

Board of Management

MINUTES of the MEETING of the LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE held in the Boardroom, 1 Inverness Campus on Tuesday 5 December 2017

PRESENT: Ollie Bray, Sarah Burton, Helen Miller, Fiona Neilson, Gavin Ross, Tom Speirs, Gabriel Starr, Kate White
CHAIR: Sarah Burton
APOLOGIES: Robert Berg, Jaci Douglas, Chris O'Neil
ATTENDING: Depute Principal
Head of Curriculum
Head of Student Services
Head of Research Development
Secretary to the Board of Management

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee held on 26 September 2017 were **AGREED** as a correct record, were **APPROVED** and signed.

2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Chair advised that the outstanding actions from previous committee meetings would be discussed at each meeting to ensure that actions had been progressed and that the action list would be updated showing actions completed as appropriate.

The Committee considered each of the outstanding actions and **AGREED** that two actions had been completed so could be removed from the list. The two outstanding action would be completed in 2018, as per the time line.

Gabbi Starr entered the meeting during discussion of the following item

3. UHI LEARNING AND TEACHING ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

A report by the Depute Principal explained that the university's *Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2017-2021* had been formally approved before the summer. The approval followed extensive consultation across the partnership and the strategy itself recognised and built on the strategies and approaches already in place, at university and Academic Partners levels. It was proposed that the college adopt the strategy and embed its values and aims within college processes and practices.

If approved, a short life working group would be convened to include, among other things, amendment of the college's Learning and Teaching strategy and other strategies as necessary. Any amendments would be submitted to the next meeting in March 2018.

The Committee **AGREED** to recommend the UHI learning and teaching enhancement strategy to the Board of Management for adoption.

4. CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

The Depute Principal made a presentation on the changing environment affecting the college and the education sector. UHI integration, national bargaining, quality frameworks and intensification were the four key frameworks driving change.

A copy of the presentation would be sent to all board members.

The Chair thanked the Depute Principal for a very useful presentation

5. STUDENT EXPERIENCE 2016-17 & Early 2017-18

A report by the Quality Manager referred to the three elements of the student experience report. The free text analysis from Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) 2016-17 was carried out on an annual basis and provided a qualitative data source to inform curriculum and support teams self-evaluation activities. The SSES headline report provided an analysis of the outcomes from the SSES, comparing IC UHI results to that of the overall sector and the Early Experience Survey 2017 – 18 report provided an analysis of responses to the student survey.

The committee engaged in a wide ranging discussion and the following points were made:-

- It was good practice to introduce the survey into the classroom and to build in a structured response time to encourage students to respond.
- It was recognised that the survey needed to be diversified to fit all learner groups
- It was important to give positive feedback to students on the changes made as a result of previous survey responses
- It was recognised that there was a need to significantly increase the response rate for the SSES
- Student expectations had to be met and communication was key to ensuring that students understood e.g. the timescale for assessment feedback
- The language used in the questions was not always “student friendly”.

The Committee welcomed the analysis which had been undertaken and **REQUESTED** that in future an indication of timescales be given in relation to any further analysis and responses provided.

6. EARLY STUDENT RETENTION/WITHDRAWAL 2017-18

A report by the Depute Principal provided a summary and analysis of Early Withdrawal (EW) rates for students on full-time programmes in 2017-18

The current EW rates for students on full-time FE programmes were better than the final rates for the previous academic year and slightly better than the rates reported at this time last year. The current EW rates were better than the latest published college sector level.

The current EW rates for students on full-time HE programmes were better than last year's final rates. However, EW rates for students on full-time Higher National (HN) programmes continued to be above sector levels overall.

There were a number of areas which had relatively high withdrawal rates, namely computing, hospitality and education. It was recognised that hospitality students had often withdrawn from their course to move to a positive destination of employment. Discussion was ongoing with providers to see how they and the college could work together.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. ACCESS AND INCLUSION STRATEGY – UPDATE

The Head of Student Services tabled a report which provided some target figures achieved by learner groups over the last two academic years. The SFC had only recently released information on the parameters for the different learner groups and work was still being undertaken to finalise data and targets for 2017-18.

The Committee discussed the need to set ambitious but realistic targets and the need for further engagement from students to allow the college to provide the required support. The increase in the number of mental health issues was raised as a potential resource issue.

The Head of Student Services advised that she would circulate a report with the proposed targets to the Committee. The Committee **REQUESTED** that the number of students within each category be shown as well as the raw numbers.

8. STUDENT RECRUITMENT 17/18 – UPDATE

A report by the Depute Principal advised that the current student activity indicated that:

- FE recruitment was on track and should make or exceed the credit target, providing January recruitment met target, and:
- HE recruitment should be within 5 FTE (0.3%) of the funded undergraduate target.

An analysis of FE enrolments and HE FTE by fee status was also provided.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

9. STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

A report by the Head of Student Services provided an update on the progress made with the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) across the four aspects of: -

- Student Representation
- Student Community
- The College Welcome
- Learning and Teaching

Discussion was ongoing with HISA regarding the level of representation IC UHI would have within HISA for the next academic year. Work had begun with Sparqs on a project around the Education Scotland Framework, *How good is our college* (HGIOC) and how the college engaged students in that evaluative process.

The Committee **WELCOMED** the work with Sparqs, which it was hoped would lead to better student engagement.

10. **HISA INVERNESS - REPORT**

A joint report by the Student Association Co-ordinator (HISA) and the Student President, HISA Inverness provided an update on the progress of the HISA Inverness team. The report referred specifically to training events, class representatives, the HGIOC Sparqs project and other issues that were being progressed.

The Student President, HISA Inverness advised that they hoped to hold an event in January and bring employers into the College. This would be similar to the employability week scheduled for March 2018. As mentioned as part of the discussion under the previous item, discussion was ongoing with HISA regarding the level of representation IC UHI would have within HISA for the next academic year. A report would be submitted to a meeting of the Partnership Council on the Service Level Agreement between UHI and HISA for the next three years.

The Chair **REQUESTED** that an objective review of the resource requirements of HISA Inverness be submitted to the next meeting of the committee in March if other timescales permitted.

Gabbi Starr left the meeting

11. **QUALITY ENHANCEMENT**

A report by the Depute Principal provided a summary of quality enhancement and related activity, including a report on the recent Education Scotland/SFC endorsement meeting, the college's involvement in the national college improvement project and an update on other quality enhancement matters.

The new quality arrangements, the requirements of the Access and Inclusion Strategy and the Gender Action Plan, involvement in the College Improvement project, the move to further harmonise FE and HE quality arrangements and the intensification of the Outcome Agreement expectations, taken together, necessitated a review of the established internal quality arrangements. The new environment, while presenting some challenges, also provided the opportunity to re-think and enhance approaches while alleviating some of the reporting and monitoring burden through better system design. This re-design would be a priority in the coming months and a report would be presented to committee once a number of priorities had been identified.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

12. **PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION ON LEARNING AND TEACHING (PDLT)**

A process for the internal review of learning & teaching: Professional Discussion on Learning & Teaching (PDLT) had been devised and agreed in consultation with unions and staff during 2014-15. The process formed part of the overall Learning and Teaching Strategy, which included the Framework for Excellent Learning and Teaching to which the PDLT process was aligned. The model aimed to complement the existing mechanisms of self-reflection and student feedback to ensure a robust evaluation of learning and teaching to support practice.

A report by the Quality Manager provided a summary and evaluation of the second phase of the internal review of learning and teaching (PDLT).

The Chair stated that there were many positives in the report and the degree of reflective practice was excellent.

13. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

The national expectations for colleges' engagement with stakeholders had increased since the regionalisation of the sector. There were now clear and explicit expectations around the extent to which each college or region identified and responded to the needs of employers and communities, worked in partnership to deliver Scottish Government priorities and gathered stakeholder feedback to evaluate and improve the quality of its provision.

A report by the Depute Principal explained how the college would respond to these expectations by carrying out a stakeholder engagement review. The aim was to complete the stakeholder engagement review by the end of January.

The Committee **NOTED** that a report would be provided to the next Learning and Teaching Committee in March 2018.

14. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

When undertaking the review and updating the curriculum, it was important to ensure that this took place in line with the strategic aim which was "to offer a progressive curriculum that is valued by our students, employers and the communities that we serve, and it is delivered in a variety of ways to make it accessible to all." To do this the curriculum was updated taking into consideration a holistic approach and considered the connections between subjects, teaching methods, engagement with stakeholders and all aspects of learning that created a learner's educational experience.

A report by the Head of Curriculum highlighted a number of developments against the five strategic objectives including

- the development of BSc Optometry
- Introduction of the HNC Soft Tissue and HND Sport Therapy
- inclusion of cyber security qualifications in full time FE computing courses
- the increase in the number of modern apprentices within the engineering and construction areas
- The development of and recruitment to the Introduction to Further Education programme for those people who have been long term unemployed and are either looking for work or hope to engage with studies.
- Successful completion of the first cohorts of Foundation apprenticeships in care and civil engineering for senior school pupils
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- Increase in the variety and number of commercial courses delivered

There was a discussion on how the college measured the sustainability and growth of courses in determining which courses to remove from the curriculum.

The Committee welcomed this report and **REQUESTED** that in future, an explanation should be included on which developments were already in place and which were still being progressed.

15. HALF YEARLY RESEARCH REPORT

A report by the Head of Research Development provided an update on research activity covering the period August to November 2017 (inclusive).

Some of the key points to note were that

- Research continued to grow steadily, notably in terms of postgraduate researcher numbers, with a 60% increase in PGRs in 2017/18.
- Development activity was crucial to maintaining research and innovation growth and associated research income but there was increasing pressure on capacity to maintain this development focus as the number of research staff on fixed term contracts, and postgraduate researchers, had expanded requiring concurrent growth in relevant management support, systems and processes.
- There were still uncertainties for the University sector around the requirements for submission for REF2021 but the UHI work plan for identifying the REF cohort for submission was already in line with the latest guidelines.
- Early indications in the UHI REF stocktake were that the college was likely to submit a lower FTE REF submission than targeted. This gave an opportunity for the college to focus development activity on those areas where REF outputs could be improved during 2018-19, if that was considered a priority.

The Head of Research Development explained that currently research in the college was funded through a number of different sources and created a complex picture. She was working with the Director of Finance to gather better intelligence around research funding.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and looked forward to a further update on the REF discussions at the next meeting in March 2018.

16. CORPORATE PARENTING PLAN – ANNUAL REPORT

After extensive collaboration and review with third sector organisations and partners, Inverness College UHI published its first Corporate Parenting Plan in October 2016. Since then significant progress had been made against the action plan. Care experienced students were also encompassed within the Access and Inclusion Strategy which set targets for the FE students within this cohort in terms of credits delivered; retention; and successful outcomes.

A report by the Head of Student Services detailed the main highlights of the work over the period since the publication of the plan and the positive impact on student retention and outcomes. Inverness College were being seen as sector leading in many aspects of the work around corporate parenting and had been invited to share practices through the College Development Network.

The Committee **WELCOMED** the positive report and looked forward to receiving an update at the next meeting in March 2018.

The following items were included in the agenda for noting only and therefore no discussion took place at the meeting.

17. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS POLICY

Following a review of the policy, two minor amendments had been made, namely inclusion of reference to the General Data Protection Regulations, which would come into force in May 2018, and a change in the review date to 2020.

18. OUTCOME AGREEMENT LETTER OF GUIDANCE 2018-19

Letter from Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science

19. MAPPING AND EVALUATING THE USE OF CONTEXTUAL DATA IN UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS IN SCOTLAND

Study into the admission of disadvantaged learners onto degree courses at Scottish Universities

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 6 March 2018 at 8.30 a.m.

Signed by the Chair:

Sarah Burton

Date:

6 March 2018