UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Student Experience Committee held on 2 March 2021.

PRESENTE: Dr Mairi Watson (Chair)

Karen Barton  
Muhammed Saad Raees  
Kayleigh Malone  
Dr Ivan Phillips  
Rosemary Allen  
Dr Karen Atkinson  
Karen Robins  
Dr Andrew Maunder

Neal Geach  
Dr Phil Porter  
Dr Stephen Kane  
Professor Helen Barefoot  
Dr Susan Grey  
Professor Frank Haddleton  
Catherine Rendell  
Julie Kelly

Geri Ward  
Dr David Ford  
Samantha Kelly  
Judith Baines  
Dr Julie Vuolo  
Scott Isaacs

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr Ciara Meehan  
Stephen Owen  
Sahar Khajeh

Sarah Flynn  
Jeff Hughes  
Shantel Thomas

Liz Gormley-Fleming  
Brian Jukes  
Dani Bradford (for item 10)

APOLOGIES:

Lisa Uttley  
Maria Banks

NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY

There were no new declarations of interest.

MEMBERSHIP

The Committee noted that Dr Tim Gledhill had joined the Committee as the new named alternate under membership category 10 ‘Director of the Doctoral College (or named alternate)’.

(Agenda Paper 3, refers.)

IN ATTENDANCE

132.1 The Committee noted that Postgraduate Research students Brian Jukes and Sahar Khajeh, and Shantel Thomas, from Health and Social Work would be in attendance as observers.

132.2 Dani Bradford, from the Hertfordshire Students’ Union, would be in attendance for item 10.

MINUTES - 19 JANUARY 2021

133.1 The Committee received the Minutes of the previous meeting.

133.2 Regarding Minute 113.6, it was highlighted that, whilst the Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre (LTIC) would be coordinating the review of the personal tutoring, it was the Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) who would be reporting back at the May meeting.

133.3 The Committee resolved that, subject to the comments in Minute 133.2 above, the Minutes be confirmed as an accurate record of the business conducted.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 5, refers.)
SCHEDULE OF ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Committee received and noted a schedule of actions arising from previous meetings.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 6, refers.)

ANY OTHER MATTERS ARISING

There were no other matters arising that were not taken elsewhere on the agenda.

EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRAND OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-25

The Committee received a presentation from the Chair on progress with delivering a blended flexible pedagogy by 2025 (KPI 3).

The Committee noted updated information on:

- scope showing current and planned activity;
- programme governance;
- initial high-level timeline, agreed by the Board of Governors;
- Herts learning emerging principles;
- next steps; and
- key deliverables for the Board.

The Committee noted that the Herts learning principles were only emerging principles and should not be actioned yet. Action required would come through a formal process of implementing the reflection on the Herts Toolkit that would unfold during the next academic year.

The emerging principles were based on the feedback gathered from the initial consultations and workshops conducted with staff and students. The next stage was to request feedback again from all Schools, central teams and students on those principles. This would happen in the form of workshops, with Associate Deans taking the role of co-facilitators rather than participants.

(Confidential Tabled Paper 8, refers.)

ANY OTHER MATTERS OF REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair on other matters of interest.

Since the Committee had last met, the government had issued new guidance on students returning to and starting higher education in the spring term 2021.

In person teaching for undergraduate and postgraduate students who were studying practical or practice-based subjects could now resume from 8 March 2021. It was also hoped that the remainder of students could return to face-to-face elements of their programmes before the end of the academic year.

As of January, there were also further exceptions in place for paraprofessional statutory regulatory body assessments and other PRSB mandatory activity.

There were currently no changes to the arrangements for research students.

Further discussions would need to be had around timetabling for the following academic year so a significant part of the students’ experience could come back onto campus, whilst also responding to calls for continuing flexibility.

Next academic year would be treated as a soft launch of the new blended flexible Herts pedagogy and implementation of the KPI 3 project. This was dependent on finalising the Herts Learning Toolkit and the move to the new curriculum management system.
Office for Students (OfS) report – Gravity Assist

The Committee noted that, in June 2020, the Secretary of State for Education commissioned OfS Chair Sir Michael Barber, to conduct a review of the shift toward digital teaching and learning in English higher education since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The outcome of the review had been a report called Gravity Assist, available online at the following link:


The report provided reassurance that the University was heading in the right direction with its new blended flexible pedagogy (KPI 3). The report also highlighted the need to make the online learning environment safe for everyone to participate in. Involving students, equipping staff for the digital future, informing staff and students on digital skills and providing access to digital resources were some of the other challenges ahead.

HSU PRIORITY CAMPAIGN AND ONLINE LEARNING FEEDBACK

HSU Priority Campaign

The Committee received a report from Hertfordshire Students’ Union (HSU) representatives Kayleigh Malone and Saad Raees on the progress of the HSU Priority Campaign.

The Committee noted that the Wellbeing Guide had now been launched and was available from the HSU website. Members were asked to promote the Guide, particularly amongst personal tutors and programme leads, as they were the most likely to signpost students to those services.

Online Learning Feedback

The Committee received a report from Dani Bradford, HSU Research Coordinator, on online learning student feedback.

The Committee noted the outcome of the online learning student feedback survey, particularly the results regarding the issue of students not feeling prepared for their assessments. The upcoming assessment period was critical for student progression and graduation. Members were asked to speak to programme and module leaders so opportunities to reassure students about their preparedness could be identified.

The Committee discussed the issue of students not being able to get through to academic staff. It was agreed that staff should have an out of office message in place redirecting students appropriately when they were unable to respond to students’ queries in a timely manner. Members were asked to take this message back to their Schools/SBUs.

(Student Confidential Agenda Paper 7, refers.)

STUDENT VOICE QUESTIONNAIRE (SVQ)

Minute 139 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.

(Student Confidential Agenda Paper 11, refers.)

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS)

Minute 140 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PTES)

The Committee received an oral report from the Deputy Director of Academic Quality Assurance, Catherine Rendell, on the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES).
The PTES would run from 18 March to 17 May 2021 for a population of over 10,000 students.

This year the University was stepping up the promotion of the PTES survey, in comparison with previous years, alongside the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). A few Covid-19 related questions had also been added this year.

**LEARNING AND TEACHING INNOVATION CENTRE**

**HERTS LEARNING PRINCIPLES**

The Committee received a report from the Director of Learning and Teaching, Karen Barton, on the Herts Learning Principles.

(Minutes 136.3 and 136.4 above, and confidential Agenda Paper 14, refer.)

**OTHER ITEMS OF REPORT FROM THE LEARNING AND TEACHING INNOVATION CENTRE**

The Committee received an oral report from the Director of Learning and Teaching, Karen Barton, in respect of the activities of the Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre (LTIC).

This year, with the development of the blended flexible pedagogy (KPI 3), digital insight was even more important and, together with OfS’s Gravity Assist report, a key piece of information in an area to work on over the next few years.

Three separate digital insight surveys – for academic staff, students and professional staff – with slightly different questions would be run this year for two weeks starting on the 15 March 2021. The results would also provide the University with a benchmark against the rest of the sector, as other universities were also running it.

Regarding KPI 3, a Digital Assessment Experts Group was being formed with members from Schools who were doing interesting and innovative work in this area to help the University move forward with digital assessments.

The Committee further noted that the Learning and Teaching Conference was taking place virtually on 30 June 2021. There were some plans for a further follow-up even on 1 July 2021 and information would be disseminated when the arrangements were confirmed.

**ITEMS OF REPORT FROM WIDENING ACCESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS**

The Committee received an oral report from the Deputy Head of Widening Access and Student Success (WASS), Dr Julie Vuolo, on the activities of WASS.

The Committee noted that the Go Herts and Connect programmes had recently been brought together under an umbrella steering group, chaired by the Director of Learning and Teaching, Karen Barton. The primary intention was to increase the reach and impact of both those initiatives.

Regarding student focused activities, a one-to-one coaching programme had just been launched specifically to support students at risk of non-continuation.

The WASS team had also continued to work together with Library and Computing Services (LCS) around the distribution of PCs and laptops to support remote learning, and with the Dean of Students Office around the distribution of food vouchers.
For the first time, the WASS team had been able to reach out to estranged students, which was a difficult cohort to identify. Sixteen students had declared through the admissions process that they were estranged students.

Regarding the hardship funds, WASS had been working closely with Academic Registry around distributing awards of £300 to 1,140 students experiencing hardship. The team was also currently working on the rent related hardship fund, for which over 3,000 applications had been received.

Another priority for WASS at the moment was the completion of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) monitoring report for April 2021.

**STANDING REPORTS**

**ITEMS OF REPORT FROM ACADEMIC REGISTRY**

*Minute 145 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*

(Confidential Agenda Paper 17, refers.)

**ITEMS OF REPORT FROM STUDENT WELLBEING**

*Minute 146 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*

**ITEMS OF REPORT FROM THE LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES**

The Committee received a report from the Head of Library and Academic Support Services, Beth Adams, on the timetabling strategy.

The Committee noted the strategy proposed by the Timetabling Strategic Governance Group, which had also been recently presented to the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive (VCE).

*Minute 147.3 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*

(Confidential Agenda Paper 19, refers.)

**COLLABORATIVE PROVISION**

**UK COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

The Committee received a report from the Head of UK Partnerships, Scott Isaacs, on UK Partnership related matters, including the student educational experience in response to COVID-19 at partner institutions and progress with the 2020-21 academic year.

The Committee noted the information contained within the report and, in particular, the recommendations listed under section 4.

The Committee resolved that the recommendations, as detailed in the report, be supported.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 20, refers.)

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTS**

There were no new matters to report.

**IN-YEAR WITHDRAWAL RATES**

*Minute 150 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*

(Confidential Agenda Paper 22, refers.)
151  CLERK’S REPORT

151.1 Working Groups and Sub-Committees of the Education and Student Experience Committee

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Chair/Convenor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Committees</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>There are no sub-committees currently established by the Committee.</td>
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<td><strong>Working groups and support groups</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Student Success</td>
<td>Professor Helen Barefoot</td>
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<td>Working Group</td>
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<td>Learning Environment Group</td>
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151.2 Schedule of meetings 2020/21

All meetings are scheduled to be held at 09:30 hours via Microsoft Teams unless advised otherwise, in which case the meeting will be held in the Central Committee Room:

- Tuesday 2 March 2021
- Tuesday 18 May 2021
- Tuesday 29 June 2021.

(Agenda Paper 23, refers.)

152  PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

There were no specific matters for referral to the Learning and Organisational Development Facilitation and Support Team Manager, Jill Lees, concerning matters relating to People Development.

153  RISK

There were no risks inherent in the matters dealt with by the Committee during the meeting but not discussed when the item concerned was taken.

154  EMERGENCY BUSINESS

There was no emergency business.

155  DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Education and Student Experience Committee would be held on Tuesday, 18 May 2021 from 09:30 hours via MS Teams.

Items for the Agenda should be notified to the Clerk, Leire Caselles Vallejo (‘e’-mail l.caselles-vallejo@herts.ac.uk) by 27 April 2021 and reports submitted by 4 May 2021.