Academic Affairs Committee

Minutes

Meeting reference: Session 2017/18, Meeting 2 of 3
Date and time: Tuesday 20 February 2018, at 2.00pm
Location: Room 19, Brahan

Members present:

Margaret Cook Principal and Chief Executive (Chair)	Harold Gillespie, Board of Management (Vice Chair)
Brian Crichton Board of Management	David Gourley (from 15.10) Curriculum & Business Engagement Director
Professor Martin Price, Chair of Research, Scholarship and Knowledge Exchange Committee	Deborah Lally Head of Student Records
Donald Maclean Support Staff Representative	Jessica Borley Head of Quality, Chair of Quality Enhancement Committee
Richard Ogston Head of Student Services	Prince Honeysett President HISA Perth
Sharon McGuire, Teaching Staff Board Member	Dawne Hodkinson, International & Corporate Services Director
Patrick O'Donnell	Maureen Masson Secretary to the Board of Management

Apologies: Jane Edwards, Support Staff Representative

                        Nurina Sharmin, Vice President HISA Perth

Minute Taker: Maureen Masson
Quorum: 8, including the Chair or Vice-Chair

Summary of Action Items			
Ref	**Action**	**Responsibility**	**Time Line**
Carry Forward from 22 November 2017			
6.1	Explore the possibility of developing STEM take away cards similar to those prepared to publicise modern apprenticeships.	Principal	Next meeting
7	**Education Scotland: Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan: update and future plan** Identify a suitable time for the Board to engage with the College Education Scotland HM Inspector	Chair/Board Secretary	ASAP

8.2	**Student Surveys: Student Induction and early experience 2017-18** Review questions with internal and UHI colleagues	Head of Quality	
9.2	**Student Retention and Attainment Report** Review schools programme to better understand negative trends in the attainment pupils undertaking courses in College	Head of Student Records and Director of Curriculum Strategy	
10.1	**Workforce Planning** Communicate the REF Strategy in an appropriate way	Principal	
10.2	**Quality Evaluation/Process** Finalise the review of Committee memberships and remit	Principal	June Board meeting
11.1	**Student Engagement Strategy Update** Provide an update on development of a student enabling plan	Head of Student Services	In due course
11.2	**Student Funding** It was agreed to explore whether Celcat might be helpful in recoding unauthorised absences.	Head of Student Services	ASAP
11.3	**Student Partnership Agreement** For signature	Principal and VP HISA PC	ASAP
12.1	**Balanced Scorecard** Include targets in the Balanced Scorecard	Head of Student Records	For circulation with BS through committee cycle
12.2	**Student Numbers 2018-19 – Planning Update** Organise a Board development event on scenario planning	Board Chair and Secretary	ASAP
13.2	**RSKE Minutes** Circulate the RSKE Strategy	Board Secretary	With the minutes of the meeting

Minutes

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Item		Action
1	**Welcome and Apologies**	

The Principal welcomed members and Barbara Nelson from Education Scotland. Sharon Drysdale from SFC was due to attend the meeting but had sent apologies as she has been delayed.

2   Additions to the Agenda

The Principal notified one addition to the agenda on the Research Assessment Exercise. This was covered under item 10.1 'Workforce Planning 2016-17'.

3   Declaration of Conflict of Interest in any Agenda Item

There were no declarations of a conflict of interest.

4   Minutes of Meeting Held on 17 May 2017

These were accepted as an accurate record.

5   Actions Arising from Previous Minutes

6.1 The possibility of developing STEM take away card was still being investigated.   Principal

Action - ongoing

7.4 The correct terminology for Developing Scotland's Workforce was confirmed as same.

Action - complete

11 A new date for Academic Affairs had been organised

Action -complete

6   Sector Manager Presentation
Nick Green, Sector Manager, Audio Engineering and Theatre Arts

Nick provided an informative and interesting presentation about the very positive work ongoing in the Department. The Committee noted that courses on offer across Audio Engineering and Theatre Arts were popular, were recognised by industry and professional associations and provided good collaborative opportunities for students to undertake work placements. A number of staff in the Department were research active with international profiles and the Department had also received a 100% satisfaction rating for its BSc honours in Audio Engineering.

The technology required to run an efficient and effective Department was vitally important and it had to remain up to speed to ensure the relevance of courses to industry and to underpin effective collaboration.

7 Education Scotland: Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan: update and future plan

The College's Education Scotland HM Inspector (HMI) explained that she was keen to meet with the Committee now that a new Principal and revised structure were in place and senior management positions were beginning to be filled. The College's HMI confirmed she would be staying on to work with the College and that she would be working closely with colleagues to develop further Education Scotland's Evaluative Report and take forward actions. She acknowledged ongoing changes did present challenges, but that there was an opportunity to work with the new senior team and colleagues at head of service level to drive forward their work on improving the student experience and to monitor impact.

The College's HMI indicated she would like to work more closely with the Board of Management and Senior Management Team to take forward the College's Enhancement Plan and to drive the cycle of continuous improvement. This would be taken forward in line with the action plan and there would be an opportunity to engage with the Board at its meeting in June or at a future development day.

Chair/
Board
Secretary

8 Student Experience

*8.1 HISA Perth College Update

The President introduced the report and the committee noted the following:

- the activity grant scheme was to go live in late-February.;
- Students were engaged with the student events and clubs on offer;
- a small number of students had attended a HISA Regional Council event which was positive for their development;
- Local and Regional officer elections were about to open and the new HISA administrator was leading on that. Voting would be electronic and the elections would run from 19-23 March. The Student Association was active in promoting this;
- The Partnership Agreement would be signed imminently; and
- Events to celebrate the Year of Young People within the College were being promoted by HISA, and other events were also being planned with Perth and Kinross Council.

*8.2 Student Surveys: Student Induction and early experience 2017-18

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The Head of Quality introduced the paper noting that the action plan is monitored by the Quality Assessment Committee. The survey was structured similarly to previous surveys and contained 44 questions. The survey was paper based currently and, as such, did not reach all students. However, work was now being done by UHI Partnership Council to develop a set questions to be used across academic partners via an online survey tool.

The Committee noted that course teams received detailed feedback on all aspects of the survey so improvements could be made where necessary. At present a benchmark of 70% overall satisfaction was set at the College and 12 courses fell below that level. However, a satisfaction rate of 80%, which is what UHI is moving to in line with the NSS, would mean that a significantly higher number of courses would not achieve that benchmark.

The Committee provided feedback on the outcomes. The College's HM Inspector felt that there were perhaps too many questions in the survey, and that a better approach may be for the survey to focus on questions which would determine areas when improvements could be identified and made. There may be an opportunity to do further work on the core set of questions with UHI partners to elicit feedback from students on their experience and level of engagement to make a difference to student experience agenda. The College's HM Inspector also commented that she felt it was better to delay the timing of the survey in order to go back to first principles and agree a set of meaningful set of questions. Work with UHI on the new set of questions had involved students, but it may be worthwhile re-visiting the questions.

Head of
Quality

9   Strategic Planning
*9.1   Regional Outcome Agreement – Progress report on 2016-17

The Committee noted the paper that set out the Highlands and Island Regional Outcome Agreement that was presented to FERB in November 2017. It was noted that there continued to be an apparent paucity of targets for measuring progress in deprived areas and that setting targets may help define an underlying strategy for taking this forward. It was further noted that that some 'single' policies were being developed at UHI level, an example being the Admissions Policy which would be considered by the Board at its meeting on 21 March. Other policies had been developed on the same basis e.g. safeguarding policy but this was now being developed into a procedures document which would set out the more practical aspects of policy implementation at a local level.

*9.2   Student Retention and Attainment Report 2016-17

The Head of Students Records introduced this paper. The SFC Benchmark data, which was usually available now, would not be ready until end-February due to ongoing work at SFC to ensure

alignment of published statistical data. The Committee noted the key statistics and that quality review meetings were ongoing with a view to identifying actions in areas where negative trends were identified. The schools programme would also be re-visited as it appeared that the attainment levels of school pupils taking qualifications in the College were a cause for concern.

In terms of HE, here was no significant change in outcomes.

The College's HM Inspector commented that key challenges to address in the coming months were related to key government priorities such as the equality agenda/gender action plan priorities/intensification. It would be important to demonstrate progress against the key priorities benchmarked against external comparators.

10 Curriculum

10.1 Workforce Planning

The Committee noted Paper 6 which provided an update on recent and planned workforce planning activities. A question was raised in relation to teaching qualifications and why 10% of staff did not have one. It was noted that whilst a teaching qualification was not mandatory, it may become more important once the Teaching Excellence Framework was in place. It further noted that HR would to take a more active role analysing CPD and this would help with workforce planning and split out mandatory training and CPD.

The Principal highlighted a new approach that was to be adopted regarding submission to the Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF). At present, College staff who undertake research only had one hour a week earmarked for that and, for many, that activity was considered to be 'scholarly' in nature rather than pure research. There were a number of active researchers within the College, however, who had the potential to submit to the REF and it was proposed that a day a week would be set aside form now so they could focus on their research and thereby meet the 0.2 time criteria specified in the REF submission criteria. Only areas of known excellence would be included for submission. This approach would set out expectations as to who would submit and the time they should dedicate to that. Around 14 staff had the potential to submit but currently 50 staff undertook scholarly activity. In the light of this it would be important to manage the messaging in order not to deter staff, particularly early career researchers.

The Committee was supportive of the approach which would build research capacity for the future and facilitate delivery of research outcomes.

10.2 Quality Review/Evaluation Process

The Committee noted a paper which set out the quality review/evaluation process for 2017-18 and the planned quality review meetings. A number of enhancements had been made to the

Head of Student Record and Director of Curriculum Strategy	(top)
Principal	

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process around timing and streamlining of meetings which would provide time to plan for any changes curricula that were needed. Department evaluation provided an opportunity for service and academic departments to review themselves against an evaluation matrix and develop action plans to address identified challenges. This also helped sectors build their understating of the Education Scotland framework.		

The College's HM Inspector commented that she did believe the process to be fit-for-purpose. However, she felt that it was essential to create an environment which supported and sustained positive practice leading to a culture of continuous improvement. The Committee noted that the remit for Quality Enhancement Committee would be included in the review of the Engagement and Academic Affairs Committee remits, to clarify the different work streams and relationships between the Committees with a role in academic business, but also set out the style and hierarchy of reporting.

<div align="right">Principal</div>

In terms of staff resources linking to quality processes, HR was planning to take a more active role in managing the CPD process including a development session on 'writing for assessments'.

11   Engagement
*11.1   Student Engagement Strategy Update

The Head of Student Services reported that work was ongoing to develop the enabling plan to specify student engagement processes. A review with the College's HM Inspector was planned and a further update would be provided at the next meeting.

<div align="right">Head of Student Services</div>

11.2   Student Funding Update
The Head of Student Services introduced the paper which set out the current approach to FE/HE student funding. The Group noted that a national review of student funding took place Autumn 2017 and this identified a minimum annual income of £8180 for students. The Scottish Government was considering its response to the recommendations.

The Committee also noted that the move to 100% attendance requirement for bursaries had resulted in an increase in overall attendance although this had led to an increase in administration. It was agreed to explore whether Celcat might be helpful in recoding unauthorised absences.

<div align="right">Head of Student Services</div>

*11.3   Student Partnership Agreement – 2017-18 Action Plan Update
The Committee noted that the Student Partnership Agreement had been approved by the Engagement Committee and was ready to be signed.

<div align="right">Principal/ HISA PC President</div>

12   Performance Monitoring

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*12.1 Balanced Scorecard

The Committee noted the Balanced Scorecard and that it had now been named the Vision Scorecard to align with the College's Strategic Plan. It was agreed that the targets for 2017-18 would be included in the future

Head of Student Records

*12.2 Student Numbers 2018-19 – Planning Update

The Committee noted the latest position on student numbers:

- the number of international students continued to decline but there was growth in in-country teaching in China and India;
- ESF funding was available until 2021 and then it was expected to decline;
- ESOL money was now included as part of the core grant although the College's credit position would not increase;
- Perth College contributed 30% to overall UHI HE targets; and
- Although not substantive, an increase in controlled numbers for BAH in Food, Nutrition and Textiles Education was positive.

The Committee recommended that scenario planning should be undertaken by the College's Board to explore options for long term sustainability linking to the College's Strategic Plan. This may include a review of programmes and how they are managed, how courses are managed across the partnership linking to the Regional Outcome Agreement, and numbers and funding environment.

Chair/ Principal

13 Standing Committees

13.1 Quality Enhancement Committee – 25 January 2018

The minutes were noted.

13.2 Research Scholarship and Knowledge Exchange Committee – 22 January 2018

The minutes were noted. It was agreed the RSKE Strategy would be circulated along with the minutes of the meeting. A review of the remit and membership of the Committee had started and this would be linked to the wider review of Committee remits.

Board secretary

The annual UHI Research Conference would be held at the College in December and this was a positive opportunity to raise the research agenda profile.

14 Date and Time of Next meeting

16 May 2018

*15 Review of Meeting (to include check against ToR)

Members agreed the meeting had covered its Terms of Reference.

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Notes taken to help record minutes are also subject to Freedom of Information requests, and should be destroyed as soon as minutes are approved.

Status of Minutes   **Open** ☒   **Closed** ☐

An **open** item is one over which there would be no issues for the College in releasing the information to the public in response to a freedom of information request.

A **closed** item is one that contains information that could be withheld from release to the public because an exemption under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 applies.

The College may also be asked for information contained in minutes about living individuals, under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. It is important that fact, rather than opinion, is recorded.

Do the minutes contain items which may be contentious under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998?
     Yes ☐   No ☒