration.

Degree Outcomes Statement

23/100 The Degree Outcomes Statement provided assurance to members that degree classifications for 2022/23 were in line with previous year's data and with sector data for England.

23/101 It was noted that changes to the academic framework may affect the proportion of 'good honours' degrees but the use of predictive modelling would be explored.

External examiner report

23/102 A summary report of the 2022/23 external examiner reports provided assurance to members that students met the required standards and their performance was comparable to equivalent courses at other institutions.

Assessment boards 2022/23

23/103 A summary report of the 2022/23 assessment boards provided assurance to members that the boards functioned in line with the policies. It was noted there were some operational points that were identified to enhance assessment boards, which were being actioned.

Senate elections

23/104 The Senate election process was outlined, starting with the elections for the Leadership and Management Academy representative, followed by the two University wide academic representative elections and then the Vice-Chancellor nominees. Members were supportive of the timelines.

Outcome: Approved.

Governance review

23/105 A governance review would be undertaken in 2023/24, with members provided with the timeline and areas of focus. The review would include some focus group sessions and provided an opportunity for staff and students to contribute to the review.

Partnerships register

23/106 The University's register of partnership arrangements was received.

Course proposal forms

23/107 The list of approved course proposal forms was provided to members for information.

Course suspension and discontinuation forms

23/108 The list of approved course suspension and discontinuation forms was provided to members.

Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)

23/109 Activity involving PSRBs, since the last meeting, was provided to members for information.

Senate activity

23/110 The items approved on Chair's action since the last full Senate meeting were provided for information.

Sub-committees

Quality Committee
23/111 The minutes from the Quality Committee held on 29 November 2023 were provided.

School Academic Committee (EAST)
23/112 The minutes from the School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology Academic Committee held on 31 May 2023 were provided.

Any other business

23/113 Members congratulated Dr Ruth Flaherty who was shortlisted for the Oxford University Press Law Teacher of the Year award.

23/114 Members also congratulated the Legal Advice Centre team who were nominated as a finalist in the Team/Community Group of the Year category at the East Anglian Daily Times Stars of Suffolk awards.

Date of next meeting

23/115 The next meeting would be held at 14:00 on Wednesday 12 June 2024 in A206, Atrium Building.

Alison McQuin
Head of Quality