REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2025 2.30pm
FF02, Horticulture (HEST) Reaseheath College

Present: Jane Artess (independent, chair)
Claire Blanchard (independent)
Prof Gary Crowe (independent)
Prof Paul Johnson (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, including those staff and students attending for item 2.1, with thanks to them for giving their time to come to share their experiences with the committee. Introductions were made. There were no apologies for absence.
1.2	There were no declarations of interest made in relation to the agenda items.
1.3	RESOLVED: Atlas Brigden was appointed as the student member of the committee, subject to Board appointment on 13 November.
1.4	RESOLVED: The minutes of meeting held on 12 June 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.
1.5	RESOLVED: The cycle of committee business for 2025-26 was confirmed.
2.	**TOR 3 – Monitor higher education performance in relation to quality of the student experience**
2.1	Programme Area insights: Animal Sciences and LEAF (Landscape, Environment, Agriculture and Food). An opportunity for discussion with area programme leaders and students with area updates provided in folder for information. Main areas of discussion were: • Student experience and why students chose to study at UCR. Added value evident in the practical experiences and study tour opportunities. • Structure of courses and potential opportunities to make delivery more flexible, modular, and whether there is a • Marketing and promotion of courses by UCR, use of social media and influencers • Increase on internal progression welcome with this work continuing to build, students are most effective in influencing FE peers, sharing their experience at UCR. • Assurance on feedback on quality of teaching and learning at UCR. • Agreed to meet with students next time in a less formal way, outside of formal meeting setting. ACTION
3.	**TOR 1 - Assure the Board on the effectiveness of the College's higher education policies and strategy**.

3.1	Dean's Strategic Overview: The dean provided an update on UCR structure as well as regulatory and sector issues. The key messages discussed by the committee were:
	• Enrolment – improved internal progression and small growth this year was welcomed.
	• Impact of the Post-16 Skills white paper and how this will influence and shape future planning and development.
	• Regulatory key factors for UCR to manage include the new OFS Quality Framework in terms of any additional process and systems or refinements that need to be put in place to maintain strong metrics. Agreed that the OFS proposal needs to be reviewed to identify risks and areas of existing strong outcomes
	• The focus on student experience and engagement, ensuring that UCR's student experience is meeting core expectations and beyond across whole lifecycle. The new faculty structure should support the focus on key areas and respond to key sector drivers including E6 and B3 metrics
	• The changing relationship with UCR's validating partner and its impact on UCR curriculum development. UCR curriculum continues to develop with the new HTQ approved and productive work ongoing around new level seven Masters provision to take this forward in a way that works for both institutions.
	• Key opportunities in 2025-26 and beyond:
	    • New provision types including masters and development of commercial revenue streams
	    • Scholarship, collaboration and alumni activity
	    • Transition and Progression activity to enhance outcomes
	    • Vision for change to space and resources to enhance student experience
	    • Industry Alignment and further accreditation to support co-creation
	    • Redefinition of USPs and increased brand awareness

4.	**TOR 2 - Review the annual self-evaluation document and quality improvement plan** **TOR 4 - Recommend to the Board annual targets and key performance indicators for quality of teaching and learning and student performance**
4.1	UCR Self Evaluation Document 2024-25: The UCR Self-Evaluation Document provided a comprehensive review of overall performance during 2024-25. The progress made against the college's 4E's strategic priorities, was summarised as: Strategic Priority 1 – Excite • New initiatives around student recruitment and outreach, developing relationships with feeder colleges. Significant increase in students progressing internally from FE to HE. • Future Focus Strategy embeds clear career development pathways from the start of the undergraduate journey. • UCR Public Lecture Series re-established, showcasing UCR teaching team expertise. Strategic Priority 2 – Enrich • Creation of Student Engagement Strategy. • Support for UCR staff to further develop their professional practice through training and professional development. Strategic Priority 3 – Engage • Approval of new suite of land-based HTQs (Animal Trainer and Assistant Farm Manager) endorsed through existing Canine and Agriculture Foundation Degrees. • New suite of successful Access to HE programmes which support progression to HE programmes.

	• Degree Apprenticeship project successfully completed, however unable to find a validating partner during 2025-26. • Masters programme continues in development to meet validating requirements with validating HEI • RCVS re-accreditation successful with approval granted for one academic year and the process to gain the full 5-year approval will continue during 2025-26. Strategic Priority 4 – Enable • Creation and implementation of new systems and process, limited progress across some of these projects, now moving at pace to support regulatory and validation requirements and allow leaders to monitor and review quality assurance and quality improvement. • UCR Faculty structure change to support emphasis on key areas of quality of teaching and learning, student engagement and academic standards.
4.2	RESOLVED: The committee welcomed the strong evidence presented in the self-evaluation document, a significant piece of work, providing an excellent overview of UCR provision and performance, with thanks to all the UCR team involved. Significant successes were identified as: • Outstanding NSS Outcomes including teaching on my course 93% +8% on previous year • Retention improved to 96% an increase of 6% on previous year • Achievement improved to 90% and increase of 12% on previous year • Recruitment: small increase in level 4 student recruitment • Reduction in the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their typically developing (TD) peers from 9% to 4% • Successful approval of suite of Land-based Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) • B3 Metrics: Improvement of +6% on Continuation from previous year to 88% (OFS Benchmark 80%), Improvement of +5% on Completion rate from previous year to 82% (OFS Benchmark 70%)
4.3	UCR Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2025-26: Presented for review and approval: The areas for improvement in the QIP were summarised as: • Student recruitment: Increase enrolments on HE programmes for 2026-27 • Student outcomes: Improve progression outcomes and first sit percentage • Quality Assurance: Improved data and reporting mechanisms • Student Engagement: Increase attendance and engagement with student voice activities and to develop the student engagement plan in collaboration with students • Curriculum Development: Deliver curriculum plan to enhance student recruitment.
4.4	RESOLVED: The committee reviewed and supported the proposed KPI for 2025-26, set out in the QIP as: Increase student enrolments on HE programmes in 2025-26 • Top up recruitment increased by 10% to 64 • Level 4 enrolment increased by 10% to 170 • Internal progression increased by 15% to 44 Improve progression outcomes and in-year and first-sit achievement outcomes for students to above UCR benchmarks • Retention maintained at >90% • First Class classifications increased by 5% to 20% • In-year achievement increased to >90% • Overall First-sit achievement increased to >80%

	• NSS score for Course organisation and management improved by 5% • Increase progression metrics by 5% Improve reporting and data mechanisms • 100% of all delivered modules use the Microsoft Teams VLE • 100% compliance in holding all HE assessment data in HE Markbook Increase student engagement in quality improvement and enhancement activities • Internal Survey participation above 60% • Fully embed student engagement strategy across all aspects of Faculty activity • 85% Attendance overall • Improve engagement and awareness of Graduate outcomes. Enhance curriculum offer to support year on year increases in student recruitment • Approve new courses for delivery in line with curriculum plan • Identify new validating partners as applicable • Increase Employer and student input into curriculum development
5.	**TOR 7 - Review risk including quality and regulatory risk – report to Audit Committee**
5.1	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: Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper 2025 • As the current UCR core curriculum offer does not clearly align with the Industrial Strategy sectors, this is a key area of focus to review. HTQs remain a core focus in the strategy and gives UCR further opportunities. • Providers encouraged to focus on distinctive strengths, form regional and employer partnerships, and reduce duplication. The Cheshire and Warrington IOT still offers an opportunity for this regional collaboration to have some impact despite its low profile to date. • The new OFS Quality Framework proposals will give a much more detailed focus on KPIs and risks for UCR to map against. • Future fee uplifts linked to demonstrable quality and graduate outcomes; poor-quality provision to be phased out. The opportunity to take advantage of the future fee uplifts will be key for UCR to maintain financial stability and the potential introduction of more science-based curriculum to have an impact on outcomes. • Renewed focus on widening participation with targeted maintenance grants and locally accessible higher-technical routes. With a prominent level of students from underrepresented groups, this gives the future UCR students increased financial incentives to study in college based HE. OFS Quality Consultation • TEF to be mandatory for all providers and embedded in the compliance element of the quality framework - as UCR were already part of the mandatory TEF this does not bring any additional impact. • Continuation and Completion will remain as KPIs but Progression as a distinct metric will be removed – this brings significant benefit to UCR as recent data sits above bench in both aspects but well below bench in Progression.

	• NSS and Student voice will have more emphasis in the new system – a positive aspect for UCR based on outstanding NSS and the increased focus on student engagement as part of the UCR restructure. New Condition E6 • UCR have created and published the required documentation and required training to support this. Further activity needs to be undertaken to ensure governors are fully appraised and that the aspects around freedom of speech include all admissions and recruitment polices. Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) • The recently published criteria identified one UCR programme which met eligibility criteria (FD Canine Behaviour and Training HTQ) however the B3 metrics over the 5-year cycle did not meet the threshold for application in this wave. This will be reviewed in the spring.
5.2	RESOLVED: 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.
6.	**TOR 6 - Monitor the effectiveness of the College's quality assurance processes**
6.1 6.2	The FESEC Minutes 18 June 2025 were received for information. The UCR Academic Board Minutes 8 October 2025 were received for information.
7.	**Governance**
7.1	RESOLVED: The meeting had covered its remit against its terms of reference and cycle of business. Action for future meeting was agreed as an opportunity to meet with students in a less formal setting.
8.	**Closing items**
8.1	There was no other business reported to the meeting.
8.2	The date of next meeting was confirmed as 12 March 2026 at 2pm. The joint session with Q&S committee on AI in education is scheduled for 12 February 2026 1pm.

The meeting closed at 4.45pm.

Approved as a correct record 12 March 2026 Jane Artess, Chair