

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of a meeting of the Student Learning Experience and Engagement Committee held on Wednesday 10 April 2019

- Present: Professor G van der Velden (Co-Chair, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Learning Experience)), A Brewerton (Head of Academic Services, Library) for minutes 41-46/18-19 only, Dr J Bryan (Student Engagement Co-ordinator (Faculty of Social Sciences)), Professor A Clark (Academic Director (Undergraduate Studies)), Dr C Hampton (Academic Representative of the Faculty of Arts), J Mellor (Student Representative, Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine), E Mundy (Head of Marketing Services, Marketing and Communications) for minutes 41-46/18-19 only, Dr L Plath (Student Engagement Coordinator (Faculty of Arts)), Dr E Riva (Academic Representative of the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL)), Dr K Simecek (WIHEA Fellow, Department of Philosophy), A Thomas (Head of Academic Technology and Digital Transformation, IT Services), Professor P Tissington (Academic Director (Employability & Skills)), Dr I Tuersley (Student Engagement Coordinator (Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine)), E Worrall (Student Representative, Faculty of Arts)
- Apologies: L Kennedy (Co-Chair, Students' Union Education Officer), Professor G Cooke (WIHEA Fellow, School of Engineering), Dr W Curtis (Academic Director (Partnerships)), Dr R Freeman (WIHEA Fellow, Head of Student Engagement and Recruitment, Life Sciences), Professor L Gracia (Dean of Students), Professor C Hughes (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)), Dr C MacLean (Academic Representative of the Faculty of Social Sciences), Dr K Owen (Student Engagement Coordinator (Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine)), Dr E Thonnes (Student Engagement Coordinator (Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine)), Dr D Wood (Academic Representative of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine), R Wooldridge Smith (Director of Student Opportunity)
- In Attendance: P Costello (Ambitious Futures Graduate Trainee), D Derricott (Secretary), R Dickinson (Senior Tutor, Dean of Students' Office), N Howell-Manning (Student Communications Officer), C O'Leary (Assistant Director / Head of Student Experience, Student Opportunity) for minute 45/18-19 only, K Pinny (Senior Academic Technologist, IT Services) for minute 48/18-19 only, K Stratford (Assistant Secretary)

41/18-19 Conflicts of Interest

REPORTED:

That, should any members or attendees of the Committee have any conflicts of interest relating to agenda items for the meeting, they should be declared in accordance with the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance (2014), available online from <http://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/publications/>.

RESOLVED:

That no conflicts of interest were raised.

42/18-19 Minutes

CONSIDERED:

The minutes from the meeting held on 04 February 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Student Learning Experience and Engagement Committee (SLEEC) held on 04 February 2019 be approved.

43/18-19 Matters Arising

REPORTED: (by the Co-Chair, Professor G van der Velden)

That following the Committee's extended discussion on how the attainment gap for Black Students could be reduced, a subset of Committee members and attendees of the last meeting are developing proposals for the Committee's consideration at its meeting in May, which are likely to include: that the University make an ambitious statement of intent in this area, that data on the gap be better collated and analysed for academic departments to use, and that academic departments be supported to understand and address the causes of an attainment gap.

44/18-19 Chairs' Business

(a) Directors of Student Experience and Progression

REPORTED: (by the Co-Chair, Professor G van der Velden)

That following SLEEC's commitment to identifying good practice in the appointment of Directors of Student Experience and Progression (DSEPs) by academic departments, Dr Freeman had led this work with herself and Professor Hughes, and a model academic role description had been developed for use by Heads of Department when next appointing to the role, which was due to be consulted on with academic departments before being brought to SLEEC for consideration.

(b) Enhancements to the Committee's operation

REPORTED: (by the Assistant Secretary)

That in line with other committees in the corporate and academic governance structures, SLEEC would adopt a new format for committee papers from its next meeting and would transition to use a new online portal, Convene, for the dissemination of committee papers from the beginning of the next academic year.

(c) Mock Subject Level TEF

REPORTED: (by the Co-Chair, Professor G van der Velden)

That an exercise was underway to introduce academic departments to the methodology being used to pilot the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) at subject level, which involves written submissions being drafted in response to the pilot metrics supplied by the Office for Students for each of the 22 eligible subject groups at Warwick.

45/18-19 Warwick Student Experience Survey

CONSIDERED:

A paper and verbal report from Claire O’Leary, Assistant Director of the International Student Office, summarising the Warwick Student Experience Survey results, and outlining proposed next steps. (SLEEC.15a&b.18/19).

REPORTED: (by C O’Leary)

- (a) That following a rebranding of the Student Barometer to the Warwick Student Experience Survey (WSES) and a collaborative effort by the International Student Office, Marketing and Communications, and Teaching Quality, student and staff engagement with the survey had increased considerably this year, with a response rate of 18% compared to 13% in 2017.
- (b) That student satisfaction with their arrival, induction and orientation had increased by 6% following the investment in Welcome.
- (c) That student satisfaction with learning overall was positive but that satisfaction with library and learning spaces was low in contrast.
- (d) That Warwick compares least well to the UK average on student satisfaction with their living experience, including transport, sports facilities and for international students, the openness of Home/UK students when making friends.

(by Dr I Tuersley)

- (e) That the School of Engineering had found students to be particularly dissatisfied with the availability of individual study space in the lead up to and during examination periods.

(by the Co-Chair, Professor G van der Velden)

- (f) In response to a question from J Mellor, that postgraduate research students were not surveyed on this occasion as the questions related more to the taught student experience and as the University was focused on maximising their engagement with the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey in term three.
- (g) That the University intends to run the WSES biennially and therefore the focus should be on making full use of the data already available through the next academic year.
- (h) That the Committee would not support the creation of a Task and Finish Group to manage the results analysis, as proposed in the paper, and that this analysis and reporting should be completed by the International Student Office as originally planned ahead of the release of the National Student Survey results and action planning in July.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That information on the availability of alternative study spaces outside of the Library would be collated and communicated to students in term three through a coordinated campaign. (**Action** for E Mundy, S Lloyd, A Brewerton and G van der Velden)
- (j) That free text comments from the survey would be shared with senior managers in relevant professional service departments. (**Action** for C O’Leary)

- (k) That a full analysis of the results would be produced by the International Student Office in advance of and for consideration by a dedicated workshop for members of SLEEC and colleagues from relevant teams across the University. (**Action** for C O'Leary)

46/18-19 Peer Observation and Review of Teaching

CONSIDERED:

A paper and verbal report from Dr Jane Bryan, Co-Convenor of the WIHEA Learning Circle on Peer Observation, summarising the consultation responses received and final policy proposals being recommended for approval (SLEEC.16/18-19).

REPORTED:

(by Dr J Bryan)

- (a) That following SLEEC's consideration of draft proposals at its last meeting, these were consulted on with academic departments and have been revised in light of the feedback received.
- (b) Academic departments were generally supportive of the proposals and no major changes to the requirements of the draft policy were needed, however the importance of confidentiality between observer and observee was emphasised by a number of departments.
- (c) That Peer Dialogue on Teaching emerged from the consultation as the preferred name for this activity.

(by the Dr K Simecek)

- (d) That academic departments would naturally implement the policy principles in different ways and it would therefore be beneficial to monitor this in the early stages as departments publish their schemes, ensuring that it is not implemented with any focus on performance management.

(by Dr L Plath)

- (e) That options for student engagement in Peer Dialogue on Teaching should be included in the guidance issued to departments on designing and operationalising their schemes.

(by the Co-Chair, Professor G van der Velden)

- (f) That a small number of policy principles have been drafted for approval based on the revised recommendations in the paper and academic departments would be asked to design and publish their individual schemes based on these principles.
- (g) That subject to agreement with HR, all staff who teach should be within the scope of the proposed policy, including hourly paid staff and postgraduate research students who teach.
- (h) That the implementation of the policy by academic departments would be reviewed, steering and assured through existing quality assurance processes, including Teaching Excellence Group meetings and the Institutional Teaching and Learning Review.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Committee agreed the draft policy statement should be adopted as University policy.
- (j) That the Co-Chairs would approve the addition of a statement on which staff are within the scope of the policy on the Committee's behalf once agreement was reached with HR.
- (k) That the Committee expresses its thanks to the WIHEA Learning Circle on Peer Observation, and in particular its Co-Chairs, for their work to reach this point and produce a good quality outcome.

RECOMMENDED: (to Education Committee)

- (l) That the Peer Dialogue on Teaching Policy drafted in SLEEC.16.18-19 be approved and formally adopted as University policy.

47/18-19

Module Evaluation

CONSIDERED:

A paper and verbal report from Dr Cathy Hampton (Chair of Module Evaluation Learning Circle) and Amber Thomas (Chair of Module Evaluation Learning Circle), on the progress made towards implementing standardised questions in module evaluation and introducing a centralised student module feedback service (SLEEC.17.18/19).

REPORTED:

(by the Dr C Hampton)

- (a) That having reviewed the implementation of the proposals for module evaluation agreed by SLEEC last academic year, the WIHEA Learning Circle found the standardised set of questions to be well received but not always used consistently, which affect the ability to compare results across modules.
- (b) That academic departments sought a clearer understanding of why module evaluation was being managed centrally and a firmer assurance that the results would not be monitored centrally, given the focus of the policy was on departments being responsible for module evaluation.
- (c) That the question set understandably focused on evaluating the module as a whole and explicitly avoided trying to assess the performance of individual staff, however some staff who teach modules as part of a team would prefer more granularity in student feedback which helps them to enhance their practice.
- (d) In response to a question from J Mellor about tension in any module evaluation system between administering it before and after the final assessment had taken place, that the current approach of administering it before allowed departments to consider feedback across modules before a term ends.

(by A Thomas)

- (e) That in the absence of a requirement to report on module evaluation outcomes to the University, there is both a desire for clarity on this and a limited appreciation for wider implications of amending the question set on using results data across departments in TEF submissions.

(by Dr E Riva)

- (f) That students studying modules in IATL appreciated the consistency in questions used across departments.

(by the Co-Chair, Professor G van der Velden)

- (g) That there was significant diversity in the design and delivery of modules across the University and as such, a common student module feedback system will not enable a comprehensive evaluation of every module by itself but it does still add value and can be used alongside other tools and approaches to evaluating and enhancing modules.
- (h) That the member of Education Executive with responsibility for ensuring the policy was implemented would be the Director of Education Policy and Quality.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the WIHEA Learning Circle on Module Evaluation would review and further enhance the guidance available to academic departments when designing and developing their approach to module evaluation.
- (j) That each academic department would be asked to summarise their approach to module evaluation, including how this currently meets the requirements of the policy and any plans for further development in 2019-20, and to publish this to their students and staff.

RECOMMENDED: (to Education Committee)

- (k) That Teaching Excellence Group engagements in 2019-20 should consider each department's published approach to module evaluation and address any gaps in this approach in the department's TEG meeting with senior staff.

48/18-19

Effective Moodle Module Practice Guidance

CONSIDERED:

A paper, presentation and verbal report from Kerry Pinny, Senior Academic Technologist, and Amber Thomas, Head of Academic Technology and Digital Transformation, on the need for guidance on effective Moodle module practice and proposing the creation of this guidance (SLEEC.18.18/19).

REPORTED: (by K Pinny)

- (a) That from 2019-20, all but two academic departments will use the Moodle virtual learning environment however the nature of that use varies considerably in the absence of University guidance, which can cause dissatisfaction amongst students when they experience inconsistency between modules.

- (b) That some other universities take a more proactive approach to guiding the content that features on the virtual learning environments, which range from informative guidance to prescriptive minimum standards.
- (c) That the Academic Technology Team in IT Services would like to develop guidance for academic departments on good practice in designing and populating module sites on Moodle, which would be disseminated as a supportive tool rather than a prescriptive checklist.

(by the Co-Chair, Professor G van der Velden)

- (d) That any resources should be developed as guidance and not as minimum expectations or standards.
- (e) That the issuing of such guidance is within the gift of IT Services as the responsible professional service area and does not require the approval of SLEEC, however members would be well placed to help shape this based on their own experience.
- (f) That this work should be undertaken in tandem with the SPI project and redevelop the module catalogue so that a consistent approach is taken to publishing information about modules in different places.

49/18-19 Summer Examinations

REPORTED: (by the Co-Chair, Professor G van der Velden)

In response to a question from E Worrall about the reasons for the delayed publication of the summer examinations schedule, that the University recognises this has been difficult for students, has issued an apology, and has put considerable effort into resolving the immediate situation with a view to ensuring it does not happen again.

50/18-19 Dates of future meetings

REPORTED:

That further meetings of the Student Learning Experience and Engagement Committee (SLEEC) will take place as follows:

Wednesday 22 May 2019, 09:00 - 11:00, CMR 1.0
 Wednesday 09 October 2019, 14:30 – 16:30, CMR 1.0
 Thursday 14 November 2019, 13:30 – 15:30, CMR 1.0
 Thursday 06 February 2020, 13:30 – 15:30, CMR 1.0
 Thursday 02 April 2020, 13:30 – 15:30, CMR 1.0
 Thursday 21 May 2020, 13:30 – 15:30, CMR 1.0