

Academic Affairs Committee

Minutes

Meeting reference: Academic Affairs 2020-21/01

Date and time: Wednesday 02 September 2020 at 2.30pm

Location: Online

Members present: Margaret Cook, Principal (Chair from Item 6.3)
Andrew Comrie, Board Member (Chair Items 1-6.2)
Ann Irvine, Board Member
Alex Wilson, Student Board Member
Cameron Murray, HISA Perth VP Education & Engagement
Veronica Lynch, Vice Principal (External)
Catherine Etri, Associate Principal (Curriculum)
Deborah Lalley, Head of Student Experience
David Gourley, Head of Learning & Teaching Enhancement
Robert Boyd, Teaching Staff Member on the Committee (until Item 7.4)

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

Apologies: Sheena Devlin, Board Member
Martin Price, Chair of Scholarship Research Committee
Lorenz Cairns, Depute Principal (Academic)

Chair: **Margaret Cook**

Minute Taker: Ian McCartney

Quorum: 7

Summary of Current Action Items			
Ref	Action	Responsibility	Time Line
6.2	Student Surveys – National Student Survey Additional Perth-focused analysis to be made available.	Head of Student Experience	Next meeting
6.2	Student Surveys – National Student Survey Areas of review would be circulated to Committee.	Associate Principal	Next meeting
8.1	Risk Register Amendments to be made to Risk Items 8 & 10	Clerk	October Board
9.1	Addressing Racism SLWG brief to be circulated to Committee members	Clerk	ASAP

Summary of Historic Action Items			
Ref	Action	Responsibility	Time Line
	Matters Arising from 19 February 2020 <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	When available from UHI
	Matters Arising from 19 February 2020 <u>Ref 9.1 – Safeguarding Policy</u> UHI Common Policy and Nursery local context to be added before publishing.	Principal	ASAP
	Matters Arising from 06 May 2020 <u>Ref 8.2 – Balance Scorecard</u> Sector benchmark rates and internal tolerance levels to be added	Clerk	October Board

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	
	<u>Matters Arising from 19 February 2020</u> <u>Ref 6.2 - Student Surveys: Induction Early Experience Survey 2019-20</u> Action: Head of Student Experience to look into whether Q10 can be reviewed. Action Update: Same questions used across UHI Partnership therefore has to be reviewed at UHI level. Process under way, updates when available. <u>Ref 9.1 - Safeguarding Policy</u> Action: Reviewed Policy be circulated to Committee members to allow Chair's Action to be progressed.	Head of Student Experience
	Action Update: UHI Common Policy and Nursery local context to be added before publishing.	Principal
	<u>Matters Arising from 06 May 2020</u> <u>Ref 6.2 – Student Destinations</u> Action: Head of Student Experience to investigate percentage of the student population comprised the 94% who progressed internally and	

	<p>whether this was increasing or decreasing.</p> <p>Action Update: Head of Student Experience reported that previous progression rates were in high-80's%</p> <p><u>Ref 8.2 – Balanced Scorecard</u></p> <p>Action: Sector benchmark rates and internal tolerance levels to be added</p> <p>Action Update: Project & Planning Officer currently reviewing, to be discussed at next Board meeting.</p> <p><u>Ref 8.3 – Risk Register</u></p> <p>Action 1: Risk Areas referencing student recruitment should be revised given likely impacts of COVID-19.</p> <p>Action Update: Completed and submitted to July Board.</p> <p>Action 2: Risk 8 be updated to include “active ongoing engagement with research organisations”.</p> <p>Action Update: Completed and submitted to July Board.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>
6.	Student Experience	
6.1	<p>HISA Perth Update</p> <p>HISA Perth President introduced Paper 2 and highlighted the main points for Committee, in particular amended arrangements for Freshers Week under COVID restrictions, with no face-to-face activities planned; liaison with PATs for induction sessions; and plans for online delivery of Class Rep Training.</p> <p>Board Member enquired as to next steps re Partnership Project. HISA Perth President advised that an action plan was being prepared which would then be discussed at Student Engagement Group before being tabled for approval at Engagement Committee.</p>	
6.2	<p>Student Surveys: National Student Survey</p> <p>Head of Student Experience presented Paper 3, noting that the timings of the survey had broadly coincided with COVID therefore responses were impacted (although response numbers were not significantly affected), and that the survey was conducted with final year HE students only.</p>	

	<p>Head of Student Experience highlighted the key outcomes for Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UHI below both Scottish and UK averages • UHI response rate 72% from 80% previous year • Q27 (overall satisfaction) down 2.3% from previous year (although still within UHI's own benchmark) • Improvements were made in 12 of 27 question areas <p>Additional Perth-focused analysis was being conducted and would be made available.</p> <p>Head of Student Experience advised that some deeper digging would be required at course level to assess impacts.</p> <p>Associate Principal outlined next steps for review, including sharing of good practice at CASE. Areas of review would be circulated to Committee.</p>	<p>Head of Student Experience</p> <p>Associate Principal</p>
6.3	<p>Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey</p> <p>Head of Student Experience presented findings from the PTES (Paper 4), noting that the survey took place online during lockdown, and highlighting that main outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction rates drops to 85% from 89% (still above Scottish average) • 13th in sector (from 57 institutions) • Small sample size skews results somewhat – response rate was 14% <p>Associate Principal noted that further analysis is required particularly in those area where a drop-off in satisfaction occurred, with a focus on those courses that Perth College has overall responsibility for.</p>	
7	Curriculum	
7.1	<p>Student Completion & Progress - update</p> <p>Associate Principal provided a verbal update given ongoing COVID situation, noting that reporting on results was well behind schedule, for example approximately 300 FE students were currently defined as deferred, albeit towards latter end of Exam Boards processes.</p> <p>Associate Principal noted complicated issues regarding Foundation Apprenticeships due to workplace elements not being completed due to restrictions, which meant this element was not translating to a record of qualification achievement.</p>	

7.2	SQA COVID Response	
	<p>Associate Principal provided Committee with a verbal update on current situation regarding SQA, noting that all changes relating to 2020 examinations had now been closed off and focus was on future years.</p> <p>Associate Principal advised that SQA were returning to unit-by-unit assessments, which will likely have an impact come Semester 2 re evidence of performance criteria. Options were being pursued with SQA.</p> <p>HISA Perth President asked about changes to mitigating circumstances processes due to COVID. Associate Principal noted that College modules were allowed to be carried forward, but a decision had still to be made by UHI re carrying additional units forward, and that it seemed unlikely that continuous deferrals will be allowed.</p> <p>HISA VPPE enquired about communications with students over changes. Associate Principal noted that academic staff were still lacking clarity on whether proposed changes were final agreements, eg SQA are stating no change, but this may move due to ongoing lobbying. Communications will be sorted as soon as position is clarified.</p>	
7.3	Student Recruitment Update	
	<p>Head of Student Experience provided an outline of current student recruitment numbers, noting that definitive numbers were not available at this stage.</p> <p>HE students were undergoing induction this week, so confirmed numbers will be available soon.</p> <p>COVID delayed the FE start date with a revised induction dates w/c 7th September. Indications are that overall student numbers are likely to have fallen, but not by as much as expected.</p> <p>Head of Student Experience advised that SFC is looking at provision of support for short-term courses, so additional opportunities may arise in this area, however the challenge will be to free up staff resources.</p>	
7.4	COVID Restart Planning	
	<p>Associate Principal summarised preparations for the restart of teaching, noting that all changes had been fully risk assessed, with staff undertaking return to work questionnaires and high risk staff not being approved to return to campus.</p>	

	<p>Registration processes will be in place onsite, linked to government trace and protect systems, and face coverings will be required.</p> <p>Isolation rooms have been created on campus, and other measures put in place to promote social distancing, such as free parking and one-way systems.</p> <p>HISA VPPE asked how the College would monitor numbers of students on campus each day. Associate Principal noted that measures were in place to ensure key staff have all the required data and induction times were being staggered to limit numbers.</p> <p>Board Member enquired as to how the College is monitoring those who have left campus. Associate Principal advised that an entry and exit system using QR codes for each building was in use.</p>	
7.5	<p>Operational Planning update</p> <p>Associate Principal advised that Operational Planning processes had proceeded online with regards to staffing, budget and capital requirements, with additional budgetary meetings arranged as required.</p> <p>A transition survey had been conducted with academic teams, MIS and student support staff to gain feedback from students re issues of digital poverty. Around 2,000 student had responded, resulting in around 600 notifying issues accessing equipment and/or broadband.</p> <p>Principal noted that £5m of Scottish Government funding had been made available, which would translate as only 50 laptops for Perth College against the figure of 600 affected students, therefore there is a budgetary challenge. A Development Trust campaign had raised another £8k, which had been utilised for RUK and International students not included in the government funding.</p>	
7.6	<p>Financial Impact of COVID & Future Implications</p> <p>Vice Principal advised Committee that the Budget prepared for the Board meeting in June projects a deficit of £1.9m, assuming no penalties would be applied for under-recruitment of student numbers.</p> <p>Certain mitigating options had been agreed by Board, and work continues with national bodies around additional funding areas, including potential focus on micro-businesses and increase in Workforce Development Funding for colleges, however there is clearly a challenge across the sector.</p>	

8	Performance Monitoring	
8.1	Risk Register – Academic Affairs Clerk presented Paper 5 for review by Committee. The following amendments were agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk 8 – Committee Member noted that REF had been delayed – announcements were expected late 2021, therefore funding likely to feed through in 2022. Risk to be updated to reflect this. • Risk 10 – Reference to Partnership Agreement to be amended to Partnership Project. • Risk 10 – Mitigations to note involvement of Student Experience Committee. 	Clerk Clerk Clerk
9	Policies & Procedures	
9.1	Addressing Racism Board Member presented Item 9.1, noting that a brief for the proposed Short Life Working Group (SLWG) had been drafted, a discussion with Principal and HISA Perth President was still to take place before issuing. Board Member briefed Committee on the processes and approximate timescales for the SLWG, with an Action Plan due to be presented to the December Board meeting. Membership and meeting dates of the SLWG was still tbc. Following agreement at Engagement Committee, the proposals would also be tabled at the next meeting of EDIT Committee on 17 September for their involvement. The brief would be circulated to Committee members once completed.	 Clerk
10	Date of Next meeting Wednesday 11 November 2020 @ 2:30pm	
11	Review of Meeting The Committee 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 ☒

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 2018. 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** ☒