



Board of Management

DRAFT MINUTES of the MEETING of the LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE held in the Boardroom, 1 Inverness Campus on Tuesday 17 March 2020

- PRESENT:** Sally Blyth, Kelly Mackenzie, Chris O’Neil and George Gunn (VC)
- CHAIR:** Tom Speirs
- APOLOGIES:** Samantha Cribb, Robyn Kennedy, Vivienne Mackie, Fiona Neilson, Gavin Ross and Tina Stones
- ATTENDING:** Depute Principal, Academic Development
Depute Principal, Planning and Student Experience
Director of Curriculum (VC)
Director of Research and Innovation
Director of Student Experience
Temporary Board Secretary

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

No Declarations of Interest noted.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Learning, Teaching and Research Committee held on 3 December 2019 were **AGREED**, and **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Student Partnership Agreement is currently the only outstanding action and is an agenda item.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

3. POLICIES

None for discussion at this time.

4. INTERNATIONAL REPORT

The Depute Principal for Academic Development introduced, '*UHI International Student Recruitment*', a presentation produced by Professor Stuart Gibb, who is the VP for International and External Engagement as well as Director of the Environmental Research Institute at North Highland College. A version of the paper had originally been presented to the Partnership Council. It was noted that UHI had fewer International Tier4 and RUK students enrolled. The Partnership Council had agreed seven different work streams to enhance the uptake of programmes by international students. The Depute Principal for Academic Development was leading on internationalising the Curriculum with twenty courses prioritised for review using the Business Model Canvas and Value Proposition design methodology.

The Principal joined the meeting

Given the low levels of international student recruitment there are potential risks of UHI violating percentile thresholds for students failing to obtain the award they had enrolled for or, for not enrolling in the first place. This situation has led to a degree of risk aversion, in recruiting international students, in order to avoid penalty points and a potential for audit by the UK Visa and Immigration Service. Budgetary constraints are not helping to market and promote our offerings however, a number of initiatives are being developed as part of the international work packages such as consideration of a partnership wide Scholarship programme to attract international students. It has been suggested that a dialogue with UKVI might lead to a more-consultative relationship.

One of the initial areas to be reviewed, under the Internationalising the Curriculum work package, was the Scottish School of Forestry. This is a unique part of the UHI portfolio, has attracted international students and is represented by a healthy

number of Erasmus students. One of the challenges for UHI is that we need to be able to offer international students a full degree programme from the outset rather than an HNC, HND and then the ordinary and honours years. A Tier4 student would have to return home at the end of each of these incremental awards and reapply for a visa, which could prove to be very expensive and therefore deter the student from applying to UHI. The Depute Principal for Academic Development provided an update on current international and RUK undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment figures.

The Committee discussed the challenges, threats and opportunities and it was identified strong action is required in relation to processes, priorities and marketing mind-set with a view to promoting the UHI vision relative to its rurality and capacity for international and RUK students. The Committee noted the contents of the presentation. It was agreed to prepare an update for the Board of Management and obtain a considered response from the EO to be carried forward to the next meeting.

5. STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The Director of Student Services and the HISA President updated the Committee, highlighting that from eight aspects of the student experience, three enhancement schemes were selected jointly each year, with those for the current year outlined in the paper. It was noted engagement with Class Representatives was working well this year and although no comparable figures were available at present, the recent student elections had been well attended with an increase in the number of contested seats - the Committee to be updated re turnout figures at the next meeting. The appointment of the SFC-funded Mental Health and Counselling Advisor was particularly welcome in view of the long-standing need, and a 400% increase in mental health issues amongst students. The Committee noted the contents of the report and the Chair commended the work that had been undertaken.

6. RESEARCH REPORT

The Director of Research and Innovation provided an overview of the report, identifying a correction to the KPI table date, which should read 'March 2020'. The report shows the FTE target for 2019-20 has been exceeded; the financial benefits

of which will be accrued two years hence. It was noted that next year, the number of fully funded postgraduate research students would increase by two. The recruitment of the full-time research director to the Centre for Remote and Rural Communities has already resulted in the appointee generating 20% of their salary in respect of research grants and secured funding. The Committee noted the contents of the report and the Chair commended the excellent work undertaken in this area.

7. Student Recruitment 2019-20

A report by the Depute Principal, Planning and Student Experience provided an update on student recruitment for 2019-20, which included information by qualification and by fee status. The current student activity indicates that:

- FE credits to date are at a similar level to this time last year (c400 credits were removed from the claim last year for being adjudged HE provision). Forecast is to meet or be slightly below target at year-end.
- SFC funded undergraduate HE activity is forecast to be c84 FTE below target.
- Application rates for 2020-21 HE courses are similar to last year at this time, and slightly higher for FE courses.

8. STUDENT RETENTION 2019/20

A report prepared by the Depute Principal, Planning and Student Experience provided the Committee with a summary of student retention over the past four years with a partial summary for 2019-20. Early withdrawals are a key focus for government and the Depute Principal, PSE said he was pleased with the outcome having worked hard to reduce the figures particularly the F/T FE figure. However, he expressed some concerns going forward in respect of FE provision regarding the challenges of delivering practical courses relative to online delivery. The Chair stated the Early Withdrawal figures represent the best outcome for four years.

9. CURRICULUM PLAN 2020-21

The Director of Curriculum presented a report to the Committee. In summarising its contents, it was noted in relation to Further Education, the value of curriculum planning as a planning tool to review every programme at every level, particularly

in respect of trend analysis; identifying courses with the potential to attract students and reviewing staffing complements was crucial. The DoC highlighted the need to capitalise on the city campus schools to enhance the potential student pool particularly in respect of Higher E, HNC and HND student recruitment.

In respect of Higher Education, HNC and HND study, the DoC said UCAS courses that failed to recruit, or which had over-recruited were reviewed. The undergraduate target of 1490.68 reported to the Partnership Forum is the target for next year. HNC Social Sciences has exceeded its targets by 100%. The figures show postgraduate study levels are satisfactory but noted a reduction in undergraduate levels. The DoC ended her summary by identifying the need to “fight back” into the graduate apprenticeship market.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

10. 2018-19 COLLEGE SECTOR PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report by the Depute Principal, Planning and Student Experience.

11. CUSTOMER SERVICES EXCELLENCE REVIEW FINDINGS

The Committee noted the content of the joint report by the Director of Student Services and Quality Manager.

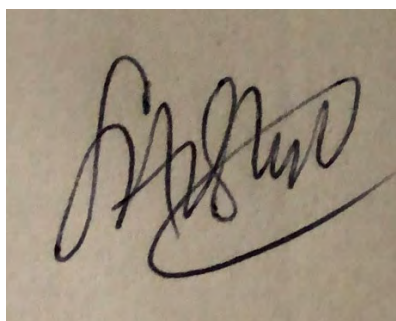
12. HALF YEARLY COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report by the Quality Manager and the Chair said the figures reflected well on the processing of complaints with appropriate action being taken.

13. AOCB

None noted and the Chair wished everyone well in the challenging times ahead.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TO BE CONFIRMED.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light brown, textured background. The signature is cursive and appears to be 'A. J. ...'.

Signed on behalf of the Chair:

Date: 09.06.20