REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 at 2.00pm
Committee Room Reaseheath Hall

Present: Prof Chris Gaskell (independent, Chair) CG
               Marcus Clinton (principal) MC
               Prof Gary Crowe (independent) GC
               Kalliopi Angelakopoulos (student) KA
               Prof Paul Johnson (external, co-opted) PJ
               Liz Watts (staff) LW
Attending: Sarah Hopkinson (assistant dean) SH
               Debra Swift (HE curriculum development manager) DS
               Peter Greenall (assistant principal and dean) PG
               Jackie Schillinger (company secretary) JS

Part A unless stated

Item	Content
1.	**APPOINTMENTS**
1.1	**RESOLVED: Prof Chris Gaskell is appointed chair of the committee and Prof Gary Crowe is appointed vice chair of the committee for the 2022-23 academic year.**
1.2	**RESOLVED: Prof Paul Johnson, Deputy Provost, University of Chester is appointed as a co-opted member of the committee.**
1.3	**RESOLVED: Kalliopi Angelakopoulos, student governor, is appointed as a member of the committee for the 2022-23 academic year.**
2.	**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2.1	The chair welcomed all to the meeting. There were no apologies for absence.
2.2	The meeting was quorate and remained quorate throughout.
3.	**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
3.1	There were no declarations made in relation to the agenda items in the meeting.
4.	**TERMS OF REFERENCE/FORWARD PLAN OF BUSINESS 2021-22**
4.1	The Terms of Reference were received for information and reference.
4.2	The Forward Plan of Committee Business was received for information and reference.
5.	**MINUTES**
5.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022 were received and approved as a correct record.
5.2	There were no matters arising not already covered on the agenda.
6.	**STUDENT EXPERIENCE FOCUS**
6.1	Student governor update on start of year: KA provided an update on Student Association activities in relation to the student experience so far this year. This included: -RAG activities and charity for this year – the Children's Adventure Farm, based in the North West. -Social events and current take up by students -Projects including sustainability activities -Increased use of the library and social learning, including evening study groups -Good use of the societies and clubs -Use of the UCR courtyard café in the evenings is inconsistent and could be made more of.

6.2	Discussion followed on the challenges in relation to student engagement in social activities, including the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, support needed with promotion and marketing of events and recognition that it is demoralising when much effort goes into putting events on if the take up is low. Members considered it worthwhile to persevere with the higher education courtyard café and bar as a place to go to with something always going on, such as quizzes, music, or poetry events as this should help to build the habit that students head to that space of an evening. They also supported the move to making the most of the student social learning spaces to allow this more informal socialising to flourish. JS noted that the governing body could perhaps take part in an activity over the RAG week activities in the spring term. Members thanked KA for her report.
6.3	National Student Survey (NSS) report 2021-22 and action plan: PG presented the report highlighting the key messages and the priority actions in the action plan. CG thanked PG for his comprehensive report. He confirmed that the results are poor and a concern for the college and the committee, with the need for clear actions to address the low scoring areas and close monitoring by the committee this year. In discussion, it was acknowledged that the relatively low number of students that participated does mean that the overall results are very sensitive to a small number of negative scores, but this did not take away from the fact that it is a warning to address some key areas. CG also noted that it increases the risk of a lower Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) grading when the TEF, currently Silver, is reassessed in the early part of 2023. Areas considered in the meeting included staffing vacancies during the year which has not prevented teaching but had caused some disruption, especially on a couple of courses. Also considered was course assessment and feedback, staff student communication guidelines, Wi-Fi issues, library services, licensing of the kennels that had caused some disruption, timetabling issues around gaps during the day.
6.4	A wide-ranging discussion followed, with key points made including: - PJ noted the importance of interventions on how students view the relationships between UCR, Reaseheath and the University of Chester as well as understanding some of the common language and concepts around the student experience. - CG wondered if there was an issue with access to library resources and noted the licensing issues with access to some resource via Chester but wondered if more could be explored. KA gave her view that the current library resources work well and she can always access a particular resource via the inter library loans system. PG confirmed that feedback on the library resource had improved since last reporting to the committee when a deep dive into student feedback was undertaken. He noted that it was good to see more UCR students using the library as a study space. MC added that the college's strategic plans prioritise the creation of more social study space which should really enhance this aspect of the higher education experience. PJ confirmed that the licensing issue on access to Chester library resources remained but that he would take this back to see what scope there may be to work more closely on library services. *ACTION: PJ to report to next meeting on student library resource and any possibilities to work more closely.* - On feedback that students had given on timetabling gaps during the day, members agreed with DS that some of this might relate to the need to support the students to become independent learners and to use these spaces during the day for study. Members welcomed the initiative this year to focus very much on these skills in student induction and to regularly revisit this with students. - CG wondered if survey fatigue could play a part in the response rate and engagement in the survey itself. KA and PJ agreed that this can be a factor. PJ shared the different ways the University of Chester seeks to gather student feedback, including in more informal face to face ways. LW noted that the conversations with UCR students she had recently were very informative and so building in some more face-to-face opportunities in the action plan would be helpful. All agreed that more work on 'you said, we did' was needed. - GC questioned whether there has been enough focus on horizon scanning and responsiveness to emerging risks as he wondered if some of the issues could have been picked up more quickly and likelihood or impact reduced. MC and PG provided some further detail and context on the issues raised. It was noted that these were not quick fixes and acknowledged that they did not take the team by

	surprise but have taken time and resource to work through. MC took the challenge as fair and emphasised that the survey results are not good enough. He gave assurance that the strategic risk assessment and action planning taking place is specifically aimed at tackling the issues. GC noted that the team could consider the worst-case scenario and plan for this, as it is possible that student feedback could get worse before it gets better. MC agreed that scenario planning is a useful tool and that the team needs to try and prepare for the unexpected. - On the action plan, GC challenged how the team and the committee will know if it is having an impact, given that some of the issues have not been resolved despite actions so far. PG considered the existing actions have had an impact and been delivered in the main, though he acknowledged that events in year such as the period of high staff vacancies had created challenges. GC asked that the team be dynamic in its application of the plan to allow for emerging issues to be picked up and tackled quickly. MC gave his assurance that the team will approach the plan in this way, and it will be closely monitored by the executive and can be brought back to the committee each term.
6.5	Following discussion, CG summarised that the committee will report to the Board that it has challenged the team on the NSS results, and it can report that much consideration has gone into evaluating the feedback and there is a plan of action which will be deployed dynamically and closely monitored. He confirmed that the committee will focus on progress on actions and impacts at each meeting this year. *ACTION: NSS action plan report to each meeting this year.*
7.	**STRATEGIC UPDATE**
7.1	Dean's Overview Report: Regulatory update: Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), National Student Survey (NSS) and Access and Participation Plan (APP): PG provided a strategic update on these key regulatory developments. Discussion on each covered the following: - The TEF review will require a submission by January with new ratings published by September 2023. There is now a requires improvement grading as well as bronze, silver, and gold. There is no removal of the right to deliver higher education is a provider received requires improvement but clearly a reputational issue. Due to the current data, it is most likely that UCR will receive a bronze rating this time and the provider submission will be essential to support this. PJ and PG confirmed that it will be helpful to both to undertake peer support on this to share expertise. - The changes to the NSS questions and format were discussed and the importance of understanding the new language related to the student experience for staff and students was emphasised. -The developments and changes in emphasis on the APP were considered to create a greater burden on smaller providers again and those providing higher education within further education colleges. It was noted that new regulatory guidance is due in spring 2023 and a new APP then due to be submitted around July for a 2024-25 academic year start. Members took assurance that the team were sighted on the changes ahead and emphasised again the value of peer support with the university to share knowledge and expertise in meeting these regulatory requirements.
7.2	Board of Studies Review and Curriculum Development 2021-22: DS presented her report for information and assurance. It provided good assurance that the Board of Studies has got off to a good start and is developing very well with excellent working relationships with the university. Members welcomed this positive development and thanked PJ and all at the university for working closely with the UCR team to make this a success. Discussion followed on future curriculum development and plans in relation to higher technical qualifications and degree apprenticeships. It was agreed that a look at the strategic decision-making around the higher education curriculum options would be helpful at a future meeting to help the committee understand the pros and cons of some of these options, such as degree apprenticeships. *ACTION: Curriculum development direction of travel and strategic decision-making item at next meeting*
8.	**PERFORMANCE MONITORING**
8.1	UCR Self Evaluation Document (SED) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP): SH presented the SED and QIP for consideration. Members thanked SH for the comprehensive report that brought together all the threads already discussed in the meeting, with the QIP central to improving the student experience. SH

	noted the separate NSS improvement action plan already discussed that forms a separate part of the overall QIP. All agreed that the three key aims are improving student recruitment, the student experience and student outcomes and proposed actions should be based on how they will contribute to these ends. Whilst the student data including recruitment was included within the SED, members noted there was not a specific look at recruitment on the agenda at this meeting. JS noted that UCR recruitment is below the current year's budgeted amount and is being considered at the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 1 December. It was agreed that a deep dive by undertaken by the HE Committee at its next meeting, looking at recruitment for next year and how this is being supported and driven by the college. *ACTION: Student recruitment for 2022-23 review at next meeting.*
9.	**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/ASSURANCE**
9.1	The Access and Participation Plan Update was received for information and assurance
9.2	The Scholarship and Research Update was received for information and assurance.
9.3	The UCR Academic Board Meeting Minutes would be circulated by email for information once available.
9.4	The UCR Board of Study Meeting Minutes would be circulated by email for information once available.
9.5	The UCR Student Complaints Monitoring Report was received for information and assurance.
9.6	The HESES Return would be reported through at the next committee meeting.
10.	**MATTERS TO ESCALATE TO RISK REGISTER/REPORT**
10.1	It was agreed that the minutes be reported to the Board and that the NSS results requiring action to improve, TEF impact risk on next review and risk in relation to student recruitment be highlighted to the Board and incorporated into the strategic risk register.
11.	**DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**
11.1	The date of the next meeting was noted as Thursday 9 March 2023 at 2pm.
12.	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
12.1	There was no other business reported to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm

Confirmed as a correct record: 17 March 2023   Chair: Chris Gaskell