

REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4 June 2019 at 2.00pm
Committee Room, Reaseheath Hall

Present: Marcus Clinton (principal) MC
Francesca Francis (independent) (Chair) FF
Dr Chris Haslam (co-opted) CH
Anne McKay (staff) AM

Attending: Peter Greenall (assistant principal and dean of HE) PG
Dr Jane Richardson (HE curriculum area manager) JR
Shaun Williams (HE quality enhancement manager) SW
Jackie Schillinger (clerk) JS

Item	Content
1.	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
1.1	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Luci Newell, Richard Ratcliffe and Prof Chris Gaskell. Attendees Dave Kynaston and Ian Watts had also sent their apologies.
1.2	The meeting was quorate.
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
2.1	The declaration of interests' form was circulated. There were no interests declared as giving rise to a conflict of interest in relation to the agenda items for the meeting.
3.	TERMS OF REFERENCE AND FORWARD PLAN OF BUSINESS 2018-19
3.1	The Committee Terms of Reference (TOR) were received. Some amendments were suggested, as noted under item 11 of these minutes.
3.2	The Forward Plan of Committee Business was received, for information. Some amendments were suggested, as noted under item 11 of these minutes.
4.	MINUTES
4.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, FF. The rolling action log was considered and updated.

<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>STUDENT EXPERIENCE FOCUS</p> <p>Student experience case study: The Curriculum Area Manager, JR, presented an anonymised student case study of a student who had accessed the college wellbeing service.</p> <p>FF thanked JR on behalf of the meeting for sharing the case study, which provided an insight into the valuable work of the wellbeing team and the positive impact on students.</p>
<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p>	<p>STRATEGIC UPDATE</p> <p>The Assistant Principal and Dean of HE, PG, provided his update on the latest developments at UCR, including the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc. Hons Veterinary Nursing has been validated by the University of Chester for delivery in September 2019 and has received provisional accreditation from the RCVS; • Office for Students – UCR is under enhanced monitoring for access as part of its initial registration. A revised access and participation plan is currently under development, but represents a significant challenge to achieve a plan which is credible, ambitious and justified within the new guidelines and expectations; • OfS and QAA fees were detailed within the update; • The Auger review has a very narrow window for publication and is now considered less likely to have a significant immediate impact; • TEF year 4 results are expected to be published on the 6th June; • The independent review of the TEF is also likely to be published in June and is expected to consider subject-level TEF as an overly burdensome exercise; • Tier 4 compliance audit issues are fully resolved and have been accepted by the Home Office. <p>Discussion and questions followed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FF noted the uncharted political landscape and the positive statements from government on FE funding as opposed to HE funding. MC agreed that some movement on FE funding seems more likely at the current time. FF noted that the work of the AoC on this seems to be paying off. CH provided a note of caution on whether any of these positive statements would come to fruition due to the lack of funds available to the Treasury and suggested that the HE and FE sector are likely to see fewer, larger institutions going forwards as a result of continued funding pressures; • FF and the committee welcomed the good news on the successful validation of the veterinary nursing degree and thanked the University of Chester for its input and support throughout the process; • The committee was hopeful of a TEF Silver award for University Centre Research when the TEF year 4 results are announced; • CH directed members of the committee to the possibility of the QAA doing a random review of an institution, which would carry a fee of £30,000; • CH queried whether there is any assurance that TEF will move away from subject level, as he had recently attended a meeting with the person leading the initiative and the message was given quite clearly that it was not going away. <p>Members thanked the Dean for his update, received for information.</p> <p>The Dean presented a briefing on the development of the Access and Participation Plan. He explained the difficulties in using the OFS dashboard due to the mix of direct funded and franchised students that UCR has. He explained that this had made the data analysis task difficult for the HE team but that they</p>

	<p>are now working with the OFS toolkits, have built the data dashboard and are finalising the assessment of performance aspect of the Plan. He noted that the final stage will be to set out the strategy and targets for the next five years. Members were invited to take away copies of the draft document and provide any feedback. In addition, it was agreed that the Dean would seek input from the Chair of the HE Committee in finalising the draft and would circulate the final draft to the full committee.</p> <p>6.4 Questions and discussion followed the Dean’s presentation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH emphasised that the focus is now on outputs rather than inputs and on the impact of actions. He noted that the five-year targets will need careful setting, as the OFS will hold organisations to account and could withdraw OFS registration if targets are not met; • CH added that governors now have more responsibility for the Access and Participation Plan than they have had in the past and therefore it is important to ensure that all governors understand their responsibilities in this area of provision; • FF wondered how the team at the University is set up to deal with the data analysis demands. CH noted that they have had two people working on the APP full time with a number of other people supporting the process. The Dean confirmed that he and members of the HE team at UCR have worked on it alongside their usual workload and it has been a mammoth task; • FF asked if the OFS will require good performers to continue to improve and stretch their targets in future. PG thought that the OFS will recognise some of the structural issues that could limit this to some extent; • CH noted that the Keele-based National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) could provide some opportunities. <p>6.5 On behalf of the committee, FF thanked the Dean for his presentation. She summarised the outcome of the discussion as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft APP to be circulated to committee members and the Chair of the Committee will provide oversight for the final draft; • The HE team will aim to submit the APP by the 1 July 2019 ‘soft’ deadline; • The APP will be provided to the Board meeting on 11 July for ratification; • The full board will receive a development session on the APP in the autumn term.
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p>	<p>7. COLLEGE STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AND KPIS</p> <p>The Principal, MC introduced the risk register report and updated members on the HE related risks. He confirmed that whilst applications remain down on this time last year, the underlying picture of first choice applications and firm acceptances remains strong. As reported to the committee in the spring term, overall, the picture is suggesting that there will not be any growth, but neither should there be a significant drop in numbers. His report summarised the key areas of risk as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment: The Student Data Report (Paper G) continues to identify a reduction in the number of applicants and individual course applications received by UCR in the current recruitment cycle. The concern is mitigated to some extent by a comparable number of firm choices from those who have applied, representing a significantly improved conversion of application to firm. Using firm offers as a basis for projection, it is expected that UCR will enrol a similar number of HE students in September, however further work is needed to understand the factors influencing the decline in applications so that mitigatory interventions can be implemented to ensure that this does not represent the start of a year-on-year decline. • Mental Health: The Wellbeing and HE Support Teams continue to report rises in the number of HE students seeking support for issues associated with mental health. The approach still ensures that students have fast access to professional support where needed which is far

<p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p>	<p>stronger than many HEI's who operate waiting lists for Counselling appointments. Media coverage of mental health issues in Higher Education study is still strong, and anecdotally FE students are beginning to be concerned about HE progression because of the perceived link between higher level study and deteriorating mental health. The team continue to monitor this situation carefully and are conscious of the need for a more proactive approach to developing resilience across the student population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office for Students Regulation: The requirements associated with the registration with the Office for Students are both challenging and extensive. Most recently, the revised requirements associated with the Access and Participation Plan have required a significant amount of focused resource in order to respond to the newly stated ambition. The Committee received an overview of this work under agenda item 6.2. <p>Questions and discussion on the key risk areas followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FF suggested that the monitoring of the APP be added within the risk register as this will be an ongoing risk area over the next five years, with the potential for significant impact if it is not well managed; • FF asked for more information on how the team are planning to address the increasing concerns of FE students progressing to HE, as seen in anecdotal evidence. PG provided information on the new wrap around curriculum support programme that is based on the FE BeReady programme but designed specifically for HE students. FF requested that a presentation on this new programme come to the next committee meeting, for information. <p>The committee received the risk report, with thanks and confirmed that it would monitor implementation of the APP via the risk register and that a report on the new graduate toolkit programme would be welcome at the next meeting.</p>
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p>	<p>PERFORMANCE MONITORING</p> <p>The HE Quality Enhancement Manager, SW presented the student data report; highlighting the following:</p> <p>Retention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention from September is currently at 91.61% (compared to 88.76% at the same time in 17/18), and Retention from November is currently at 94.74% (compared to 91.32% at the same time in 17/18). This is an increase of 2.85% from September, and an increase of 3.42% from November. The increase in Retention is for every curriculum area apart from one, however, due to low numbers, this is only two withdrawals. By far the greatest number of withdrawals are in year 1, but since this time last year retention rates in year 1 have increased by 4.76%; • Reasons for leaving is an area where more work is needed in terms of accurately recording – the stats show that for both years, Academic Failure /Left in Bad Standing and Unhappy with Programme are the highest number of reasons given. However, there is some limitation of the reasons provided to record this data in Pro Solution, and sometimes unhappy with accommodation, or not wanting to travel, or simply feeling homesick get recorded as Not Happy with Programme. This is an area of current work to improve the quality of data captured at this level; <p>Recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of applicants and applications are currently down on last year, which goes against the national trend which shows a 1% increase. The number of applications to Top-Up programmes is showing good performance this year, with a large number of these applications

being internal applications. The introduction of an internal application process has encouraged early applications in an area that had traditionally seen applications coming in later;

- Up until a few weeks ago firm acceptances remained high compared to previous years. After a dip, this is looking stronger again. The data is showing an increase of 5.73% on last year on conversion of applications to firm. This is an extremely positive figure and indicates a positive outcome during enrolment. Converting acceptances to enrolments still remains a crucial activity;
- Animal Science, Equine and Food Science Applications largely mirror the overall application figures. A large factor in Animal Science is in the amount of choice available now for prospective applicants in choosing an Animal Science course. A search on UCAS shows that for 19/20 there are 350 courses from 86 providers for Animal Science. The same search for 18/19 shoes 113 courses from 39 providers. It is more important now that UCR offerings and provision stand out as the competition is greater.
- The following are recommended strategies moving forward;
 - A continuation of Offer Holder Days as these show a positive conversion rate
 - Early course specific communication/keep warm communication to offer holders, including the production of high quality, professional materials and emails
 - A review of all communication that goes out regarding offers to present a more professional and corporate image
 - CAM's and PL's to be involved, in conjunction with Marketing, to encourage course specific conversion of offers

8.2 FF welcomed the report, which the committee found very useful and informative. The committee acknowledged the good work and results on retention. Further questions and discussion followed:

- FF asked how students provide feedback on withdrawal. SW confirmed that this is a face to face tutorial wherever possible. FF noted that exit knowledge will be important to capture accurately for APP purposes;
- AM questioned further on the decline on applications and discussion followed around increased market competition. However, PG also acknowledged that there is longer term work to be done in continuing to develop the curriculum. FF and MC agreed and gave their view that this 'stand out' offer and increased 'HE environment' for students will be essential for remaining a strong competitor in the marketplace. MC outlined the plans currently being developed to improve HE social and learning space as part of the new estates strategy, as well as the strategic objective to develop research and scholarly activity;
- SW noted the importance of the offer holder days and AM wondered if the team can see evidence that these contribute to conversion. SW confirmed that there is strong anecdotal evidence that these days support conversion;
- CH noted that the University of Chester is also seeing lower applications this year and he agreed that the offer holder days are crucial for conversion.

The committee received the report with thanks, noting the good retention statistics reported.

8.3 PG presented the UCR Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2018-19 monitoring report, indicating good progress on the whole. He highlighted the following key points to note:

- Within the update, one item has been downgraded to a red rating for progress. The action (AP20) relates to an evaluation of the student application cycle to identify opportunities to enhance processes and the overall student experience at this stage of their studies. The item was previously reported as being behind schedule, and the significant work required by the

Office for Students on the formation of the new Access and Participation Plan has meant that this work will regrettably be deferred to the next academic year.

- 7 areas are rated as amber:
 - AP3: Attendance – a new process for attendance monitoring has been implemented this year, however changes to the system are currently being developed to ensure a more supportive approach.
 - AP5: Assessment and Feedback – a number of enhancements have been made within the academic year; however, module survey results suggest that this continues to be an area which requires further improvement. The end of year evaluation will consider the effectiveness of interventions and consider next steps to secure improvements.
 - AP8: Spending associated with APP – this has been rated amber as the publication of new guidance from the OfS has necessitated a full reconsideration of the approach in all aspects of this activity. This work is therefore being considered in the formulation of the evaluation aspect of the APP.
 - AP9: Consistency of faculty and non-faculty provision – the planned Advanced Practitioner post may be removed from the establishment in budget setting for 2019/20 and a different approach may therefore be necessitated.
 - AP12: Induction Survey: rated as amber as participation was lower than targeted, however overall, improvements in student satisfaction were realised.
 - AP16: Module Evaluation Surveys – the new survey approach has been deployed this year; however, participation rates were lower than targeted, and the windows associated with the surveys need to be adjusted in the next academic year. The process for evaluating the feedback gathered through these surveys is underway and may require intervention to ensure that it is fully embedded next year.
 - AP26: APP activity associated with supporting disabled students – rated amber as the APP is currently being constructed under challenging circumstances.
- The remaining 18 actions are rated as green as they are either complete or satisfactory progress has been made to-date.

8.4 The committee welcomed the thorough and informative report. Questions and discussion followed, in which the key points were:

- FF noted that the assessment and feedback area is still an issue and she considered that the HE Committee needed to see some progress on this, as it is an area that can have such an impact on student satisfaction. PG explained that the assessment structure is being reviewed with changes planned for module assessment schedules ready for next year. AM wondered if assessment strategy within modules could be looked at, in addition to scheduling. SW noted that scheduling is an important aspect to get right and all agreed that a holistic approach is important. FF noted that the APP approach supports the need to take into account different types of students coming into the organisation and AM agreed that an assessment strategy needs to increase accessibility and engagement for students. PG noted the impact of the change of validating partner and the impact of some of these changes on assessment, with the need now to focus on all aspects of assessment as well as scheduling in order to secure improvements.
- FF asked if the HE team have found the new QIP format helpful and those present agreed that it had helped keep the team focused.

8.5 The committee received the report and looked forward to monitoring progress on 'assessment and feedback' in 2019-20.

<p>9.</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p>	<p>ITEMS FOR APPROVAL</p> <p>The committee considered the following items for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Protection Plan and Refund and Compensation Policy • HE Admissions Policy • Fitness to Study Policy <p>Members provided some helpful suggestions on wording and, subject to these being incorporated, were happy to approve the items.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Approval of the UCR Student Protection Plan and Refund and Compensation policy; the HE Admissions Policy; and the Fitness to Study Policy.</p>
<p>10.</p> <p>10.1</p>	<p>ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/ASSURANCE</p> <p>The committee received the following items for information and assurance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE Academic Board meeting minutes • HE Student Complaints Monitoring Report (with an update from PG in the meeting)
<p>11.</p> <p>11.1</p>	<p>SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMITTEE AND REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE</p> <p>The committee considered its performance against its terms of reference and considered that it remained fit for purpose, with individual self-assessment questionnaires provided to the clerk to feed into the governance self-assessment process. The committee considered its Terms of Reference. It recommended the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of reference – suggested inclusion of the advisory role of the committee in addition to review and approval. Some further minor wording amendments suggested. • Committee Business Plan for 2019-20 to include the Self-Evaluation Document and the Quality Improvement Plan as a substantive item in the November meeting; The Dean’s Report to include OFS and TEF updates each term; An annual PREVENT overview report in November; The development of the curriculum and HE offer is a priority for next year as well as monitoring subject level TEF developments.
<p>12.</p> <p>12.1</p> <p>12.2</p>	<p>MATTERS TO REPORT TO THE BOARD</p> <p>The meeting confirmed the Chair’s report would be made to the board with a copy of the minutes, for information and assurance</p> <p>She summarised the key point to be reported to the Board as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful validation of the Vet Nursing degree that will run from September 2019; • Very good student retention in 2018-19 to date; • The Access and Participation Plan (APP) will be an important area of governance oversight over the next five years of its implementation; • The draft APP to be circulated to committee members and the Chair of the Committee will provide oversight for the final draft, with the HE team aiming to submit the APP by the 1 July 2019 ‘soft’ deadline. The APP will be provided to the Board meeting on 11 July for ratification; • The full board will receive a development session on the APP in the autumn term; • The committee approved the UCR Student Protection Plan and Refund and Compensation policy; the HE Admissions Policy; and the Fitness to Study Policy; • The committee recommends its Terms of Reference to the Board for approval;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of key areas for focus by the committee in 2019-20 are securing improvements on the student experience of assessment and feedback; ensuring a PREVENT overview report is monitored in the November meeting each year; the development of the curriculum and HE offer to secure market position and recruitment; and the monitoring of subject level TEF.
13.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>There was no other business reported to the meeting.</p>
14.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 28 November 2019 2pm</p>

The meeting closed at 3.50pm

Signed:

Dated: