

**REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2025 at 1.00pm
Committee Room, Reaseheath Hall**

Present: Jane Artess (independent, co-opted, chair)
 Prof Gary Crowe (independent) (*via Teams*)
 Prof Paul Johnson (external, co-opted)
 Marcus Clinton (principal)
 Liz Watts (staff)

Attending: Summer Lakin (SU president) for student committee member
 Jane Nickisson (dean)
 Sarah Hopkinson (assistant dean)
 Neil Moran (head of academic standards and admissions)
 Jackie Schillinger (head of governance)

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.	Opening items
1.1	Apologies for absence were received and accepted from committee members Claire Blanchard and Fran Copper. SU president Summer Lakin attended on behalf of Fran Cooper. Gary Crowe joined the meeting via Teams. The meeting was quorate and remained quorate throughout.
1.2	Paul Johnson declared an interest in relation to items 3.2 and 3.3 below and left the meeting for these items.
1.3	RESOLVED: The minutes of meeting held on 17 December 2024 were approved as a correct record
Corporation Core Function Accountabilities	
2.	Holding executive leaders to account for educational performance and quality and the performance of staff
2.1	<p>Student Engagement Update: The SU president and the head of academic standards and admissions presented an update on engagement activities and progress since the last meeting. Key points highlighted were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCR students attend the smaller socials rather than the big events such as the Valentines ball. An example of a recent social event that attracted 73 students, with 24 of these being UCR students. The Courtyard café and bar is the specific social space for UCR students but there remains a challenge to increase usage especially in evening events. Fran Copper is currently surveying residential students to ask why they are not using the space and what kind of events they would like. Paul Johnson noted that the same challenges exist of the University of Chester. Areas of potential are to look at opening at the end of the college day for a coffee shop culture before student travel home and providing a SU offer within courtyard during the day. The committee agreed it was a good time to retest what students want in the evening and for the SU to go and see what is happening at other land-based colleges and at Chester. • The Access and Participation Plan is now published, with the main focus on increasing participation of those qualifying for free school means, non/low participation outcomes, disabled young students and females from disadvantaged backgrounds, and closing the achievement gap evident in the data for disabled students. 70% of our students gave a declared

	<p>disability. The role of the committee is to monitor and challenge outcomes, test and challenge challenge any achievement gaps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCR is working towards a student engagement strategy, with a measurable approach to whether UCR is meeting expectations, which aligns with the Office for Students priorities. Future focus is the UCR graduate toolkit and employability strategy with a range of measures to support students to develop career ready skills, transferable, subject specific and professional. • Chester email account issues have been supported to resolve this, but it remains necessary to have two emails to access Chester systems.
2.2	RESOLVED: The committee received the update on engagement activities and progress and recommended that it consider the student engagement strategy development at its next meeting.
2.3	<p>UCR Quality Improvement Plan 2024-25 progress monitoring was presented by the dean and assistant dean. The reporting set out the priority areas for improvement in 2024-25 and evaluated how successful actions taken have been to date in making progress towards or meeting the targets set, with evidence of the impact made. In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student recruitment: Increase student enrolments on HE programmes in 2025-26. Good progress has been made on student recruitment actions, with a positive picture on applications at this stage in the year. • Student outcomes: Improve or maintain outcomes for students above OfS B3 metric thresholds and UCR benchmarks. Whilst good progress has been made on student outcomes actions, with the in-year resubmission and deferral process now in place, some challenges remain with access to improved data and dashboards to improve collection and analysis of student performance data, which is ongoing work. Support for disabled students is also being monitored, with a focus on ensuring their outcomes are in line with those of non-disabled students. • Quality of Learning Experience: Improve learning experience of all UCR students. Good progress on quality of learning actions, with substantial quality assurance activity indicating positive feedback from early evaluation. • Student Engagement: Increase student engagement in quality improvement and enhancement activities. Several actions completed and processes in place, with more work to do to develop the student council meetings approach and Student Union engagement with UCR activities as part of the wider student engagement strategy. • Curriculum Development: Enhance curriculum offer to support year on year increases in student recruitment over the next three years. Actions on HTQs, HNs, RCVS, degree apprenticeship complete or on track, with more work to do on the BSc and Masters proposal, as well as developing the new Curriculum Development Unit role.
2.4	<p>Committee members received the update with thanks and raised several challenges and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment is the key area to improve, how is this being taken forward from a marketing point of view? More focused with the marketing activity for higher education with a fixed term role supporting undergraduate recruitment student outreach, having an impact and also focusing on internal progression which has shown more internal applications this year. Influencing the teachers, career advisers and key influences at other colleges and schools is key • The committee supported an approach to focus on the home market and not divert resources to target the international market at the current time. • What is the best route to reach out to bring people in? Via the Excite strand of the strategy looking at dedicated events promoted to colleges to say being your students to us to experience what they could be doing. Animal behaviour and science remains the main offer with agriculture an area of focus for growth via the Agri food agenda. There will also be more aligned

	<p>courses with biological sciences and others to support growth where this is showing demand such as business and construction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the Chester role in moderating quality of programmes, structure and modules? Reaseheath is like a faculty, so has very similar processes. Chester is going through revalidating provision, one aspect that Chester can support with it the strategy on AI and advice to students, with a special interest group running that the dean will be invited to. • How will the new Office for Student condition of registration on student union engagement impact UCR? This will mean that the SU will need to provide support for from a more impartial perspective and will need to work with the academic and external regulatory element to support higher education students. This is a challenge for summer HE providers and it will be key to work with Chester colleagues for support in this new area. Th dean noted that UCR has been very well supported by Chester colleagues on the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) re-accreditation inspection.
2.5	RESOLVED: Overall, good progress made on the quality improvement targets set, substantial assurance on a continuing strong student experience and outcomes with student complaints reporting providing substantial assurance on resolution of concerns at an early informal stage.
3.	Strategy
3.1	<p>Dean's Report: The dean provided a strategic overview of the external environment and regulatory update. This covered Regulation, Policy and Legislation for Higher Education including the Institute of Technology (IOT), Office for Students (OfS) and Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) developments, as well and an update on UCR strategy including the strategic alliance with the University of Chester Partnership. Key points raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IoTs will be given the option to extend to 2028 and this allows time for the government to consider how they will fit in future post 16 policy, with a particular eye on the development of the FE Skills White Paper. For Reaseheath and the Cheshire and Warrington IOT, there will be a continued focus on building the regional brand impact and continuing to hit the KPI targets as planned. • OFS have proposed a key focus for their strategic goals for the next 5 years. This is based on 3 key pillars of focus: Quality, the Wider Student Interest and Sector Resilience. A new integrated quality assurance quality model for HE is suggested which may mean an annual review of all providers. The focus for Reaseheath is on the increased financial burden and the process of measurement and the impact on small providers. • A new OfS requirement to require higher education providers to prevent and address harassment and sexual misconduct. It will come into force from August 1, 2025, from when providers must publish a single comprehensive document detailing the steps they will take to protect students, how incidents will be investigated, and how support will be offered to those affected. • The LLE plans to transform the student-finance system in England for all HE providers with students receiving funding from the Student Loans Company (SLC). This will launch within academic year 2026/27 for courses and modules starting on or after 1 January 2027. Updated guidance has been published which provides useful content and timeline to guide UCR's preparations for LLE implementation, as a key part of the curriculum strategy and business planning for 2027-2028 will include the opportunity to delivery modular study for students. • Again, the LLE creates extra challenge for smaller providers to have the resource to manage it, with the need for UCR to review its curriculum unit structure which may require re-validation. The committee chair confirmed the LLE plans were having a big impact on IAG teams, and she agreed to pass on resources such as webinars to support understanding and preparation.
3.2	Part B item.
3.3	RESOLVED: The committee reported substantial assurance on the management of quality and student outcomes risk from the reporting in the meeting, noting the emerging regulatory environment as

	potentially increasing risk exposure in this area and the Chester relationship change, with support for the intention to continue to work with the University provided the issues around curriculum development and potential competition can be resolved for the future.
4.	Items for approval/assurance
4.1	RESOLVED: Higher Education Tuition Fees for 2026-27 were recommended for approval unchanged on 2025-26 levels but with the Access and Participation fee summary review enabling a change to the UCR terms and conditions going forwards to allow for rate increases to be applied across all levels should future changes to the tuition fee cap be implemented. Finance and Fees University Centre Reaseheath (ucreaseheath.ac.uk)
4.2	UCR Academic Board Minutes were received for information.
4.3	UCR Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee Minutes were received for information.
5.	Governance
5.1	RESOLVED: The committee was satisfied that it had met its terms of reference and planned cycle of business for the meeting, with the recommendation that the TOR are reviewed against the 4Es and edited down for review in the summer term meeting.
6	Closing items
6.1	RESOLVED: Consider co-options to the committee for the future from other universities and colleges.
6.2	RESOLVED: The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 12 June 2025.
6.3	The Chair expressed thanks on behalf of the committee to Liz Watts at her last meeting of the committee as she steps down from the staff governor role at the end of March 2025.

The meeting closed at 3.20pm.

Approved as a correct record 12 June 2025

Jane Artess (Chair)