UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Standards and Audit Committee held on 22 June 2021.

PRESENT: Professor Frank Haddleton (Chair)

Dr Mairi Watson  Dr Marjolein Groefsema  Veronica Earle
Catherine Rendell  Karthik Bonkur  Dr Michaela Cottee
Karen Barton  Julie Kelly  Dr Barbara Henry
Janette Bowyer  Dr Barbara Brownie  Dr Stefanie Schmeer
Dr Jo Cahill  Dr Ivan Phillips  Dr Sherael Webley
Liz Gormley-Fleming  Dr Mariana Lilley  Scott Isaacs
Jackie Hulse  Alison McLauchlin

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisa Uttley  Mel Golder

133 APOLOGIES

The Committee received apologies from Dr Susan Grey, Stephanie Keegan. Jenny Lorimer attended on behalf of Dr Cheryl Holman and Joanna Rawska was invited to observe this meeting.

134 TO NOTE CHANGES TO THE MEMBERSHIP

The Committee noted a correction to Agenda Paper 2. There was currently a vacancy for an Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) within the School of Humanities.

(Agenda paper 2, refers).

135 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

There were no declarations of interest.

136 MINUTES - 4 MAY 2021

The Minutes were approved subject to the following amendment (italicised) to confidential minute 112.4:

This minute is confidential and is available to members and officers in attendance only.

(Confidential Agenda paper 4, refers).

137 MATTERS ARISING

All remaining actions were identified for consideration at this meeting.

138 CHAIR’S OVERVIEW

The Committee received an update from the Chair.

138.1 The Committee received the Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Advice on Academic Credit Arrangements May 2021. This outlined the credit expectations along with guidance. An audit would be planned for next year.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 6, refers)
138.2 The OfS had published its consultation on the proposed approach to regulating quality and standards (delivered through ‘B conditions’) This consultation would run from 20 July 2021 to 27 September 2021.

138.3 Marketing guidance had been published following the OfS extension of a year to the TEF awards deadline. No marketing materials were allowed from September.

138.4 An investigation would take place following the increase in good honours degrees received for this year and last year.

AUDITS

139 ONGOING AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY’S PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Committee received a report from Lisa Uttley, Assistant Registrar (Academic Services).

139.1 The audits of Collaborative Partner Websites were conducted on a rolling programme throughout the year. The aim of the ongoing audits was to satisfy the University that the published information available on Collaborative Partner Websites (CPW) accurately reflected the material information about the provision delivered in partnership with the University. There were different models of agreement between UH and partners and assurance was required that partners had correctly represented these arrangements through the materials and information available through their websites. The report considered not only issues of compliance as audit outcomes but measures of engagement of the academic schools and Collaborative Programme Leaders (CPLs) with the audit process.

139.2 A total of 44 partner websites were audited between March 2020 and March 2021, 14 of which related to UK partners and 30 international partners. In summary the audits had successfully highlighted matters of inaccuracy on partner websites that required action and in the majority of cases these matters were resolved. The amount of follow-up activity after the initial audit that was required to identify that actions had been completed and the length of time taken to resolve these matters, for some partners was unsatisfactory.

139.3 The recommendations made within the report were:

1 That the ongoing programme of auditing partner website continued.

2 The escalation process was reviewed to ensure that the auditor was raising matters that had not been resolved at an earlier point in time, with the aim of reducing the number of post-audit follow ups that were required and to minimise the risk of inaccurate information being displayed on the partner web-site.

3 To review how information about CPLs was maintained to ensure up to date details were accessible.

139.4 The CPL information on the curriculum management system would be updated.

139.5 Communication guidance would be updated within the CPL handbook.

139.6 The escalation process would be followed up with ADoS(AQA).

139.7 The Committee passed on their thanks to Tracey Kinsella, for her contribution. 

(Confidential Agenda Paper 7, refers).

140 AUDIT OF GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The Committee received a report from Petros Khoudian (CAQA, since retired) and Dr Ivan Phillips (Associate Dean of School (L&T) CTA)
The aim of the audit was to review the use of Grade Descriptors within the University and to identify good practice.

Responses from Associate Deans of School (AQA) indicated that practices between schools and within some Schools varied in relation to the use of UH Grading Descriptors. It should be noted that such variance was not indicative, necessarily, of an ‘issue’ but indicated, in most cases, approaches adapted to the specific requirements of the schools in terms of the purpose, range and variety of assessment methods used.

There was clear evidence of good practice in the use of UH Grade Descriptors across the schools. However, work was required to ensure that module teams used the correct UH Grade Descriptors consistently and ensured that students were familiar with both the purpose and function of these. The following recommendations were made:

1. students were made aware of Grade Descriptors prior to the submission of their work, ideally at the point of briefing and preferably as part of a live briefing activity, with the information also being available on the Canvas module site and in the published assignment briefing documentation.

2. students were reminded of Grade Descriptors and their use at regular intervals during the course of an assignment, so that awareness was achieved reiteratively, enhancing confidence in the fairness, accuracy and consistency of assessment and feedback processes.

3. UH Grade Descriptors were used to provide a summary statement as part of written (or audio/video feedback), e.g., ‘Overall this is a very good work piece of work’

4. internal moderation forms should ensure that moderators were required to check that UH Grade Descriptors were used correctly and consistently by all markers in providing feedback on assessments (including the provision of a summary statement aligned with the descriptors, see (2) above).

The Committee passed on thanks to Ivan, for taking up the audit and to Catherine Rendell and Karen Barton for their help.

Good progress had been made and the updates were noted by the Committee and also that there were no essential recommendations outstanding.

The Committee noted a report from Dr Mariana Lilley, Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) and also noted that it had been circulated to members following the meeting held on 4 May 2021.
143 SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK

The Committee received a report from Jenny Lorimer on behalf of Dr Cheryl Holman, Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance).

Minute 143 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 11, refers).

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND REGULATIONS (UPRS)

144 THE COMMITTEE NOTED THE CONTINUING AMENDMENTS FOR 2021/22:

144.1 The Committee noted a report from the Chair concerning UPR AS14 (Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes) for 2021/22: continued temporary regulations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

144.2 The University introduced a Safety Net policy in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, some of which continued to apply for the lifespan of the pandemic. However, there was a need to revert back to the requirement for the submission of evidence alongside SACs and communication concerning the capping of referrals needed to be made clear to Students. Discussions would be held on how to communicate this to students.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 12, refers).

145 THE COMMITTEE NOTED THAT MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING UPRS WERE APPROVED BY THE CHAIR ON 1 JUNE 2021:

145.1 UPR AS14, Appendix IV: Apprenticeship Provision - End Point Assessment policy

145.2 UPR AS14, Appendix V: Apprenticeship Provision - Fair Access Policy for End Point Assessment

(Confidential Agenda Paper 13, refers).

146 THE COMMITTEE NOTED THAT FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS, THE FOLLOWING UPR WAS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR ON 20 MAY 2021:

UPR AS17, Appendix I: Apprenticeship policy: quality assurance and guidance for apprenticeship programmes.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 14, refers).

147 THE COMMITTEE NOTED THE DEFERRAL OF STUDY ABROAD YEAR 2022-23 WAS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR OF (ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE) ADC ON 1 JUNE 2021

(Confidential Agenda Paper 15, refers).

OTHER BUSINESS

148 ACADEMIC REGISTRY UPDATE

The Committee received a report from Julie Kelly, Academic Registrar.

148.1 As expected, activity relating to SACs peaked during April and May (5086 e-mails) in advance of the Semester B assessment period. At the point when the cyber incident occurred (15th April) the SAC team had processed requests received up to 7th April.
The Academic Quality The team continued to process the Programme Specifications and Course Fact Sheets that were submitted for UH delivered programmes at the end of March and beyond. There continued to be a substantial number of errors identified in the documents during this process and due to the focus on data quality, these were being returned to the Hubs/Schools for amendment, which was adding further delays with processing. It was noted that the documents provided by the School of Creative Arts had no errors to resolve. At the end of May, the team received an additional 200 DMDs that required their assessments to be amended and need to be published for 2021.

Since the start of term, the team had received an increased number of academic misconduct cases 413 to be processed at Stage 2 of which 326 had been completed.

The Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers had now re-opened, and work had started on the re-application process. There were 722 learners currently and the Committee wished to recognise Lisa Uttley and the Team for coping with the extra workload.

Plans for the September 2021 Graduation Ceremonies were underway. 7,500 students from the class of 2020 & 2021 were expected.

Staff were encouraged to help with Clearing especially as volunteer numbers to take calls were still low.

The Committee received a report from Liz Gormley-Fleming, Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance.

The report detailed the change to the External Quality Assurance arrangements for integrated End Point Assessments. This would require UH to consider the External Examiner (EE) role for integrated EPAs and the additional preparation required by programme teams to assure a state of readiness for apprentices to complete the EPA.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was the appointed External Quality Assurance Provider (EQAP) for all Integrated EPAs unless stated otherwise on the Assessment Plan. The External Quality Assurance (EQA) process was currently being tested in a number of HEIs focusing on one apprenticeship standard with a view to rolling the process out in 2022.

The Committee received a report from Catherine Rendell.

The report provided some background information about the student population in 2019/20 and considered available internal university and public data on student performance measures. Student characteristic data relevant to the University’s Access and Participation Plan (APP) targets was also presented in the report, where available. Given the importance of the APP to the University, progress against the 2020/21 APP targets for the areas covered by the report are explicitly set out. It was important to note that APP targets applied only to Home/EU full-time students.

Schools to take actions forward for inclusion in the Annual School specific reports.
CONTINUOUS MONITORING WORKING GROUP

The Committee received an update from Catherine Rendell

151.1 The Group recommended that all programmes should be part of a continual monitoring process. All programmes benefit from enhancement activities and the sharing of good practice. Continual monitoring should be combined with annual enhancement events. Essentially, the process should comprise a ‘live’ Action Plan and at least one annual enhancement event.

151.2 Discussions would be held at the July ADoS(AQA) forum and at the Associate Deans away day on the progress made so far and to finalise details.

151.3 The cyber-attack had affected the timeline and there had been further challenges with regards to staff access and programming issues however, it was hoped that it would be up and running before the end of term.

CHECK LIST FOR COMMUNICATIONS

The Committee agreed the outcomes of this meeting.

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENTS

There were no people development needs identified as requiring referral to the Manager of People Development, Department of Planning, Development and Change.

RISK

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

EMERGENCY BUSINESS

There was no emergency business.

CLERK’S REPORT

The Clerk’s report substituted part II of the Agenda.

There were no indications that Members wished to comment on any item in the Clerk’s report which had been received and therefore the report was taken as noted and approved.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 24, refers).

ACADEMIC SERVICES

The amendments/revisions to the Academic Services publications for the period 28 April 2021 – 03 June 2021 (Part 2)

Publications are available for inspection online at: http://www.studynet1.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/aqo.nsf/Homepage?ReadForm

Members and named alternates wishing to view or obtain copies should refer to this site.
156.2 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND DEADLINES 2021/22

The schedule of meetings to take place at 09.30 hours:

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<th>Date of meeting</th>
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156.3 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Academic Standards and Audit Committee will be held on Tuesday, 12 October 2021 from 09:30 hours via MS Teams - Online. Items for the Agenda should be notified to the Clerk, Mel Golder (email m.golder@herts.ac.uk) by 21 September 2021 and reports submitted by 28 September 2021.