

REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 27th February 2018 at 2.00pm
Committee Room, Reaseheath Hall

Present: Meredydd David (Principal)
Francesca Francis (independent, co-opted)
Prof Chris Gaskell (independent)
Dr Ian Graham (independent, Chair)
Anne McKay (staff)
Eleanor Thomas (student)
Dr Karen Willis (independent, co-opted)

In attendance: Rachel Ellis-Jones, Assistant Principal and Dean of HE
Dave Kynaston, Vice Principal
Dr Jane Richardson, Curriculum Area Manager, HE
Shaun Williams, HE Quality Enhancement Manager
Shane Wild, HE Student Data and Records Officer (*items 1-6.2 only*)
Don Clarke, HE Academic Services Officer
Matt Gower, Assistant Principal, Quality and Learner Services
Jackie Schillinger, Clerk

Item	Content	Action
1.	<p>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting, in particular welcoming Professor Chris Gaskell to his first meeting of the committee. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Richard Ratcliffe. The meeting was quorate.</p>	
2.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>The following interests were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meredydd David, Director of DART Limited, Council Member University of Chester • Prof Chris Gaskell, Council Member University of Winchester, Applied Inspiration (Education consultants) (Adviser) • Dr Karen Willis, employee of University of Chester. <p>No conflict of the declared interests arose in relation to the content of the agenda items.</p>	
3.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p>	

4.	<p>TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (TEF)</p> <p>The Higher Education Quality Enhancement Manager presented an analysis of University Centre Reaseheath TEF metrics including information on subject level TEF, the assessment framework and the six core metrics, an explanation of some of the jargon involved in the TEF, the University Centre Reaseheath (UCR) TEF year 3 core metrics for 2017-18, the Quality Improvement Plan and the issues around skilled employment in the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data. The committee thanked him for his very helpful presentation. Questioning and discussion followed on a number of areas including timing for re-submission for TEF silver, the sensitivity of the data to small shifts in student profile, the importance of effective student performance management and student satisfaction, as well as data management. Members noted that assessment and feedback was acknowledged as a problematic area for HE providers in terms of student satisfaction and that it was important to achieve an institution wide approach. All agreed that whilst some of the data analysis is complex, focusing on providing the best experience possible for the students should mean that the data takes care of itself and a continued student focus should enable UCR to move to TEF Silver within the next couple of years.</p>	
5.	<p>UNIVERSITY CENTRE REASEHEATH STRATEGIC UPDATE</p> <p>The Dean of Higher Education provided a progress update on the UCR strategic area plan for 2017-18 and an update on the development of the strategic alliance with the University of Chester (UoC). Members were interested to hear of a number of collaborative projects of benefit to both institutions including joint working on apprenticeships, vet nursing programmes, European funded projects and a project involving the UoC's Faculty of Health Care and Social Sciences and the NHS. The committee thanked the Dean for her very informative update. The student governor asked for some further detail on the impact on students so far in terms of progress on the strategic objective to improve the employability of all students. The Dean explained the plans in place now the new Careers and Work Placement Manager is in post and how these are intended to benefit students. The Dean appreciated that the profile and wider communication to the student body of the careers and employability actions needed to be developed and that the team would welcome working with the Student Association to promote the initiatives.</p>	
6. 6.1	<p>HE PERFORMANCE TARGETS MONITORING</p> <p>The Higher Education Quality Enhancement Manager presented the Annual Academic Overview Report 2016/17 and the HE Quality Improvement Action Plan 2017/18. The reporting provided good assurance that overall the taught programmes are in good health and compare favourably with sector benchmarking. Members received the comprehensive content in the report with thanks. A member questioned the relationship between this report and the annual assurance reporting as she considered that both reports covered much of the same ground and could be combined in future. Members agreed that this would be a useful approach. The committee recommended that the annual assurance reporting be combined with the current report and presented in the autumn term each year to provide an overview of the previous year as well as a quality improvement plan for the current year. This would then enable the Reaseheath College Board to give its annual assurance statement. Members also suggested that the reporting should now consistently use University Centre Reaseheath in the reports to aid clarity.</p>	<p>Combine Annual Academic Overview, Assurance Report and QIP in one report in autumn term 2018</p> <p>Use UCR in reports instead of the College</p>

6.2	<p>The HE Student Data and Records Officer provided his report on in year retention, attendance and applications data. He provided assurance that overall retention is tracking in line with the same time last year and above the college target of 90%. However, last year saw a fall in retention in the latter part of the year, following the summer exams. The committee discussed the actions put in place this year to prevent a similar pattern. Applications for 2018-19 were reported as very positive at this stage, especially when benchmarked against other institutions. Discussion focused on the continuing challenge of internal progression, the possible reasons for this and the actions in place to improve progression from further education to higher education at UCR. The committee supported the work taking place to understand more fully the reasons for low internal progression. The committee welcomed the focus group work with students that is taking place and asked to see the outcome of this work. The committee strongly supported the need to provide an experience that enables further education students to aspire to progress on to the higher education programmes at UCR and to make offers (conditional as appropriate) to level three students at an early stage in order to support this aim. In terms of data reporting, the committee requested data on progression from foundation degree to top up in the next data report. The committee looked forward to a clearer picture on applications, conversions and progression at its next meeting in June. The committee confirmed that it would continue oversight at its next meeting, and took assurance at the overall positive picture at the current time on retention for 2017-18 and applications for 2018-19.</p>	<p>Report back outcome of focus group and survey work on internal progression</p> <p>Data report to include progression from foundation to top up</p>
6.3	<p>The HE Quality Enhancement Manager presented the Office For Fair Access (OFFA) access agreement monitoring report. He explained that all institutions with access agreements report to OFFA on the extent to which they have met their obligations set out in their agreement and the progress they have made against their targets. The report provided positive assurance to the committee on performance and progress against the access agreement obligations for 2016-17. It also provided positive assurance that funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for widening access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, improving retention and improving provision for students with disabilities is being accounted for and used appropriately. Members welcomed the positive report and noted the ongoing actions to be reported to the committee in the next monitoring report. Discussion followed on the approach of the Office for Students (OFS) going forwards and the committee agreed that there is likely to be less scope for support and development working and more formal regulatory scrutiny of access agreements.</p>	
6.4	<p>The HE Academic Services Officer presented his report on Widening Participation (WP) in HE. He explained that WP is about widening access to and success in HE and aims to address the discrepancies in the take-up of HE opportunities between different social groups. He noted that whilst it is about increasing the numbers of young people entering HE generally, it is also about increasing the proportion from under-represented groups. He went on to explain that UCR has been active in WP, but the team feel it is time to develop a specific, co-ordinated strategy. He outlined the detailed set of targets and actions, which were presented in his report. In discussion, the committee wholeheartedly agreed that the widening participation strategy needs to be a key part of UCR strategy and that much good work has started and is planned. The committee stressed the importance of taking a college wide approach to widening participation and to maximising funding opportunities through the use of the HEFCE Access Fund. The student governor commented on the extremely positive impact that the Higher Education Support Team (HEST) has on supporting students with a variety of needs</p>	

	<p>throughout their study at UCR. Members agreed with the report's recommendation that not only is widening participation at the heart of mission, values and strategy, it is also good business in an increasingly competitive market. The committee thanked the HE Academic Services Officer for his report and looked forward to future updates on progress.</p>	
7.	<p>HE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK</p> <p>The Dean of HE updated the committee on the new HE regulatory framework, introduced by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. She explained that the new single regulatory body, the Office for Students (OfS) comes into its powers in April 2018 and that all providers intending to continue to deliver higher education must register with the OfS within what is a very tight timescale. She outlined that UCR is well placed to respond swiftly once the detailed requirements are announced to ensure successful and timely registration and also provided information on the likely cost. Members noted that much of the information still remains uncertain, including the exact cost of registration for UCR. Members commented that a more systematic approach to widening participation (WP) is likely in future and so UCR could expect a further shift towards accountability for its WP targets. The greater impact and use of the Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF) going forwards was also discussed, as were the changes to the Quality Code that are due to be released in March/April 2018. The Dean gave her view that the requirements and complexity of the new system may well reduce the number of colleges providing directly funded higher education, particularly those that have relatively small numbers. The committee received the report with thanks and acknowledged that the implications for change are extensive regarding how higher education is administered, monitored and funded. They highlighted that, as with any substantial change process risk increases until the processes are normalised and the regulatory and quality related risks to UCR will inevitably increase in the short term.</p>	
8.	<p>HE TUITION FEES</p> <p>The Dean of HE presented a paper proposing tuition fees for 2019/20 for consideration by the committee and for recommendation to the Reaseheath College Board at its meeting on 22 March 2018. She explained the context to the decision-making on fee setting and bursaries, including the impact of the TEF and the competitor analysis that had taken place. She proposed that tuition fees for 2019/20 remain at the same level as that set for 2018/19. In addition, she proposed approval for Higher Nationals provision, commencing from September 2018/19, to be charged at the same rate as Foundation degrees. She explained that Teacher Training fees had been set in line with other fees at this level. However, on consideration in the meeting, it was confirmed that the Teacher Training fee was intended to align more closely with local competitors and would therefore be amended in the report for recommendation to the Board. On consideration of the fees proposed in the report, the committee agreed to recommend them to the Board for approval at its meeting on 22 March 2018.</p>	
9.	<p>QUALITY MONITORING REPORTS</p>	
9.1	<p>The HE Quality Enhancement Manager reported on the overall positive student survey results from the Pulse One survey, with comparisons showing trends, direction of travel and benchmarking data to provide a full picture and assurance on satisfaction levels.</p>	

9.2	Members received for monitoring an update on current and on-going formal complaints for the period 1 October 2017 to 26 January 2018. A member noted that consideration of complaints can help to inform college-wide widening participation aims as a useful way of reviewing policies and procedures as and when issues come up.	
9.3	The Curriculum Area Manager, HE, presented her Research and Knowledge Transfer update report, with details of activities undertaken between July 2017 and January 2018. Her report also presented the Terms of Reference for the HE Ethics Committee and the Scholarly Activity Committee for information and any comments. Members discussed the key points and the context and balance to be struck between continued professional development and teaching related activities and primary research. The committee received the informative update report with thanks.	
9.4	Members received the HE Academic Board Minutes for information.	
10.	RISK MONITORING REPORT TO AUDIT COMMITTEE The Clerk presented the college strategic risk register extracts for consideration of any emerging sector changes or risks and for consideration of level of risk following the committee's various topics for discussion in the meeting. The committee linked the discussion at item 7 to the risk of regulatory breach and also the risk of failure to maintain a good and outstanding student experience and outcomes. They considered that the residual risk score on student experience and outcomes should be raised to reflect the heightened risk created by the changes in HE regulation. The committee considered the other risk levels to be about right. However, they expressed a wish to see the other college strategic risks in future as a number of these overlap across committees, such as income and staffing risks. It was agreed that the Clerk would provide the full risk register next time and also provide a heat map of the current risks.	Full risk report and heat map to next meeting
11.	MATTERS TO REPORT TO THE BOARD It was agreed that the Chair will provide a report to the Board to accompany the minutes, which reflects the overall good assurance level received on the areas within its remit, with those risks related to HE regulatory change highlighted to the Board, as well as the need to take action to improve internal progression and to implement the new widening participation strategy. The committee's recommendation on tuition fee approval will also be provided, with the approval of fees a specific agenda item on the Board agenda.	
12.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS The Chair reported that this meeting would be the last for the Dean of HE, as she was leaving the College in May for pastures new. The Committee expressed their thanks to the Dean for her commitment and contribution to the success of the College and in particular its higher education provision and wished her all the very best for the future.	
13.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 5 June 2018 at 2pm.	

The meeting closed at 4.30pm

Signed:

Dated: