



REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2023 at 2.00pm
Committee Room, Reaseheath Hall

Present: Prof Chris Gaskell (independent, Chair) CG
 Marcus Clinton (principal) MC
 Prof Gary Crowe (independent) GC
 Prof Paul Johnson (external, co-opted) PJ
 Liz Watts (staff) LW

Attending: Alice Warmisham (student) AW
 Peter Greenall (assistant principal and dean) PG
 Sarah Hopkinson (assistant dean) SH
 Debra Swift (academic development manager) DS
 Thomas Furness (academic registrar) TF
 Jackie Schillinger (company secretary) JS

Observer: Rachel Robson Stone King LLP (via Teams) (*items 1 – 6*)

Part A unless stated.

Item	Content
1.	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
1.1	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting including a warm welcome to the external governance reviewer Rachel Robson observing the meeting via Teams. Student governor Alice Warmisham was welcomed to the meeting, attending in place of Kalliopi Angelakopoulos, who had given her apologies, which were accepted.
1.2	The meeting was quorate and remained quorate throughout.
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
2.1	There were no declarations made in relation to the agenda items in the meeting.
3.	TERMS OF REFERENCE/FORWARD PLAN OF BUSINESS 2022-23
3.1	The committee terms of reference were received for information.
3.2	The committee forward plan of committee business was received for information.
4.	MINUTES
4.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.
4.2	The rolling action log was reviewed for assurance that actions were completed or on track.
4.3	On matters arising, PJ updated the committee on the action he had taken away from the last meeting about access to the University online library resources. He explained that the current situation regarding access to university online resources for partner students is defined by licensing. Due to licensing restrictions the university library service is unable to facilitate access to all subscribed online resources, however students at partner organisations do have access to a limited range of online resources through their University of Chester network account. If denied access to any online material, it is likely to be because it is online content that is not licensed for use. Where access is provided this includes e-books, e-journals and research databases. He explained that there is a dedicated page for partners so that they can easily access the subscribed resources which are available to them and there

4.4	<p>are also details of additional open access resources. He added that as the parameters for access to subscribed resources are defined by the supplier, if there are resources which the college wishes to pursue it would be in the college's interest to approach suppliers directly, as they would most likely be eligible for/be able to negotiate pricing based on their JISC banding. Members thanked PJ for this update on the situation for clarity. PG confirmed that this is how he understands the situation also. He noted that this means the college needs to have an adequate resourced provision and he explained that the team has been working with students to understand their needs outside of the core coverage.</p> <p>Also on matters arising, AW gave an update on Student Association (SA) activities. She noted that the Raising and Giving (RAG) month had raised a lot for its charity during lambing and the Sandstone Trail walk was the next day. She provided an update on the use of the social space for HE students in the courtyard, noting that the SA are seeking to promote it as a place to congregate and there is a refreshed programme of activities and social study opportunities. On wider social space for HE students, AW cited the library which is used, and SH confirmed that student voice feedback is that they want social study spaces but they are currently using the kitchen areas in the townhouses. MC explained the plans to expand social study space across campus and the committee welcomed this, as it seemed a clear need. The committee welcomed the update and requested that they be kept informed of progress.</p>
<p>5. 5.1</p>	<p>STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING</p> <p>National Student Survey (NSS) and Quality Improvement Monitoring Report: SH presented the progress monitoring report, explaining the RAG ratings applied. She then took the meeting through the RED rated actions, which indicated that these actions were behind expected progress with a potential risk that they would not be achieved by the target date. Key points of discussion in the meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The committee noted that the NSS action plan considered at the previous meeting was incorporated into this plan and members welcomed the assurance that there were no RED rated actions except that the marketing and recruitment plan had not been achieved in that it had not delivered the desired outcome. LW confirmed the range of work carried out and the committee acknowledged that a great deal of work had been undertaken. - On the current NSS, PG confirmed there is about a 50% participation rate currently but with time for this to increase and the overall sample in scope is small. He explained that there is also a change in survey methodology and drafting, with a new question on freedom of expression. He gave assurance, to be seen later in the meeting, that the latest module evaluation surveys are encouraging and that student voice mechanisms are being used to raise awareness of the questions. - RED rated areas of internal progression and IT infrastructure were interrogated. Members noted that the WiFi issue was reliant on the timing of the JISC campus internet connection upgrade, a national roll out programme that had been delayed but with the chance that it could be completed in the summer term. Members noted that this was not within UCR's control but that it remained a risk to NSS student satisfaction scores. On internal progression, members acknowledged that much work had been done but that it had yet to be seen pulling through into internal recruitment, which was disappointing. - Discussion on the AMBER rated risks covered an update on staffing recruitment and retention, which was an improving picture but still a risk area. - GC requested feedback on student views on the student experience and communication. AW gave her view that there were good student voice mechanisms in place but that communication back to students could be improved. TF commented that it has recently worked well to invite heads of department to the student meetings and by increasing staff student rep communication more generally to reach the wider student body. 'You said we did' was considered to be a key area to continue to work on and the committee asked that they be kept informed on evidence that the ways of communication being tried are having the desired effect.
<p>6. 6.1</p>	<p>STRATEGIC UPDATE</p> <p>Dean's Update - UCR Strategy Monitoring: PG presented an update on progress against the UCR strategic plan, covering the five pillars of the strategy: students; staff; identity and branding;</p>

	<p>enhancement and curriculum development; and innovation. The update, showing good progress in many areas, was received with thanks. Discussion in the meeting followed and the key points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student feedback mechanisms are working well. - The Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) due to come in in 2025 is yet unclear as to how much take up there might be with the pilot not evidencing much demand. However, UCR is looking at developing short courses and modular programmes. - Staff turnover is much reduced this year but there is still some movement. Very pleasing to see improved staff satisfaction and culture, with good development of research and trials with examples of staff involving students in research. Acknowledgment that the staff CPD model has been changed and is working well so far with every staff member with agreed CPD. - Looking at strategy with UCAS events, to consider a regional focus and the aim to have the planned system in place shortly so that a proper evaluation of impact can take place from these events. - On marketing generally, the committee encouraged the team to look at doing more on providing rich content on UCR on social media platforms. LW and MC provided further detail on work about to come to fruition that they expected to enhance this. All agree of the importance of very regular postings and the need to drive and incentivise this activity. - On brand identity, the committee thought the identify was strong but encouraged more visible branding around UCR and in classrooms etc as the branding in the central area was strong. MC agreed this was needed and provided an update on the work that is planned to refresh signage and graphics.
6.2	Curriculum Development: DS presented an update on curriculum developments and reported positive assurance on the development of the offer. Members welcomed the positive progress in these areas and endorsed the partnership working with the University.
6.3	UCR performance dashboard and recruitment data: PG presented an update on performance data and the current applications picture. He provided a worst-case scenario on recruitment and the level of risk on student numbers was discussed as well as the level of impact of the new programmes and refreshed offer. It was accepted that the new programme developments had not yet been translated into increased recruitment and the reasons and context to this was considered. PG provided assurance that the approach through business planning has ensured tight control on staffing requirements and costs. Detailed discussion took place on specific areas of provision with low progression as well as consideration of the wider context in the sector. MC confirmed that the general approach into next year will be holding to see how all the work plays out and to consider all the factors to move forward thereafter with some key strategic decisions. Members thanked the team for the open and comprehensive reporting and welcomed all the work going on and the commitment of the UCR team. They supported all the efforts made and supported the approach of the holding position in the context of the many factors at play in the current climate. They noted that they were particularly pleased to see the encouraging signs on student satisfaction from the student module evaluation survey. GC emphasised the importance of lead indicators that managers use to assess risk. PG confirmed that conversion will be key as will intelligence on the quality of applicants, such as whether they have attended an offer day or not.
6.4	Teaching Excellence Framework Submission: Members received the full submissions for information and assurance, as previously reported and supported. Members considered it an achievement to have a separate student submission and considered this would be a benefit. Members welcomed the submissions and thanked the team for all their work.
6.5	Higher Education Tuition Fees 2024-25: Members received the report and recommendations and agreed with the recommendations made. PG noted that the impact of a TEF 'requirements improvement' would be restriction of £250 on undergraduate fees back to £9,000, but that the TEF outcome is expected to be bronze or above and so there should be no change.
6.6	RESOLVED: To recommend the UCR Tuition Fees are maintained at current fee levels for the 2024-25 academic year for home and international students.
6.7	Strategic Risk Report and KPI monitoring: MC presented his report. Members noted the key areas had been discussed in the meeting and thanked him for his useful overview of risk levels. They supported

	the evaluation of risk and welcomed the progress being made on collaboration with the University and industry engagement.
7	ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/ASSURANCE
7.1	The Scholarly Activity/CPD report was received for information.
7.2	The Academic Board meeting minutes were received for information.
7.3	The Board of Studies meeting minutes were received for information.
7.4	The HESES22 data submission return dated 25 January 2023 and signed by the accountable officer was received for assurance.
8.	MATTERS TO ESCALATE TO RISK REGISTER/REPORT
8.1	<p>The committee agreed to report the following key points to the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board needs to be sighted on the continued challenges and risk on student numbers in HE, which will form part of the financial planning discussion item at the upcoming board meeting. • The committee reports that it has considered the student data and performance reporting, including applications and actions on recruitment and conversion of applicants and is comfortable that everything reasonable is being done. The committee commends the huge amount of work done and the commitment of the UCR team. • There are many positives including the development of the curriculum offer and the encouraging recent student survey results that show improving student satisfaction in key areas aligned to the National Student Survey. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission has been made and the outcome is awaited later this year. • It is clear there is a lead in time for the changes to take effect in relation to student recruitment and the situation needs close monitoring, but the committee recommends holding firm for the coming year. • The committee gives assurance that it feels fully informed, with open and honest reporting and discussion taking place.
9.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING
9.1	The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 15 June 2023 at 2pm.
10.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
10.1	There was no other business reported to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.25pm

Confirmed as a correct record: 15 June 2023 Chair: Chris Gaskell