

Academic Affairs Committee

Minutes

Meeting reference: Academic Affairs 2019-20/03

Date and time: Wednesday 06 May 2020 at 2.30pm

Location: Online

Members present: Margaret Cook, Principal (Chair)
Andrew Comrie, Board Member
Lorenz Cairns, Depute Principal (Academic)
Veronica Lynch, Vice Principal (External)
Catherine Etri, Associate Principal (Curriculum)
Michaela Asisten, HISA Perth VP Education & Engagement
Deborah Lalley, Head of Student Experience
David Gourley, Head of Learning & Teaching Enhancement
Robert Boyd, Teaching Staff Member on the Committee
Martin Price, Chair of Scholarship Research Committee

In attendance: Ian McCartney, Clerk to the Board of Management

Apologies: Sheena Devlin, Board Member
Amy Studders, HISA Perth President

Observing: Alex Wilson, HISA Perth President-Elect
Cameron Murray, HISA Perth VPEE-Elect
Aimee Cuthbert, Students' Association Coordinator (HISA Perth)

Chair: **Margaret Cook**

Minute Taker: Ian McCartney

Quorum: 8

Summary of Action Items			
Ref	Action	Responsibility	Time Line
5	Matters Arising <u>Ref 6.2 - Student Surveys: Induction Early Experience Survey 2019-20</u> Head of Student Experience to look into whether Q10 can be reviewed.	Head of Student Experience	Next Meeting
5	Matters Arising <u>Ref 9.1 – Safeguarding Policy</u> Chairs Action to finalise approval once contextual adjustments made, including those to reflect the increase on online learning due to COVID-19.	Chair/ Head of Student Experience	ASAP
6.2	Student Destinations Head of Student Experience to investigate percentage of the student population comprised the 94% who progressed internally and whether this was increasing or decreasing.	Head of Student Experience	Next Meeting
8.2	Balanced Scorecard Sector benchmark rates and internal tolerance levels to be added.	Clerk	ASAP
8.3	Risk Register Risk Areas referencing student recruitment should be revised given likely impacts of COVID-19.	Clerk	Next Meeting
8.3	Risk Register Risk 8 be updated to include “active ongoing engagement with research organisations”.	Clerk	Next Meeting

Minutes:

Item		Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted presence of Observers. Apologies were noted.	
2.	Additions to the Agenda There were no additions to the agenda.	
3.	Declaration of Interest in any Agenda Item There were no declarations of a conflict of interest.	
4.	Minutes of Meeting held on 19 February 2020 Committee noted re Item 9.2 that Vice Principal had been added to membership of Scholarship & Research Strategy. Other than this addition, the minutes were approved as an accurate record.	
5.	Matters Arising from Previous Minutes	
	<p><u>Ref 6.2 - Student Surveys: Induction Early Experience Survey 2019-20</u></p> <p>Action: Head of Student Experience to look into whether Q10 can be reviewed.</p> <p>Action Update: Head of Student Experience noted that any amendments to survey questions are required to go through the Survey Group. This is being taken forward and any progress will be reported back.</p> <p><u>Ref 7.2 - HISA Perth Update</u></p> <p>Action: Associate Principal (Curriculum) provided a brief verbal update Curriculum Review & Planning process, and noted that a fuller update would be circulated by email for the benefit of Board members.</p> <p>Action Update: On Agenda (Item 7.2)</p> <p><u>Ref 7.4 - Regional Outcome Agreement</u></p>	Head of Student Experience

	<p>Action: Depute Principal to provide progress reports by email when available.</p> <p>Action Update: On Agenda (Item 8.1)</p> <p><u>Ref 9.1 - Safeguarding Policy</u></p> <p>Action: Reviewed Policy be circulated to Committee members to allow Chair's Action to be progressed.</p> <p>Action Update: Head of Student Experience informed Committee that some confusion had surrounded this issue, related to whether the Policy had been fully approved. In summary, Policy needs to be reviewed in terms of contextualisation. It was AGREED that, once any contextual adjustments were made, including to any reflect the increase on online learning due to COVID-19, Chairs Action to finalise approval would be appropriate.</p> <p><u>Ref 11 - Risk Review</u></p> <p>Action: Clerk to update Risk Register to reflect changes to Risks 8, 10 and 11</p> <p>Action Update: Completed and on Agenda under Item 8.3</p>	Head of Student Experience/Chair
6.	Student Experience	
*6.1	<p>HISA Perth Update</p> <p>HISA Perth VP Education & Engagement summarised the key points of Paper 2, highlighting that supporting of Class Reps was now being provided online; that the new Students' Association Coordinator had taken up post; that Perth College reported the highest turnout in Student Elections across the Partnership; and that the OBI Awards were still going ahead, but now online.</p>	
6.2	<p>Student Destinations</p> <p>Head of Student Experience introduced Paper 3 on student destinations for information, which provided information as up to date as possible at this stage, noting that this area is a statutory return to SFC and incorporates information from strategic partners such as Student Development Scotland, however the final stage of the reporting process cannot be completed and it is unknown when this will be completed.</p> <p>Head of Student Experience highlighted the positive 89% response rate, and noted a progression within Perth College/UHI of 94%.</p>	

	<p>Teaching Staff Member asked what percentage of the student population was made up of this 94% who progressed internally and whether this was increasing or decreasing, as this would be an indicator as to how successful the College was in attracting new students. Head of Student Experience to investigate this matter.</p>	Head of Student Experience
6.3	<p>Student Funding Update</p> <p>Head of Student Experience presented latest student funding update, as detailed in Paper 4, for information, noting that the paper represented the current position with Bursaries, Educational Maintenance Allowance and Student Loans continuing to be paid out to students.</p> <p>In addition, where available funds were not being used for the original purpose due to COVID-19 (eg travel allowance and nursery costs), these have been repurposed and will be utilised as part of College discretionary funds, and this has been cleared to be used in non-traditional ways (eg International students, residences, IT resources).</p> <p>Head of Student Experience further noted that, although it was not permitted to interchange HE and FE funds, Scottish Government had allowed for funds to be transferred within UHI, which allowed for a greater flexibility across Partner Colleges.</p> <p>Chair recorded thanks to staff for the speedy reaction to a rapidly-changing environment to meet needs of students, and informed Committee that the College was actively supporting and encouraging students to come forward and access the funds made available. Chair clarified that the emergency funds was not all “new” money, as it includes repurposing of around £2m from 2020/21 funding</p> <p>Board Member asked whether there were any hardship themes emerging, Chair noted that, although over 100 laptops had been distributed to students, the main concern continued to be around digital poverty.</p>	
6.4	<p>Student Support Update</p> <p>Head of Student Experience presented Paper 5, which provided information on current key issues affecting student support. Head of Student Experience outlined that recent focus had been on reaching out to students who had not used service before, as well as providing links to external support agencies as the College continues to stay engaged with those students who were already receiving support.</p> <p>Service levels continue to be monitored to ensure that, should</p>	

	<p>Support Services experience a surge in demand, an effective response can be provided. This includes online provision of counselling services, with 2 Counsellors trained in this mode of delivery.</p> <p>Initiatives such as Mental Health Week will continue online, and the College has launched DigiPals to tackle issues around isolation for students.</p> <p>Committee commended the Student Support team in their response to change methods of support so quickly.</p>	
7	Curriculum	
7.1	<p>Student Recruitment Update 2019/20 & Targets 2020/21</p> <p>Head of Student Experience outlined latest Student Recruitment position per Paper 6, noting that College had been broadly on track prior to COVID-19 restrictions; a recruitment drive for hands-on teaching areas planned for April 2020 had to be cancelled.</p> <p>Head of Student Experience noted that College FE core targets have been met but UHI targets had not been and will now be unlikely to do so, meaning College will be unlikely to receive ESF funding. Clarification required as to whether any ESF funds received will be subject to clawback.</p> <p>HE targets are close to targets, although currently running just below.</p> <p>Board Member queried whether any lobbying is taking place within sector re ESF shortfall due to circumstances. Principal noted the Colleges Scotland were pursuing the matter, as it is a huge issue across the sector.</p> <p>Head of Student Experience noted that target planning for 2020/21 has commenced – overall targets are set by SFC and these are collectively worked through across Partnership. Target planning for 2020/21 will have COVID-linked caveats such as how new Academic Year may be impacted and structured, how many students choose to stay on at school, impacts of social distancing, potential restrictions on travel and Residences, etc. There will also be Partnership factors feeding into process as well as local issues.</p>	
7.2	<p>Curriculum Review Planning Update</p> <p>Associate Principal (Curriculum) provided a brief verbal update on Curriculum Review & Planning process, that Sector Development Directors had produced papers on impacts in each area, and</p>	

	<p>highlighting some of the main impacts across a range of courses.</p> <p>Teaching Staff Member asked whether there was any increase in networking of HNs across Perth cohorts. Associate Principal noted that elements could be delivered this way but there was a need to ensure the same experience therefore there were potential difficulties within face-to-face elements which were being worked on.</p> <p>Teaching Staff Member queried impacts on staffing due to changes in working practices brought about by COVID-19. Associate Principal advised that there may well be an impact on part-time staffing due to staffing model being based on numbers of students, however this has yet to be discussed with staff.</p> <p>HISA Perth VP Education & Engagement asked about the appropriateness of learning spaces post-COVID. Associate Principal advised that timetabling and accommodation were being looked at, and noted that a number of UHI courses are networked which can cause issues that Perth College cannot directly fix.</p>	
8	Performance Monitoring	
8.1	<p>Regional Outcome Agreement - Update</p> <p>Depute Principal provided a verbal update on the latest iteration of the Regional Outcome Agreement, noting that due to COVID-19 there had been a relaxation of the deadline for input until June 2020.</p> <p>Depute Principal advised that the majority of Perth College responses were near completion, with the exception being developing young workforce, which was only at first draft phase.</p> <p>Board Member asked whether Board would have sight of final document before submission. Depute Principal noted that the hyperlinks were ready and able to be viewed should this be desired.</p>	
8.2	<p>Balanced Scorecard</p> <p>Clerk presented Paper 7, which presented a mixed picture around rates of retention.</p> <p>Head of Student Experience informed Committee that, while over the years the College has been fairly successful in retention, last year did see drops in retention, particularly in areas of increasing complexity for student support. However, it should be noted that, while it is disappointing that retention rates have dropped against target, Perth College is still performing ahead of the Sector.</p>	

	<p>Board Member noted that the report did not show the Sector benchmark rates or internal tolerance levels which makes comparative analysis difficult and has the potential to lull the College into a false sense of security. Clerk advised that this area was due to be addressed within the review of the Balanced Scorecard currently being undertaken.</p>	Clerk
8.3	<p>Risk Register – Academic Affairs</p> <p>Clerk presented Paper 8 for review by Committee.</p> <p>Board Member noted the lack of reference to COVID-19 within the document. Clerk advised that a new Risk Area had been added to the full Register and would be scheduled for review by Audit/Board during this meeting cycle.</p> <p>Board Member suggested that the Risk Areas referencing student recruitment should be revised given likely impacts of COVID-19.</p> <p>Chair of Scholarship Research Committee requested that actions in Risk 8 be updated to include “active ongoing engagement with research organisations”.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
9	<p>Committee Minutes</p> <p>Committee received and noted minutes of Scholarship & Research Committee dated 20 April 2020,</p> <p>Chair of Scholarship Research Committee noted that contributions to REF are proceeding well, however REF itself is delayed which may have some impact on future income.</p>	
10	<p>Date of Next meeting</p> <p>Meeting date tbc, pending Board approval of the full Committee Schedule for 2020/21</p>	
13	<p>Review of Meeting</p> <p>The Committee agreed the meeting had covered its Terms of Reference.</p>	

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Status of Minutes – Open ☒

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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.

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