UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

STUDENT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Student Educational Experience Committee (SEEC) of the Academic Board held on 12 March 2019.

PRESENT: Dr S M Jarvis (Chairman)

Ms B Adams
Ms R Allen
Mr A Aman
Ms J Baines
Ms K Barton

Mrs S D Harrison-Barker
Ms Z Hakim
Dr M Lilley
Dr A Maunder

Dr I J Phillips
Mr S Issacs
Ms K Robins
Ms J Vuolo

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms K Atkinson
Mrs L Caselles Vallejo
Mrs S D Harrison-Barker

Ms B Lyons
Mr S Owen
Ms K Barton

APOLOGIES:

Mr T Baker
Dr H C Barefoot
Mrs L Bissessar
Mr J L Collett

Mr N Geach
Dr S Grey
Mr F L Haddleton
Dr S Murray

Dr P Porter
Mrs G Ward
Ms S Webster

51 MEMBERSHIP

51.1 Noted: the Committee’s current membership (Agenda Paper 2.1 refers).

The Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) were happy to confirm the student nominated to fill the vacant position for Category 5, a representative of the Postgraduate Taught Students, nominated by the Associate Deans of School (Learning and Teaching). Ms Z Hakim, Vice-President (Education) of the Hertfordshire Students’ Union, would notify the Clerk of the name of the student. ZH

51.2 In attendance

51.2.1 Noted that Ms G Sadler, Head of Planning and Strategic Support, would attend for item 10.

51.2.2 Noted that Mr S Fox, Director of Higher Education, University College St Albans, (UCSA), would attend for item 16.

52 MINUTES – 22 JANUARY 2019

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

53 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

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

53.1.1 Noted: the report of the Working Group on Assessment would be received at the meeting on 21 May 2019. KB
A further report of the Working Group to consider the University’s Turning Point (Electronic Voting System (EVS) requirements would be received at the meeting on 21 May 2019.

Noted: with thanks, the communiqué of the meeting of 22 January 2019 prepared by Mrs G Ward (Agenda Paper 4.2 refers).

Agreed: Ms K Robins would produce the communiqué of the meeting of 12 March 2019.

Any other matters arising from the minutes not taken elsewhere on the agenda

There were no further matters arising.

CHAIR’S COMMENTS

Minutes 54.1 is confidential and available to members and Officers in attendance only.

Received: an update on the Academic Quality Review.

The Academic Quality Review had just begun. The review would consider the definition of academic quality and what the University required to support academic quality. This would be a two-year exercise with Part One led by Professor J Forrester. The revised Quality Code contained some useful themes to feed into the review.

Ms S Harrison-Barker, Academic Registrar, reported that the review of student administration was underway. SEEC would be updated when further information was available.

Received: a report from Ms Harrison-Barker on exams culture and back to back exams.

Minutes 54.3.1 is confidential and available to members and Officers in attendance only.

The Academic Year Group had looked at the timing and number of exams and had considered rescheduling. Specific issues within Schools would be taken into account and members were asked to email the Chair or Ms Harrison-Barker with any particular concerns.

The Assessment Working Group had examined specific areas where modules had a high failure rate and consulted Schools to see if assessment criteria were the issue.

ITEMS OF REPORT FROM THE HERTFORDSHIRE STUDENTS’ UNION

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 (Confidential Agenda Paper 6 refers).

Student elections were currently taking place with voting closing on Friday 15 March 2019. Many candidates had experienced stress and concerns had been raised over mental and physical wellbeing. The Chair had written to Deans to request that short extensions to submission deadlines for candidates involved in elections should be allowed if requested. There were 54 candidates for eight full-time positions. There had been good engagement with the student body with 2,800 votes cast on the first day.

More than 1,300 students had engaged with the #HertsEmpowerment project. The Hertfordshire Students’ Union was looking at election manifestos to see how campaigns could be taken forward.

The first week of April would be Commuters Appreciation Week with the aim of improving engagement with commuting students. Schools had been asked to provide study space for commuting students during that week. The campaign would require proactive engagement within Schools.
STUDENT SURVEYS

2019 National Student Survey – Minute 38.3 refers

Received: an update from Ms C A Rendell, Deputy Director of Academic Quality Assurance, on the 2019 NSS.

Noted:

i NSS engagement was slower than normal with the exception of Creative Arts who were well ahead of previous achievements;

ii the Semester B mid-module survey had now closed. The response rate was 21.5% compared to 24% for Semester A. 155 out of 983 modules had a response rate of over 50%. 132 modules had a 0% response rate but many should not have been included in the survey. The results had been fed back to module teams;

iii the next step was for module teams to speak to students in class regarding their comments and to use Canvas to feedback responses to qualitative observations. This was not currently embedded in all module team practice. It was imperative to ensure that data in the module planner was accurate. Ms L Uttley, Assistant Registrar, Academic Services, would advise the Clerk of the deadline;

iv students continued to appreciate good organisation. Lecture capture had received largely positive feedback;

v comments would be be sent to Schools today and shared with Marketing and Communications.

CONTINUATION RATES FOR 2019

Received: an update from Mrs Harrison-Barker on in-year withdrawal rates for 2019 (Confidential Agenda Paper 8 refers).

Noted:

i the Tableau dashboard had been developed to track and report student withdrawals;

ii the University reserved £7m annually to mitigate withdrawals across the academic year. Minimising withdrawals therefore saved money as well as transforming lives;

iii there was no cash impact if withdrawal took place during the first two weeks of Semester A. The level of financial impact depended on when in the cycle the withdrawal took place;

iv fewer students had withdrawn compared to the same point last year. Humanities and Creative Arts in particular had seen a drop in withdrawals;

v the reasons for withdrawal were many and varied and included personal, financial, family circumstances and ill health. Some students did not return after a break. Data for Learning might make it easier to spot students at risk of withdrawal;

vi non-attendance was one indicator of risk. Intervention should begin at that point and Wellbeing and Student Finance alerted. Academic Registry was working with School Academic Managers to develop signposts;

vii Continuation Rates would remain as a standing item on the agenda for forthcoming meetings.
58  SCHOOL ACTION PLANS

58.1  Received: updated School Action Plans from the Associate Deans (Learning & Teaching). Five of the Associate Deans (Learning & Teaching) were unable to attend to present their updates. These would be received at the meeting on 21 May 2019.

58.2  Noted:

58.2.1  School of Computer Science and Engineering and Technology, from Dr M Lilley. This would be received at the next meeting.

58.2.2  School of Creative Arts, from Dr I J Phillips (Confidential Agenda Paper 9.2, refers).

i  The School was working with Careers and Employment to move into line in respect of adequate records and central record keeping relating to sandwich placements;

ii  an audit would take place to ensure that Visiting Lecturers were following the same assessment practices as the rest of the School;

iii  the School was looking closely at concerns raised by Programme Leaders regarding staff:student ratios and the replacement of staff leavers with non-equivalent cover. The slow turnaround in recruitment also had a significant effect on programme leaders and would eventually impact on students;

iv  the BAME advocate had been very active as was keen to engage with the Dean, Associate Deans and subject leaders.

58.2.3  School of Education, from Ms R Allen (Confidential Agenda Paper 9.3, refers).

i  The School had been successful in strengthening research informed approaches and was working closely with PGR students. Spaces had been updated and students were working alongside staff to improve the student experience;

ii  substantial support had been made available to BAME students to improve the differential in performance but the hoped-for progress had not been made. The School was working with the BAME advocate and student groups. Tracking and monitoring was much easier with Tableau and MFQ data;

iii  a student experience administrator had been identified and was working alongside programme leaders;

iv  working with other areas of the University had been helpful had and reduced duplication of effort.

58.2.4  School of Engineering and Technology, from Mr T Baker. This would be received at the next meeting).

58.2.5  School of Health and Social Work, from Ms J Vuolo (Confidential Agenda Paper 9.5 refers).

i  Challenges and priorities for the School remained the numbers of good degrees awarded and BAME attainment levels;

ii  there was a strong emphasis on assessment and feedback to reduce variation. Moderators were encouraging staff to increase consistency;

iii  a Grade Up programme had been introduced for level 4 students who had not achieved the required grades in Semester A;

iv  the BAME staff:student group had produced a newsletter. A good degree attainment support network existed within the School;

v  it was difficult to quantify the impact of the focus on digital literacy.
58.2.6 **Hertfordshire Business School**, from Ms K Robins (Confidential Agenda Paper 9.6 refers).

i A Working Group had been formed to investigate why Level 4 students were less engaged;

ii staff were being trained to use Sharepoint to facilitate the storage of moderation forms;

iii some process issues existed in respect of peer review. This would be brought to SEEC for discussion at a later date;

iv there had been a huge growth in postgraduate numbers since adding a placement opportunity. The difficulty now was to identify sufficient placement providers;

v the BAME agenda was going well with a narrowing in the number of first class and upper second class degrees awarded. Value-added was positive for most programmes in the School.

58.2.7 **Hertfordshire Law School**, from Mr N Geach. This would be received at the next meeting.

58.2.8 **School of Humanities**, from Dr A Maunder (Confidential Agenda Paper 9.8, refers).

i The School was working hard to raise its profile and create a sense of identity and community on the de Havilland campus. The year photos had been very successful;

ii the BAME student advocate had been very helpful and was working with the Widening Access and Student Success (WASS) on the BAME agenda.

58.2.9 **School of Life and Medical Sciences**, from Dr P Porter. This would be received at the next meeting.

58.2.10 **School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics**, from Dr J L Collett. This would be received at the next meeting).

58.2.11 The Careers and Employment service was considering the message around careers fairs and how to change the narrative to ensure students were aware that employers wanted to meet them all. It was important to have strong central teams with the expertise to support Schools. Research informed teaching and it would be useful to have a list of where staff were published and to reflect this in reading lists. Information Managers should be linking with Schools to help students in a timely manner.

59 **PLANNING ROUND**

59.1 Received: a report on the Planning Round in respect of Student Educational Experience from Mrs G Sadler, Head of Planning and Strategic Support.

59.2 Noted:

i a review of the planning process to ensure fitness for purpose moving towards the new Strategic Plan had taken place in 2018. The recommendation of the review was that the process should be extended to allow further time for preparation. The effect of the changed timetable meant that business planning had started before the budget setting process. There were particular financial challenges to be faced in the coming year, together with a series of unknown factors such as Brexit and the Augar review of fees;

ii at the start of the process each of the strand leads for the Strategic Plan had set key operational priorities for the coming year. Educational priorities were to secure high continuation rates, to promote quality teaching and to focus on employability;
iii from December 2018 to February 2019 all Schools and SBUs had been asked to consider cost reduction and income generation opportunities. The results of the exercise would be shared with CEG at an Away Day in March;

iv the planning template had been revised and was now shorter and simpler than in previous years. The submission date was 23 April 2019;

v the next Strategic Plan would run from 2020-25 and would be launched around the beginning of 2020;

vi the University was planning for the eventuality that finances were not going to improve and may well be less positive. In terms of international students, although fees were higher they were more expensive to teach so increasing overseas recruitment was not the only solution. The financial situation was expected to be tighter rather than difficult;

vii when preparing submissions any initiatives in terms of income generation should be included. It was essential to continue to fund innovation.

60 STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTS – Minute 998 refers

60.1 Received: a report from Dr S Grey, Director of the Doctoral College, concerning the student experience of research degree students.

60.2 The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) would run from 18 March to 17 May 2019. Weekly feedback on response rates would be available.

60.3 The first phase of the research degrees management system (RDMS) had gone live. Web-based procedures had replaced many of the paper-based processes of the Doctoral College. The second phase of the project relating to the final submission process for research students was proceeding.

61 LEARNING AND TEACHING INNOVATION CENTRE (LTIC) – Minute 39 refers

61.1 Received: an update from Ms K Barton, Director of LTIC.

61.1.1 Funding had been extended for Canvas school champions and student mentors to the end of the financial year. This would be directed to support staff to ensure reading lists were on TALIS which would assist the Data for Learning Working Group with its discussions. It would also help Library and Computing services financially in terms of renewing subscriptions and guiding purchases going forward.

61.1.2 Academic staff would be encouraged to work on the assignment area of Canvas to enable the data to be used for the Data for Learning dashboard. This would feed into the pilot in Semester B which would look at the exporting of marks directly from Canvas to Quercus. This was contingent on assignments in modules being set up correctly.

61.2 Received an update from Ms Barton on Lecture Capture.

61.2.1 Five thousand more timetable sessions had been captured. Various tweaks were being made to address overlapping sessions, signage, instructions on stopping and pausing and the editing window. A trial was taking place in one room using a light to raise awareness of recording taking place. Improvements and testing would continue as the roll out progressed.

61.2.2 Training was ongoing but attendance had dropped off which had caused some issues. Support was being offered at the start of each session if required. There was system potential to send an automatic email to inform staff that a recording had taken place and was available in the private area to edit. The email was currently sent to all staff on the module.
61.2.3 Discussions with Human Resources and Unions were ongoing. A joint statement would be issued this week affirming that the student experience was being improved and looking to work together to resolve any issues going forward. Deans were encouraged to be sympathetic to staff who wished to opt out. Once the timetable had been set with opt-outs in place there would still be a means of removing sessions through syllabus plus or via the software before publishing.

62 DEAN OF STUDENTS REPORT
This item would be carried forward to the meeting on 21 May 2019.

63 WIDENING PARTICIPATION – Minute 40 refers
63.1 Received: a report from Mrs L Bissessar, Head of Widening Participation and Outreach (Confidential Agenda Paper 14 refers).

63.2 Noted:
   i  the Quercus student management database had been development to allow notes to be added to an individual student's record to give a more comprehensive picture of any potential disadvantages students might face and to improve report efficiency;
   ii a large amount of data had been received from the OfS in respect of the Access Participation Plan. A working group had been formed to review the data and to set out targets and ambitions for the next five years. The submission date was July 2019. A high level of student involvement would be important.
   iii Mrs Bissessar and Mr S Farenga, Deputy Head of Widening Participation and Outreach, had attended a meeting of CEG to discuss the attainment gap. The OfS was seeking to eliminate the gap in the next ten years.

64 LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES (LCS) – Minute 41 refers
64.1 Received: a report from Ms B Adams, Head of Library and Academic Support Services.

64.2 Noted:  
   i  the wifi upgrade project was continuing and had been well received to date;
   ii  the next system update weekend would take place later in March.

65 COLLABORATIVE PROVISION – Minute 42 refers
65.1 Received a partner focus presentation from Mr S Fox, Director of Higher Education, University College St Albans (UCSA), on UCSA activities including the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APAL).

65.2 Received: an update from Mr S Isaacs, Head of UK Partnerships.

65.2.1 The review of financial arrangements with consortium colleges had been positively received. An ongoing review of consortium practices was underway in relation to future relationships and ambitions.

65.2.2 Application numbers to extended degree courses across consortium colleges were healthy. Applications to foundation degree courses remained challenging. A revalidation of creative enterprise would begin shortly.
Virginia Rosenfeld, Principal Lecturer in the School of Health and Social Work, was leading a project on performance and degree outcome of extended degree science projects.

There were ongoing issues relating to teaching and learning with both extended degrees at Hertford Regional College (HRC) and the courses would not be delivered next year. There had been complaints from students about the extended degree in science and Mr Isaacs was due to visit the College shortly. Members were asked to inform Mr Isaacs if there were any further issues with HRC in respect of teaching and student experience.

There were issues at City and Islington College regarding the marking and assessment of the Optometry course.

An Intercultural Development inventory (IDI) revaluation would take place at the end of March. The relationship with Hertfordshire International College (HIC) was strong and recruitment was healthy.

**WORKING GROUPS AND SUB-COMMITTEES OF SEEC**

**66.1** Noted: the sub-committees and working groups of the Committee, their Chairs and convenors (Agenda Paper 17.1 refers).

**66.2** A report from the Working Group on Assessment would be received at the meeting on 21 May 2019.

**66.3** An update on the Data for Learning Working Group would be received at the Away Day on 9 July 2019.

**67** PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Noted: digital capability literacy for staff across the institution was crucial.

**68** RISK

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

**69** EMERGENCY BUSINESS

There was no Emergency Business.

**70** SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS – ACADEMIC YEAR 2018-2019

Tuesday 21 May 2019, 09.30 hours, Central Committee Room.
Tuesday 9 July 2019, 09.30 hours, Room R215, College Lane Campus.

Noted: The Away Day would take place immediately following the meeting on 9 July 2019 in Room R215, College Lane Campus.
DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 21 May 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, telephone extension: 4372), B204, College Lane, Hatfield by Tuesday 17 April 2019.