

REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 1 November 2016 at 2.00pm
Committee Room, Reaseheath Hall

Present: Meredydd David (Principal)
 Dr Ian Graham (independent, Chair)
 Hannah Holwell (HE Student)
 Anne McKay (Staff)
 Richard Ratcliffe (independent)
 Emily Thrane (independent)
 Karen Willis (independent, co-opted)

In attendance: Matt Gower, Assistant Principal Quality and Learner Services
 Rachel Ellis-Jones, Assistant Principal and Dean of HE
 Jo Maher, Assistant Principal,
 Jackie Schillinger, Clerk.

Item	Content	Action
1.	APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR	
1.1	The Clerk requested nominations for the role of Chair. Dr Ian Graham was nominated and seconded for the role. No other nominations were received and all were in favour.	
1.2	RESOLVED: Dr Ian Graham is appointed as Chair of the Committee for the 2016-17 academic year.	
2.	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the first meeting of the committee. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from attendees Dave Kynaston the Vice Principal and Shaun Williams the HE Quality Enhancement Manager.	
3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST The following interested were noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meredydd David, director of DART Limited • Richard Ratcliffe, director of DART limited • Emily Thrane, director of DART limited and member of the University Council, University of Chester • Karen Willis, employee of University of Chester. No specific agenda items were identified as giving rise to a conflict of interest.	

<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER</p> <p>The Chair proposed the appointment of Karen Willis of the University of Chester as a co-opted member of the committee. The proposal was seconded and all were in favour.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Karen Willis is appointed as a co-opted member of the committee for a period of three years.</p>	
<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>TERMS OF REFERENCE</p> <p>The committee considered the term of reference, and subject to some minor corrections and adding in the current membership, RESOLVED to recommend the terms of reference to the governing body for approval. (attached at appendix 1 - <i>published on the college website in the terms of reference section</i>).</p> <p>It was agreed to try to secure a further external co-opted member with relevant experience.</p>	<p>JS add to board agenda</p> <p>Chair/JS to pursue</p>
<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p>HE STRATEGY</p> <p>Update on HE strategy development: The Assistant Principal and Dean of Higher Education (The Dean) updated members on the development of the HE strategy. She explained that due to the significant changes in the HE landscape still on going, as well as the evolving partnerships with the University of Chester and North Shropshire College, the draft strategy would come to the HE Committee for consideration at its next meeting in March 2017. Members acknowledged the huge policy changes currently on going in HE and welcomed the proposed timing. Discussion followed around the significant new data reporting requirements and the challenges of the reporting requirements for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). An update on a new appointment of a HE Curriculum Area Manager and changes to the HE team roles and responsibilities to align with the new requirements was provided and welcomed. Members requested that the governor strategy day at the end of January 2017 look at the HE policy implications for the college in more detail and that the co-opted members of the committee be invited to take part.</p> <p>HE performance targets 2016-17: The College HE performance targets set out in the Strategic Plan were provided and confirmed by the committee as the targets that they will be monitoring over the year. Members discussed student numbers and it was noted that the Finance and General Purposes Committee was due to meet shortly to scrutinise recruitment performance and the actions in place to manage risk. Course manager level targets set out in the college Performance Development Review process were discussed and their importance highlighted in relation to the TEF metrics. The committee requested that course manager performance be monitored very closely by senior managers this year, as it is so critical to student satisfaction improvements for the college.</p>	<p>JS Governor strategy day to include HE external policy changes Jan 2017</p> <p>REJ – Draft strategy to the next meeting.</p> <p>REJ to keep committee updated on actions to monitor improve Course management</p>

7. HE POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

7.1 Changes to National Student Survey: The Dean provided an overview of the impending changes to this academic year’s National Student Survey (NSS) questionnaire. She highlighted the following:

- The most substantial change is the introduction of nine new questions looking at aspects of student engagement: *learning opportunities, learning community, and student voice*;
- Student engagement is increasingly seen as a crucial part of a quality learning experience. With a third of the new survey addressing different aspects of student engagement, institutions will have no choice but to prioritise it in the coming years;
- Another major change to the survey is the amending of the current question on students’ unions. The new question focuses in on what many in the students’ union sector consider to be unions’ core purpose: the effective representation of students’ interests in academic life;
- The new questions will be challenging for both institutions and their students’ unions, but the reorientation of the survey firmly towards the enhancement of learning and teaching is extremely welcome.

The discussion that followed highlighted the following key points:

- It is essential to help students understand what the questions are asking and work collaboratively with student reps;
- The college is still carrying out its own internal student survey and has adjusted it in line with the new NSS survey. The FE internal survey has also been adjusted to better feed into the HE surveys, but always with the caveat that the FE questions also need to support the external FE Choices survey.

7.2 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2: The Dean presented an overview of the implementation of year two of the TEF, which aims to provide clear information to students about where the best provision can be found and to drive up the standard of teaching within all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). She highlighted the following:

- To receive a TEF rating, providers must meet the requirements for quality assessment put in place by Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE);
- Assessment will be holistic, based on both core metrics and additional evidence, and carried out by peer review panels comprised of experts in teaching and learning and student representatives;
- The assessment framework comprises three key aspects of quality:
 - Teaching Quality – NSS Qs: Teaching/Assessment and Feedback
 - Learning Environment – NSS Qs: Academic Support; Non-continuation
 - Student Outcomes and Learning Gain - Employment/destination;
- Assessors will be supplied with contextual data on each provider (including size, location and student population), as well as aiding the interpretation of core and split metrics;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessors will look at performance against the core metrics to form an initial hypothesis on the likely rating. The provider submission will be used to determine whether the initial hypothesis should remain unchanged, before an overall judgement is recommended. • The deadline for submission is January 2017. The College needs to make best use of the provider submission in putting together a case to influence the outcome where we may have any negative indicators. • There will be three different TEF descriptor ratings: <i>Bronze, Silver and Gold</i>. • TEF outcomes will be included in official sources of information aimed at prospective students. <p>During discussion, the meeting acknowledged this as a major change to the HE quality assessment system, with a clear and robust focus on the metrics, meaning increased transparency and no hiding place for poor performance. It was noted that the requirement to achieve the TEF in order to recruit international students would ensure that it is implemented by the traditionally high performing HEIs. Members noted that the metrics were only provided yesterday and the HE Faculty is now working to pull together the data in the short timescale available before submission in January 2017. The committee requested an update at its next meeting.</p>	<p>REJ – TEF 2 update at the next meeting.</p>
<p>7.3</p>	<p>Report to HEFCE on meeting the Prevent Agenda: The Dean presented a report for assurance on how the college is meeting that Prevent agenda. The college is required to submit the report and assurance statement to HEFCE by 1 December 2016. She explained that to be assessed as ‘having due regard’ to the Prevent duty, the college must have robust policies and processes in place which respond to the Prevent statutory guidance, and must demonstrate that the college is actively implementing these policies. The assurance report and action plan were considered in the meeting. Based on the reporting, the committee agreed that the college is in a strong position in terms of having due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into extremism and terrorism (the Prevent duty) and that the governing body can have confidence in the College’s evidence of on-going engagement and active implementation of the duty. The areas that the committee requested to be closed off to complete the assurance were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation as soon as possible of a social media policy for students written in partnership with the Student Association; (<i>after note: expected to be completed early 2017</i>) • The review (in time for the Board meeting on 8 December) of the college’s existing Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech to ensure that it fully takes into the account the latest Prevent guidance. <p>It was noted that the special board meeting on 27 October 2016 had formally delegated authority to the Chair of Governors to make the relevant assurance declaration to HEFCE by 1 December 2016. The committee confirmed that they were content for this to happen, having considered the report at the meeting and subject to the above actions being closed down, as agreed.</p>	
<p>7.4</p>	<p>HEFCE Assurance statement by governing bodies: The Clerk introduced the report on the new role for the governing body in providing assurance to HEFCE about the quality of the college’s HE provision. She explained that this</p>	

	<p>assurance is in relation to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and of student outcomes; and the reliability of degree standards. HEFCE require colleges to submit this assurance for the academic year 2015-16 through a template statement by noon on 1 December 2016. The committee noted that the same report had been considered by the special board meeting held on 27 October 2016, where the governing body had delegated authority for approval of the assurance report to the Chair in consultation with the Chairs of the HE Committee and the Quality and Standards Committee and the Principal. The Dean confirmed that a tailored HE Faculty quality assurance report is currently being prepared to be circulated in good time for consideration and approval before the deadline of 1 December 2016. It was confirmed that the Principal as accounting officer, would sign the declaration for submission to HEFCE.</p>	
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p>	<p>HE PERFORMANCE REPORTING</p> <p>The Dean presented an update on HE student numbers, including summaries of retention and continuation for 2015/16; final year outcomes and achievement; recruitment and application numbers; enrolment for 2016/17 and progression. The committee drilled down into the data and discussed the work being carried out to understand the unexpectedly lower conversion rates this year that had affected recruitment. They considered the curriculum areas requiring action in terms of recruitment and progression and the action plans being put in place to make improvements. On outcomes and achievements, members welcomed confirmation in the data that the college is in a strong position, with an overall picture above national benchmarks. The committee requested an update on the impact of improvement action plans at its next meeting.</p> <p>Animal Management programmes performance analysis: The Dean provided an overview of the teaching quality and student experience data collated for Animal Science programmes across both Reaseheath College and the University of Chester (the University) for the academic year 2015/16. The data analysis looked at the seven NSS aspects (Teaching, Assessment and Feedback, Academic Support, Organisation and Management, Learning Resources, Personal Development and Overall Satisfaction). The Dean explained the context of the report, as a response to the University identifying its Animal Science provision as one of the weakest performing subject areas in 2016. The college wished to check whether it was contributing to this identified weakness. The report was considered for information and the committee welcomed the assurance that it provided on the college's positive contribution to the quality of the University's Animal Science provision and its good outcome when compared nationally as well. NSS results on course management, feedback and assessment were recognised as needing attention and were considered in more detail in the next agenda item.</p>	
<p>9.</p> <p>9.1</p>	<p>QUALITY MONITORING REPORTS</p> <p>2016 NSS Results Summary: The Dean reported that overall student satisfaction at 83% is the same as last year's result. The survey has seen teaching and personal development scores up but responses on feedback, assessment and course organisation still low and not showing sufficient improvement on last year's results. Members queried this aspect in detail as an area that the college has not yet achieved the impact required to make</p>	

	<p>improvements. The committee discussed actions taken to drill down into the results and the possible reasons for the responses, including the possible impact of small numbers on some of the results. Managing student expectations of feedback and assessment timescales and good communication about what the survey questions were asking were seen as important. The HE student governor provided input on some of the IT problems still being experienced, whilst acknowledging that there had been improvements since the second JANET connection became available earlier in the year. She confirmed that students were still experiencing dropping off of the Wi-Fi connection in some common study areas. The committee agreed that the following actions should be taken away by management following the meeting and reported back on at the next meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action to follow up on outstanding IT issues; • Clarification on the impact of small numbers on the NSS survey results; • Re-instatement of HE Course Managers meetings led by the Dean to ensure close control on course management and organisation to drive improvements; • More involvement for student course reps in Faculty meetings; <p>9.2 Complaints monitoring HE: Members received for information an update on current and on-going formal complaints for the period May – October 2016.</p> <p>9.3 HE Academic Board Minutes: Members received for information the HE Academic Board minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016.</p>	<p>MD – follow up IT issues REJ – clarify impact of small numbers</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT TEAM UPDATE</p> <p>The Dean updated members on the changes to the Higher Education Support Team (HEST) put in place to achieve a service that will work within the new realms of the Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs) administered by Student Finance England (SFE) and their new quality assurance processes. She confirmed that the new team has adjusted well with all establishment staff experiencing enhanced roles within the team in light of the halted recruitment to the HE Learning Support Coordinator role. Bank staff are functioning well with staff engagement in the new process being successful at this early stage. HE Learning Mentors (DSA specialist support) are now in place with the service running to meet the needs of the students. 2016/17 will present challenges within the team as it adjusts to being managed operationally and strategically within the Faculty of Higher Education. Work needs to be done to increase engagement with DSA funded support this year to reduce the amount of unclaimed hours of specialist DSA support. The team are working in a new culture and to drive this forward, the team have clearly defined strategic aims for 2016/17 that complement the HE strategy.</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>MATTERS TO REPORT TO THE BOARD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of Karen Willis as co-opted member of the HE Committee • Recommend amended terms of reference to the board for approval • Provide an update on the timeline for the HE strategy • Highlight the risks that will be monitored by the HE Committee at each meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEF 2 application/implementation and metrics • Student numbers and conversion rates 	<p>JS for Chair's report</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student satisfaction with course management • Assurance that the Higher Education Support Team update requested by the Quality and Standards Committee at its last meeting has been satisfactorily received. 	
12.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>There was no other business to report.</p>	
13.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Confirmed as Tuesday 7 March 2017 at 2pm.</p>	

The meeting closed at 4pm.