University of Essex
Summary of Academic Policy Decisions – Summer 2013/14

This information note refers to decisions made at the following meetings:

Student Experience Committee (SEC): 6/5/14
Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC): 14/05/14, 4/6/14
Education Committee (EC): 18/6/2014
Senate (S): 2/7/14

Minute numbers are given to indicate the source of the information set out below. Where extracts of minutes or papers are included verbatim, this is indicated by speech marks.

Links are provided to relevant committee minutes and papers, where available. If a link does not exist for the documentation that you require, please contact the relevant committee secretary for further information: http://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/CommitteeSearch.asp

LIST OF CONTENTS

1. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE RULES OF ASSESSMENT AND THE CREDIT FRAMEWORK (Paper S/14/48, S M.240/14, Paper EC/14/57, EC M.165-166/14)

Senate Agreed	That the changes to the Rules of Assessment and Credit Framework be approved as set out in Appendix A of paper S/14/48.

2. REVISIONS TO PROGRESS AND ACADEMIC OFFENCES PROCEDURE
(Paper S/14/48, S M. 242-243/14, Papers EC/14/59 and EC/14/60, EC M.169-172/14)

Senate Agreed	That the Progress Procedures, the Appeals Procedures and the Academic Offences Procedures be amended as set out in Appendix C of paper S/14/48, with effect from 2014-15.
	That the Academic Offences Procedures be approved as set out in Appendix D of paper S/14/48, with effect from 2014-15.

3. PROCEDURES RELATING TO STUDENT ABSENCE AND MEDICAL CERTIFICATION AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS
(Paper S/14/48, S M.244/14, Paper EC/14/58, EC M.167-168/14)

Senate Agreed	That the proposed changes to relevant procedures be approved as set out in Appendix E of paper S/14/48, with effect from 2014-15.

4. REVIEW OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION
(Paper S/14/48, S M.246/14, Paper AQSC/14/20, AQSC M.120-121/14)

AQSC Received	"A paper summarising the first year of operation of the Student Representative Policy and enhancement activities relating to student engagement and Chapter B5 of the Quality Code."

AQSC Recommended to Education Committee	"Members of Education Committee are asked to approve the following recommendations:

- A consultation to be held with Departments/Schools and the SU about the appointment process for Course Representatives and attendance at SSLCs.

- The annual review of the Student Representative Policy to be conducted through the re-convening of the Task and Finish group, to review the policy and feedback from the departmental consultation, and to make recommendations to Senate via AQSC and Education Committee.

- The Student Representative Policy Task and Finish group remit to be extended to include looking at measuring student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes."

Education Committee recommended to Senate that the recommendations outlined above should be approved (EC M.153/14).

Senate Agreed	That the revised Student Representative Policy be approved, as set out in Appendix G of paper S/14/48, with effect from 2014-15.

5. HIGHER DEGREE REGULATIONS (Paper S/14/48, S M.247/14)

Senate Agreed	That the changes to the Higher Degree Regulations be approved, as set out at Appendix H of paper S/14/48, and that the wording of all relevant University regulations be amended as necessary to reflect the required minor changes in terminology, with effect from 2014-15.

6. REVISED COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS
(Paper S/14/54, S M.255/14, Paper EC/14/56, EC M. 163-164/14)

Senate Agreed	"That the revised Complaints Procedure for Students be approved as set out in paper S/14/54."

7. REVISED CODE OF CONDUCT AND CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT IN RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION (Paper S/14/55, S M.256/14)

Senate Agreed	"That the Revised Code of Student Conduct and Code of Student Conduct in Residential Accommodation be approved as set out in paper S/14/55."

<u>SECTION B – FOR INFORMATION</u>

1. QAA Consultation on a Revised Version of the UK Frameworks for Higher Education
2. SUMS Review Report on the Strategic Challenges for Work-Based Learning
3. Periodic Review Schedule 2014-15
4. Curriculum Review – Principles and Processes
5. Annual Review Procedures and Criteria for Academic Staff
6. Education Action Plan 2014-15
7. Research Action Plan 2014-15
8. Cultural Sub-Strategy
9. Recruitment Sub-Strategy
10. Development of the Essex Experience
11. Institutional Review of External Examiner Reports
12. Institutional Review of National Student Satisfaction Survey Outcomes 2013
13. Equality and Diversity Monitoring Across the HE Sector
14. Ethnicity Data
15. Review of University Policy and Practice in Relation to Student Assessment of Modules and Teaching
16. Revised Student Charter
17. University Admissions Policy
18. Proposed Changes to Ordinance 44: Emeritus Professors
19. Update on Undergraduate Student Retention, Progression and Success / Integration of Equality and Diversity
20. Review of the Graduate Teaching Assistant Professional Recognition Requirement
21. Review of Student Engagement and Representation
22. Proposal for a Revised Research Degree Programme Annual Review Form

1. **QAA CONSULTATION ON A REVISED VERSION OF THE UK FRAMEWORKS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION** (Paper AQSC/14/26, AQSC M.193-197/14)

AQSC Received	"Details of the QAA consultation on the draft updated and revised version of the UK frameworks for higher education qualifications, which were formal components of the Quality Code, *Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards*."
AQSC Reported	"The consultation opened on 7 May 2014 and would close on 27 June 2014. The final framework would be published at the end of October 2014, and would be a reference point for QAA reviews carried out from August 2015."
AQSC Noted	"Members supported the idea of merging the varying frameworks and providing an easier form of comparison."
	"HEIs had been asked to consider the introduction of the Juris Doctor to the framework. Members of AQSC did not support its introduction because of the risk of confusion with, and the impact on the understanding of, the title of doctor and the level of the qualification. There were queries over the volume of credit on specific awards, such as the PG Certificate in Education, which appeared to be out of line with current norms."
	"Members of AQSC were invited to provide any further comments to Ms Nixon to be included in the University's response."

2. **SUMS REVIEW REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING** (Paper EC/14/48, EC M.153/14, Paper AQSC/14/27, AQSC M.198-205/14)

AQSC Received	"A report from SUMS Consulting commissioned by the Director of Employability to identify the key strategic challenges for the University's work-based learning (WBL), and examples of arrangements adopted by other Universities that could potentially help to address these challenges and to expand the University's WBL over the next few years."

AQSC Recommended to Education Committee	"That the academic lead for WBL should be the PVC (Education), with operational management by the Director of Employability."
AQSC Recommended to Education Committee	"That a proposal be submitted to the Project Co-ordination Group for a project, supported by a dedicated project manager, to develop the plan for shaping the future of WBL at the University, how this would be implemented, and the resources required. The Project Champion would be the PVC (Education), with the Project Sponsor role and operational oversight undertaken by the Director of Employability."

Education Committee approved the recommendations (EC M.153/14).

3. PERIODIC REVIEW SCHEDULE 2014-15 (AQSC M.244-246/14)

AQSC Reported	"That the Academic Standards and Partnerships Office would be in contact with Executive Deans, Deputy Deans (Education) and departments to review the periodic review schedule to ensure that the groups and schedules for departments, centres and the provision within them remained clear and appropriate."
AQSC Noted	"It was confirmed that approval for requests to defer a periodic review should be sent to the Academic Standards and Partnerships Office, clearly stating the reason and revised proposed timelines. Approval of requests to defer was the responsibility of the PVC (Education). Departments wishing to combine their curriculum reviews with periodic review events should contact the Academic Standards and Partnerships Office."
AQSC Noted	"That the Academic Standards and Partnerships Office was organising briefing events for departments due to undergo periodic reviews during 2014/15, which other departments would be welcome to attend. A separate briefing event was being organised for Chairs and Secretaries."

4. CURRICULUM REVIEW – PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS
(Paper S/14/40, S M. 210-212/14, Paper EC/14/37, EC M.117-119/14, AQSC M.188-192/14)

Senate Received	"A paper prepared by Stephen McAuliffe (Academic Registrar) and Dr Sonia Virdee (Director of Strategic Planning and Change) outlining the proposed approach to addressing and supporting the requirements of the Education Strategy in relation to curriculum review and development."
Senate Noted	"Senate members supported the proposed approach, which would allow a three-year period for the activity to be completed so that all courses would be aligned with the Education Strategy for 2017-18. Within the over-arching requirements, Departments could incorporate existing and complementary processes, such as Periodic Review and external accreditations, to minimise the administrative burden. A comprehensive toolkit would be provided to support the review in areas such as assessment practice, technology enhanced learning and internationalisation, which would be supplemented by Faculty-based information and discussion groups in the Autumn term. The process would be overseen by the relevant Faculty Education Committees (FECs), with each Department required to report to the relevant FEC at its meeting in the autumn term 2014, setting out their planned next steps to undertake the review."
Senate Agreed	"That the Curriculum Review Principles and Process paper be approved as set out in paper S/14/40."

5. ANNUAL REVIEW PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA FOR ACADEMIC STAFF
([Paper S/14/35](#), [S M.184 -194/14](#))

Senate Received	"A paper prepared by Professor Jules Pretty (Deputy-Vice-Chancellor) and Katherine Parker (HR Manager) setting out proposals for the Annual Review Procedures and Annual Review criteria to be effective from academic year 2014- 15."
Senate Noted	"Senate members noted the main features of the revised procedures and the consultation process that had been undertaken, which had included a formal consultation with Departments, meetings with UCU and feedback from individual staff and had resulted in a positive response. Professor Pretty proposed that section 4 of the version of the procedures presented in paper S/14/35 should be removed. The section related to the award of discretionary increments and bonuses and was based on the existing Annual Review procedures. Senate would receive a revised proposed procedure for rewarding performance at its next meeting in October 2014."
Senate Noted	"Senate members made a number of observations on the criteria and their implementation for the three categories for academic staff: academic staff with education and research responsibilities (ASER), academic staff primarily with education responsibilities (ASE) and academic staff primarily with research responsibilities (ASR). Minor amendments were agreed as a result."
Senate Agreed	"That the Annual Review Procedures and Annual Review criteria be approved as set out in paper S/14/35, subject to the removal of section 4 and the minor amendments agreed during discussion."

6. EDUCATION ACTION PLAN 2014-15
([Paper S/14/36](#), [S M.195-197/14](#), [Papers EC/14/36](#), [EC M.114-116/14](#))

Received	"A paper prepared by Professor Jane Wright (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education) setting out the proposed Education Action Plan for 2014-15, which was presented to Senate for discussion and approval."
Senate Noted	"Senate members were supportive of the proposed Education Action Plan and noted the priority actions within the Plan as being the taught curriculum review, a project to deliver a step change in institutional capacity for Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and institutional TEL practice, a systematic approach to provision of mentoring for and by students at Essex and evaluating and enhancing the University's approach to engaging with the student voice."
Senate Agreed	"That the proposed Education Action Plan for 2014-15 be approved as set out in paper S/14/36."

7. RESEARCH ACTION PLAN 2014-15 ([Paper S/14/37](#), [S M.198-201/14](#))

Received	"A paper prepared by Professor David Sanders (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research) setting out the proposed Research Action Plan for 2014-15, which was presented for discussion and approval."
Senate Noted	"Senate members were supportive of the proposed Research Action Plan and noted four key areas of work in the Plan: the review of the outcome of the Research Excellence Framework; the work required to improve the University's citation rates; the planned review of Centres and Institutes; and the need to establish processes to support and record research impact. Senate members also noted that a review of the operation of the Research and Enterprise Office (REO) was planned as part of the Registrar and Secretary's action plan for 2014-15."

"The planned Task and Finish Group to be established during 2014-15 would consider the issues and bring forward a report and recommendations on appropriate mechanisms to support the use of citations."

Senate Agreed	"That the proposed Research Action Plan for 2014-15 be approved as set out in paper S/14/37."

8. CULTURAL SUB-STRATEGY (Paper S/14/38, S M.202-204/14)

Senate Received	"A paper prepared by Vanessa Potter (Director of Communications and External Relations) seeking Senate approval for the Cultural Sub-Strategy."
Senate Noted	"Senate members noted that, although the development of the Sub-Strategy had emerged from work undertaken in relation to the arts, it covered much more than the arts and would support staff and student engagement in a range of areas."
	"There was discussion about the emphasis of language linked to the University's brand. Rather than referring directly to the 'challenger narrative', it was suggested that the Sub-Strategy should refer to 'institutional identity' and the focus should be on the four pillars of the University's approach: the Essex spirit; a culture of membership, a global community and outlook; and a research mindset and skills. It was agreed that the wording of the document would be revised to reflect these changes."
Senate Agreed	"That the Cultural Sub-Strategy be approved as set out in paper S/14/38, subject to the amendments described above."

9. RECRUITMENT SUB-STRATEGY (Paper S/14/39, S M.206-209/14)

Senate Received	"A paper prepared by Vanessa Potter and Lindsey Russell (Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment) seeking Senate approval for the Recruitment Sub-Strategy."
Senate Noted	"Professor Pretty underlined the changing nature of the higher education sector and the need for the University to respond effectively, with every member of academic staff involved in student recruitment. The Sub-Strategy contained 24 objectives, which highlighted the range of planned activities."
	"During discussion, Senate members acknowledged that similar changes were required to the document as those agreed for the Cultural Sub-Strategy (paper S/14/38) regarding the emphasis of language linked to the University's brand. It was noted that the Sub-Strategy would be supported by more detailed implementation plans, which would be developed in consultation with Departments."
Senate Agreed	"That the Recruitment Sub-Strategy be approved as set out in paper S/14/39, subject to minor amendments, including revisions as described in relation to paper S/14/38."

10. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ESSEX EXPERIENCE
(Paper S/14/41, S M.213-215/14, Paper EC/14/38, EC M.120-123/14)

Senate Received	"A paper prepared by Hannah Gott (Strategic Development Manager, Campus Services), Professor Jane Wright, Professor Aletta Norval (Dean of Postgraduate Research and Education & Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) Designate), Peter Church (Director of Campus Services) and Stephen McAuliffe, which provided a report to Senate on the work undertaken to date by the Task & Finish Group on Living & Learning Communities, established by the Student Experience Committee."

Senate Noted	"Senate endorsed the inclusive approach set out in the report towards the coordination of extra- and co-curricular activities provided by the University and the Students' Union, which aimed to develop communities of learning linked to particular interests. Senate members were supportive of the recommendation that further work should be undertaken in 2014-15 to articulate and develop the concept and delivery of 'The Essex Experience', an institution-wide initiative to enable students to shape their educational journey and experience at Essex.
Senate Agreed	That the proposed approach to the development of 'The Essex Experience' be approved as set out in paper S/14/41."

11. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF NATIONAL STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY OUTCOMES 2013 (Paper S/14/48, S M.238/14, Paper EC/14/34, EC M.101-107/14)

Education Committed Received	"A paper prepared by Rich Alderman (Assistant Education Manager, Policy and Development) providing an overview of the National Student Survey 2013 and a summary of the key issues."
Education Committed Noted	"There was discussion about the organisation of deadlines, which was an issue highlighted regularly in feedback from students. It was noted that Senate had approved a set of recommendations in 2011 in relation to coursework deadlines and that the planned curriculum review including a review of assessment, would further enhance the University's approach. The Committee agreed that Departments played an important role in ensuring an holistic approach towards the organisation of deadlines and that a recommendation should be made to Senate to reaffirm the requirement for Departments to review their deadlines regularly in line with good practice and existing University policy."
Education Committed Resolved	"That the following recommendations be approved: ■ Education Committee should receive an overview of NSS outcomes data at its first meeting of each academic year to identify (i) key themes emerging from the NSS results to inform faculty and departmental planning; (ii) any outlying areas (either positive or negative) at departmental level; and (iii) any concerns with regard to equality and diversity and the representative nature of the survey. ■ Education Committee should receive a report from each faculty that addresses any themes at faculty or departmental level and note any specific actions. ■ Education Committee should adopt the monitoring schedule outlined in paper EC/14/34. ■ Departmental NSS commentaries should be shared with Student-Staff Liaison Committees and via the 'current students' departmental web pages as standard practice. ■ That Education Committee recommend to Senate to reaffirm the requirement for Departments to review their coursework deadlines regularly in line with good practice and existing University policy."
Senate Agreed	That the recommendations set out in item 6 of paper S/14/48 regarding coursework deadlines be approved.

12. ETHNICITY DATA (Paper EC/14/39, EC M.124-126/14)

Education Committee Received	"A paper prepared by Ray Lashley (Head of Planning and Performance information) and Natasha Mooney (Planning and Information Officer) providing data relating to ethnicity within the context of student achievement."
Education Committee Noted	"The Committee noted that the data should be considered with caution as (i) students were not required to declare their ethnicity, which may have an impact on the overall picture presented by the data, and (ii) further and more detailed analysis was required in order to verify trends appropriately. During discussion, the Committee identified the gender variance in some disciplines, specifically Computer Science."
Education Committee Resolved	"That the data should be provided to Departments, Schools and Centres by the Executive Deans to enable reflection during the next round of planning meetings in the autumn term and as part of the curriculum review."

13. REVIEW OF UNIVERSITY POLICY AND PRACTICE IN RELATION TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF MODULES AND TEACHING
(Paper S/14/42, S M.216-221/14, Paper EC/14/42, EC M.137-141/14)

Senate Received	"A paper prepared by Liz Dobson-McKittrick (Academic Standards and Partnerships Manager), which contained the report from the Task and Finish Group on the Review of Student Assessment of Modules and Teaching (SAMT)."
Senate Noted	"Senate members noted that the report contained a number of recommendations relating to module feedback from students, covering the name of the process, frequency, a proposed new set of compulsory questions (alongside a pool of additional questions) and action and reporting in response to feedback. It was noted that a new centralised system to support the SAMT process would be purchased during 2014-15 in order to maximise efficiency."
	"During discussion, Senate members agreed minor changes to questions 5 and 12 in the proposed new set of questions. Some Senate members suggested it would be appropriate to include a question on attendance in order to identify a student's level of engagement with the module but it was agreed that the process should be an open invitation to all students to provide module feedback, regardless of the level of engagement. It was confirmed that modules taught by Graduate Teaching Assistants would be subject to the SAMT process."
	"Senate was invited to vote on the following recommendation: ■ That the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group on the Review of Student Assessment of Modules and Teaching be approved as set out in paper S/14/42, subject to the minor revisions agreed during discussion in relation to questions 5 and 12."
Senate Agreed	"That the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group on the Review of Student Assessment of Modules and Teaching be approved as set out in paper S/14/42."

14. REVISED STUDENT CHARTER
(Paper S/14/48, S M.241/14, Paper EC/14/55, EC M.161/14)

Senate Agreed	"That the revised Student Charter be approved as set out in Appendix B of paper S/14/48, with effect from 2014-15."

15. UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS POLICY
([Paper S/14/48](), [S M.245/14](), [Paper EC/14/64](), [EC M.179-180/14](), Paper AQSC/14/17, [AQSC M.99-108/14]())

Senate Agreed	"That the Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions Policies be approved for the 2014-15 admissions cycle, as set out in [Appendix F]() of paper S/14/48."

16. PROPOSED CHANGES TO ORDINANCE 44: EMERITUS PROFESSORS
([Paper S/14/46](), [S M.233-235/14]())

Senate Received	"A paper prepared by Monica Illsley (Chief of Staff) regarding the review of the University's existing practice in relation to the expectations associated with, and the duration of the award of, the title of Emeritus Professor. In particular, the paper set out recommendations for changes to Ordinance 44."
Senate Agreed	"That the recommendations in [paper S/14/46]() be approved and the changes to Ordinance 44 be recommended to Council."

17. UPDATE ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RETENTION, PROGRESSION AND SUCCESS / THE INTEGRATION OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY
([Paper S/14/48](), [S M. 239/14](), [Paper EC/14/41](). [EC M.129-136/14]())

Education Committee Received	"A paper prepared by Angela Jones (Deputy Director, Student Support) and Katie Rakow (Senior Project Officer, Student Support) providing an update on the actions agreed following the consideration by Senate in April 2013 of the paper on Undergraduate Student Retention, Progression and Success."
Education Committee Noted	"The Committee noted the inclusion in the paper of a more detailed summary and recommendations relating to the integration of equality and diversity throughout policies and processes that support the University's mission to deliver excellence in education through appropriate pedagogical practice. During discussion, the Committee agreed a number of amendments to the proposed recommendations."

That the following amended recommendations be made to Senate for approval:

- That, prior to the start of each academic year, Departments should consider action to support retention and success so that they can continue to implement good initiatives that aid student retention and success, and that Departments report to the relevant Deputy Dean (Education) on the actions that they have taken.

- That it is important for all student-facing staff to be informed about what is being communicated to students and when to ensure that messages to students are consistent and timely.

- That equality and diversity training in the induction programme for Heads of Department, and Heads of Section, and other senior managers (e.g. departmental education directors and faculty managers) should be reviewed, specifically to consider how equality and diversity matters are considered throughout the annual planning cycle to ensure that relevant issues are identified and addressed in a timely manner. The resource implications of implementing this should also be considered.

- That Departments should be able to view NSS and SSS data by protected characteristics, particularly for the purpose of completing the Annual Review of Courses.

- That the guidance for completing the Annual Review of Courses (ARC) should include prompts to consider equality and diversity matters, and should direct colleagues to Learning and Development for support and to share good practice. Learning and Development should be made aware of any change to the guidance.

- That the terms of reference of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, Faculty Education Committees and Partnerships Education Committee should be amended with effect from 2014-15 in order to clarify that each sub-committee has due regard for issues of equality and diversity to support the Education Committee in fulfilling its responsibilities (noting that amendments to the Committees' terms of reference were proposed to Senate as part of the annual submission to Senate setting out the membership and terms of reference for all Committees of Senate).

Senate Agreed   "That the recommendations in relation to the integration of equality and diversity throughout policies and processes, set out in item 7 of paper S/14/48 as part of the Update on Undergraduate Student Retention, Progression and Success, be approved."

18. REVIEW OF THE GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION REQUIREMENT (Paper EC/14/66, EC M.182-183/14)

Education Committee Resolved   "That the changes to the Graduate Teaching Assistant Professional Recognition Requirement be approved, as set out in paper EC/14/66."

19. PROPOSAL FOR A REVISED RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMME ANNUAL REVIEW FORM (Paper AGSC/14/18, AQSC M.109-115/14)

AQSC Received   "A proposal for a revised Research Degree Programme Annual Review form."

AQSC Recommended to Education Committee   "That the revised Research Degree Programme Annual Review form be approved with effect from the 2014/15 academic year subject to the minor recommended changes."

AQSC Recommended to Education Committee   "That Education Committee support the development of a relevant set of benchmarks for PGR provision."

Education Committee approved the recommendations (EC M.153/14).

Academic Standards and Partnerships Office

August 2014

FOR ACTION:

Head of Departments/School
Directors of: Centres
                  Study Abroad Office
Departmental Administrators (including Centres)

FOR INFORMATION:

Pro-Vice-Chancellor
Executive Deans
Deputy Deans (Education)
Academic Registrar
Faculty Managers
Faculty Education Managers