University of Suffolk

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14 October at 14:00 hours via Zoom

Chair:	Professor Helen Langton (Vice-Chancellor)
Present:	Dr Suha Al-Naimi (School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology, Vice-Chancellor nominee), Daniel Betts (Students' Union School Officer, Suffolk Business School), Professor Emma Bond (Director of Research), Dr Ellen Buck (Director of Learning and Teaching), Aaron Burrell (Head of Learning Information and Environments, Vice-Chancellor nominee) from item terms of reference, Dr Sam Chenery-Morris (University wide academic representative (School of Health and Sports Sciences)), Dr Daba Chowdhury (University wide academic representative (Suffolk Business School)), Professor Mohammad Dastbaz (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Dr Paul Driscoll-Evans (Dean, School of Health and Sports Sciences), Marianne Flack (Director of Quality, Teacher Development, Student Progress and Foundation Learning, Suffolk New College), Rose Gant (Students' Union School Officer, School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology), Daniel Goulborn (President, Students' Union), Professor Gurpreet Jagpal (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Business and Entrepreneurship), Dr Wendy Lecluyse (School of Social Sciences and Humanities representative), Professor Brian McCook (Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities), Dr Stuart McErlain-Naylor (School of Health and Sports Sciences representative)
Apologies:	Holly Bowen (Admissions Manager), Adam Clayden (School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology representative), Fiona Fisk (Academic Registrar), Rachel Heathershaw (University wide representative, School of Health and Sports Sciences), Chris Meredith (Executive Dean HE, West Suffolk College), Stephanie Nye (Students' Union School Officer, School of Health and Sports Sciences), Robert Price (Suffolk Business School representative), Reilly Willis (University wide representative, School of Social Sciences and Humanities)
Secretary:	Alison McQuin (Head of Validation and Exams)
In attendance:	Polly Bridgman (Director of External Relations), Tim Greenacre (Registrar and Secretary), Dr Mark Lyne (Head of Quality Enhancement), James Nial (Head of Planning and Management Information), Deborah Odell (Representative, University and College Union), Laura Pennie (Deputy Academic Registrar (Registry Services) deputising for Fiona Fisk)

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

[Secretary's note: Due to an Ofsted visit and teaching commitments, a number of members were unable to attend the meeting and the meeting was therefore not quorate. It was agreed that the meeting should go ahead with any items due for approval to be circulated to absent members for review, identifying that a nil response would be considered as approval.]

Minutes of previous meeting held on 8 July 2020

20/001   The minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising

Matters Arising – Partnerships Management Review (from minute 19/126)
20/002   A verbal update was provided at the meeting, see minute 20/043.

Partnerships – LSC Egypt (from minute 19/173)
20/003   It was reported that LSC Egypt have clarified the outstanding issues and so can proceed to validation with a November 2020 start date.

Academic Calendar 2020/21 (from minute 19/184)
20/004   It was confirmed that the academic calendar 2020/21 was used as an internal document for staff members. Students were issued with their own personalised timetable.

20/005   All other matters arising were completed or due for completion at a future date.

Students' Union report

20/006   The Students' Union report was received, it was reported that the 'Good Night Out' campaign was being progressed with resource requirements shared with the University to ascertain viability. It was confirmed that the University wanted to support the initiative, where possible, including the Pro-Vice-Chancellor helping with business contacts, to help provide a 'normal' student experience.

20/007   A 'Listen-Up' meeting between the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students' Union President and Vice-President and BAME students was held to discuss their experiences both on and off campus. It was a positive discussion and the University were exploring how they could support students who had experienced racism on nights out. Further Listen Up meetings were scheduled during November as part of Black History month.

20/008   It was confirmed that the Students' Union was exploring how to extend the care package arrangements for Athena Hall students to other key accommodation providers.

20/009   Members thanked the Students' Union President and Vice-President for their support and engagement throughout the pandemic, noting the difficult time in which they started their tenure.

Chair's report

20/010   The Chair highlighted the success of the University's position within the Guardian League Table, noting this reflected the work by staff and the results were encouraging for both staff and students. The Guardian League Table do not measure research activity and so better reflects the position of the University.

20/011   Members noted that some students had difficulties accessing Brightspace. This had resulted from a number of issues and detailed reports had been provided to the Deans so the situation could be monitored. A review of enrolment was taking place with enhancements planned for the 2021/22 process, which would help mitigate as many of the issues as possible.

Covid-19 lessons learnt

20/012   Members split into groups to discuss their lessons learnt during the pandemic, both positive and negative, and what should be continued beyond Covid-19. The groups reported their top three items to note, the full lists from groups are provided in appendix A.

Agreed action: A member from each group to provide the full notes from their discussions to the Secretary, by 26 October 2020, for inclusion in the minutes with any future learning to be fed in by all members.

20/013   Group one noted the three positive elements from the pandemic included the ability to be proactive in ways that some other institutions were unable to be; the resilience of staff and teams; and the collective efforts of people coming together to make things work. The group noted they wanted the flexibility in delivery and taking a standardised approach to elements of online delivery to continue beyond Covid.

20/014   Group two noted that some further future reflection would be beneficial as the pandemic was ongoing. They reported the positive elements to be home working, although there were some different perspectives that additional training and strategies could help support; and attendance for online teaching during lockdown was good but noted this did not work for all students. The group wanted the University to continue to embrace technology beyond Covid.

Agreed action: The Secretary to include 'Covid-19 lessons learnt' and how to disseminate new ways of working on the June 2021 Senate agenda.

20/015   Group three noted the positive elements of the pandemic included the increased range of online tools being used that provided opportunities to work with different groups; it was easier for students to be involved with more course and Students' Union activities; the agility of the institution to move to online learning.

20/016   Group four recognised the flexibility and speed to change teaching and assessment, which was acknowledged by external examiners; the different ways students could engage with their learning and support services; and the opportunity to use different teaching methods. The group wanted the open meetings and regular video communication from the Vice-Chancellor to continue beyond Covid as this helped foster a greater sense of community.

Terms of reference
20/017   The terms of reference are reviewed annually at the beginning of each academic year and no changes were proposed for 2020/21.

Outcome: Approved.

20/018   Members acknowledged the role of the Trade Union Policies and Procedures Committee in the development of procedures and criteria for the appointment and promotion of academic staff but noted that reference to the Committee would not be included in the terms of reference as it was not appropriate to do so.

20/019   Members welcomed Aaron Burrell, Head of Learning Information and Environments, and Dr Suha Al-Naimi, Senior Lecturer School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology, as the Vice-Chancellor nominees on the Senate membership.

Policies and procedures

Assessment Board Policy

20/020 Amendments were proposed to the Assessment Board Policy to reflect the needs of the block learning pilot, additional changes were also proposed to reduce the number of staff in attendance at the Assessment Board.

20/021 While members were supportive of the proposals, they queried the frequency of Assessment Boards within an academic year and it was agreed to alter the policy to reflect the range of meetings. Members also queried whether there was a deadline for Assessment Boards to be held at the end of the academic year. It was noted that while there was a cut-off point for Assessment Boards to be held to allow students to go through that year's graduation ceremonies, flexibility of Assessment Board dates was needed to help support students in continuing their studies.

Agreed action: The Deputy Academic Registrar (Registry Services) to amend the policy by 26 October 2020 to better reflect the number of Assessment Boards.

20/022 Members were supportive of the proposal to reduce the number of staff in attendance at the Assessment Boards and encouraged course teams to continue to engage with their external examiner throughout the year.

Assessment Regulations

20/023 In recognition of the ongoing impact of Covid-19, it was proposed to continue with some of the temporary changes made to the assessment regulations. It was acknowledged that students were given the opportunity to achieve the learning outcomes rather than ensuring that students met the learning outcomes.

20/024 Members discussed the possibility of points 3, 6, 7 and 9 of the temporary variations being extended beyond 2020/21 and it was acknowledged that these areas would be discussed further as part of the normal review cycle of the regulations that was due in 2020/21.

20/025 It was confirmed that the changes to the regulations would be communicated to students on the dedicated webpage and would be circulated to staff with an additional advisory document.

Outcome: Approved.

Attendance Monitoring Policy

20/026 It was proposed to amend the Attendance Monitoring Policy to reflect the requirements of blended learning. Queries from members focused on the operationalisation of the policy and it was confirmed that engagement data would be drawn from Brightspace and disseminated to course teams and Course Administrators. Standard attendance data would continue to be collected. It was confirmed that communication to both staff and students about the changes would take place.

Outcome: Approved.

20/027 It was noted that the proposed changes would be monitored as part of the normal cyclical review process due in 2020/21.

Extenuating Circumstance Policy

20/028   Following the temporary arrangements put in place due to Covid-19, it was proposed to move back to the existing policy and include an additional statement for students to outline flexibility to the policy depending on changes with Covid-19 and accessibility to services. It was confirmed that the statement would form part of wider communications to students and there would be a number of advisory points as part of the application process.

Outcome: Approved.

20/029   Members discussed methods of communication to students, noting that a mix of mediums, including videos embedded within the website, should be used to ensure that information was accessible to all.

Employer Complaints and Dispute Resolution
20/030   A new Employer Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedure was proposed so that the University continued to meet the requirements of the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA).

20/031   Members had several queries including clarifying the relevant parties and team in paragraphs 13 and 20; compliance with confidentiality and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR); and ensuring the review and escalation stage did not result in staff members being subject to more than one disciplinary procedure. It was noted that the procedure mirrored the existing Student Complaints Procedure, where possible, but noted that apprentices were subject to both employer and University policies and procedures. It was confirmed that the University adhered to the GDPR and pushed-back, where necessary, through national bodies where it was felt it was being asked to disclose excessive information. It was agreed that the procedure should be updated to clarify the queries raised and should be submitted to the Trade Union Policies and Procedures Committee.

Agreed action: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Business and Entrepreneurship to:
- make explicit confidentiality requirements;
- make explicit that staff should not be subjected to further disciplinary procedures if these were completed at the first stage;
- clarify the relevant parties in paragraph 13;
- clarify the team in paragraph 20

The revised procedure should be submitted to the next Trade Union Policies and Procedures Committee and circulated to Senate members not in attendance for approval.

Quality Committee terms of reference

20/032   Changes to the membership of Quality Committee were proposed including a change to the Chair and inclusion of the Director of Business and Entrepreneurship to the list of those in attendance.

Outcome: Approved

20/033   It was noted that the other proposal to move the Deputy Academic Registrar (Registry Services) to membership and the Head of Quality Enhancement to the attendance list to reflect retirement planning and the outcome of the Directorate review would be taken back to the next Quality Committee for discussion.

Agreed action: The Deputy Vice-Chancellor to submit the proposed change to membership to the December 2020 Quality Committee for discussion.

20/034 Members noted that while there should be collaboration between quality assurance and quality enhancement that should also be distinction between the Quality Committee and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC).

League tables and National Student Survey

NSS results

20/035 The NSS results were provided and it was noted that the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor had met with all Course Leaders to discuss the results. While the good course level results were publicised, these were not picked-up in the local press.

20/036 Members discussed the differences in the satisfaction rates in relation to the ethnicity and diversity categories and it was reported that the results had been discussed at the Student Experience Committee with initiatives identified to address the results.

Graduate outcomes

20/037 The Graduate Outcomes data, which replaced the Destination for Leavers in Higher Education, was provided. Members discussed the importance of using this data to help inform re-approval processes and the need to use the data alongside the NSS results.

League Tables

20/038 A summary of the University's placement in the different league tables was provided, noting that the differences in position could be attributed to the different metrics and weightings used. It was also noted that course groupings could differ between league tables.

Agreed action: The Head of Planning and Management Information to circulate the league table methodologies to members prior to the next Senate meeting.

Student recruitment update

20/039 The student recruitment update was provided to members, noting this did not represent the final figures as there were still both new and continuing students to enrol. Given the issues in 2019/20 across the sector, members were encouraged with the recruitment figures provided.

Access and Participation Plan

20/040 An update on progress with the 2019/20 and the 2020-25 plan was received for information.

Annual apprenticeship report

20/041 The annual apprenticeship report was received with members noting its importance due to the different challenges this group of courses had compared to other provision offered by the University.

20/042 It was reported that Ofsted's remit had expanded from higher apprenticeships (levels 4 and 5) to include all apprenticeship provision and the implications of this would be discussed further at a future Senior Leadership Team meeting.

Partnerships management review

20/043   The work of the Partnerships Management Review Group, looking at the way partnerships were managed post TDAP and the resources used, had now been completed. The key principles recommended by the group included academic schools taking a more strategic lead in the development of partnerships; to streamline management structures to ensure continued quality assurance and enhancement oversight; the development of international partnerships, which would also help international recruitment to Ipswich.

Postgraduate research validation

20/044   The outcome of the postgraduate research validation with the University of Brighton was received. Members congratulated the Director of Research and the associated teams with the successful result.

REF and RDAP

20/045   An overview of the current position regarding REF and RDAP was received.

Graduation

20/046   Graduation 2020 had currently been postponed to March 2021 and this date was being kept under review as the situation with Covid-19 changes. The University remained committed to celebrating with the class of 2020 in a meaningful way, however in the intervening period the Directorate of External Relations has facilitated social media celebrations.

20/047   This year there were over 2000 students graduating; upon conferral of the award, the students received their electronic certificate and Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). The certificates were due to be posted in early November.

Member attendance

20/048   The annual report of member attendance at Senate meetings was received.

Partnerships

Partnerships update
20/049   An update on existing and new partnerships was provided to members for information.

Partnerships register
20/050   Members received the list of international and UK partners, outside of the Partner Colleges, that have signed or were proposing to sign a memorandum of understanding.

Course proposals

20/051   The list of approved course proposal forms was received.

Course suspension and discontinuations

20/052   The list of approved course suspensions and discontinuations was received.

Course validation/re-approval outcomes 2019/20

20/053   The evaluation of the course validation/re-approval processes and outcomes in 2019/20 was received and included a list of all courses approved on behalf of Senate during 2019/20.

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) reports

20/054   Recent correspondence from PSRBs was received for information.

Chair's action

20/055   The items approved on Chair's action since the last meeting was provided for information.

Intellectual Property Policy (Commercial and Exploitation)

20/056   The approved Intellectual Property Policy was provided to members, noting that any future changes should be reviewed by the Trade Union Policies and Procedures Committee.

Reports from sub-committees

Academic Appointments and Promotion Committee
20/057   The minutes from the meeting held on 17 September 2020 were received.

Quality Committee
20/058   The confirmed minutes from the meeting held on 16 September 2020 were received.

School Academic Committee
20/059   The minutes from the Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology School Academic Committee held on 10 June 2020 were received.

20/060   The minutes from the Health and Sports Science School Academic Committee held on 11 June 2020 were received.

Any other business

20/061   An update on evaluation of the block learning pilot was requested and it was reported that a paper would be going to November 2020 LTAC meeting, outlining the approach to evaluating the project, which would inform the next steps.

Date of next meeting

20/062   The next meeting would be the joint Senate and Board workshop to be held at 09:00 on 16 December 2020.

Alison McQuin
Head of Validation and Exams

Appendix A – Covid-19 Lessons Learnt

Notes from group discussions on lessons learnt during the Covid-19 pandemic have been collated under broad headings.

Teaching/technology

- Noted that the volume of emails had increased dramatically, and this was challenging, leading to people feeling overwhelmed and missing key information. As a group we would be keen to further explore the tools we have within O365 (and beyond) – some good examples exist of moving communication from emails to chats, as well as 'good old fashioned' phone calls which can be done while walking/moving away from the desk and screen. Would a refresh or development session on the various communication tools available help staff/managers adapt their approach?
- Flexibility to change both teaching and assessment, technology has stepped into the breach, and will continue to play a key role in educating future generations. The impact on assessment was swift and profound. Consequently, considering the future of reflective questions on moving to online assessment.
- Gave us opportunity to use different teaching ways by blending technology, method of learning that combines face-to-face and online instruction.
- Timetables were redone on time
- Change in the student's participation, students not participating by voice/ video but mainly via the chat system which can be bit challenging for the staff who is presenting the lectures remotely
- Technology – issues got solved very quickly! Laptop roll out excellent. Also, all learnt not to be scared of the technology – we made it work when we had to.
- Online teaching – during lockdown attendance was great! But remote learning is a mixed bag – for some of our students it works well, but there are mixed levels of engagement. Concern that we might lose people as time progresses. Need to think about how it effects our particular student profile and WP students.
- Structured and organized, coordinated and thorough.
- Done a lot better than other institutions.
- For staff, especially those new in post, online meetings have benefits i.e. everyone has a name tag and you can easily look at a job title.

Agility/flexibility

- It was noted that we were – and are – more agile than a number of other institutions and we are delivering online courses 'properly' not just narrated power point presentations etc. We're getting the pedagogy right. We achieved ten years' worth of institutional change in 10 days and wouldn't want to see a step back.
- Impressed with ability to be proactive in some ways – other places decisions have been much slower, or we were already doing them. Really thinking ahead – reduces need to chop and change.
- Teams **resilient** and responsive. Ability to adapt progress quickly and short notice
- Rapid change has meant things are ongoing – when do we communicate? Feels like we have got this broadly right

Student experience

- Student feedback on the increased accessibility of sessions has been welcomed by most. This extends from their course to meetings which they are now more easily able to take part in (SU Council was the example given).
- Students feel positive about being on campus – feel safe. Appreciate what has been done. Also note the massive development of online teaching from when lockdown happened in March compared to start of new term.
- For some courses, students want to be on campus, others increasingly want to be remote.
- Not a bad student experience: changing the way in which students interact with teaching and learning materials, support services, and one another.
- Working/studying from home is good if your circumstances make it easy – as we go into winter not only digital poverty, also heating and food costs etc

Work-life balance/staff

- This was one of the main areas of concern moving forwards. Some are disengaging from work a little and there are challenges for managers in balancing the needs of teams and services when some colleagues can't or won't come on to campus. The group discussed the possible influence of the changing seasons on wellbeing; reduced daylight and how this will impact the feel of the working day when at home, and possible concerns about disruption to Christmas. It was suggested that some of the online socials which were popular during early weeks of lockdown could be re-established.
- Miss collegiality of seeing people, and light touch social integration.
- Even less control over diary than had on campus. Absolute madness – level of meetings.
- The good sense of community and the feedback to students and staff were very well received, the videos that been published by the VC to both students and staff.
- Having some open meetings with the staff helped with boosting the confidence and showing that we are all together in this.
- Different perceptions and perspectives depending on your role and own personal circumstances. A change in balancing both sides of your life, and what 'home' is now used for. If continues, we need strategies around home working, perhaps training for staff. However, all agreed that though we don't miss things like commuting etc we miss face to face interactions – it needs a blended approach of face to face and homeworking!
- Could more have been done to support mental health and wellbeing? Or is everyone just up against it? Welfare checks? Social activities?
- Collective efforts – trying to make things work.
- One negative is the leanness of teams

Other

- Still learning as we are still in the midst of it – will take a couple of years for us to look back and take stock of what we learnt during this time.
- Trying to be all things to all people - and are we satisfying anybody?

Items to consider continuing beyond Covid

- Flexibility in delivery – condensed timetables, online options. Blend is here to stay.
- What do we want our university delivery to be like? What does online learning do to on campus stickiness?
- Changes to methods of communication – increased information and being more conscious of what students are being told. Different appreciation of what students need to know, when and how – and the challenges students are facing.
- Standardised approaches to elements of delivery in an online environment.
- Engagement vs attendance conversation