

# Student Experience Forum (SEF)

**Chair’s Minutes of the Fifth meeting held on Thursday 30 June 2022 via Collaborate**

**Present:**

Shan Wareing (Chair)

David Cousens

Annette Devine

David Fitzgerald

Philippa Hinks

Rob Howe

Wray Irwin

Ivna Reic

Genine Taylor (SU)

Kate Williams

**Apologies:**

Becky Bradshaw, Michelle Chodyniecki, Kate Coulson, Brendan Fawcett, Angela Rushton, Cathy Smith, Steve Wood

**In attendance:**

Matthew Watson (Officer)

Sheryl Mansfield (for item M51/22)

Suzy Wallace and Hannah Samuels (for item 52/22)

Nick Allen (for item 54/22)

**M47/22 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**M48/22 Actions from the meeting held on 7 April 2022**

Actions have been addressed, are in hand or addressed elsewhere on the agenda.

**M49/22 Chair’s matters**

The Chair reported to the Forum that the Student Experience Improvement Action Plan was now mainly signed off. Actions in relation to MyEngagement were still in progress. The University is waiting for the publication of the National Student Survey (NSS) results on 6 July 2022. The outcomes of this and the Student Experience Improvement Action Plan will feed into the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission. It was noted that the TEF Working Group is now in operation and appropriate progress is being made in anticipation of a submission deadline early in 2023.

**M50/22 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**M51/22 Learning Development Mentors (Sheryl Mansfield in attendance)**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 23/22). The Head of Learning Development provided the Forum with a short presentation on Learning Development Mentors. The Forum was informed that eight Learning Development Mentors had been recruited in September 2021, all of them being undergraduate students in their second or third year of study. They are contracted to work four hours per week for 40 weeks. The intention is that the Learning Development Mentors will provide peer support for students in terms of academic skills. It was suggested that some students do not feel comfortable in seeking help from staff and the Learning Development Mentors help to bridge that gap. The Learning Development Mentor initiative is being promoted via various forms of social media including Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok, which it is recognised that not all members of staff feel comfortable engaging with. The initiative will have a University webpage and this will be launched from September 2022. The initiative is being promoted via a ‘Spread the Word’ project which includes communications via Student Advocates. A Learning Development Mentor ‘brand’ is being developed to enhance levels of visibility. It was noted that the Mentors have been sitting in on drop-in sessions and have seen more than 100 students since September 2021. In an annual survey it has emerged that 47% of recipients expressed no preference of seeing a member of staff or a Learning Development Mentor. Succession plans are in place to ensure that new Learning Development Mentors are in place as the existing ones graduate.

In general, the Forum warmly welcomed the Learning Development Mentor initiative and can see that it is having a positive impact. It was agreed that there is a need to actively promote the initiative. **Action: Chair**

**M52/22 #ExamStruggles – resources for students (Suzy Wallace and Hannah Samuels in attendance)**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 24/22). The Senior Counsellor and the Student Mental Health Advisor provided the Forum with a short presentation on #ExamStruggles. The Forum was informed that this is an online resource. The resource is intended to provide information, strategies, and suggestions for students to cope with examinations – before, during and after. The resource provides practical strategies and tips as well as helping students to understand and manage their emotions. The rationale of the project is to increase student access to support, increase mental-health resilience, provide students with a broad range of coping strategies and for all this resource to be evidence-based. Method used to review #ExamStruggles include open evaluation, page-view analysis, and structured feedback. The Forum was informed that it is the intention to make #ExamStruggles available on the public website and future projects will look at transitions from school to university and between each level.

It was noted that the webpage data analysis has just been received and shows how the level of access to the resource has increased since the launch in March with a particularly high spike in demand on 23 May 2022.

The Forum welcomed the presentation and agreed that #ExamStruggles is a much-needed resource, strongly evidence-based making use of extensive research. It was suggested the Faculties should help to disseminate the use of the #ExamStruggles resource. The Forum was informed that there has been increased promotion of the resource via social media in the lead up to the main examination period.

**M53/22 University of Northampton Student Digital Experience Tracker 2022**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 25/22). The Head of Learning Technology provided the Forum with a short presentation on the key findings of the University of Northampton Student Digital Experience Tracker 2022. The Survey compares data for the University with over 50 other HEIS covering 33,000 students. It was explained that the Survey was carried out between 14 November 2021 and 1 February 2022 at the University and was completed by 411 students. Responses were from all Faculties and all levels (Foundation, Undergraduate and Postgraduate). It was noted that the future delivery, 50% of UoN students prefer to be taught by a mixture of on-campus and online teaching, 30% mainly on-campus and 20% mainly online (which is 7% higher than the comparison HEIs. 93% access their learning via a personal laptop, 13% via their own tablet devices and 58% use a smartphone to do this. The Survey shows that 46% of UoN responders are hindered in their learning by poor wifi connections. In terms of guidance and support, it was noted that 52% came from online videos and resources, 53% from lecturers, 30% from family and friends, and 34% from IT staff. 39% of responders wanted the University to upgrade platforms and systems, 24% wanted more IT support and 23% asked for more specialist software for their particular programme. It was suggested that the survey outcomes show that the University is ahead of the sector in the top-end elements. Confirmation was provided that outcomes of the Student Digital Experience Tracker have been shared with the Chief Information Officer.

In terms of the staff version of the survey, 229 members of staff completed it. 22% of the responders indicated that they prefer to work on-campus which corresponds closely to how the students responded. Staff had similar issues in relation to challenges regarding poor wifi connections. 18% of staff responding indicated that they did not feel that they receive appropriate support. 76% of responders turned to colleagues for help.

**M54/22 Welcome and Induction September 2022 (Nick Allen in attendance)**

The Executive Officer provided the Forum with a verbal update on the preparations for Welcome and Induction September 2022. It was reported that Welcome and Induction is being overseen by a Working Group which meets monthly and is jointly chaired by the Faculty Managers. The Working Group is aiming to make Welcome and Induction as effective as possible, especially as in September 2022 it will be carried out alongside normal teaching. Lessons learnt from the May 2022 intake of Masters students in the Faculty of Business and Law will be carried forward to September 2022. The September 2022 welcome packs are being stripped back with much of the generic information being made available via the University’s webpages. It is hoped that this will reduce some of the burden on staff. The Forum noted that the Welcome and Induction Working Group is an open forum and staff are welcome to join if they notify the Executive Officer.

**M55/22 University of Northampton Initial Institutional Graduate Outcomes (GO) Survey results**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 26/22). The Director of Enterprise and Employability provided the Forum with a short presentation on the University of Northampton Initial Institutional GO Survey results. The Forum was informed that these are the top-level findings based on the outcomes published on 16 June 2022. It was reported that the survey involves graduates 15 months after they have completed their programmes. The survey asks institutions to achieve an 80% response rate. The University achieved a 54% response rate with positive response rates from all of the Faculties. It was noted that the graduates being surveyed were from cohorts which had experienced the challenges of the Covid-19 lockdowns. Whilst the outcomes were still not back to the pre-pandemic levels, they did show that the University is maintaining its position.

It was noted that the relatively poorer outcomes for Joint Honours programmes may have had a negative impact for the overall outcomes for the University. The Forum questioned whether Joint Honours outcomes might be relatively poorer due to Joint Honours students being less focussed on their qualification as the foundation for future employment than single honours students. In response it was felt that this was possible and the Forum acknowledged that not all students study in preparation for employment. Poorer GO results need not reflect a lower value of education. It was noted that the Office for Students has suggested that funding might be withdrawn for programmes with lower than 60% graduate employability. The example was given of media coverage of the decision of one HEI to reorganise its English Literature programme, where reporting alleged that the decision was influenced by poor employment data in the context of OfS funding threats. . The Forum agreed that not all graduates necessarily seek work identified as ‘graduate’ jobs, but that they may aim for medium skill jobs which have social high value, and which their degree helps them undertake, and in addition, their degree can ultimately lead to them undertaking work identified as ‘graduate level’ later in their career.

The Forum was informed that the University is still working to close the access and participation gaps between GEM and white students by 2025. The gap has been closed to -11.9%. White students are still more likely to enter graduate jobs but the gap with GEM students is narrowing and FAST has been especially successful with this. A best practice hub in relation to this is being developed.

The presentation will be provided to the Officer to share with the Forum membership. **Action: Director of Enterprise and Employability**

**M56/22 Chatbot pilot to improve student socialisation**

The Head of Learning Technology provided the Forum with a short presentation on the Chatbot pilot to improve student socialisation. It was explained that whilst students appear to enjoy having at least some teaching online, they do need new ways to socialise and come together as a community. Chatbot allows students to network together online and develop friendly relationships between groups. The Chatbot pilot has been shared with the Executive Officer and the Students’ Union. The pilot is small-scale to begin and will involve the Students’ Union. It was noted that it had been shared with the Student Support and Advice Manager in relation to safety elements.

**M57/22 Super-Supportive updates**

**57.1 MyEngagement – an update**

The Head of Learning Technology provided the Forum with a verbal update on MyEngagement. It was explained that a pilot involving postgraduate students has taken place in June 2022. Further discussions are taking place in terms of how it monitors attendance ahead of an institution-wide launch in September 2022. In general, the Forum welcomed the progress being made.

**M58/22 Student voice updates**

**58.1 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) – University-level quantitative data**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 28/22). The BIMI Reporting Development Manager explained that the indications are that the PTES 2022 results are seeing an improvement on the previous year, including on resources and the Students’ Union. The data, in general, appears to be moving in the right direction.

**58.2 Update on when the other PTES and NSS 2022 data will be published**

The BIMI Reporting Development Manager informed the Forum that the National Student Survey (NSS) results will be published on 6 July 2022. The PTES results are currently being worked on.

**M59/22 Project Clover – an update**

The Chair provided the Forum with a verbal update on Project Clover. The Chair thanked staff for their contributions to making Project Clover a success. Initiatives such as improving Award Titles, refreshing modules and enhanced marketing have all helped to make Project Clover a success. In addition, the recruitment of international students is going particularly well and there is confidence that the UK will remain an attractive opportunity for international students for some time to come. As well as benefits, enhanced recruitment will create new challenges for timetabling and the estates. There will also be a need to ensure that staffing levels are aligned with increased student numbers.

**M60/22 HUMEN University Mental Health League Table**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 29/22). The Forum welcomed the positive outcome for the University (10th out of 80 HEIs) but recognised that there is some uncertainty regarding how the data was obtained. The Forum agreed that is good to acknowledge the work of the Mental Health teams, especially given the challenges of the pandemic and the cyber-attack. It was acknowledged that the demand for support with mental health issues is continuing to rise. **Action: Chair**

It was agreed that the accuracy of the data needs to be verified first before the report is disseminated more widely and possibly presented to Senate.

**M61/22 Availability of papers**

The following paper was deemed confidential to the Forum:

* Annexe 26/22 University of Northampton Initial Institutional Graduate Outcomes (GO) Survey results

**M62/22 Any other business**

There was no other business.

**M63/22 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place at 2:00pm on Wednesday 19 October 2022 via Collaborate.

*SEF 30 June 2022 – M Watson*

*Draft: 5 July 2022*

*Chair’s: 6 July 2022*

*Confirmed:*



**Actions from the meeting of the Student Experience Forum held on 30 June 2022**

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| **Reference** | **Person(s) responsible** | **Action (or title of policy for dissemination)** | **Update on outcomes**  |
| M51/22 | Chair  | To take forward the further dissemination of the Learning Development Mentors initiative.  | Progress to be reported at the SEF meeting on 19 October 2022.  |
| M55/22 | Director of Enterprise and Employability | To provide the Officer with the GO Survey outcomes to disseminate to the Forum membership.  | This action has been completed.  |
| M60/22 | Chair  | To work with the Officer on the wording of a letter to acknowledge the efforts of the Mental Health teams.  | This action is ongoing.  |