

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Standards and Audit Committee held on 3 May 2022.

PRESENT: Professor Frank Haddleton (Chair)

Dr Mairi Watson
Catherine Rendell
Karen Barton
Janette Bowyer
Dr Jo Cahill
Liz Gormley-Fleming
Jackie Hulse
Dr Marjolein Groefsema

Dr Barbara Brownie
Prosasti Ganguly
Dr Susan Grey
Tony Rosella
Dr Mariana Lilley
Alison McLaughlin
Dr Cheryl Holman
Veronica Earle

Dr Michaela Cottee
Dr Barbara Henry
Peter Thomas
Dr Stefanie Schmeer
Dr Sherael Webley
Scott Isaacs

IN ATTENDANCE:

Faith Goligher

Lisa Uttley

Mel Golder

105 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee received apologies from Julie Kelly.

106 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest by members, Officers in Attendance or others present in any of the matters to be considered during the meeting.

107 **MINUTES - 15 MARCH 2022**

The minutes were confirmed as accurate.

(Confidential Agenda paper 3, refers).

108 **MATTERS ARISING**

108.1 The Committee noted that summary of actions agreed by the committee on 15 March 2022. Minute 89.2 would be covered under Minute 110 at this meeting.

108.2 All remaining actions were identified for consideration at this meeting, or for consideration at the next meeting in June 2022.

(Confidential Agenda paper 4, refers).

109 **CHAIR'S OVERVIEW**

The Committee received an update from the Chair.

109.1 The University had responded to the second stage of OfS consultation on changes to the ongoing conditions of registration which related to quality and standards condition B3 and the TEF. Revised conditions B1, B2, B4 and B5 come into force on 1 May 2022 and would partly replace the QAA Quality Code. The remaining B conditions are expected to come into force on 1 July 2022.

109.2 The University had been working on its response to the two DfE consultations, the first on HE reforms with proposals on number controls on Students, minimum entry requirements for Students entering HE, future funding of Foundation years and how to grow the number of qualifications at levels 4 and 5 and secondly the Lifelong Loan Entitlement.

- 109.3 The Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Higher Education (QE-TNE) review took place at the end of March 2022. The Committee would be updated on the outcome of that review at the next meeting in June. Chair

AUDITS

Minute 110 is confidential and available to Members and Officers in Attendance only.

110 SUMMARY OF AUDIT PROGRESS

The Committee received a report from Catherine Rendell, Deputy Director of Academic Quality Assurance.

(Confidential Agenda paper 6, refers).

OTHER BUSINESS

111 THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS' STRATEGY 2022 TO 2025, AND IT'S FOCUS ON QUALITY AND STANDARDS, AT:

- 111.1 On 23 March 2022, the Office for Students launched its strategy for 2022 to 2025, at: <https://www.officeforStudents.org.uk/media/1d6ad023-366a-4538-b931-03aa60a78f88/ofs-strategy-2022-final-for-web.pdf>.

- 111.2 The strategy identifies two main areas of focus for the OfS over that period, quality and standards and equality of opportunity. In terms of quality and standards, OfS have identified a number of goals that they want to achieve, including Students receiving a high quality academic experience; and Students being rigorously assessed, with the qualifications awarded being comparable to those granted in previous years.

112 STUDENT PERFORMANCE MONITORING GROUP (SPMG) FINAL REPORT.

The Committee received the final report for 2021/22 from Catherine Rendell.

- 112.1 The committee's attention was focussed on the public data on continuation and undergraduate awards.
- 112.2 Compared to previous years, the UH HESA non-continuation rate decreased for full-time entrants in 2019/20 going into 2020/21. There was also a decrease for our competitor set average and the England average. The non-continuation rate is below our benchmark although the difference is the smallest in the five year trend shown (0.4%). The UH HESA non-continuation rate decreased on previous years to 11.8% for part-time entrants in 2018/19 going into 2020/21. There was also a decrease in non-continuation for our competitor set average and the England overall average. Our non-continuation rate is well below our benchmark of 26.4%.
- 112.3 In 2020/21, the University overall awarded a higher percentage of 'good degrees' than both the sector overall and our competitor set overall. There was also a marked increase in the percentage of first-class degrees awarded by the University to 42%, taking the UH percentage to 7.0% higher than the sector overall and 8.5% higher than our competitor set overall. The pandemic, safety net policy and a reduction in the awarding gap explained some of the increase however, there were still some subject areas that were performing below their CAH3 subject group.
- 112.4 Schools were asked to consider their awards data in the light of the above and to comment in their updated annual school report on all areas of student performance monitoring data that might need action as set down in their School report in Appendix 1 to the SPMG report. ADoS (AQA)

(Confidential Agenda paper 8, refers).

113 **REVIEW OF SERIOUS ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE OPERATION OF COURSEWORK EXTENSIONS FINAL REPORT**

The Committee received a report from the SAC Working Group which was presented by Catherine Rendell.

113.1 The focus of the Group was to reduce the number of Serious Adverse Circumstances (SAC) applications by putting in place a number of strategies that helped students to stay on track without resorting to a SAC application and to make the process fairer and clearer.

113.2 The reliance on SACs was linked to a lack of Student engagement. Effective and proactive personal tutoring, use of data for learning, availability of centralised services and support for academic skills, were all key in keeping students on track.

113.3 The Committee agreed in principle recommendations 1 -7 and made the following suggestions;

1. That reference to Stage 1, 2 and 3 should be changed to 'Route' 1, 2 and 3.
2. Recommendation 2 - Wording to be changed to 'Academic Advice', rather than support. to avoid a deficit model.

113.4 It was agreed that Recommendation 8 required further discussion and as the proposed changes related to SA17, the UPR on voluntary suspension, some of which was outside the remit of ASAC. Catherine Rendell would take forward with Julie Kelly who 'owned' the UPR in her capacity as Academic Registrar.

113.5 The Committee agreed that the recommendations should be referred to PVC Advisory Education and Student Experience to agree on how the principles should be implemented.

(Confidential Agenda paper 9, refers).

114 **UPR AS 12 APPENDIX 1 - REQUEST FOR THE REVIEW OF AN ASSESSMENT DECISION**

The Committee received a proposal from Catherine Rendell to amend UPR AS12 Appendix 1 – Request for the Review of an Assessment Decision.

114.1 The proposal was to make the grounds of appeal easier for students to understand. The wording of the current appeals procedure is not written in plain English and results in many students appealing on all three of the current grounds, supported by unstructured text. This then makes it difficult for investigate the appeal. No material change to the grounds of appeal is intended, but simply a clearer explanation of the grounds on which a student may appeal.

114.2 The Committee accepted the proposed amendments but questioned whether the word 'material' should be explained and whether some examples should be provided. The Standing Working Party on UPRs would discuss these issues.

(Confidential Agenda paper 10, refers).

115 **MODULE EVALUATION PROCESS GUIDANCE**

The Committee received a document from Catherine Rendell and Jan Bowyer, Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance detailing guidance on the module evaluation process that had been agreed at the previous meeting of the Committee.

115.1 It was agreed that the guidance on the module evaluation processes would form a useful basis for Schools to review existing practice in this area. The Committee members were asked to email Catherine with any minor amendments.

- 115.2 Members formally approved the wording for AS17 C2.2. which was included in the document.

(Confidential Agenda paper 11, refers).

116 **CONTINUOUS ENHANCEMENT PLANNING (CEP) PROCESS UPDATE**

The Committee received an oral report from Catherine Rendell.

- 116.1 Programme Leaders and Associate Deans of School (AQA) had been consulted on the CEP database about enhancements for next year.

- 116.2 Modules that were at risk as identified in the module evaluation guidance, would also be an added as a new tab.

- 116.3 The Committee discussed how better links to Tableau data and better communication to Schools and Programme Leaders about the Data Release Points could be achieved. CAQA was working with the SIP Team to make Tableau data more accessible and to improve links to the CEP process. A communications plan would be in place for the next academic year.

- 116.4 The collaborative CEP pilot would commence from September. Communications with the partners identified for the pilot would follow shortly. The collaborative operational delivery plan would be embedded within the collaborative CEP action plan. Training material was being prepared.

- 116.5 Associate Deans of School (AQA) were informed that completed CEP actions would be archived on the 1 July 2022. Any outstanding actions would roll over onto next year.

117 **HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

The Committee received a report from Scott Isaacs, Chair of the HHEC Consortium Quality and Management Committee.

- 117.1 The report concerned the activities of the Herts Higher Education Consortium (HHEC), which consisted of the University of Hertfordshire (UH) and four partner colleges: Hertford Regional College (HRC), North Herts College (NHC), Oaklands College (OAK) and West Herts College (WHC). The Committee received reassurance that the action plans had been received earlier than the full report which allowed the consortium to respond to actions during the year.

- 117.2 There had been challenges due to the effects of the pandemic and this had led to an increased need for academic and pastoral support for students. The colleges monitored and worked with students on an individual basis and had been able to support students highly effectively.

- 117.3 Work based learning was key for students. This had also been impacted by the pandemic, students participated in virtual work experience or undertook secondary research for their work based learning projects.

- 117.4 Recruitment remained a challenge especially the foundation degree programmes. The number of applications overall had marginally increased. The consortium's focus would be to try and convert applications as early as possible in the cycle.

- 117.5 All four colleges would be piloting the continuous enhancement process (CEP).

- 117.6 Programmes with Level 4-5 progression rates below the benchmark had decreased and only four programmes had been below the benchmark this year.

- 117.7 The Committee passed on their thanks to Helen Hall for her detailed, informative report and wished her all the best in retirement.

- 117.8 The Committee noted that this report would be made to the Collaborative Partnerships Assurance Group (CPAG) in future. (Minute 95.1, refers)
- 117.9 The Global Academic Foundation (GAF) Annual report would be presented at the next meeting. ZA/SI
(Confidential Agenda paper 13, refers).
- 118 **HERTFORDSHIRE INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE (HIC) ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**
The Committee received a report from Scott Isaacs.
- 118.1 Meetings were held with HIC every semester and a recruitment and academic performance report were received regularly.
- 118.2 HIC would be piloting the continuous enhancement process (CEP) for selected programmes.
- 118.3 It was agreed that it would be useful for awards data and data concerning students that had transitioned to UH delivered programmes would be added to this report going forwards.
- 118.4 The Committee agreed that the report could be circulated to the Collaborative Partnership Leaders.
- 118.5 The Committee noted that this report would be made to CPAG going forwards. (Minute 95.1, refers)
(Confidential Agenda paper 14, refers).

STANDING ITEMS

- 119 **ACADEMIC REGISTRY UPDATE**
The Committee received a report from Julie Kelly, Academic Registrar.
- 119.1 The National Student Survey closed on 30 April 2022 and the results would be released on 6 July 2022. So far there had been a 75% uptake.
- 119.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) closed on 14 June and had received 15.8% responses, Students would be encouraged to take part.
- 119.3 Student Voice Questionnaire (SVQ) response rate was currently at 8%.
- 119.4 The Student Exams office were preparing for Module Boards. The lack of professional staff and the staff recruitment position had been added to the University's risk register. The clerking of exam boards for the Schools of Life and Medical Science and Health and Social Work were recognised as a particular risk.
(Confidential Agenda paper 15, refers).
- 120 **DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS UPDATE**
There were no items for this meeting.
- 121 **CHECK LIST FOR COMMUNICATIONS**
The Committee agreed the outcomes of this meeting.
- 122 **PEOPLE DEVELOPMENTS**
There were no people development needs identified as requiring referral to the Manager of People Development, Department of Planning, Development and Change.

123 **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

124 **EMERGENCY BUSINESS**

There was no emergency business.

125 **CLERKS 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 21, refers).

125.1 **ACADEMIC SERVICES**

The amendments/revisions to the Academic Services publications (Part 2 was not received).

125.2 **ACADEMIC QUALITY****Programmes, Courses and Collaborative Agreements**

The reports confirmed by the Chair of the Education and Student Experience Committee and ratified by the Vice-Chancellor for the period 1st March 2022 to 19h April 2022 with the summary of conclusions and recommendations. (Part 3).

125.3 **REMAINING MEETING AND DEADLINES 2021/22** - at 09.30 hours in the Central Committee Room/Hybrid

| Date of meeting | Date for receipt of papers | Date for notification of items |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 21 June 2022 | 7 June 2022 | 31 May 2022 |

125.4 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND DEADLINES 2022/23** - at 09.30 hours in the Central Committee Room/Hybrid

| Date of meeting | Date for receipt of papers | Date for notification of items |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 11 October 2022 | 27 September 2022 | 20 September 2022 |
| 6 December 2022 | 22 November 2022 | 15 November 2022 |
| 24 January 2023 | 10 January 2023 | 3 January 2023 |
| 14 March 2023 | 28 February 2023 | 21 February 2023 |
| 2 May 2023 | 18 April 2023 | 11 April 2023 |
| 20 June 2023 | 6 June 2023 | 30 May 2023 |

126 **THE NEXT MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY, 21 JUNE 2022 FROM 09:30 IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ROOM.**

Items for the Agenda should be notified to the Clerk, Mel Golder ('e'-mail m.golder@herts.ac.uk) by 31 May 2022 and reports submitted by 7 June 2022.