

HE EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 5 March 2024 at 4.00pm

Present physically: C Chua, Vice Chair

Present virtually: M Searcey
N Savvas, CEO
R Hetherington

In attendance: E Lees, Executive Dean University Studies
F D'Costa, Registrar
L Hunt, Head of Student Experience
L Moody, Group Principal Strategic Growth and Partnerships (part)
S Appleby, Head of Higher Education Curriculum Delivery
S Gales, Governance Professional

Apologies: C Higgins, Chair
C Shaw, Group Sixth Form Principal
J Gazzard
J Robson, Group Sixth Form Principal

Absent:

1. **Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence**

N Savvas declared his role as CEO and Trustee of Suffolk Academies Trust. C Chua declared his role as an employee of University of Cambridge's Judge Business School. M Searcey declared his role as an employee of University of East Anglia. No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies for absence were received from C Higgins, C Shaw, J Gazzard and J Robson.

The Committee extended their well wishes to C Higgins.

C Chua chaired the meeting.

2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

3. **Matters Arising from the meeting on 23 November 2023**

The matters arising from the previous meeting were complete.

L Moody joined the meeting at 4.04pm

4. **Risk Register Extract**

Governors received and considered the Risk Register extract provided.

Governors discussed WSCR029 (relating to non-compliance with OfS conditions) and queried why the post-mitigation risk rating had increased, compared to the previous meeting. E Lees explained the rationale is the need to embed the identified best practice.

Governors reviewed the risks and **felt assured** by the mitigations proposed.

5. **Internal Auditor's Findings Report**

Governors received and considered the Internal Auditor's Findings Report for Mental Health and Wellbeing which took place in July 2023 and was graded as **significant assurance** and resulted in one low risk recommendations for students and four low risk recommendations for staff and one added value suggestion.

Action

Governors received and considered the Internal Auditor's Findings Report for HE student recruitment which took place in January 2024 and was graded as **reasonable assurance** and resulted in one medium risk and five low risk recommendations and one added value suggestion.

Governors discussed the medium risk recommendation and queried whether the due date was feasible. E Lees confirmed it was and completion of this recommendation is essential to our plans to further develop our HE offer.

Governors queried whether the Internal Audit process was helpful for the Executive. E Lees noted the report echoed our internal findings and the recommendations are actions we were already working on.

Governors noted the Committee have discussed the HE recruitment strategy and queried if the College has a HE recruitment and marketing strategy. E Lees noted that at the time of the audit we had multiple interlinking documents, as opposed to a cohesive over-arching strategy, which resulted in their recommendation.

Governors discussed their commentary about viability of courses and E Lees explained how this is being further developed by the Curriculum Development (Executive) Board.

Governors queried how the Internal Auditor's findings reports are utilised by the Executive and Governance. E Lees explained how the reports feed into the Executive Boards (such as Data, Registry and Compliance; Curriculum Development, and Academic Quality) and S Gales explained how the reports are reviewed by the specialist Committees and overseen by the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Governors discussed the need for greater clarity and a well-known unique selling point for US. L Moody confirmed this is underway. N Savvas explained our core target markets and how we are advertising to them.

Governors reviewed the report recommendations and the management response and **felt assured** by the actions proposed.

6. **UPD strategy and implementation summary**

[This item was discussed after agenda item 12.](#)

E Lees summarised how working as part of University and Professional Development (UPD) have enabled HE to be better integrated within the Group which has created opportunities for best practice sharing and innovative pilots as well as cross-marketing and greater access to employers and stakeholders. It has also provided the HE team with more support and nurtured the development of more inclusive Group-wide strategies to benefit all our students, staff and community.

Governors commended the progress and welcomed this being showcased at a future Corporation meeting and/or EEG Strategic Conference. L Moody and N Savvas to discuss.

L Moody
N Savvas

7. **Recruitment and student numbers in-year and year ahead**

Governors received and considered the paper provided, and E Lees summarised the key points and F D'Costa provided an update on the live application data for 2024/25.

E Lees explained the impact of the UPD open events and advertising via employer breakfast events.

8. **KPI Report**

Governors received and considered the paper provided, and F D'Costa summarised the key points.

E Lees noted there are some inaccuracies in the metrics and explained how the data will be further interrogated and refined in future.

9. Student Experience inc. Voice, Conduct and Complaints

Governors received and considered the paper provided and L Hunt summarised the key points and findings of the Semester One evaluation questionnaire.

Governors fed back that the Edmunds Lecture Series have been well received by the community.

E Lees noted that lots of student voice and engagement happens at course/subject level outside of the formal Student Voice Forum, which skews the data as this is less well documented.

Governors noted a 'you said, we did' communications strategy might improve student voice engagement and survey response. L Hunt agreed and noted this is underway.

The Committee discussed that instances of low-level academic misconduct (e.g. plagiarism or collusion) can be reassuring in that it shows the staff are vigilant and are checking/reporting.

10. Access and Participation Plan inc. Investment Monitoring

Governors received and considered the paper provided, and E Lees summarised the key points.

11. Curriculum Development

Governors received and considered the paper provided, and E Lees summarised the key points.

Governors discussed the proposed new Degree courses and queried if we have confidence that these courses have suitable progression routes into local employment opportunities. E Lees confirmed that part of the validation approval process considers our links to local employer partners and noted employers co-design the courses to ensure future graduates acquire the required skills.

Governors discussed the proposed new nursing and allied health qualifications and queried if we have links to NHS partners to create career pathways. E Lees explained the networks we are part of and how we are partnering with them to address their skills needs. The Committee discussed the recruitment trends in health roles and associated factors which might influence their applications.

12. Office for Students (OfS) Compliance Review

Governors received and considered the paper provided, and F D'Costa summarised the OfS returns since the last meeting and confirmed that the returns were compliant.

13. Any Other Business

None.

The meeting closed at 5.47pm