UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

STUDENT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Student Educational Experience Committee (SEEC) of the Academic Board held on 27 November 2018.

PRESENT: Dr S M Jarvis (Chairman)

Ms B Adams Dr J L Collett Dr M Lilley
Ms R Allen Mr N Geach Dr A Maunder
Mr A Aman Dr S Grey Dr I J Phillips
Ms J Baines Mrs S D Harrison-Barker Dr P Porter
Mr T Baker Dr F L Haddleton Ms C A Rendell
Dr H C Barefoot Ms Z Hakim Ms K Robins
Ms K Barton

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs J H Allen Ms K Murphy

APOLOGIES:

Mrs L Bissessar Mrs B Lyons Ms G Ward
Ms L Uttley

ACTION

11 MEMBERSHIP

11.1 Noted the Committee’s current membership (Confidential Agenda Paper 2.1 refers).

11.2 Category 6: Associate Deans of School (Learning and Teaching) (and named alternate who shall be the relevant Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance))

11.2.1 Noted the appointment of Dr B Brownie, as Interim Associate Dean (Academic Quality and Assurance) in the School of Creative Arts.

11.2.2 Noted the appointment of Mrs S Murray, as Associate Dean (Academic Quality and Assurance) in the School of Engineering and Technology.

11.3 In attendance

Noted: Ms K Murphy, Equality and Diversity Officer, was in attendance.

12 MINUTES – 2 OCTOBER 2018

Confirmed and signed the minutes (Confidential Agenda Paper 3 refers).

13 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

13.1 Received the summary of actions to date (Confidential Agenda Paper 4.1 refers).

13.2 Noted: with thanks the communiqué of the meeting of 2 October 2018, prepared by Ms C Rendell (Agenda Paper 4.2, refers).

13.3 Agreed: Dr I J Phillips would produce the communiqué for today’s meeting. IJP
13.4 **Annual School Reports on Academic Standards and Student Experience**
2017–2018 – Minute 968 refers

(Minute 15, refers.)

14 **CHAIR’S COMMENTS**

14.1 **Received:**

14.1.1 An update report from the Chair on TEF.

14.1.2 TEF Year 4 metrics (Confidential Agenda Paper 5.1.2, refers).

14.2 **Noted:**

14.2.1 the Chair thanked colleagues for their continued work and support for the University’s students;

14.2.2 the second year of the subject level pilot, which would continue, had now been launched, though the University of Hertfordshire would not be participating;

14.2.3 further information had been released by the TEF team of the Office for Students (OfS) concerning what was being piloted and a summary had been circulated to Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching);

14.2.4 key additions/changes/features included:

   i two new NSS metrics were included, student voice and learning resources; NSS metrics would continue to be half-weighted;

   ii the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey (DHLE) was discontinued but LEO metrics would be added to core metrics (these had previously been supplementary metrics);

   iii continuation would be double-weighted in respect of students continuing at Level 4 and Level 5. It had been clarified that, if students continued at another institution this would count as continuation in higher education. Internal movement within an institution from one programme to another would also count as a positive metric and seen as an endorsement of an institution’s willingness to embrace mobility;

   iv a ‘differential degree outcomes’ metric would be piloted as a supplementary metric alongside the grade inflation metrics.

14.2.5 no TEF awards would be made in 2020, therefore the University’s institutional level Gold award would last the full three years;

14.2.6 2018-2019 would be the final year of provider level TEF; thereafter TEF would be at subject level only though it was anticipated that awards would last longer than the current three years, subject to the outcome of continuing pilots;

14.2.7 the metrics for TEF 2021 would be made available in Spring 2020;

*Minute 14.2.8 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only*
14.2.9 Paper 5.1.2 contained the TEF 4 metrics which had been published in October 2018. The results on Pages 2 and 3 in respect of the core metrics forming the initial hypothesis for the University, were indicative of a silver category outcome. The blue colour-coding on Pages 2 and 3 was a negative indicator;

14.2.10 although the part-time head count of postgraduate taught students of 1,605 was a relatively small proportion of the total student body this figure did not include postgraduate students at collaborative partners. In acknowledging the need to support them as fully as full-time students, School Administration Managers were in a position to provide a list of those part-time students in the Schools;

14.2.11 an independent review of TEF would be chaired by Dame Shirley Pearce DBE, currently Chair of Court and Council at the London School of Economics and Political Science, a member of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Panel for the Ministry of Education in Singapore, a Trustee for the Royal Anniversary Trust, a member of the advisory board of HCA UK and a member of the Committee for Standards in Public Life.

14.3 NSS Away Day

14.3.1 Received: an oral report from the Chair concerning the NSS Away Day held on 10 October 2018.

14.3.2 Noted:

i feedback from the Away Day had been broadly positive and the Chair would consider it in more detail with Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) at a forum session;

ii two distinct views on the structure of the day had emerged with those requesting more of the same and others preferring an opportunity for more informal networking with colleagues;

iii three priorities had been identified for action during the coming year:

a differential attainment for different student groups (outcomes, continuation, student success on the course);

b staff development;

c student engagement in its broadest sense;

iv in considering Action Plans from Annual School Reports, members would be asked to consider these three priority areas as well as the sharing of good practice.

15 ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORTS ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE 2018-2019

15.1 Received: Action Plans from Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching):

15.1.1 School of Computer Science and Engineering and Technology, from Dr M Lilley (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.1, refers);

15.1.2 School of Creative Arts, from Dr I J Phillips (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.2, refers);

15.1.3 School of Education, from Ms R Allen (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.3, refers);

15.1.4 School of Engineering and Technology, from Mr T Baker (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.1, refers);

15.1.5 School of Health and Social Work, from Ms J Vuolo (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.5, refers);
15.1.6 Hertfordshire Business School, from Ms K Robins (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.6, refers);
15.1.7 Hertfordshire Law School, from Mr N Geach (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.7, refers);
15.1.8 School of Humanities, from Dr A Mauner (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.8, refers);
15.1.9 School of Life and Medical Sciences, from Dr P Porter (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.9, refers);
15.1.10 School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics, from Dr J L Collett (Confidential Agenda Paper 6.1.10, refers).

15.2 **Noted**: following group discussions on the School action plans, the following key observations were recorded:

15.3 **Staff development/support**

**Noted:**

15.3.1 it was acknowledged that Programme Leaders played a key role in the delivery of degree programmes; staff development initiatives to assist them in their tasks, which also included responsibility recruitment of students and student attainment success;

15.3.2 these individuals were in contact with and supporting students from first encounter on the website, application process, acceptance through to employment;

15.3.3 in considering the effective management of Action Plans, the number of actions varied widely across Schools from ten to almost 30 and there might be scope for some actions to be part of the wider Strategic Business Unit (SBU) action plans as whole-School actions, for example student recruitment. In providing support for and easing the pressure on Programme Leaders, there was a need to prioritise actions.

15.4 **Continuation/student achievement**

**Noted:**

15.4.1 Canvas had been useful in respect of the provision of feedback on marked work;

15.4.2 there was scope to introduce peer-peer support which was already in operation in some areas of the University and there was further scope for students to elect for either peer support or the opportunity to ‘tutor’;

15.4.3 the Academic Support Unit in the School of Life and Medical Sciences (LMS), comprising three staff, had been well used by several hundred students already, though it was also available to support staff;

15.4.4 LMS would also like to introduce alumni mentoring to motivate and inspire students who might otherwise be tempted to drop out. In this respect the School was organising careers and alumni days;

15.4.5 it was planned to organise a BAME careers event on the de Havilland Campus in Semester B and the School of Humanities was working with the Careers and Employment Service in this respect; it was hoped to draw in BAME former students for the event;

15.4.6 with the implementation of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the exchanging of personal contact information between students and alumni required careful guidance and members were encouraged to liaise with the Careers and Employment Service and Development and Alumni Office;

15.4.7 given the mixed results in attempts to utilise the experiences of alumni, work would be required within the University to help Schools make use of this valuable resource.
15.5 **Student engagement**

**Noted:**

15.5.1 there had long been issues in respect of contacting students via email,

15.5.2 whilst Canvas provided students with the option to decide how they wish to be communicated with, it was noted that Canvas operated at Module level only;

15.5.3 the Committee believed that students needed to understand that email was the professional means of communication but acknowledged that there was a requirement to consider the messages being given to students about the methods by which they could receive information;

15.5.4 there had been positive work in the School of Computer Science in respect of the embedding of activities for students with employers within the curriculum in the form of live projects providing authentic learning activities.

15.6 **Timetabling**

**Noted:**

15.6.1 the challenges of timetabling for commuting students were acknowledged, particularly if those students wished to come in for extra-curricular activities which were on a different day. Such challenges might need to lead to greater creativity in the methods of learning and teaching, for example online lectures;

15.6.2 any reduction in direct contact time might need to be considered in respect of the information in Key Information Sets;

15.6.3 students were keen to have options to access the timetable to identify an additional session, sometimes because they wished to attend other lectures for interest. Currently only staff had access to the full timetable;

15.6.4 in making the wider timetable available, there were implications in respect of accommodating extra individuals at an event that proved popular.

16 **ITEMS OF REPORT FROM HERTFORDSHIRE STUDENTS' UNION**

16.1 **Received:** a report from Ms Z Hakim, Vice-President (Education) of the Hertfordshire Students' Union and Mr A Aman, Vice-President, (Community) of the Hertfordshire Students' Union (Agenda Paper 7, refers).

16.2 **Noted:**

16.2.1 by-elections for NUS delegates and part-time campaign officers had taken place (Section 1 of Agenda Paper 7, refers) and members of the Committee would be informed of the names of the new campaign officers;

16.2.2 elections for campaign officers would be integrated into the main elections in March with effect from March 2019;

16.2.3 monthly reports would be provided; currently an awareness campaign was being planned to raise awareness of those on the autistic spectrum. The Students' Union was working with Dr H Barefoot, Deputy Director of Learning and Teaching, in respect of sharing best practice within the Schools to encourage inclusivity for students coping with autism.
16.3 **Herts Empowerment**

**Noted:**

16.3.1 Mr Aman reported on a social platform for students to share ideas and matters with other students through the use of an A5-sized ‘postcard’ which, following completion, would be put into a suggestion box. Contributors would remain anonymous, the only information required from them would be the name of their degree programme and level of study. Once the information provided had been uploaded to the Students’ Union website, other students would be able to ‘up’ vote or ‘down’ vote and any comment/idea that received at least 50 votes would be investigated;

16.3.2 the need for a moderator to filter inappropriate information, such as personal identities, was acknowledged.

16.4 **Commuters Connect**

**Noted:**

16.4.1 Mr Aman reported on the success to date of a networking initiative for commuting students and acknowledged the assistance from the Student Success Team in hosting events for commuters;

16.4.2 a week-long series of events was planned during February 2019.

16.5 **‘End of Stigma’**

**Noted:**

16.5.1 a series of monthly sessions to raise awareness of mental health issues would commence in December 2018; two sessions were planned for January 2019;

16.5.2 School Community Organisers and Residential Assistants were working in partnership with Schools in the organising of these events and a central timetable of events would be available for all students to access.

17 **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS)**

17.1 **Received:** an update from the Chair on the NSS.

17.2 **Noted:**

17.2.1 NSS 2019 NSS was due to commence on 29 January 2019 and training would be provided on both the College Lane and de Havilland Campuses;

17.2.2 the Committee acknowledged the concerns of the OfS that institutions should not seek to influence the manner in which students completed the Survey;

in noting that the guidance to be circulated would include advice on how to avoid influencing students’ responses, it was acceptable to refer students to the NSS website should students request this. The website would be open from 7 January 2019;

17.2.3 it was possible that Ipsos Mori might contact students prior to 29 January 2019;

17.2.4 Careers and Employment were running a campaign in January 2019 to train students in the use of LinkedIn; it would be appropriate to exercise caution to ensure this campaign was not connected to the opening of the NSS 2019 survey.
18  
**STUDENT SURVEYS**

18.1  
**Module Feedback (MF) – Minute 996.4 refers**

18.1.1  
**Received:** an interim report from Ms C Rendell, Deputy Director of Academic Quality Assurance, concerning the development of MF at the University and an update on electronic implementation (Confidential Agenda Paper 9.1, refers).

18.1.2  
**Noted:**

i. the outcome was subject to amendment as some modules operated outside the period under review and therefore a full analysis had yet to be made;

ii. although the response rate was lower than at the same time in the previous year, it was acknowledged that EvaSys had not been fully operational during the period under review. Nevertheless, despite the low response, comments from students had been helpful;

iii. indications so far suggested that satisfaction among students had improved significantly; one possible reason was that the introduction of Canvas had encouraged staff to redesign modules though a contributory factor where modules were not working particularly well might relate to how lecturers worked with students. TEF Gold Award might also be a contributing factor;

iv. students tended to be very supportive of their lecturers, who were well prepared in delivering lectures and used lively and engaging techniques including lecture capture;

v. negative comments tended to arise when students had not been sufficiently confident to ask for help and requests for help and guidance featured quite strongly in the Feedback;

vi. negative comments in respect of assessment had quite often been in respect of students not knowing how they would be assessed;

vii. Canvas had been positively received;

viii. the importance of feeding back to students such positive results was acknowledged. The Department of Marketing and Communications was currently working on a template for use by Schools to disseminate feedback and members were encouraged to channel comments for the University-wide feedback campaign to Ms S Loasby, Internal Communications Coordinator, Department of Marketing and Communications;

ix. in respect of being able to use Canvas to encourage module feedback by students, it was now possible to send reminders but module leaders were still relied on to encourage participation.

19  
**LEARNING AND TEACHING INNOVATION CENTRE (LTIC)**

19.1  
**LTIC Annual Report 2017-2018**

**Received and noted:** the annual report of the LTIC for the academic year 2017-2018 which reflected the breadth of activity taking place in Schools (Confidential Agenda Paper 10.1, refers).
WIDENING PARTICIPATION

Received:

20.1 a report prepared by Mrs L Bissessar, Head of Widening Participation and Outreach (Confidential Agenda Paper 11, refers);

20.1.2 an oral report from Ms K Barton, Director of Learning and Teaching.

20.2 Noted: although attendance by students at Maths and English support sessions had been encouraging, most of those in the target group, without adequate GCSE grades in the subjects, had not attended and Mrs Bissessar was working with the Student Centre to obtain up-to-date information on those without adequate GCSE grades.

LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES (LCS)

Received: a report from Ms B Adams, Head of Library and Academic Support Services, concerning any matters for consideration (Agenda Paper 12, refers).

Noted:

21.2.1 the WiFi improvement project was still on target for completion in Summer 2019;

21.2.2 the Learning Spaces project had commenced, mainly on the de Havilland Campus at this stage.

21.3 Lecture capture

Noted:

21.3.1 it was anticipated that rooms would be brought into commission ready to go live in Semester B and Ms Barton would issue a message on 14 December 2018;

21.3.2 the Committee noted that this would remain a rolling programme of commissioning and Ms Barton would be in regular communication with Timetabling teams;

21.3.3 the fitting of wifi channels for use of effective wireless microphones with a fairly wide pick-up was an important aspect in respect of teaching techniques;

21.3.4 there would be benefit, during the Inter-Semester week, for Learning and Computing Services to provide a session on the use of WiFi and Eduroam in the programme of events.

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Noted: there were no matters for referral to Ms J Lees, People Development Manager, Department of Planning, Development and Change, concerning matters relating to People Development.

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD (Minute 5.2 refers)

24 WORKING GROUPS AND SUB-COMMITTEES OF SEEC

24.1 Received and noted:

the sub-committees and working groups of the Committee, their Chairs and convenors (Agenda Paper 15.1, refers);

24.2 the terms of reference and composition of the working group on Data for Learning (Agenda Paper 15.2, refers).

24.3 Working Group on Student Resilience

Decision: the terms of reference and composition of the working group on Student Resilience were endorsed, subject to the provision of another representative from the School of Creative Arts (Agenda Paper 15.3, refers).

IJP/KB

25 COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

25.1 Received: a report from Dr F Haddleton, Director of Academic Quality Assurance, on OfS registration: implications for collaborative partners (Agenda Paper 16, refers).

25.2 Noted:

25.2.1 the Academic Standards and Audit Committee had responsibility for academic standards in respect of collaborative partnerships as well as the quality of the student experience, whilst recognising the responsibility of SEEC for student experience;

25.2.2 the University would also be required to meet the conditions of the OfS registration in respect of sub-contractual arrangements, whereby students were registered for a University of Hertfordshire award at a collaborative partner, whether in the UK or overseas;

25.2.3 the Committee’s attention was drawn to Conditions B.1, B.2 and B.3 on page 2 of Confidential Agenda Paper 16;

25.2.4 access and widening participation arrangements and institutional financial stability were also significant aspects;

25.2.5 the continuing provision of a standing item on Collaborative Provision would enable both ASAC and SEEC to address their responsibilities in respect of the nature and quality of student experience;

25.3 Decision: it would be appropriate for representation on the Committee in respect of collaborative partnerships and, given the OfS interest in UK collaborative partnerships, the Composition of the Committee would be amended to provide for attendance by the Head of UK Partnerships.

IJP/KB

26 RISK

Noted: there were no risks inherent in the matters dealt with by the Committee during the meeting but not discussed when the item concerned was taken.

27 AGENDA - PART II

Noted and approved Part II of the Agenda (items A-B).
ACADEMIC QUALITY RISK REGISTER

Received the Academic Quality Risk Register from Dr Haddleton (Confidential Paper A.1 refers).

ANNUAL SCHOOL ACADEMIC COMMITTEE (SAC) REPORTS

29.1 Received the Annual School Academic Committee (SAC) Reports from the Deans of School, as follows:

29.1.1 Hertfordshire Business School, from Professor D Ward (to be received at the next meeting);

29.1.2 School of Computer Science, from Dr R Day (to be received at the next meeting);

29.1.3 School of Creative Arts, from Mr P Healey (Confidential Agenda Paper B.1.3 refers);

29.1.4 School of Education, from Dr L Trodd (Confidential Agenda Paper B.1.4 refers);

29.1.5 School of Engineering and Technology, from Dr R Day (to be received at the next meeting);

29.1.6 School of Health and Social Work, from Ms J Kelly (Confidential Agenda Paper B.1.6 refers);

29.1.7 School of Humanities, from Professor A Murphy (to be received at the next meeting);

29.1.8 School of Law, from Mrs P Carey (Confidential Agenda Paper B.1.8 refers);

29.1.9 School of Life and Medical Sciences, from Dr R Southern (Confidential Agenda Paper B.1.9 refers);

29.1.10 School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics, from Professor M Thompson (Confidential Agenda Paper B.1.10 refers).

EMERGENCY BUSINESS

30.1 Guidance on the use of Text Matching Software

30.1.1 Received: a paper from Ms Rendell and Ms Barton (Additional Agenda Paper 19.1, refers).

30.1.2 Noted:

i the contents of Additional Agenda Paper 19.1 reflected the conclusions of a working group to review guidance on text-matching software;

ii the guidance had originally been designed to assist students with their academic writing, whereby students would be given one opportunity to use text-matching software prior to final submission of their dissertation and, each year, one piece of a student’s work would be subjected to scrutiny of text-matching software;

iii the implementation of Canvas had facilitated the integration of text-matching software such as ‘Turnitin’ such that work could easily be checked with scores made available to those marking the work;

iv the amendment in Section 3.4 would allow students the opportunity to submit their work for text-match checking more than once;

v whilst the University did not require submission for all written assessments, text-matching software was freely available to students;
vi the view of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator was in favour of providing greater access to students of text-matching software;

vii such a move did not imply that more cases of plagiarism would occur and School Academic Conduct Officers were aware that the use of such software remained a measure to support students in improving their academic writing skills;

viii in offering greater use of text-matching software to students, there would be a responsibility on Schools to support students in its effective use;

ix although there was no policy or guidance in respect of postgraduate research students, the initiative would be of assistance to them as well and the guidance material would include a short section for this group of students, which was being provided by Dr S Grey, Director of the Doctoral College; the first formal progression report would be submitted for text-match checking, after which they would be free to use text-matching software as often as required in order to develop academic writing skills;

x implications for staff workload to support students: section 6 of the guidance has not changed and has always been in the guidance i.e. that staff should know how to use the software and interpret the results; however, Canvas training would include training in the use of text-matching software;

xi although it was not possible to limit the number of submissions for text-matching, staff would be able to see whether students' writing skills were improving.

30.1.3 Agreed: the guidance would be further amended to include reference to postgraduate research students and Section 6 would be adjusted to place responsibility for training of staff on the University centrally. KB

31 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS – ACADEMIC YEAR 2018-2019

Noted: the schedule of meetings for the remainder of the academic year 2018-2019:

Tuesday 22 January 2019, 09.30 hours, Central Committee Room
Tuesday 12 March 2019, 09.30 hours, Central Committee Room
Tuesday 21 May 2019, 09.30 hours, Central Committee Room
Tuesday 9 July 2019, 09.30 hours, Central Committee Room

32 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 22 January 2019 at 09.30 hours, Central Committee Room, MacLaurin Building.

Items for the Agenda, together with supporting papers, should be lodged with the Clerk, Mrs B Lyons (e-mail: b.lyons@herts.ac.uk), B204, College Lane, Hatfield by Tuesday 8 January 2019.