

## **PARTNER INSTITUTION GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STUDENTS INVOLVED IN INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW EVENTS**

The University of Essex approves Higher Education (HE) course(s) for delivery at your institution, leading to an award of the University of Essex. The University carries out a review of the partnership, called *institutional review*, usually every five years to ensure that the institution remains suitable to deliver HE courses.

These guidance notes provide information about the institutional review process and have been written to support students involved in the process, either as a member of a review panel or as a participant in a student meeting at a review event.

### **Why is my involvement important?**

The University of Essex is keen to capture your views on the courses you are undertaking and the facilities for learning and support that are available to you at your institution. We value your opinion on your experiences, are keen to ensure that you are able to take an active role in developing and improving the learning opportunities available to you.

### **What happens at an institutional review event?**

An institutional review panel is formed to consider the partner institution, which is made up of approximately 7 members, including academic staff, administrative staff, students and external representatives (including employer representatives). Approximately three weeks before the event, panel members are sent a pack which contains details about arrangements for the event and information about the institution (prepared by the institution and the University of Essex). This gives panel members a chance to find out more about the institution and the partnership with the University before the event and to identify any points that they would like to discuss on the day.

The event usually takes place over one day and is held at the partner institution. The panel will usually meet at around 9.45am and the event usually finishes around 5.00pm. During the event the panel gets a chance to view facilities, meet with students and discuss the partnership with members of staff from the institution. At the end of the event, the panel will determine their conclusions and recommendations, which provides an opportunity to commend positive aspects of the institution and the way in which courses are delivered and managed and identify areas where there is scope for improvement. These conclusions are recorded in a written report. The institution is expected to respond to any recommendations by the panel, and this is overseen by the University of Essex.

### **I am a panel member – what is my role?**

You are a full and equal member of the panel and your views will be valued by other panel members. Please participate honestly and constructively, and don't be afraid to ask questions, make suggestions or tell the panel and the course team how you and other students feel about your experiences studying at the institution.

Some of the things you might want to consider are:

- Is the course you are studying meeting your expectations?
- Are the teaching methods appropriate?
- Are timetables and workloads manageable?
- Is there adequate access to the necessary resources (e.g. labs, computers, the library)?

- Do you feel that the course will prepare you well for future employment or future study?
- Is information in student handbooks clear and up-to-date?
- Are you clear about how work is assessed?
- Do you get useful and timely feedback on your work from members of the course team?
- Do you feel that there is sufficient support (both academic and personal) to help you during your studies?
- Does the course team seek your views on your course on a regular basis?
- Do you feel that your views are listened to?
- Are there matters that students have previously raised with the course team or other members of staff at the institution that you feel need to be addressed further?
- What do you like most about your course and studying at the institution?
- Is there anything that could be improved?

If the panel does not ask questions about something that you feel is important, do not be afraid to bring it to their attention as you have a unique and valuable perspective on the quality of the course and support provided. If there is anything that you do not understand, please feel free to ask any member of the panel for clarification.

Although the experience may initially seem daunting, please rest assured that your thoughts and suggestions are incredibly valuable and the panel will be keen to make you feel welcome and to hear your views.

### **I am taking part in a student meeting with the panel – what is expected of me?**

The institutional review panel finds it incredibly useful to meet with students to get a real feel for how current courses are operating, what support is provided and how these areas are viewed by students. Members of the panel will ask you questions about your experiences on your course and studying at the institution, some of which may be similar to the questions listed in the section above.

Although it can seem a daunting prospect to meet with the panel, please do not feel intimidated as the panel will be keen to hear your views. Please speak freely and honestly about your experiences on your course and studying at the institution, highlighting any aspects of the course or the institution that you like and any areas where you think there is room for improvement. If the panel does not ask questions about something that you feel is important, do not be afraid to bring it to their attention.

Your feedback will be treated with discretion and your views will not be individually attributed to you in either the written report of the event or in verbal feedback provided to the institution.

### **What's in it for you?**

You will be helping to contribute to the review and re-approval of your institution as a partner of the University of Essex. You get to have your views listened to and taken seriously and you will have a real input into decisions that are made that will affect your course or other courses at your institution. You will get to meet new people, and it will also provide an opportunity to gain new skills and enhance your CV. It's a real chance to put your communication skills into action and provides an opportunity to demonstrate your teamwork, time management, negotiation and presentation and meeting skills.