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# Student Experience Forum (SEF)

**Chair’s Minutes of the Second meeting held on Wednesday 26 January 2022 via Collaborate**

**Present:**

Shan Wareing (Chair)

Zoe Boyer (SU)

Michelle Chodyniecki

Kate Coulson

David Cousens

David Fitzgerald

Beth Garrett (SU)

Philippa Hinks

Rob Howe

Peter Jones

Ivna Reic

Dean Sheldrick

Cathy Smith

**Apologies:**

Brendan Fawcett, Wray Irwin, Kathryn Kendon, Angela Rushton, Kate Williams, Stephen Wood

**In attendance:**

Matthew Watson (Officer)

Nick Allen (for item 07/22)

Chris Powis (for item 10/22)

**M01/22 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2021 were agreed as a fair and accurate record. The Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Health, Education and Society requested a minor correction to M07.2/21, the wording of which will be provided to the Officer.

**Action: Deputy Dean, Faculty of Health, Education and Society**

**M02/22 Actions from the meeting held on 3 November 2021**

Actions have been addressed, are in hand or addressed elsewhere on the agenda. The following actions were noted:

*M04/21 Glossary of Learning and Teaching Terminology*

It was confirmed that the Glossary of Learning and Teaching Terminology had been further updated since the last meeting and had been taken to the Senate meeting of 8 December 2021 for approval. It has been published online and the link was provided to members of the Forum.

**M03/22 Chair’s matters**

The Chair informed the Forum that work on the Student EDI Action Plan was continuing and a link will be provided to the Forum when available.

**M04/22 Matters arising**

The Chair reported that the Office for Students has published its consultation paper on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the data which will be used for it. The University is currently developing an institutional response which needs to be completed by mid-March 2022. The TEF exercise is likely to take place in the Autumn Term of 2022 with the results due in early 2023. There will only be a relatively short timeframe in which to prepare for the TEF, therefore it is important that as many staff as possible contribute to the consultation in order to increase awareness.

**M05/22 Student Experience and National Student Survey Improvement Action Plan – update**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 02/22). The Chair explained that the paper aims to capture the work in progress and shows what changes have happened since it was last presented. The Chair reminded the Forum that the University’s first Chief Information Officer has been appointed and will be commencing his role on 14 March 2022. He will initially be working alongside the Interim Director of IT.

It was reported that semesterisation has been put back to amber status from green status. This is due to several ‘snagging’ issues which have been identified and contained. These include issues related to the bunching of assessments and challenges around Examination Board timings. The Forum recognised that positive outcomes from semesterisation were also being identified such as students and staff benefitting from the inter-semester breaks. It was suggested that semesterisation may need some modules to be redesigned, particularly in relation to moving away from 50/50 assessment weightings.

The Forum was informed that the potential ‘flagship’ programmes have been identified and these are now with the University Management Team (UMT) for approval. The proposal for electives still needs to be progressed.

**M06/22 University Support for Mental Health**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 03/22). The Additional Needs Manager provided the Forum with a short presentation on mental health provision at the University of Northampton. It was explained that there has been a significant increase in the need for mental health provision in the last few years, particularly as a result of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The potential return to more face-to-face teaching has created other issues such as anxiety about returning to the campus. This has led to a shift in referrals, with the NHS now referring more students to the University’s own services than previously had been the case.

There have been several staffing changes in the Counselling Team. The University has tried to ensure that all gaps have been filled. It has become increasingly the case that GPs are referring students back to the University’s services. The period after Christmas tends to be a peak in need and this has been the case in 2022. There is currently a five week wait for an initial assessment appointment and then one to two weeks for follow-on sessions.

There have been similar issues with the Mental Health Team. There has been an increase in the focus on students funded by the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). As of 24 January 2022, there were 14 referrals with 19 students on the waiting list. The current waiting time is four weeks for an initial assessment appointment. It was confirmed that students are kept fully advised of the waiting times.

Progress has been made in developing the online Student Hub. It has been made easier to navigate and contains increased ‘self-help’ options. Buttons on the Hub include virtual drop-ins, general wellbeing and wellbeing related to Covid-19. The Forum was made aware of ‘Togetherall’ which is available to all staff and students. This is an online mental health platform which enables participants to interact 24/7 including through the medium of art. The platform includes algorithms which can identify if participants might be at risk and need an intervention.

The Forum was reminded that mental health provision is not just in the form of specialist teams. Support can come from other areas such as the Students’ Union and the professional services. All staff have a duty of care to students.

It was reported that the University’s Mental Health Day will take place on the Waterside Campus on 3 March 2022. There will be 20 stalls in place covering a wide range of areas. Other developments include the Student Struggles Exam video resources project, the Suicide Working Group, the Mental Health Networking Group and the Students of Concern Group.

The Forum welcomed the range of initiatives demonstrated by the presentation. It was felt that more needs to be done to promote the idea of an ‘active’ campus as it was agreed that physical activity helps to mental wellbeing as well as physical wellbeing.

The Forum noted that ASSIST has faced some staffing challenges, with pressure points particularly occurring at examination times. It was reported the University is in talks with De Montfort University and the University of Leicester to work with the local NHS trusts as a Higher Education grouping as similar issues are having to be dealt with across the area.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Science and Technology (FAST) suggested that there may be an opportunity to utilise MSc Counselling students on placements to operate student-led clinics for undergraduate students.

**Action: Additional Needs Manager**

**M07/22 Welcome and Induction – update (Executive Officer in attendance)**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 04/22). The Executive Officer provided the Forum with an update on matters related to Welcome and Induction. It was explained that Welcome and Induction is being reviewed by a Working Group, chaired in rotation by the Faculty Managers. The Working Group is adhering to several key principles including the need to provide the best opportunities for students to embed themselves into both the University and the town of Northampton. For the students entering the University in February 2022 there will be a ‘Refresher Week which will be scaled down version of the September 2021 Welcome Week. For September 2022 entry, there will not be a dedicated Welcome Week and all the induction activities will be integrated into the first weeks of the semester instead. The dedicated Welcome Week will be reintroduced for September 2023. Challenges with the academic year calendar mean that it will not be possible to reintroduce a dedicated Welcome Week for September 2022. The good practice emerging from the integrated approach in Autumn 2022 will be used to inform subsequent Welcome and Induction activities.

The Executive Officer confirmed that the paper will be presented to Senate on 2 February 2022 to ensure that Senate members are also aware of developments in relation to Welcome and Induction.

**M08/22 Super Supportive updates**

**08.1 Update on LEARN**

The Head of Learning Technology provided an update on the LEARN platform. The Forum was informed that LEARN had been introduced in February 2021 to provide aggregate date on student attendance taking account of attendance, engagement with NILE and with Library and Learning Services (LLS). The emerging data is intended to allow staff to monitor student engagement and make appropriate interventions. The cyber-attack in the Spring of 2021 had disrupted the operation of LEARN and the recovery has been delayed. It is hoped that it will be fully operating again from February 2022. A report on this will be provided to the next meeting of the Forum. It was reiterated that any issues with LEARN need to be appropriately logged so that they can be escalated to the appropriate owner.

**08.2 Personal Tutoring**

The Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement provided the Forum with an update on the review of Personal Tutoring which she is leading along with the Director of LLS. The review has already commenced with the aim of the final paper of findings and recommendations being presented to the June 2022 meeting of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC). The findings will be presented to the SEF first. The review will dovetail with the review of workload being carried out by the Dean of FAST and the LEARN implementation. The consultation exercise element of the review is due to be completed by 31 March 2022. The consultation will include Deans, Subject Leaders and Programme Leaders as well as involvement from the Students’ Union and Student and Academic Services. As part of the review, a small number of current Personal Tutors have been randomly selected to be interviewed. It was confirmed that it is intended that any recommendations be implemented for the 2022-23 academic year.

**M09/22 Learning and Teaching Innovation projects - update**

The Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement provided the Forum with an update on Learning and Teaching Innovation projects. This was proving to be very successful with 26 applications for projects having been made. Of these 26 applications, 14 had been awarded funding. These covered a very wide range of issues including barriers to progression, dealing with non-submission of assessment and children as researchers. It was noted that the 12 projects without funding were still being supported. A mentor from the University of Plymouth has been allocated and she is content with the progress made so far. The Learning and Teaching Conference on 23 June 2022 will receive a presentation on the progress made with the projects.

**M10/22 Recognition opportunities for staff (Director of LLS in attendance)**

The Director of LLS provided the Forum with a verbal update on recognition opportunities for staff. In relation to external opportunities, the University was continuing to increase the number of Advance HE Teaching Fellowships. There was still a relative lack of Senior and Principal Fellows but the University was continuing to push for these. In terms of internal recognition, the applications for the Learning and Teaching strand of Associate Professorships was welcomed. The Forum also welcomed the continuing role of the STAR awards. Other recognition opportunities include the DELTA project, URBAN, C@NDO and the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education. It was agreed that the University needs a big academic community of good practice and this will help to underpin the student experience.

**M11/22 Student Voice update**

**11.1 PTES 2022 Set-up and Preparation**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 05/22). The BIMI Reporting Development Manager requested the Forum approve the following recommendations in relation to the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2022:

* That the University retains the same additional institutional questions to assist with trend data (the questions relate to the Students’ Union, career development and support for international students).
* The Survey to be open at the University from the week commencing 21 March 2022 to 17 June 2022.
* To apply the same promotion as for the National Student Survey with no incentives applied.
* To retain the questions on support in relation to Covid-19 and dissertations.
* The Survey not to include partner provision.

The Forum **approved** the recommendations above.

**11.2 Undergraduate Achievements Final Sit Report 2021**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 06/22). It was explained that this Report had been delayed until January 2022. The Report identifies the need to address the attainment gaps between male and female students and between white and GEM students.

**11.3 Progression Report 2020-21 starters**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 07/22). It was noted that the targets had been set before the pandemic and the situation was now very different. The gap between male and female students had widened this year. The Report was now able to be broken into different ethnic categories.

**11.4 Postgraduate Achievements Final Sit Report**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 08/22). The Report included the 2019-20 data as the cyber-attack had delayed the 2020-21 data.

**M12/22 Project Clover**

The Chair provided the Forum with an update on Project Clover. The UCAS deadline has now been moved later into January which means that the University is waiting until February 2022 to see the full impact of Project Clover on applications. At the current time the University appears to be ahead of its competitor institutions but down on the sector.

**M13/22 Availability of papers**

There were no papers deemed confidential to the Forum.

**M14/22 Any other business**

The budget has been approved for Call Insights. The stakeholder interviews are being carried out in the week commencing 24 January 2022 with the report being ready in March or April 2022.

The SEF meeting on 23 June 2022 will need to be rescheduled to avoid a clash with the Learning and Teaching Conference. **Action: Officer**

**M15/22 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place at 2:00pm on Thursday 10 March 2022 via Collaborate.

*SEF 26 January 2022 – M Watson*

*Draft: 28 January 2022*

*Chair’s: 2 February 2022*

*Confirmed:*

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**Actions from the meeting of the Student Experience Forum held on 26 January 2022**

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| **Reference** | **Person(s) responsible** | **Action (or title of policy for dissemination)** | **Update on outcomes** |
| M01/22 | Deputy Dean – Faculty of Health, Education and Society | To provide the Officer with the amended wording for the minutes of 3 November 2021. | - |
| M06/22 | Additional Needs Manager | To take forward the possibility of MSc Counselling students on placement providing student-led clinics for undergraduate students. | - |
| M14/22 | Officer | To reschedule the SEF meeting due to take place on 23 June 2022. | - |