

**DRAFT MINUTES of the MEETING of the LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE held via Microsoft Teams, on Tuesday 07 December 2021**

**PRESENT:** Kelly Mackenzie, Chris O'Neil, Bonnie Crawford, Ruth McFadyen  
**CHAIR:** Kelly MacKenzie  
**APOLOGIES:** Tina Stones, Russell Edwards, Robyn Kennedy, Arvinder Kainth and Assistant Principal – Academic & Research  
**ATTENDING:** Assistant Principal – Student Experience & Quality  
Information Systems Manager  
Wellbeing and Learning Support Manager  
Access and Progression Manager  
Tertiary Education Leaders  
Board Secretary

The Board Secretary advised that the Chair of the Committee had given her apologies and explained that the Vice-Chair is expected to attend however they have indicated that they may be late. The Board Secretary advised that where the Chair or Vice Chair is not present the Standing Orders advise that members shall elect from amongst themselves a Board member who is entitled to act as Chair for the Meeting.

**Decision:** It was **AGREED** that Kelly MacKenzie would Chair the meeting.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that we were quorate.

No Declarations of Interest were noted.

**Decision:** It was **AGREED** that we would begin the meeting with items for discussion and return to items for decision upon the Vice-Chair's arrival.

## 1. EARLY STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY RESULTS

The Assistant Principal – Student Experience and Quality provided the Committee with a summary of the overview of student feedback received as part of the Early Experience Survey which ran in October 2021. The following was highlighted to the Committee:

- That student satisfaction is back to pre-pandemic level.
- Students with a disclosed disability had experienced a drop in satisfaction; however, it was noted that only 9.75% of students disclosed they had a disability within the survey compared to 31% of students who declared that they had a disability during the enrolment process.
- The response rate to the survey was lower than pre-pandemic.
- There was a vast variation of response rates across the schools.
- Care experienced students showed an increase in satisfaction.
- Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with professional services.

The Committee noted that where there are variances in student satisfaction; steps are being taken to address these concerns.

The Committee welcomed the results of the survey. A lengthy discussion with regards student access to finances took place.

**Action:** The Assistant Principal – Student Experience and Quality will liaise with the Shared Service Finance Manager to look at how we can signpost students to the support they require to access appropriate funding.

## 2. STUDENT OUTCOMES REPORT

*The Information Systems Manager joined the meeting.*

The Information Systems Manager spoke to her report which provided the Committee with a summary of high-level performance indicators relating to student outcomes. The Information Systems Manager explained to the Committee, the calculations which had been used for student outcome

performance indicators and advised that we had applied the same measures to our HE data to ensure consistency. The Committee was advised that deferred learning for FE Outcomes for 2019-20 and 2020-21 is currently excluded from the performance indicators. However, it was noted that there will be an opportunity to update SFC in the future.

The Committee was advised that whilst national benchmarking figures are not expected to be released until March 2022 it is anticipated that we will continue to exceed the national benchmarking as has been the case in previous years.

The Committee noted the interesting correlation between further withdrawals and success rates and thanked the Information Systems Manager for this report.

### **3. STUDENT RETENTION – REVIEW OF EARLY WITHDRAWALS**

The Information Systems Manager spoke to the joint report on Early Withdrawals for 2021/22 advising the Committee of the early withdrawal deadline dates for both FE and HE students.

The Information Systems Manager advised that since the report was circulated the early withdrawal rates in respect of FE FTE had increased to 9%. The Committee discussed the reasons behind early withdrawals and a lengthy discussion around the effects of mental health on students and the initiatives and plans being undertaken to mitigate these took place

The Committee highlighted that no student had withdrawn due to digital poverty and commended staff on their work to ensure that all students had access to IT equipment.

*The Information Systems Manager left the meeting.*

### **4. WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH UPDATE**

*The Wellbeing and Learning Support Manager joined the meeting*

The Wellbeing and Learning Support Manager spoke to her report advising the Committee of how we are supporting the wellbeing and mental health of our students highlighting the additional funding we have received from SFC, and the negative impact which Covid-19 is having on student's mental health. The Wellbeing and Learning Support Manager underlined:

- The expanded Wellbeing and Learning Support team and the funding which has been secured for team members.
- The stepped care model which is in place to triage students.
- The increasing numbers of students who are experiencing acute mental health illness.
- The increased provision of crisis support being offered to students as well as the unavailability of NHS resources.
- The continued increase in referrals which has now resulted in a waiting list for students to access the service and the effect that these pressures are having on the team.

The Committee noted that from the results of the Early Student Experience Survey, reasons for withdrawals and this report it is evident that students are finding their mental health is obstructing their ability to study.

*The Wellbeing and Learning Support Manager left the meeting.*

## **5. SCHOOLS/SENIOR PHASE CURRICULUM**

*The Access and Progression Manager joined the meeting.*

The Access and Progression Manager spoke to her report and provided the Committee with an overview of our current offer to senior phase pupils highlighting our geographical nature as well as our partnership working with both North and West Highland Colleges to ensure the delivery and consistency of the programme to students. The Committee noted that work is continuing to provide and receive information both to and from schools and external partners in one place on both our website and through a collective SharePoint site.

With regards applications and enrolments, the Committee was advised that these have been impacted by Highland Council budgets, Covid-19, and the cyber incident. The Committee was pleased to note that we have been able to provide all courses despite these difficulties.

The Committee was advised of the growing interest for in-school delivery and noted that plans are underway to increase the senior phase offer for the Academic Year 22/23.

The Committee undertook a lengthy discussion with regards travel for students highlighting the proposed change to free travel for all under the age of 22 as well as the current services offered by Stagecoach.

*The Access and Progression Manager left the meeting.*

## **6. ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT (INCLUDING UHI CURRICULUM REVIEW)**

*The Tertiary Education Leaders joined the meeting*

The Tertiary Education Leaders spoke to their joint report which provided the Committee with an overview of developments and activities affecting all schools. Highlighting curriculum planning, changes to PRD process and registration with GTCS. The Committee noted that credit targets for both FE and HE remain short of our target, but that work is continuing to increase credits across both provisions.

The Tertiary Education Leaders explained the new monthly data presentations which are received from Heads of Schools which allows for the team to trend and map data, undertake curriculum costings and understand and predict the data. The Committee was advised that this data can be benchmarked to both Covid-19 and pre-Covid-19.

*The Tertiary Education Leaders left the meeting.*

## 7. DISCUSSION – COLLEGE TRANSPORT AND EFFECTS ON STUDENT LEARNING, FINANCES AND PROGRESSION

The HISA President advised the Committee of the issues students are experiencing with regards to Stagecoach, reiterating some of the problems highlighted earlier in the meeting.

The Committee acknowledged the need for a dependable bus service and the impact which the unreliable service is having on students.

**Decision:** It was **AGREED** that this issue is to be included as part of the Principal's Report for the Board of Management Meeting on 14 December 2021. Following Board discussion, a communication around this issue will be shared with the University Court.

## 8. HISA REPORT AND STUDENT PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Assistant Principal – Student Experience and Quality spoke to the joint report advising that there continues to be a joint role in the monitoring of Covid-19 and compliance.

The Committee noted that the enhancement themes for the year ahead are:

- Student Life
- Advice, Support and Progression
- Learning and Teaching.

The following was highlighted to the Committee:

- study pods are now available for use by students
- new atrium furniture has been purchased
- the first student voice meeting for the Academic Year has been held
- around 370 laptops have been issued to students with a further 400 ready to be issued.
- Inductions for the new academic year have taken place

- teaching observations are now underway
- there will be two secondment opportunities within the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Team
- A new accessibility tool – Blackboard Ally – is now available and training on this tool has been provided to all Lecturing staff.
- HISA Con will take place in January 2022.
- An advent calendar event will be organised by HISA and will take place in the atrium.
- Safety packages are being produced for students.

A lengthy discussion with regards Naloxone training took place with HISA representatives advising that they had recently attended this training. The Committee noted that further discussion around this training is required with regards onsite storage, ethics as well as the development of guidance and a process to adhere to. The Committee was advised that further training sessions have been arranged and it was noted that these should be paused until these conversations have taken place.

**Action:** With regards the safety packages, HISA representatives advised that they would confirm where the funding for these packages was received from.

## 9. SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee noted the contents of the confidential report which set out the number and nature of safeguarding disclosures which had been received as well as the ongoing partnership working as part of our role as a member of the multi-agency public protection arrangements. The Assistant Principal – Student Experience and Quality highlighted that the report contained an error within it.

**Action:** The Board Secretary will circulate an updated version of the confidential report to all members of the Committee.

The Committee noted that a new safeguarding training module was available on Brightspace for all staff to complete.

The Committee discussed the trends surrounding safeguarding reporting and communication with other agencies and held a lengthy discussion with regards safety, the Halls of Residence and training which is being made available to staff within the Halls of Residence by ourselves. The Committee noted that a further discussion with regards this would form part of the Board of Management meeting being held on 14 December 2021.

#### **10. QUARTER 1 – COMPLAINTS REPORT**

The Committee noted the contents of the Quarter 1 Complaints Report.

#### **11. EDUCATION SCOTLAND QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Committee noted the contents of the Education Scotland Quality Assurance Arrangements Report.

#### **12. MINUTES FROM INVERNESS COLLEGE COMMITTEES**

The Committee noted the contents of the confidential minutes from the Student Journey and Enhancement Committee meetings held on 14 September and 19 October 2021.

#### **13. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL – SUPPORTING STUDENT CARERS**

The members of the Committee in attendance gave their approval of the Supporting Student Carers policy.

**Action:** It was **AGREED** that the Board Secretary would liaise with the members of the Committee who had offered their apologies and seek their online approval to the proposed changes to the Supporting Student Carers Policy.

#### **14. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**



- **UHI Tertiary Learner Support Policy.** The Committee noted that discussions had taken place with regard this policy and that 3.5 of the policy had been amended as follows:

*3.5 – Alternative Assessment Arrangements: In order to justify Alternative Assessment Arrangements within a PLSP, it is often required to gather evidence of disability/disadvantage. This evidence can take a variety of forms and may be dependent on the accreditation body stipulations.*

**Decision:** It was **AGREED** that this item can be removed from the list.

- **Research and Innovation:** The Committee noted that the Assistant Principal – Academic and Research was due to have a phased return in the new year.

**Decision:** It was **AGREED** that the presentation with regards Research and Innovation would be postponed until March 2022.

## 15. MINUTES

The members of the Committee in attendance gave their approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2021.

**Action:** It was **AGREED** that the Board Secretary would liaise with the members of the Committee who had offered their apologies and seek their online approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2021.

## 16. AOCB

The Committee expressed their thanks to Kelly MacKenzie for chairing the meeting.

## 17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY 15 MARCH 2022 AT 4.30 P.M.

**Signed by the Chair:** *Tina Stones*

**Date:** 15 March 2022