REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2026 at 2pm
UCR Committee Room, Reaseheath College

Present: Jane Artess (independent, chair)
Claire Blanchard (independent)
Atlas Brigden (student)
Prof Paul Johnson (external, co-opted)
Janet Lloyd (external, co-opted)
Marcus Clinton (principal)

Attending: Jane Nickisson (dean)
Sarah Hopkinson (assistant dean)
Phil Nickisson (head of academic standards and admissions)
Elizabeth Coles (student support and engagement manager)
Jackie Schillinger (head of governance)

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.	**Opening items**
1.1	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Gary Crowe. The meeting was quorate and remained quorate throughout.
1.2	There were no declarations of interest made in relation to the agenda items.
1.3	RESOLVED: Janet Lloyd was appointed as a co-opted member of the committee for a period of one year.
1.4	RESOLVED: With several clarifications made, the minutes of meeting held on 3 November 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.
1.5	RESOLVED: The updated cycle of committee business for 2025-26 was received for reference.
2.	**TOR 1 - Assure the Board on the effectiveness of the College's higher education policies and strategy**.
2.1	UCR Quality Improvement Plan and KPI monitoring: The Committee considered the progress made against the actions identified in the UCR Quality Improvement Plan. The assistant dean reported assurance that at this point in the academic cycle, the leadership team are satisfied that expected progress is being made towards objectives and targets identified. The leadership team are aware of any issues which might impede, or delay progress and action is being taken to mitigate this whilst acknowledging that some actions and targets may be adjusted to account for changes in circumstances or priorities.
2.2	Committee discussion and questions followed, and in summary the main points made were: Student recruitment • The equal consideration deadline being two weeks earlier this year has not made a noticeable difference, with applications coming in and a tendency for UCR to have about a third of students applying after the deadline. Assurance was sought and received that the team are using the same date for comparisons on last year.

	• The student governor explained how the current students get involved in promoting the HE courses to FE students on open days and going into FE classes to talk to students. • Outreach work with fifty additional colleges contacted was welcomed as a good outcome. A member queried the quality of these contacts, with confirmation that the aim is to have named people at these colleges, which is not yet achieved but is developing. For further context, it was explained that UCR now has nine or ten new colleges coming to visit, with this expected to increase. The committee welcomed this work and acknowledged that it will take a few years to yield results. Student outcomes • The predictions at this stage in the year were considered by the committee and looked strong. These were based on mid-year meetings and were considered robust. • A 'Future Focus' week was held in January to support career skills building and promote careers advice resources. On questioning by the committee on take up and impact, it was noted that the strongest take up was in level four, with the intention to build on this next year. The student governor present in the meeting explained that she attended the drone flying session and really enjoyed the week. She had also asked colleagues about it and they had fed back that they enjoyed it and said the improving concentration session was valued and they have taken on board the skills they learnt that week. Quality assurance • Access to data has improved and is now making a real difference. Context was provided for the new member, who agreed that the approach being taken sounded appropriate for UCR. • The approach to the module questionnaire was considered and agreed as reasonable to encourage a good response rate. The student governor agreed the approach was reasonable in her view. Student engagement • Students are not directly incentivised to take part in student voice. It can be a challenge some years, but a wide range across all subject areas is the aim and training on how to be a representative is provided. The committee welcomed the work and noted that it is an area that has been worked hard on and it is good to see improvement. Curriculum development • The committee welcomed the news that the Masters programme approval had been achieved. UCR is hopeful that it will be ready to have a cohort for September 2026. There is already a group of level six students ready to progress on to the level seven. The provision meets the gap in supporting students to progress into level seven. Assurance was sought and provide that UCR has the staff in place and able to deliver it. • The RCVS accreditation panel visit is imminent, and the evidence required has been submitted. There has been a lot of preparation involved and them team have experience from last year. This has been a very good example of the strong partnership with University of Chester, evidencing a real collaboration, with thanks to the University. If achieved, accreditation will be for four years. KPI Monitoring • On applications, UCR is slightly down on last year, at the current time, but this is not a concern, as applications are still coming in and there are still some top ups to come.

	Vet nursing applications have a ten percentage points increase, but there are a few courses that are down slightly. • Retention is 98% and better than last year. Retention is strong across the provision. One module - Scientific communications - is not popular but UCR is looking at how to make this more appealing. However, it was noted that achievement remained good on this module. • The attendance rate is 88% for the year. • Continuation has been positive over the last few years. • The reason for such strong retention was considered, and the student governor mentioned that tutors really know their students very well, with a supportive and nurturing environment, amazing facilities, access to staff and being small enough for a strong cohort identify.
2.3	RESOLVED: Quality Improvement Plan actions are on track and KPI in year indicators are strong, with thanks for all the work on the improvement actions enable a very positive report.
2.4	Student Engagement Plan: The HE student support and engagement manager provided an update on the development of a student engagement plan. She explained that UCR is committed to the idea of co-creation with students and is improving this through a student engagement plan. The plan has been given to students for comment, and the team will now proceed to make the improvements that have been suggested by students. The report set out the direction of travel for student engagement and the operational concerns of supporting students with additional needs in higher education and provided assurance on how students with additional needs are supported. She asked for feedback from the governors on the key areas and on moving forwards. The key areas highlighted were: • Internal surveys are a valuable student voice activity, and the role of student support officer is supporting engagement with these studies. • Employability and therefore graduate outcomes are being supported with new initiatives such as Future Focus Week. • There are some challenges for UCR's Uni-connect partner, and this may see changes in the partners or activities in the future, however UCR is committed to widening horizons through outreach. • Numbers of students sharing a learning need is increasing. UCR continues to provide a Disabled Students Allowance service despite the recruitment challenges in the sector. Not providing this could represent a risk to student support, outcomes and income. Key strategic questions considered were: • Is there support to fully embrace co-production and student voice in a meaningful way whilst also raising survey participation rate? • Are there any experiences that could support bringing together the FE and HE voices?
2.5	Committee discussion and questions followed based on the key strategic questions, and in summary the main points made were: Co-creation • Student feedback included creating the plan in a student friendly way with marketing, so there is some work to do on that. There is wider working with the college on student voice, with Unloc and via the assistant principal role and this will need to be managed to ensure the higher education student voice is within this but also distinct within a whole college approach. The student governor commented that there is an element of feeling that further education takes priority in the forums. In discussion it

	was agreed that higher education cannot operate in a silo and needs to be heard within the wider college but also not getting lost within it. It was agreed that the approach needed to balance this and ensure there are specific higher education mechanisms whilst also getting more involved in the wider college student voice. • The ladder descriptor was discussed as it is aimed at children however, it was felt it was a sufficiently adult concept to be transferable to young adults. Positive impacts, as noted in the quality improvement plan reporting: • Internal survey completion is up this year. • Successful future focus week with very positive student feedback Feedback from the student forum held with governors and students over lunch: • Communications with students is usually via teams, which the student governor agreed was the best method. She noted that the new KX app will help. Face to face contact to promote engagement also happens as UCR is small enough. There is a central channel for communications within UCR leadership so this can be controlled. • Being a separate part of the college was very strong with a feeling of sometimes being overlooked. It was agreed that there is a need to communicate back better what has been progressed for higher education students specifically as there has been a lot of investment, for example there is new student social space. The theme of appreciating separate spaces, such as smoking areas and other social spaces due to some under 18 behaviours came out clearly from the feedback. They do also appreciate extra facilities in the vet areas. • There were some very positive and more varied views on different courses. It was agreed those present would feedback general themes and any points for looking at to the dean, keeping the feedback anonymous, so that the team could consider and include this in their 'you said we did' comms as appropriate. ACTION
2.6	RESOLVED: The committee gave strong support for the direction of travel for student engagement and co-creation with students, assurance on how students with additional needs are supported and valuable student forum feedback with the key theme in developing the higher education student voice being one of maintaining distinctiveness whilst being part of the wider college.
3.	**TOR 6 - Monitor the effectiveness of the College's quality assurance processes to ensure teaching and learning quality and the continued professional development of staff and scholarly activity.**
3.1	UCR quality assurance process: The head of HE academic standards and admissions presented an overview report to provide assurance that the UCR quality assurance and enhancement framework provides clear oversight of academic standards, regulatory compliance and strategic enhancement activity. The framework separates assurance from enhancement, enabling governors to monitor risk, performance and student outcomes transparently. The model aligns with University of Chester (UOC) collaborative requirements and Office for Students (OfS) Conditions B1–B6. Assessment governance, external examiner oversight, annual monitoring and quality improvement planning are integrated within a structured institutional framework.
3.2	Committee discussion and questions followed, and in summary the main points made were: Preparation for new TEF • The negative consequences of a bronze TEF are a risk. More support for students to engage in the process is something UCR needs to develop. The other strong message is about consistency across all provision. Framework

	• The committee welcomed the very clear reporting on the assurance and enhancement framework. It was suggested that it is made explicit where the UoC oversight is embedded. It was agreed to add the appendix as a flowchart, which shows how all UCR processes link to UoC processes. This will make clear how what UCR is doing internally is also meeting validating body requirements. ACTION • Annual reviews and periodic reviews – whilst annual reviews are done, periodic reviews are not routinely scheduled and are now done on a risk basis. There was a suggestion that these periodic reviews remain useful. It was agreed that for UCR the thematic institutional reviews are of value and so UCR will continue to bring this periodic approach in.
3.3	RESOLVED: The committee took substantial assurance that the UCR quality assurance and enhancement framework provides clear oversight of academic standards, regulatory compliance and strategic enhancement activity and academic governance arrangements remain robust, externally validated and aligned to strategic priorities.
4.	**TOR 7 - Review risk including quality and regulatory risk – report to Audit Committee**
4.1	Regulatory Update/Assurance Report: The dean provided an overview of sector and regulatory changes, for consideration of impact on UCR. The committee noted the responsive actions to manage risk and maximise opportunity and highlighted the following points: • Since the last TEF UCR's outcomes have significantly improved and the team are modelling it, with the expectation that UCR will be in scope for silver. • LLE – there is poor appetite, awareness and preparedness across institutions. The University of Chester is involved in a QAA collaborative project on quality processes to deliver the LLE. UCR can be involved as a stakeholder. ACTION. • LLE Modular aspect - evidence currently is that there is not a market for it, the sector is not keen, students or employers don't really understand it, but it is likely that private providers will take this on more.
4.2	RESOLVED: It will be a very challenging few years with a lot of change going on, however, the committee considered the reporting in the meeting with performance data remaining strong and confirmed that it took substantial assurance on the management of strategic risk on student outcomes and quality of student experience.
5.	**TOR8 – Consider relevant policies and procedures**
5.1	RESOLVED: The committee recommended the tuition fee change to 2026-27 fees and the expected fees for 2027-28 for approval by the Board, with addition of the proposed masters provision fee to be approved by the Board.
6.	**TOR 6 - Monitor the effectiveness of the College's quality assurance processes**
6.1 6.2	The Board of Studies meeting minutes from 3 December 2025 were received for information. The UCR Academic Board meeting minutes from 4 March 2026 would be added to GovernorHub for members to read. ACTION
7.	**Governance**
7.1	RESOLVED: The meeting had covered its remit against its terms of reference and cycle of business. Action for autumn term, possibly October, was for a half-day session on learning walks as a separate activity to the meeting that is later in the term.
8.	**Closing items**
8.1	In any other business, the chair provided a paper on the career registration project, which could support UCR in evidencing the full story of graduate outcomes. The meeting

	supported the potential of UCR becoming involved in the project. Agreed that the college will look in more detail at resource and cost.
8.2	The date of next meeting was confirmed as 18 June at 2pm.

The meeting closed at 4.10pm.

Approved as a correct record 18 June 2026 Jane Artess, Chair