



**REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2024 at 3pm
Committee Room, Reaseheath Hall**

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

Attending: Jane Nickisson (dean) JN
 Sarah Hopkinson (assistant dean) SH
 Debra Swift (curriculum development manager) DS
 Thomas Furness (academic registrar) TF
 Jackie Schillinger (head of governance) JS

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.	Opening items
1.1	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Casey Crispin. There were no declarations made to the meeting.
1.2	RESOLVED: Claire Blanchard is appointed as a member of the Committee for the 2024-25 academic year.
1.3	RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2024 were approved as a correct record.
2.	Holding executive leaders to account for educational performance and quality and the performance of staff
2.1	UCR Performance dashboard report: Academic Registrar TF presented a positive report with encouraging signs on stabilisation in recruitment for 2024-25 and which covered key performance indicators across the areas of: Viability – Recruitment and Retention data; Student Outcomes; Academic Conduct; Exceptional Circumstances; Semester 1 Attainment; Attendance and risk ratings; Inclusive Learning Team; People; Student Experience - Module Evaluation Survey; Complements and Complaints.
2.2	The Committee discussion that followed highlighted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More stability in staffing this year. The report next time would be helpful to provide an indication on staffing as to where the pressure points are/sector norms on turnover. It was noted the HE Faculty staff survey result could be included next time for an indication on staff engagement/satisfaction. • NSS student survey participation was good with results due mid-July and with modular survey results positive, especially in relation to the continued strong satisfaction with library resources and service, a previous lower scoring response and something both the HE team and the Library team have worked very hard to improve. An overview of NSS results can be provided to members once available this summer. Student retention is a positive story. The

	<p>new post of UCR Student Experience and Outcomes Officer will support and build on these positives, with the impact of this post considered in future reporting once established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment picture is one of stability, with first year recruitment showing small growth. Effective marketing and promotion as part of the Excite element of the new strategic plan was seen as key, as was the need for those in the admissions team on open days and careers fayres to know the bigger picture story around NFU/Landex/Schools strategy to be able to articulate this to prospective applicants. Tracking of SEN in higher education student outcomes/achievement gaps is considered in the UCR Quality Improvement Plan and via the Inclusive Learning Team. It could form part of the Access and Participation Plan dashboard development and be more visibly monitored going forwards. A themed joint meeting with the FE Quality and Standards Committee could consider the overall approach to monitoring/tracking of how well SEN students across college.
2.3	<p>UCR Quality Improvement Plan Monitoring: Assistant Dean SH reported progress as expected against the majority of actions and key priority areas, which covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum Development/Access and Participation Plan UCR Student characteristics and improvement/continuation, completion and progression Educational Gain Teaching, Assessment and Feedback Research, Innovation, Scholarship, Professional Practice and Employer Engagement Staff Professional Development and Academic Practice Learning environment and academic support Learning resources Student engagement in improvements National Student Survey.
2.4	<p>The committee noted that overall progress against identified actions is strong reflecting a commitment to continuous improvement across the UCR Staff team. Some significant areas of developments had been accomplished and all actions were on track to be achieved by the end of the quality improvement cycle. Full evaluation of the impact of the actions will be possible once key student outcome and student experience data is available. On Scholarly Activity, the committee welcomed the activity including the symposium on 4 September, to which board members would be invited to attend.</p>
2.5	<p>RESOLVED: The committee reports it received substantial assurance from the meeting on the educational performance and quality and performance of staff, with a stable growth position on recruitment for next year.</p>
3.	Strategy
3.1	<p>Dean's Report: Dean JN presented her report providing a broad overview of key issues and developments within UCR and the wider HE landscape since the previous HE Committee meeting in March 2024, and covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office for Students – Key consultations around Freedom of Speech and grant funding Government Policy & Legislation – Changes to introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE). QAA UK Quality Code: Updated UK HE Quality Code under development. UCR Curriculum Review Process – undertaking a full curriculum review in line with commitment to achieving sustainable growth for UCR, commencing June 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheshire & Warrington IoT – Project progressing through the pre-award stage. Some concerns over inflationary pressures on the capital expenditure, which are currently being worked through.
3.2	<p>The Committee discussion that followed highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute of Technology development and progress with the website now up and running and marketing expertise on board. Home - Cheshire & Warrington IoT (cwiot.ac.uk) Teaching Excellence Framework rating impact on student decision-making is not currently seen as significant. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) role and the tension of remit between the QAA and the Office for Students (OfS) was discussed and the new Quality Code welcomed. The impact of the new freedom of speech legislation was noted as this will impact across higher and further education requiring policy review and adaptation should the changes be implemented as currently planned. A full curriculum review for had commenced with the dean able to bring forward initial plans for a five-year plan for growth to the next committee meeting.
3.3	<p>Access and Participation Plan: Curriculum development manager DS presented the draft of the new Access and Participation plan 2025-2029, created following an extensive process for review and approval for submission to the Office for Students (OfS) in July 2024. She explained that the new plan has been informed by Regulatory Notice 1 and Regulatory Advice 6 and contains Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) Theories of change to support more extensive evaluation.</p>
3.4	<p>The Committee discussion that followed highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan is very well written, clear and impactful with thanks from the committee to DS and Chris Buckle and the team at UCR for all the excellent work that has gone into the plan. The committee queried the resource implications of the ambitious targets and received assurance that the focus is on enhancements with some additional resourcing which provides a solid platform to build on the existing UCR strengths. It was confirmed that the executive team have considered and recommend the plan for approval. It was noted the submission date is the end of July and the OfS will respond to the draft, potentially requiring further submission on some elements, before the plan receives OfS approval.
3.5	<p>RESOLVED: The UCR Draft Access and Participation Plan is recommended for approval.</p>
3.6	<p>Curriculum Report: The meeting received a progress report from curriculum development manager DS on the UCR curriculum developments in 2023-24 noting good progress with no concerns to escalate. There would be future curriculum strategy reporting at the meetings in the autumn and spring term in 2024-25 which would consider the next five-year curriculum offer.</p>
3.7	<p>RESOLVED: Based on the strategic risk review carried out in the meeting and based on the reporting received, the committee reports substantial assurance on quality and reasonable assurance on strategic curriculum development and future growth with stabilised numbers looking likely for 2024-25.</p>
4.	Governance
4.1	<p>Impact Evaluation against terms of reference and cycle of business: The committee considered its Terms of Reference (TOR), its business over the year against its TOR and considered it had met its responsibilities as set out in its TOR. It agreed that items related to prevent, safeguarding and health and safety should be reported to the committee by exception or as referred to the committee by the board.</p>

4.2	RESOLVED: The committee recommends its Terms of Reference for approval, with no substantive changes proposed at the current time.
5.	Consent Agenda
5.1	RESOLVED: The following items are approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCR Admissions Policy • UCR Student Complaints Policy • UCR Contextual Admissions Policy
5.2	RESOLVED: The following items are received for assurance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCR Academic Board minutes • UCR Faculty Education & Student Experience Committee Minutes • HESES Return
6	Closing items
6.1	There was no other business reported to the meeting.
6.2	RESOLVED: The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 7 November at 9.30am on Teams.
The meeting closed at 5.10pm	

Confirmed as a correct record: 17 December 2024

Chris Gaskell (Chair)