UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Student Experience Committee held on 17 January 2023.

PRESENT: Dr Mairi Watson (Chair)

Karen Barton	Professor Helen Barefoot	Anna Levett
Aman Tripathi	Dr Susan Grey	Laide Bissessar
Laura Lowe	Professor Frank Haddleton	Scott Isaacs
Dr Suzanne Fergus	Catherine Rendell	Associate Professor Sarah Flynn
Dr Stephen Kane	Julie Kelly	Associate Professor Rosemary Allen
Geri Ward		

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr Cheryl Holman	Lisa Uttley	Bethan Adams
Sharleni Gault	Dr Julie Vuolo	Linda Goodwin

APOLOGIES:

David Gillard

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61   **NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY**

There were no new declarations of interest.

62   **TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COMPOSITION**

The Committee noted the Terms of Reference and Composition.

(Agenda Paper 3 refers)

63   **MEMBERSHIP**

63.1   The Committee **received** amendments to the Committee Membership.

63.2   The Committee noted that under Category 3 Membership. President of the Students' Union, Rhiannon Ellis had left the University.

63.3   The Committee noted that Associate Deans Learning & Teaching (Health & Social Work), Laura Lowe had joined the Committee Membership under Category 7.

(Agenda Paper 4 refers)

64   **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

64.1   The Minutes of 22 November 2022 were reviewed for accuracy.

64.2   **SUMS Review of Academic Skills Support, minute 35.3 refers.**
Wording would be amended to read that the Chair would '*refer* to the Committee with CEG feedback'.

Minutes 64.3 to 64.5 are confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only

64.6   **Student Voice Questionnaires, minute 46.3 refers**
The minute was inaccurate and would be removed.

64.7   The Minutes of the previous meeting were **agreed** as an accurate record of the business conducted, subject to the above amendments.

(Confidential Agenda paper 5 refers)

65   **SCHEDULE OF ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

65.1   The Committee **received** a Schedule of Actions arising from the previous minutes.

65.2   **SUMS Review of Academic Skills Support, Minute 35.2 and 35.3 refer**
The SUMS Review report had been shared with the Committee prior to the meeting. An update regarding the implementation proposal, which was taken to the Chief Executive's Group on 16 January 2023, would be given under item 8.

65.3   **Cost of Living Crisis, Minute 36.6 and 36.7 refer**
Academic Registrar, Julie Kelly confirmed that postgraduate research students were viable for hardship funding.

65.3.1   The Committee **received** an update from the Chair and noted that at a meeting of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive on Friday 13 January 2023, it was agreed to increase the amount of hardship funding for University of Hertfordshire students a further £750K. £500K of the additional amount was allocated to core hardship funding, £50K to placement students as travel bursaries and £200K to reduce the cost of services on campus.

65.3.2   The Committee noted that the Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) had requested a further breakdown of the allocation of funding for services on campus, which would be brought to a future meeting.

65.3.3   Academic Registrar, Julie Kelly confirmed that appropriate promotion of the additional funding for students was in hand.

65.4   **Exams, Minute 38 refers**
The Committee **received** feedback from Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching regarding the impact at School level, of the message that the University would not revert to pre-pandemic levels of exams.

65.4.1   The Committee noted most Schools continued to use exams for assessment only where there was a PSRB requirement or where module teams had determined examination was the only way to assess particular learning outcomes. However, Schools confirmed that where other reasonable means of assessment were available, they continued to be used and that a shift back to the use of exams was not supported.

65.4.2   The Committee **discussed** concerns regarding academic integrity and acknowledged reinforcement of the University's clear position would be beneficial.

65.4.3   The Committee **concurred** that plagiarism should not be aligned with forms of assessment, and that assessment design and academic skills support were key elements to ensuring academic integrity.

65.4.4   The Committee **agreed** that the University assessment regulations required updating to reflect the University position regarding the use of exams.

65.4.5   It was **agreed** Deputy Director of the Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre, Professor Helen Barefoot, would liaise with colleagues to propose changes to UPR AS12 for approval by the Standing Working Party on UPR's at the January 2023 meeting, for implementation September 2023.

65.5   **BAME Attainment Gap, Minute 42 refers**
The Committee **received** an update from the Deputy Director of the Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre, Professor Helen Barefoot.

65.5.1 The Committee noted that the Chief Executive's Group (CEG) had received the BAME Attainment Gap report and discussed the recommendations to address the awarding gap going forward. CEG had been satisfied that a focus on assessment design at module level, renewed emphasis on race equality staff development and monitoring the impact of student hardship on performance would help address the gap going forward and supported the policy and process changes proposed.

(Confidential Agenda paper 6 refers)

66 OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the Minutes of the last meeting which were not taken elsewhere on the agenda.

67 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

67.1 SUMs Review of Academic Skills

67.1.1 The Committee **received** tabled paper 08 which was taken to the Chief Executive's Group on 16 January 2023 and outlined proposals to equalise academic skills support across the University over the next 2 years.

67.1.2 The Committee noted the proposed next steps which tasked two groups and a project lead with the Report's implementation.

67.1.3 The Committee noted that a post for a new Head of Academic Skills Development would be advertised this week. The individual would be responsible for putting in place and leading the University's new approach to academic skills development, which would come to CEG for consideration and to this Committee to note prior to implementation.

67.1.4 The Chair would provide regular progress updates of changes to the structure of academic skills development to Deans, Heads of SBU and the Committee.

67.2 Office for Students Blended Learning Review Feedback

67.2.1 The Committee **received** correspondence from the Office for Students which gave formal notification of the outcome of the informal review of the University's' Blended Learning provision.

67.2.2 The Committee noted the University outcome was positive, albeit there were concerns about the extent to which technical issues interfered with students' ability to get the most out of live online lectures.

67.2.3 Concerns had been discussed with the Chief Information and Digital Officer, David Gillard and the Director of Learning and Teaching, Karen Barton, who confirmed historical issues had been resolved. The Committee noted that rooms were equipped to ensure they were designed for purpose.

67.2.4 The Committee noted that work to audit the Office for Students B conditions was being undertaken by the Director of Academic Quality Assurance, Frank Haddleton, and would be progressed through the Academic Standards and Audit Committee (ASAC).

67.3 Academic Integrity

67.3.1 The Committee **received** a verbal report from the Chair and the Director of Learning and Teaching, Karen Barton regarding news in the press and the sector of the development of a Chat GPT facility being deployed to write narrative text.

67.3.2 The Committee noted several groups in the sector, such as the University Alliance and Advance HE, continued to review and share practice regarding the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, and that internally, there were pockets of work in certain areas being undertaken.

67.3.3   The Committee **agreed** a more formal collaborative approach would be taken to develop an institutional response to the use of Artificial Intelligence tools.

67.3.4   The Committee **discussed** the formation of a small institutional AI Group and **agreed** that; members of the Committee would nominate AI specialists, English Language, and subject experts from their areas to sit on the group; Membership would include nominees from Learning and Teaching and the Chief Information and Digital Officer or nominee; The Chair and Director of Learning and Teaching, Karen Barton would liaise with external networks, organise a meeting and commission a report to come back to the next ESEC on the likely impact of Artificial Intelligence tools on policy and practice next academic year.

67.4   **The Teaching and Excellence Framework (TEF) Submission**

67.4.1   The Committee **received** an update regarding the University's TEF submission, which was due on Tuesday 24 January 2023. The Chair thanked the Director of Learning and Teaching, Karen Barton, the TEF Working Group, and colleagues, for their input into the submission.

67.4.2   The Committee noted a final copy would be circulated to members when the submission was concluded.

68   **PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING - UPR AMENDMENT**

68.1   The Committee **received** a report which outlined recommendations for the revision of UPR HR11 version 07.0 Peer Review of Teaching Practice.

68.2   The Committee noted the UPR required updating to ensure it was complementary to AS17 Apprenticeships Policy and accurately reflected current expectations.

68.3   The Committee **considered** the recommendation that either section 6 from UPR HR11 was removed in its entirety and the original expectation that all staff participated in peer review was reverted to, or that section 6 was amended to indicate the additional processes, which pertained to the review of teaching on provision subject to Ofsted inspection.

68.4   The Committee **discussed** the Apprenticeship Policy which was also being redrafted and acknowledged it made clear the list of activities colleagues would engage with. This was being progressed through the Academic Standards and Audit Committee (ASAC).

68.5   The Committee **agreed** that for clarity, Section 6 would remain and would be amended to include a link which signposted to the new Apprenticeship Policy and made clear it was an additional process.

         (Confidential Agenda paper 9 refers)

69   **STUDENT PERFORMANCE MONITORING GROUP (SPMG) INTERIM REPORT**

69.1   The Committee **received** Interim Report 2 from the Student Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG) 2022/23, which focussed on UH population, Admissions, Non-continuation, and Undergraduate Awards data by student characteristic.

69.2   The Committee **discussed** the key institutional highlights and noted School level data was available which provided summary data of trends and concerns for School action planning.

69.3   The Committee noted the importance of understanding the University population data as context for the more specific data within the report.

         Minutes 69.4 to 69.17 are confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only

69.18   The Deputy Director of Academic Quality Assurance, Catherine Rendell confirmed that the SPMG was looking at withdrawal data for clarification around reasons for withdrawal.

69.19   The Committee **agreed** to request SPMG reported further on withdrawal data at entry level.

69.20   The Committee **discussed** preparation in place for ensuring the Office for Students thresholds for B3 and benchmarks for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) would be met. It was noted that programme monitoring informed subject specific actions, which would be embedded and monitored through School continuous action plans.

69.21   The Committee noted that SPMG members would meet with Schools to discuss every aspect of the School level data.

69.22   The Committee acknowledged the Report contained a lot of data, which was cut different ways and considered and actioned by different groups across the University. The Committee was assured that the committees and groups currently in place effectively responded to and addressed the challenges raised.

69.23   The Committee noted that data relating to non-continuation and withdrawal was immediately flagged by the SPMG and taken to the Chief Executives Group (CEG), where a call to action on Schools had been agreed.

(Confidential Agenda paper 10 refers)

70   **EDUCATIONAL GAIN SURVEY 2022**

70.1   The Committee **received** a report which outlined the headline results of the University educational gains survey 2022, which was devised to help evidence the educational gain of our students for the purpose of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

70.2   The Committee noted there was not a sector definition of educational gain, however the University survey had aligned questions with its strategic vision and ambition to transform lives, and measured evidence of improved academic achievement, employability, personal development, self-reflection and values.

70.3   The Committee noted a 33% response rate to the survey and that gains were seen across all measures.

        Minute 70.4 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only

70.5   The Committee **discussed** students' perception of educational gain and noted there may be correlation between their perception and scores they gave in the National Student Survey (NSS).

70.6   The Committee **considered** it may be useful to feedback the survey data to students in preparation for the NSS and CV and job applications.

70.7   The Committee **considered** the future of the University's educational gains survey and noted the insight it had given into the effectiveness of the University's approach to teaching and learning and its students' educational gain.

70.8   The Committee **acknowledged** that the future of the survey would be influenced by further sector guidance on educational gains and its continued usage in the TEF. For the University there were challenges and conflicts with other surveys to consider.

70.9   The Committee **discussed** the benefits of student self-reflection, perception insight and the positive messages that could be fed back to students and that spoke to the various equality charters.

70.10   The Committee acknowledged the survey's benefits to the University and it's TEF submission and **agreed** it would be run next year, subject to further sector guidance.

(Confidential Agenda paper 11 refers)

71   **STUDENT SURVEYS UPDATE**

71.1   **National Student Survey (NSS) 2023**
The Committee noted a National Student Survey 2023 launch question and answer session would take place for programme leaders. A good turnout was anticipated.

71.2   **Student Voice Questionnaire (SVQ)**

71.2.1   The Committee noted the Semester A Student Voice Questionnaire achieved a 25% response rate, which was an improvement on last year.

71.2.2   The Committee noted the opening window for Semester B and that questions for Semester B would be different to align with some of the NSS questions that worked well at module level. Support was in place for Programme Leaders to help make the most of the broad survey window to optimise response rates.

71.2.3   The Committee noted a report on Semester A data would be brought to the next Committee.

71.3   **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**

71.3.1   The Committee noted the Academic Services survey team were meeting with Schools to ascertain their survey populations and start dates. The Survey window would open on 1 February 2023 and closed on 6 June 2023.

71.3.2   Survey questions had not changed; however Advance HE had made a lot of the questions optional.

71.3.3   The Committee **discussed** the survey questions for inclusion and **considered** whether to reduce the number of questions and/or the open questions to shorten the survey length.

71.3.4   The Committee **agreed** the principle to retain all questions but that opportunity for open comments would be reduced to shorten the survey length. Open comments would be invited at the end of the survey unless feedback from other specific areas was deemed useful.

72   **REPORT FROM WIDENING ACCESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS (WASS)**

72.1   The Committee **received** a report from Deputy Head of Widening Access and Student Success, Dr Julie Vuolo, which proposed a recommendation for the future development of the University's Go Herts Award to expand its reach and impact.

72.2   The Committee noted that just 272 students received an award last year, which was a long way from meeting the institutional target of 20% (approximately 3600 students) participation.

72.3   The Committee **considered** the recommendation for two separate undergraduate and postgraduate awards and noted that acceptance of recommendations to increase reach, would have possible resource and location implications.

72.4   The Committee **supported** the recommendation in principle, for two separate undergraduate and postgraduate awards.

72.5   The Committee **acknowledged** there were further discussions required outside of this Committee regarding funding, resources, and location which required input of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive and consideration in the Planning Round.

72.6   The Committee **suggested** further consultation with students was required.

72.7   It was **agreed** the Chair would discuss next steps with the Director of Learning and Teaching and colleagues in Widening Access and Student Success outside of the Committee.

(Confidential Agenda paper 13 refers)

73   **REPORT FROM ACADEMIC REGISTRY**

73.1   The Committee **received** a report from Academic Registry.

73.2   The Committee noted a new telephone support service for exceptional circumstances would soft launch this week.

Minute 73.3 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only

73.4   A paper would be taken to the Chief Executives Group in February with proposals for accommodating increased volumes of postgraduate students at Graduation this year.

73.5   There was a 75% increase in footfall in the Hubs at the start of term Semester A which had a knock on impact on services.

73.6   Semester A Registration was going well, with better turnaround times and an improved student experience.

73.7   Debt chasing was on hold due to exams but would resume next week.

(Confidential Agenda paper 14 refers)

74   **REPORT FROM THE DEAN OF STUDENTS**

74.1   The Committee **received** a report from the Deputy Dean of Students, Geri Ward.

74.2   The Committee noted the Student Assistance Programme was being well used and promotion of the service would be included in this week's central communications to encourage the usage and signposting of the service.

74.3   The Suicide Prevention Group would meet for the first time next week. Outputs from the group would be brought to this Committee.

74.4   Mental health training and awareness, and safeguarding and Prevent training and development were available for staff again this year.

74.5   The rollout of the SNA System was running to schedule. The new safeguarding system would be rolled out later this year and into 2024.

74.6   A new Deputy Director of Student Wellbeing had been appointed.

(Confidential Agenda paper 15 refers)

75   **REPORT FROM ENTERPRISE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (EBD)**

75.1   The Committee **received** a report from Enterprise and Development.

75.2   The Committee noted the support available to students in finding part time work.

75.3   The Committee **discussed** membership of the Graduate Outcome Steering Group and **agreed** membership should include a member from the Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre.

(Confidential Agenda paper 16 refer)

76 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTS**

76.1 The Committee **received** a verbal report from the Director of Research Degrees, Dr Susan Grey.

76.2 The University would be participating in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), from March to May 2023. A briefing sheet would be prepared and circulated to this committee.

77 **REPORT FROM THE LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES**

There were no matters to report.

78 **UK COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

The Committee noted that programme reapproval work was underway with HIC and that a more comprehensive update would be brought to the next meeting.

79 **CLERK'S REPORT**

79.1 **SUMS REVIEW OF ACADEMIC SKILLS SUPPORT**

The Committee noted the SUMS Review of Academic Skills Support was circulated to the Committee by the Clerk, by email on 5 January 2023 and was attached to the report.

79.2 **SCHOOL ACTION PLANS**

The Committee noted School Action Plans from the Hertfordshire Law School and the School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science were received by the Committee Clerk and were attached to the report.

79.3 **STUDENT FUTURES MANIFESTO**

The Committee noted the Presentation received by the Committee on 22 November 2022 from Associate Director Learning and Teaching, Neal Geach, was circulated to members by the Committee Clerk via email on 1 December 2022 and was attached to this report.

79.4 **STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

The Committee noted that the student communications plan was available for services and Schools to view to find out what was planned, and was available via the link below https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/Brand-templates-and-communications/SitePages/Student-Communications.aspx

79.5 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS – 2022/23**

The Committee noted all meetings were scheduled to be held at 09:30 hours in the Central Committee Room:

Tuesday 7 March 2023
Tuesday 16 May 2023
Tuesday 27 June 2023

80 **PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT**

There were no matters identified for referral to the Learning and Organisational Development Facilitator and Support Team Manager, Jill Lees.

81 **RISK**

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

82   **EMERGENCY BUSINESS**

There were no matters of emergency business.