

Mitigation Measures Report.

SUSU's *VP Education and Democracy* and *Director of Student Experience* attended a meeting with the University's *VP Education, Academic Quality and Standards Committee Chair*, and the *Academic Registrar*, on the 11th of January 2021, following student outcry for a no-detriment policy.

This meeting transpired from the Undergraduate and Post-Graduate student body's response to the announcement that the same no-detriment policy, established in March 2020, would not be reintroduced during the 2020/2021 academic year. Many students at the time were away from their university accommodation and under lockdown, away from resources such as the library, or stable internet, and they were concerned that the blended learning adopted this year had not been sufficient in preparation for their assessments. Additionally, students at their family homes were now given additional care responsibilities. Whilst others were experiencing poor mental health issues. Overall, the student population felt unsupported. These student concerns were further prompted by the University's collaborative statement with other Russell Group universities which was against re-introducing any no-detriment policy. Their reasonings were that the same algorithm used in 2020 could not be effectively applied this year to achieve the same results as last. Additionally, they felt confident that they were well equipped to deliver teaching online. This message prompted many students to begin petitions, joining campaigns, whilst contacting the University demanding change. In response, the University's VP Education requested that he met with SUSU to address these issues.

SUSU, with the help of its academic representatives, collected student feedback and demands. Within the demands was an array of concerns and pleas for better communication, not all students wanted a no-detriment, most were seeking further support. SUSU organized these requests into a series of attainable goals. Avila (VP Education and Democracy) also met with Education Officers across the U.K. to learn how they were planning on negotiating with their respective Universities.

Then on the 11th of January SUSU met with the University's *VP Education, Academic Quality and Standards Committee Chair*, and the *Academic Registrar*. The meeting began with the University's VP Education stating that they were not going to offer a no-detriment policy like the one from March 2020, however they were open to listening to other demands/proposals and discussing how best to implement them.

SUSU's proposals were as follows; students wanted clear and accessible mitigation measures which acknowledged the difficulties they were facing in the third lockdown. They wanted extra financial support to help them access resources such as stronger internet and computer equipment. Additionally, blanket extensions were demanded, and uncapped re-sits, or the possibility of deferring a module until the summer. Within these demands were requests for mark scaling and better communication from the University when it came to important decisions.

The University was responsive to these proposals. They agreed that targeted and enhanced mitigation measures designed to acknowledge the climate students were working in due to the pandemic, and how it could potentially impact students' performance. These would be created following the meeting. Next, they agreed to assess modules which would benefit from being extended or allowing students to defer assessments to the Summer. However, they were conscious of the pressure lecturers were currently under and their well-being. Due to the late start dates the University were running two post-graduate cohorts which restricted which modules could potentially be extended. Additionally, moving assessments would not be possible due to student finance dates and deadlines affecting when students could

start. SUSU agreed that when collecting student feedback post-assessments, they would ask academic representatives to consider this.

The University were confident that they could implement mark scaling without putting additional stress on staff, they would be able to compare module averages and identify any which fell below what was expected. SUSU insisted that students could not be disadvantaged by this, so marks could not be lowered. This was accepted. They also stated that a student could still request re-sits, or appropriate provisions, through the Special Considerations process.

Next, the University agreed to streamline the application processes for extensions and Special Considerations by making them simpler and preventing the need for students to contact multiple staff members before getting approval. This ensured that the deadline extensions were automatic if a student sent an email to their department informing them that they would be taking the additional time. They also changed the wording in the Special Considerations application to clarify that issues such as internet connectivity could be applicable.

SUSU then proposed that existing funding be re-allocated into the Online Learning Support Fund, which the University were happy to oblige with. They were able to source £100,000 to be placed within the fund, SUSU then ensured that the funding was available to U.K., E.U. and international students.

During the discussions it was reiterated that student feedback had been vital and would be required post-assessments, in order to understand how successful they had been. The University are open to receiving feedback and assessing the areas requiring improvements. This process is in its early stages as we begin collecting feedback from course representatives.

The meeting concluded with a consensus that students needed to be informed of changes more coherently, all parties agreed to spend a few days working on implementing the agreed proposals and drafting the letter which was sent out to all students on the 21st of January. Following these letters student's emails demanding change reduced, and feedback collected was generally positive.

Overall, the meeting with the University proved to be successful and they continue to praise the students who shared their feedback and concerns. With praise being shared in the University Senate meeting which took place on the 10th of February.