

Our Ref: 2022 01 14 SUSU

14th January 2022

Ben Dolbear
President
SUSU

Dear Ben,

Thank you for your further open letter of Friday 14th January. I want to reassure you that UEB has been weighing up all the points you make in your note alongside for example factors including academic design and rigour of the assessment as well as the student views as you have been communicating, and has tried to balance all of the factors.

You state 'that the University has repeatedly assured students that, were circumstances to change significantly, measures were in place to move assessments online. I now strongly believe that such conditions for change have been met.' UEB did discuss this very question of whether conditions have changed at meetings this week and considered the objective indicators of change with input from our health and safety professionals. It was very clear that to date conditions have not changed in any meaningful respect that would require a change in our assessment plans.

You also call on the University 'to urgently delay the January assessment window by one week' to allow time to change planned in-person assessments to online assessments. In the very comprehensive discussions of UEB this has been considered as a potential course of action. However, there are several reasons for which UEB does not believe that this is the right course at this point in time. Chief amongst them is the very significant disruption it would cause to almost all students who have been preparing for examinations to start next week (and who would in some cases have unreasonably short notice of such a significant change). Trying to reschedule teaching and other activities would also cause other further significant subsequent disruption to the student body. It has concluded that this would be at best an action of last resort were the underlying public health situation to change significantly for the worse.

As I said in my last letter, we do of course recognise and acknowledge the concerns of members of the student body concerning in-person teaching and assessment: as you know, these concerns have been carefully considered and have led us to reconsider and test our view that both our in-person assessment and our in-person teaching arrangements are safe and compliant with the current Government and University COVID guidelines. Again, we are assured that they are both safe and compliant.

Yours sincerely,



Mark E. Smith
President and Vice-Chancellor