

# Student Experience Forum (SEF)

**Chair’s Minutes of the Third meeting held on Thursday 10 March 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

Kathryn Kendon

Ivna Reic

Angela Rushton

Cathy Smith

Kate Williams

**Apologies:**

Becky Bradshaw, Brendan Fawcett, David Fitzgerald, Wray Irwin, Stephen Wood

**In attendance:**

Matthew Watson (Officer)

Tereza Aidonopoulou-Read (for item 22/22)

**M16/22 Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**M17/22 Actions from the meeting held on 26 January 2022**

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

*M06/22 MSc Counselling students*

The possibility of MSc Counselling students on placement being able to provide student-led clinics still needs to be followed up.

**Action: Additional Needs Manager**

*M14/22 June 2022 meeting of the Student Experience Forum*

The rescheduled date of the June 2022 meeting of the Student Experience Forum is likely to be 30 June 2022 at 10:00am (to be confirmed).

**M18/22 Chair’s matters**

There were no Chair’s matters.

**M19/22 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**M20/22 Student Experience and National Student Survey (NSS) Improvement Action Plan – update**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 09/22). The Chair provided an update on each item on the Action Plan:

**Short term/focussed:**

Item 1: The lunch to congratulate Programme Teams with very successful NSS and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) had finally been held following delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Item 2: The line management review of programmes with persistently negative impacts on institutional NSS results was progressing. This review was looking at the issue holistically and taking account of matters such as entry qualifications, resources, staffing and the curriculum. It was reported that in the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) regular meetings were taking place and NSS reports were being used from both 2020 and 2021 to inform this process. In the Faculty of Arts, Science and Technology (FAST) work was being carried out with the Subject Leaders to ensure that the impacted Programme Teams are addressing the issues, including that resources are appropriate and that modules are completely redesigned where necessary. The Faculty of Health, Education and Society (FHES) has also been taking account of the Barometer Annual Review.

Item 3: In relation to the Pilot ‘Toolkit’ for improving programme NSS scores, FAST had used this last year for provision delivered with Moulton College and had achieved the best results which was welcomed by the Forum. The other Faculties have adopted aspects of the Toolkit and the uptake to date has been mixed.

Item 4: In relation to consolidating and promoting mental health provision, this can now be classed as ‘green’. The University has looked at mental health provision holistically and promoted the support framework extensively.

**Long term/systemic**

**IT and Data Management:**

Item 1: The new Chief Information Officer is due to join the University of Northampton on 14 March 2022.

Item 2: The Forum was informed that the pilot system for the relaunch of LEARN is now working. The accuracy of the data is felt to be improving in time for a soft launch on 31 March 2022. The Academic Registrar provided the Forum with an update on the My Day trial, which is one of the most critical feeds into LEARN. There have been some challenges with engagement, but confidence was expressed that there will be opportunities to test if further with the Semester 3 arrivals prior to LEARN going live for the September 2022 start.

**Teaching and Learning Development:**

Item 1: The Decolonising Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA) has now gone to ‘green’ status. This has been a major project and there will be an event in September 2022 to showcase what has been achieved. There are plans to broaden it out to Diversification and Diversity. This does not mean that there will be any reduction in focus on issues related to race and ethnicity.

Item 2: The Forum was informed that three members of staff (Roshni Khatri, Nick Cartwright and Kate Coulson) have been put forward for National Teaching Fellowships. There will be a continuing focus on the Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence and hope of a strong submission in future years.

Item 3: In relation to internally funded projects to raise the profile and standards of learning and teaching and student support, these are continuing to be progressed. These will be discussed further at the Learning and Teaching Conference on 23 June 2022.

**Portfolio Review:**

Item 1: The launch of flagship developments is ongoing. The approval for funding was agreed and the initial proposal provisionally agreed by January 2022. The action should be completed by 31 May 2022. The flagship developments will incorporate a narrative of excellence in learning, teaching, research and enterprise.

Item 2: The Forum was informed that the process of removing the Joint Honours provision from the curriculum is nearly complete. The Joint Honours provision has been removed mainly to do with the poorer student experience and outcomes; and to remove its negative impact on timetabling. It was felt that it will leave the University with a much clearer view of its provision.

Item 3: The Director of Enterprise and Employability is taking forward the possible introduction of electives to increase student choice, employability and satisfaction. It will be part of the move to enhance the students’ Higher Education Achievement Record by enabling such activities as taking extra modules, Students’ Union work, volunteering and sports activities to appear on the Record.

Item 4: In relation to Project Clover, the aim of this was to recruit 600 additional on-campus students. Achieving this would provide the University with the critical mass to have more options about its estate. Taking account of volatile student numbers, it does appear that to date the University is set to potentially recruit 300 additional students for September 2022. The Project was felt to be a positive example of good team working. The Forum was reminded of the importance of the University being able to effectively convert its applications through activities such as Discovery Days.

Item 5: The use of evidence arising from the portfolio review to improve existing programmes and develop new ones is ongoing.

**Organisation and Management:**

Item 1: The action in relation to Faculty Business Plans is now completed.

Item 2: The review of timetabling has been extensive. The space utilisation project will help to identify how the campus is actually being used. The Assessments, Ceremonies and Examinations (ACE) department has been looking at the effectiveness of the examination board timings and how the related processes flow together. It is anticipated that timetabling changes will be limited for the 2022-23 academic year but there will be additional proposals for implementing in September 2023.

**Learning Communities, Student Support and Student Voice:**

Item 1: In relation to communities of practice, this item can now be considered to have a green rating. The Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement informed the Forum that these are all happening and provided the example of the one related to personal tutoring which is taking place every four to six weeks. Attendance is positive with 25 to 30 colleagues attending each session. These communities of practice will be formally reviewed.

Item 2: The review of ‘super supportive’ is undergoing a soft launch at this meeting of the Forum.

Item 3: Work to standardise Welcome and Induction activities is progressing.

Item 4: Ensuring that all students have access to regular personal tutoring is a major project being dealt with by the Head of Learning Technology through LEARN. The research phase of this is due to carry on until the end of March 2022. Some staff are being randomly selected to take part in the research stage. A Programme Leaders’ community of practice is also an area of focus. The paper on this is due to be written in the week commencing 14 March 2022.

Items 5 and 6: The Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Health, Education and Society informed the Forum that there is general agreement that the current system of module evaluations is not as effective as it could be. Therefore, three programmes from each Faculty are currently taking part in a pilot in a new module monitoring approach. The intention is that the new approach will facilitate dialogue and increase a sense of ownership for Module Leaders. Programme annual review is being finalised and an annual programme-level survey, similar to the NSS but to track students’ views at Levels 4 and 5, will be trialled. The results of this will be fed back to the Forum.

Item 6: In relation to the Student information Desk (SID), this is a large-scale project to review its effectiveness so as to create a ‘One Stop Shop’. This is continuing to be progressed.

Item 7: The review of the estate, to ensure flexibility and agility, is continuing. A consultation with students is due to be held before the end of March 2022.

**M21/22 JISC Student Digital Experience Tracker 2022**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 10/22). The Head of Learning Technology informed the Forum that the survey had not been carried out in 2021 due to the cyber-attack. The outcomes of the 2022 survey showed that 50% of the students who responded prefer a ‘hybrid’ mix of online and face-to-face delivery, 30% prefer mainly on-campus delivery and 20% prefer mainly online delivery. The Forum welcomed the rise in the number of students who believe that their programme is appropriately preparing them for the digital workplace. The Forum considered the recommendations. In particular it was noted that possible low student digital capability had meant that some students had not been able to complete the survey due to this. The Forum agreed that it is important for the University to promote activities to help avoid a sense of digital isolation and enhance the feeling of being part of a community. The Forum **approved** the recommendations.

**M22/22 Discussing ‘Super Supportive’ (Tereza Aidonopoulou-Read in attendance)**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 12/22). The Programme Leader for MA Special Educational Needs (SEN) & Inclusion and MA SEN & Inclusion (Autism) provided the Forum with a short presentation on ‘University Services and Being Super Supportive’. The Forum was informed that the University needed to consider what does being ‘super supportive’ mean and to what extent are students aware of this. It was recognised that in many cases, the students most in need of additional support are those that do not access support mechanisms such as ASSIST. There was also agreement that assessments need to be designed to meet the needs of all students upfront rather than being in such a format that many students need to apply for adjustments, which is a growing issue for the University.

There was a recognition that for some students there is a perceived stigma in asking for additional support. Therefore, there needs to be a different way of framing education and learning. Students need to be given the soft skills to help them better cope with life and staff interactions with students need to be looked at holistically. There was a general agreement that ‘super supportive’ is not a particularly empowering term. ‘Super’ as a term can seem ambiguous. Students may have higher expectations of what the term actually means and misinterpret what the University’s services can do for them.

It was agreed that it will be helpful if the MA SEN & Inclusion can talk to Faculty teams further about her research into ‘super supportive’ during the Summer Term.

**M23/22 Online and Digital Exams and TCAs**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 14/22). The Academic Registrar explained to the Forum that during the pandemic there had been a move away from ‘face to face’ examinations to other forms of assessment. The University still did not have the necessary software to run online examinations. There needs to be a broader discussion about this and what exactly is the purpose of examinations as a means of assessment. There was general agreement that the University’s move towards more authentic assessments is to be welcomed. It was agreed that the discussions about the future of examinations must include the student voice at their centre, including those students who would prefer to take examinations. It was noted that some Professional/Statutory/Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are reviewing their approaches to assessment as a result of the pandemic and this may lead to some of them moving away from traditional examinations more permanently. It was recognised that traditional examinations are not a form of assessment guaranteed to make cheating impossible. To date there has been one meeting of the related Working Group. Following further discussions with the Faculties, a revised version of the paper will be brought back to the next meeting of the Forum. It was requested that the Assessments, Ceremonies and Examinations (ACE) Manager be invited to the next meeting.

**Action: Officer**

**M24/22 Student Futures Commission Report**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 11/22). The Chair explained that this was an independent report which showed that students had been seriously negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. It was agreed that the six longitudinal themes identified in the report can be used by the University as a framework to check progress against. This will help with the preparations for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

**M25/22 Student Experiences Insights Survey (SEIS – November to December 2021)**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 13/22). The Chair explained that the data in the survey cannot be used as part of the TEF. The outcomes did show that the University was performing well against its comparator institutions.

**M26/22 Student Voice update**

**26.1 National Student Survey (NSS) 2022 Response Rates**

The Forum received the paper (Annexe 15/22). It was reported that as of 9 March 2022, the University’s NSS response rate is 40% (45% in 2021). A total of 16 programmes are so far over the threshold to generate individual programme outcomes. The Survey will close on 30 April 2022 and there will be pressure to ensure the institutional response rate reaches 50%.

**26.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2022 Response Rates**

The BIMI Reporting Development Manager explained to the Forum that the Survey is due to open in the week commencing 21 March 2022 and will be open to the middle of June 2022. BIMI has met with the Students’ Union to discuss its promotion. It was noted that the University will also be participating in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) in 2022.

**M27/22 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**

The Chait explained to the Forum that the institutional response to the TEF is due in seven days’ time. It is likely that the dataset deadline will be Christmas 2022 meaning that the TEF will take place at some point in the 2022-23 academic year. The emphasis will be on the student voice.

**M28/22 Availability of papers**

The following paper was deemed confidential to the Forum:

* 13/22 Student Experiences Insights Survey (SEIS)

**M29/22 Any other business**

The Academic Registrar and Director of Student and Academic Services (Kathryn Kendon) was thanked for her significant contribution to the Forum and the way in which she has solved many major issues over the years. The Forum wished her well for the future.

**M30/22 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place at 10:00am on Thursday 7 April 2022 via Collaborate.

*SEF 10 March 2022 – M Watson*

*Draft: 22 March 2022*

*Chair’s: 4 April 2022*

*Confirmed:*



**Actions from the meeting of the Student Experience Forum held on 10 March 2022**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reference** | **Person(s) responsible** | **Action (or title of policy for dissemination)** | **Update on outcomes**  |
| M17/22 | Additional Needs Manager | To take forward the possibility of MSc Counselling students on placement providing student-led clinics.  | - |
| M23/22 | Officer  | To invite the ACE Manager to the next meeting of SEF in relation to the issue of online examinations.  | - |