

# Student Experience Forum (SEF)

**Chair’s Minutes of the First meeting held on Wednesday 3 November 2021 via Collaborate**

**Present:**

Shan Wareing (Chair)

Emily Coleman

Kate Coulson

David Cousens

Brendan Fawcett

David Fitzgerald

Beth Garrett (SU)

Philippa Hinks

Rob Howe

Peter Jones

Nikhil Paul (SU)

Angela Rushton

Dean Sheldrick

Cathy Smith

Steve Wood

**Apologies:**

Kathryn Kendon, Ivna Reic, Kate Williams

**In attendance:**

Matthew Watson (Officer)

**M01/21 Welcome from the Chair**

The Chair welcomed the members to the first meeting of the Student Experience Forum. It was explained that it is the intention that the Forum will be nimble, collaborative and action focussed. It will look at the full student experience and it is hoped that it will learn experiences in the pandemic.

**M02/21 Terms of Reference and membership 2021-22**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 01/21). It was explained that at the high level, the Forum will be overseeing the institutional preparations for the Teaching Excellent and Student Outcomes Framework (TESOF) which was announced as taking place in 2022, although that timeframe now starts to look unlikely as no further information has been issued. It was noted that in the last such exercise, the University had achieved Gold status and preparations will be undertaken to achieve the best result possible in the next exercise. The Terms of Reference reflect this and are aligned to the University’s strategic aim to be super-supportive. It is the intention that the Forum will focus on a series of student experience-related projects which will differentiate it from the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), which focusses on process and procedures.

In general, the Forum members felt the Terms of Reference to be appropriate. It was requested that the full title of the TESOF be included and the job title for the Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement be corrected. It was suggested that the reference to ‘2021-22’ be removed from the final section of the Terms of Reference to better reflect that some priorities may run over more than one academic year. The Terms of Reference were recommended to Senate for **approval** subject to the above amendments being made. **Action: Officer**

The membership as presented was recommended to Senate for **approval**. It was noted that in the Faculty of Business and Law it is intended to create a sub-executive role to oversee student experience matters and it was agreed that this person will be able to sit on the Forum.

**M03/21 Chair’s matters**

The Chair informed the Forum that the details of the next iteration of the TESOF had not yet been published. It is understood that it is likely to be happening in the summer of 2022. Although the details have not yet been published, the metrics involved are likely to be looking at student outcomes and success. There is expected to be an institutional narrative based on evidence.

**M04/21 The Naming of Parts: A Glossary of Learning and Teaching for the University of Northampton**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 02/21). The Head of Learning Technology explained that the paper had been drafted by the Director of Library and Learning Services. In drafting the paper, the Director of Library and Learning Services had consulted widely on common phrases used in relation to learning and teaching. An intention of the paper is to help reduce confusion regarding what is meant by ‘online’ and ‘face-to-face’ learning. The Forum agreed that it is helpful to see this terminology clearly defined and provided in one place in written form. It was confirmed that the Deans had already provided feedback on the paper.

The Head of Planning reminded the Forum that in terms of student funding, the definitions of mode of study are limited to full-time, part-time and sandwich year. Therefore, it is critical to ensure that institutional definitions recognise this. It was agreed that the Head of Planning will take this forward with the Director of Library and Learning Services and the Academic Registrar to ensure that the definitions in the Glossary are aligned with funding requirements.

**Action: Head of Planning and the Academic Registrar**

The Forum agreed that once the Glossary is finalised it will need to be appropriately disseminated and made accessible to staff and students. It was suggested that communication mechanisms for the Glossary could include via Marketing and International Relations and via Unify.

**M05/21 University Support for Mental Health**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 03/21). The Head of Student Services explained the main purpose of the paper is highlight the multiple support system across the University to support mental health. The Forum was informed that the mental health support systems have been represented as a pyramid to indicate the different levels of available support. It was recognised that there has been a significant increase in the need to provide mental health support, particularly since the start of the pandemic, and this has required a holistic approach.

The Forum was informed that the default position should that the mental health of all students is supported by university and Student Union activities and communities. It is hoped in many cases these, together with open access resources, will reduce the number of students who need appointments with either the Mental Health or Counselling teams. The new platform for providing mental health support will go live on 10 November 2021 and there will be an open forum on how this will work. It will be recorded and made available for those who cannot attend. It was confirmed that the University’s mental health support is clinically led and has safeguarding facilities built into it.

The Chair noted that that is currently a lot of concern regarding the state of mental health in the UK with a significant increase in mental health needs amongst students and the wider population. The University is very keen to support all students in need or at risk and it is imperative that the University takes the necessary action. It was agreed that University staff work very hard in this area, and maximise the resources available. The Mental Health Working Group is focussing on raising awareness as lack of awareness has been identified as a significant barrier to students accessing support in a timely way. The paper as presented will be widely distributed and include a QR code to allow students to access further information easily. Clarification was provided that the baseline support is accessible to everyone and the support becomes more specialist the higher the level in the ‘triangle’.

The question was raised as to whether the provision of mental health support is a mandatory part of induction for new staff. In response it was confirmed that it is part of all new staff orientation. There is also a self-reference video available on the Northampton Integrated Learning Environment (NILE).

It was confirmed that support from the NHS and IAPTS come at the top of the ‘triangle’ but the Forum recognised that external waiting lists can be very long. The University can and does signpost students to external forms of help. Telephone and video conferencing support is also available.

**M06/21 Super-supportive update**

It was noted that this will be a standing item on the agenda.

**06.1 Update on LEARN**

The Head of Learning Technology provided an update on the LEARN platform. It was reported that the stream had been taken down as a result of the March 2021 cyber-attack. Bringing LEARN back on stream since then had taken longer than anticipated. It is anticipated that it will be fully back in mid-December 2021. A member of staff has been recruited to lead on the roll out. There will need to be a focus on the feed systems (Blackboard, the Library and Attendance Management). The data feeds include the Student Record System, timetabling and Attendance Management. It was felt that the data has been improving in terms of reliability as the semester has gone on. Registers will cause issues for LEARN and it is recognised that some of this data is not as accurate as it should be. It is intended that the stream will be fully rolled out in early 2022.

The Forum recognised that there could be repercussions in relation to the accurate monitoring of the attendance of international students to meet UKVI requirements. It was noted that since the pandemic, there has been some additional flexibility regarding this. The Forum agreed that there needs to be a review of all activity which contributes to the maintenance of accurate records in relation to attendance, including the involvement of Personal Tutors. It was agreed that this will be taken to the next Library and Learning Services (LLS) Student Forum. **Action: Head of Learning Technology**

**M07/21 Student Voice update**

It was noted that this will be a standing item on the agenda.

**07.1 National Student Survey (NSS)**

The Reporting Development Manager informed the Forum that preparations are underway for the NSS 2022. The Forum agreed to formal promotion of the NSS at the University from 14 February 2022. The Forum also considered whether incentives for students to complete the NSS should be provided. Whilst it was recognised that some Higher Education Institutions do offer incentives, it was more important that staff talked to the students about the NSS rather than providing incentives. Therefore, the Forum agreed that no incentives will be offered in relation to the NSS 2022. Finally, the Forum considered whether the University will opt to ask two additional questions as part of the Survey. It was noted that the NSS will not be asking any Covid-19 related questions in the 2022 Survey. The Forum was reminded that the monthly Pulse Survey picks up on questions related to mental health matters. The Forum agreed that the NSS 2022 at the University will include the two additional questions permitted: one on mental health and well-being and the second one on equality and diversity.

**07.2 Module/Programme feedback**

The Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Health, Education and Society explained that it is felt that the current module evaluation process is not working as well would be preferred. The process in not sufficiently timely and students often do not see the benefits or impacts of any resulting actions. Therefore, three programmes from each Faculty are currently piloting a programme-level approach to module evaluations. It is the intention that this will result in more timely improvements to modules, improve senses of ownership by Module Leaders and reduce ‘survey fatigue’ for students. It will also inform the Annual Review process and encourage good practice. The Forum was informed that it is anticipated that the revised process will look like the NSS and will inform how module-level feedback is carried out. The outcomes will be fed back to the SEF to determine the future approach to module/programme feedback and will be communicated to the wider University, including via Unify. It was confirmed that the evaluation will take place at the end of the final semester and may be extended to postgraduate provision too.

**07.3 Students’ Union Pulse Survey**

The Insights Coordinator informed the Forum that the Students’ Union (SU) Survey is run over nine months and is extended to 1/9 of the student population per month. It considers issues such as employability, the students’ academic and social life and well-being. Student are offered the chance of winning a £250 Amazon voucher for completing the Survey. It has a response rate of approximately 20%. It is designed to allow benchmarking to take place against other HEIs although some caveats are necessary. The SU uses the data for strategic and operational planning purposes. The data also helps the SU to plan which campaigns to run. Clarification was provided that the data from the Pulse Survey cannot go down to the level of individual programmes.

The Forum welcomed that the Insights Coordinator is on the Student Survey Group as it was agreed that is essential to avoid unnecessary duplication between surveys. The Insights Coordinator provided reassurance that the data from the Pulse Survey does actively inform the campaigns run by the SU and it does shape priorities for the year ahead.

**M08/21 Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework**

It was noted that this will be a standing item on each agenda.

The Forum noted that this had been dealt with in an earlier item.

**M09/21 Project Clover – an update**

The Chair provided the Forum with a verbal update on Project Clover. The purpose of Project Clover is to recruit an additional 600 on-campus undergraduate students. This will involve initiatives for both recruitment and retention.

**M10/21 BIMI data reports**

The Head of Planning explained that the results from both the recent NSS and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) had been disappointing and the results are being analysed. It was recognised that several factors had been outside of the control of the University. However, the surveys provide a rich data set and will help to determine a programme of work to take forward. This will be brought to the next meeting of the Forum. **Action: Head of Planning**

**M11/21 Availability of papers**

There were no papers deemed confidential to the Forum.

**M12/21 Any other business**

A member of the Forum stressed the importance of ensuring that all welcome and induction processes are the best they can be. Feedback on the welcome and induction processes for September 2021 had been positive and this momentum needed to be maintained. It was agreed that first impressions are key. The Forum agreed that this will be added as an agenda item for the next meeting on 1 December 2021.

**M13/21 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place at 2:00pm on Wednesday 1 December 2021 via Collaborate.

*SEF 3 November 2021 – M Watson*

*Draft: 23 November 2021*

*Chair’s:*

*Confirmed:*



**Actions from the meeting of the Student Experience Forum held on 3 November 2021**

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| **Reference** | **Person(s) responsible** | **Action (or title of policy for dissemination)** | **Update on outcomes**  |
| M02/21 | Officer  | To make the necessary amendments to the Terms of Reference and membership.  | This action has been completed.  |
| M04/21  | Head of Planning and Academic Registrar  | To review the ‘Naming of Parts’ paper to ensure that the terminology used aligns with funding requirements.  | This action has been completed. A final version of the Glossary was presented to the Senate meeting of 8 December 2021.  |
| M06.1/21 | Head of Learning Technology  | To take the issue of maintaining accurate student attendance records to the next meeting of the LLS Student Forum.  | An update to be provided to the SEF meeting of 26 January 2022.  |
| M10/21  | Head of Planning  | To bring the programme of works in relation to the NSS and PTES outcomes to the next meeting of the SEF.  | This has been added to the agenda for the SEF meeting of 26 January 2022.  |