

**Board of Management**

**DRAFT MINUTES of the MEETING of the LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE held via Microsoft Teams, on Tuesday 9 June 2020**

- PRESENT:** Sally Blyth, Tom Speirs, Kelly Mackenzie, Chris O'Neil, Tina Stones, Fiona Neilson, Robyn Kennedy, Sarah Burton, Samantha Cribb, Vivienne Mackie and George Gunn
- CHAIR:** Tom Speirs
- APOLOGIES:** None
- ATTENDING:** Depute Principal, Academic Development  
Depute Principal, Planning and Student Experience  
Director of Curriculum  
Director of Research and Innovation  
Director of Student Experience  
Board Secretary

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that our newly elected HISA President for 20-21 was Ruth McFadyen.

No Declarations of Interest were noted.

**1. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Learning, Teaching and Research Committee held on 17 March 2020 were **AGREED**, and **APPROVED** for signature by the Chair.

**2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

International Students is currently the only outstanding action. The Committee was advised that a partnership wide response to the report is still being developed. The Committee discussed the impact which Covid-19 may have on applications from

international students and thereafter the Committee **AGREED** that this action could be removed from the list.

### 3. POLICIES

- **Safeguarding Policy** – The Director of Student Experience took the Committee through the proposed changes to the policy. The Committee was advised that the policy had been amended to include a clear scope with regards student accommodation. The Committee **AGREED** recommendations for expanding on all staff being responsible for safeguarding students and the Director of Student Experience will **UPDATE** the policy to reflect these recommendations. Pending the policy being updated with these recommendations the Committee **APPROVED** the policy.
- **PVG Scheme Policy** – The Committee was advised that this was a new common UHI Policy which mirrors our own previous policy. This policy relates to students only. The Committee **APPROVED** the policy.
- **FE Guidance Policy** – The Committee was advised that this was again a new common UHI Policy which aims to highlight all entitlements which are available to students. The Committee discussed how this was being achieved within the College and thereafter the Committee **APPROVED** the policy.

### 4. IMPACT OF AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Committee was advised that a report has been prepared to highlight the impact of Covid-19 on the current Academic Year and to look at the predicted impact of Covid-19 for the next Academic Year.

#### **Learning and Teaching**

The Committee was advised that we are continuing to develop our virtual models of teaching and that a small number of laptops had been made available to both staff and students. The move to virtual teaching has provided both opportunities and challenges with some courses finding that students are more engaged and as a result some courses may remain online or blended in the future. The use of Brightspace and E-Portfolio has increased.

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It was noted that there has been a gap analysis carried out between FE and HE with some areas facing more constraints than others. This will continue to be analysed as we move into the next Academic Year.

Committee members gave their thanks to all Lecturers for all the support they have given to students to enable them to move their learning online.

The Committee enquired as to whether we have any idea of how many students may be suspending their studies due to Covid-19 and the prospect of online learning. The Committee noted that students are continuing to be fully informed of all measures being taken with regards Covid-19 and inductions for the new Academic Year are to go ahead as planned.

The Committee members gave their thanks to HISA for all the support they have given to students and staff during this period. It was noted that it is hoped that ex-students can be surveyed to see what they found worked well and given the opportunity to discuss any challenges they found with regards to moving to online learning.

The Committee was advised that all students who have accepted offers to study will be surveyed to ensure that they have sufficient means to study (such as access to computer/laptop, access to broadband, bandwidth of broadband and their own skillset and competencies with using technology). Support will be offered where needed and we will be prioritising the delivery of laptops to students who require them. The Committee noted that we hope to purchase 80 laptops in time for the next Academic Year.

### **Student Support**

The Committee acknowledged the way in which staff were continuing to support students remotely and staff have been able to direct students to wider support and funding available to them. Amendments have been made to support plans in order to suit the new learning environment and PDA continue to support our most vulnerable students. Students have also been able to access the Big White Wall and there is now a counselling officer in post who can provide online counselling to students.

## **Assessment and Progression**

The Committee discussed how we are continuing to meet criteria with regards assessments. The Committee noted that going forward all teams will look at each course separately to see how criteria can be met. The Committee was advised that the vast majority of students have completed their course and are ready to continue onto the next year. Where students have been unable to complete their studies then systems are being looked at so they are not penalised. With regards Foundation Apprenticeships it has been agreed by all universities that a letter of completion will be given which will recognise the apprentice's achievement.

## **Impact on Student Credits**

The Committee was advised that the Funding Council have guaranteed that we will not be penalised for not meeting our credit targets this year and we are hopeful that this will be the same for the next Academic Year. Currently we are 1000 credits below target due to Covid-19. Until Covid-19 we were ahead of where we were expected to be and we have evidence of this which can be presented to the Funding Council if required.

The Committee was advised that HE is down 84 FTE on its target however we remain broadly the same as other partnership agencies. The MicroRAM is looking more positive with £371k which reduces the outflow ratio to 54% which is a very positive shift securing an additional £107k income in relative terms, and £22.5k in real terms due to the reduced recruitment.

## **Contingency 20/21**

The Depute Principal (Academic Development) advised that he is chairing a small group, who meet weekly, to look at how to manage and co-ordinate the move out of lockdown. The Committee was advised that it is likely that we will move into phase 2 of lockdown on 18 June 2020 with staff who work within lab research allowed to re-enter labs.

Currently the group are looking at how we can maintain physical distance so that we are ready when buildings are able to reopen. A reduction of the physical

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distance to 1m would provide us with a more efficient means of delivery than if the 2m distancing remains.

The Committee was advised that staff will be given access to the building to allow them to collect work/papers which they may require. This has only just been launched and already 15 requests have been received from staff. Any heavy items are being delivered directly to staff to ensure that this is done in a controlled and safe manner.

The Committee noted that courses will likely begin online in Semester 1 to minimise the amount of students and staff within the building. It was advised that we have entered into a variation of contract with Pristine to allow a greater number of deep cleans to the building. The group will continue to monitor all advice from the Scottish Government with regards to face coverings and physical distance.

The Committee was advised that we are looking at 3 different scenarios for the new Academic Year:

1. We have limited access to the building during Semester 1 but reopen in Semester 2.
2. We have no access to the building during Semester 1 and limited access within Semester 2.
3. We have no access at all to the building during either Semester 1 or 2.

All Heads of Schools are planning for each scenario and the biggest constraint will be the number of students allowed within classrooms or workshops. Heads of Schools will be looking at staff resources available and reprioritising their programmes.

### 5. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Depute Principal (Academic Development) took the Committee through the report which is looking at the general environment and provides a PESTEL analysis of the macro environmental factors impacting Colleges. The Committee was advised that it was felt useful to look at the broader picture in this current changing environment. The Committee noted that there are vectors for growth which have been identified and we are in a position to progress, adapt and

capitalise on demand however we remain cognisant of the challenges facing us and others within the sector.

### **6. STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT UPDATE**

The Director of Student Experience gave the Committee a brief overview of the partnership agreement. The Committee was advised that the Student Representative Committee has, due to Covid-19, moved to virtual meetings which have been very successful and well attended given the current circumstances. Work is continuing to foster the needs of students with HISA being available online and the bi-monthly newsletters continuing.

The Committee praised the phenomenal amount of nominations which were received as part of the HISA awards with nominations being received throughout all teams and noted the high regards that our students have for staff.

The HISA President advised the Committee on how student life has changed due to the current circumstances and students are aware that there will be no graduation ceremony this year. Support is continuing to be offered to all students in relation to mental health.

The Committee expressed their delight that Vivienne Mackie would be staying as HISA Vice President for Education and look forward to meeting the new HISA President Ruth McFayden and the HISA Vice President for Activities and Welfare Julie Riviere.

### **7. HISA END OF YEAR UPDATE**

The HISA President advised the committee that some of this update overlaps with the previous agenda item. The Committee was advised that HISA had experienced a good year with a high level of support for all events. Due to Covid-19 adaptations have been made and it was reiterated that the Student Representative Committee had moved online. Events such as quizzes were continuing but again these are being held online.

HISA have two new members of staff and there were 232 class representatives for the year. Engagement is up this year with meetings being well attended. Voting

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within the HISA elections increased by 30%. The Committee gave thanks to the outgoing HISA President George Gunn and HISA Vice President (Activities and Welfare) Deborah Halliday for all their excellent work over the past year.

The Committee discussed and highlighted the following campaigns and events which had been held over the year:

- Fresher's week – particularly the here to help signs.
- Stop Brexit Campaign
- Climate Emergency
- Mental Health – it was reiterated the work that is continuing to be done to support students especially during this pandemic.
- Covid-19 – events such as Badaguish had to be cancelled but students were enthusiastic about the event and it had been fully booked.
- HISA Conference
- Clubs – these have increased from 16 to 23 and applications are continuing to be received. The first in a set of regular club and society council meetings have been held and these will be used to ensure good governance for all clubs.
- Volunteer Officers – there were 18 candidates for 6 positions.
- Halls of Residence – The Halls Officer has been continuing to engage students and events have been well received by students.
- Work is continuing with regards Peer Support and links are continuing to be built with Victim Support Scotland.

The HISA president highlighted the difficulties the HISA representatives faced when papers for Committees were received late. Communications between HISA and the Chair of the Board of Management are continuing with regards HISA representation on other Committees.

### **8. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT AND PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO SFC EQUALITIES REPORTING**

The Director of Student Experience took the Committee through her paper advising that this was an annual update on the Corporate Parenting for the Academic Year 2018-19. The Committee was advised that our Corporate

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Parenting Plan was first published in 2016 and we were reviewing this retrospectively for the year 2018-19. There have been a lot of changes in the policy area with regards Corporate Parenting and we have now been asked to report on this as part of the Regional Outcome Agreements. This will involve reviewing what recommendations we need to act on and planning ahead for 2020-23. This remains a national issue and there is a drive to close the attainment gap. This has resulted in a lot of common policy throughout the partnership.

The Committee was advised that the regional approach to both the Access and Inclusion Strategy and the Gender Action Plan had been put on hold due to pressures surrounding Covid-19.

The Committee was advised that our outcomes for F/T FE were progressing and we are sitting at 58% which is the same as the sector average however there remains much work to be done. We are continuing to see success with PDA FE.

The Committee enquired as to how we are helping our most vulnerable students especially with regards to the impact of Covid-19 and it was noted the most problematic area was student's ability to access IT equipment. Staff are continuing to work with the most vulnerable students to ensure they remain supported and we are maintaining our links with partnership schools and the Highland Council.

### **9. STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEYS**

The Committee noted the good response rate to the second semester survey and were advised that the outcome of the survey would be available for discussion in due course.

### **10. RESEARCH REPORT**

The Director of Research and Innovation highlighted to the Committee the impact Covid-19 is having on research and advised that her report should be read in conjunction with the UHI paper which was also circulated to the Committee.

The Committee discussed a number of issues including:

- Delays to final submission dates and the concerns around this.
- The absence of Core funding throughout the sector.



- Support being provided to research post-graduates.
- Research students not being furloughed and the hope for field work and labs to be opened soon within Phase 2 of Lockdown. Staff were able to be furloughed.
- That a Rivers and Lochs Institute Director was not recruited. The Director of Research and Innovation advised that she will continue to oversee this role for the future and the Committee discussed the impact this would have on her capacity and highlighted their concerns over this.

### **11. RISK REGISTER ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Depute Principal (Planning and Student Experience) advised that he had detailed the risks held within the risk register that fell within the remit of this Committee. These include:

- Covid-19
- Our Financial Position
- The Financial Position of UHI
- Changes across the Sector

The Committee noted that the SMT were reviewing all risks and mitigating any additional risk and that the entire risk register would be updated and taken to the Board of Management for final approval.

### **12. MODERN APPRENTICESHIP IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Committee was advised that SDS had issued UHI with a requirement to look at, review and address ongoing non-compliances with the SDS contract. This is an opportunity for us to ensure our compliance and each Head of School has been provided with a framework and action plan and monthly monitoring will be carried out by the Academic and Equality Committee.

### **13. STUDENT ENROLMENT 2019/20 AND RECRUITMENT 2020/21**

The Committee noted the contents of the Student Enrolment 2019/20 and Recruitment 2020/21 report and highlighted that trends are continuing to be analysed and recognised.

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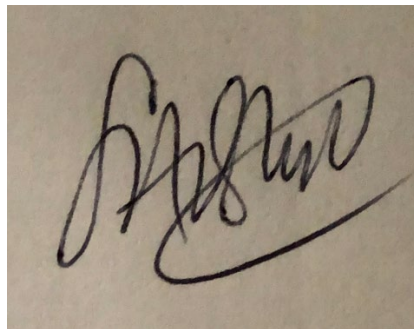
### 14. LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE SELF EVALUATION AND COMMITTEE CHAIR EVALUATION EXERCISES

Due to time constraints the Committee **AGREED** that the Committee and Chair Evaluations would be completed out with this meeting. Anonymised results from these evaluations will be brought back to the September meeting.

### 15. AOCB

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

### 16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 4.30 P.M.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored, textured paper background. The signature is cursive and appears to be 'A. J. ...'.

**Signed by the Chair:**

**Date:** 22.09.20