UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Standards and Audit Committee held on 21 June 2022.

PRESENT: Professor Frank Haddleton (Chair)

Dr Mairi Watson     Dr Marjolein Groefsema     Dr Michaela Cottee
Catherine Rendell   Dr Barbara Brownie      Dr Barbara Henry
Karen Barton         Tony Rosella           Peter Thomas
Janette Bowyer       Dr Mariana Lilley      Dr Stefanie Schmeer
Dr Jo Cahill         Alison McLauchlin      Dr Sherael Webley
Liz Gormley-Fleming  Dr Cheryl Holman      Scott Isaacs
Jackie Hulse         Veronica Earle

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisa Uttley          Mel Golder             Faith Goligher
Zoe Aslanpour (Observer)  Tazeen Syed (Observer)

127 APOLOGIES
The Committee received apologies from Dr Susan Grey.

128 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.

129 MINUTES - 3 MAY 2022
The minutes were confirmed as accurate.

(Confidential Agenda paper 3, refers).

130 MATTERS ARISING
The Committee noted that all remaining actions were identified for consideration at this meeting.

(Confidential Agenda paper 4, refers).

131 CHAIR’S OVERVIEW
The Committee received an update from the Chair.

131.1 The OfS final decision on changes to the ongoing conditions of registration which related to quality and standards condition B3 and the TEF was expected in the next few weeks.

SCHOOL EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE ACTION PLANS
The Committee considered Part 2 of the Annual School reports on Academic Standards and Student Experience.
The Committee received a report from Tony Rosella, Associate Dean of School Academic Quality Assurance and noted the following:

1. Stretched resources in the Hutton Hub administrative teams may compromise the school’s ability to meet central deadlines.

2. Internal (student finance) and external (SLC, HEFCE) constraints were likely to prevent the validation of flexible and blended pathways.

(Confidential Agenda paper 6, refers).

The Committee received a report from Dr Mariana Lilley, Associate Dean of School Academic Quality Assurance and noted the following:

1. The assessment landscape could not currently be downloaded as a .csv or .xlsx file to facilitate monitoring/analysis. Additionally, there was no flag/no reporting available on Studynet/Canvas for Schools that showed when feedback had been returned to students. This made any auditing/analysis work challenging; it would be useful to have this process automated in some way.

2. The current Studynet/Canvas workflow for deferred/referred assignments was impractical for large modules (200+ students) for a number of reasons including; unable to perform a simple upload of eligible students, the inability to differentiate between two students with the same name, and students may perform less well in the referral than they did at their first sitting.

3. It would be helpful if the spreadsheet upload feature of Quercus could be activated (as it appears this is functionality that already exists off-the-shelf). Gradebook exports were being considered/piloted, but this provided no relief to the Hub teams who would still be required to enter grades manually. Additionally, there were issues with Gradebook exports including: data was unreliable when candidates change groups (group changes occur for a variety of valid reasons), some assignments were not mediated via Studynet/Canvas, any member of staff enrolled on a module (whether or not they had been part of the assessment process) could at present alter a candidate’s score on Studynet/Canvas.

(Confidential Agenda paper 7, refers).

The Committee noted a report from Alison McLauchlin, Associate Dean of School Academic Quality Assurance and noted the following:

1. Could external examining training be recorded so that they could complete it once they were approved. Currently Programme Leaders were having to provide guidance to new external examiners who needed to start before a training date was available.

2. The organisation of admin support for School of Education programmes was inconsistent. Currently–CPU, the Consortium team and HUB all managed a mixture of short courses, home, online and partner programmes making it a challenge to coordinate or know who had responsibility for a task.

(Confidential Agenda paper 8, refers).
135 **SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK**

The Committee received a report from Dr Cheryl Holman, Associate Dean of School Academic Quality Assurance and noted the following:

1. Improve the response rate for PTES by improving promotional material and developing understanding of the organisation of post-graduate studies.

(Confidential Agenda paper 9, refers).

136 **HERTFORDSHIRE BUSINESS SCHOOL**

The Committee received a report from Veronica Earle, Associate Dean of School Academic Quality Assurance and noted the following:

1. Increased number of academic misconduct cases
2. Processes to capture academic quality and standards (HUB)
3. CPU was under-resourced for partners (UK and abroad)

(Confidential Agenda paper 10, refers).

137 **HERTFORDSHIRE LAW SCHOOL**

The Committee received a report from Dr Barbara Henry, Associate Dean of School Academic Quality Assurance and noted the following:

1. Increasing number of appeals coming in late, particularly in relation to fit to sit cases.
2. Confusion around the rules relating to feedback and release of results to students who had a StudyNet block/withdrawn for debt.

(Confidential Agenda paper 11, refers).

138 **SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES**

The Committee noted a report from Peter Thomas, Associate Dean of School Academic Quality Assurance.

(Confidential Agenda paper 12, refers).

139 **SCHOOL OF LIFE AND MEDICAL SCIENCES**

The Committee received a report from Dr Stefanie Schmeer and Dr Sherael Webley, Associate Deans of School Academic Quality Assurance and noted the following:

1. The lack of adequate staff resource for the Student Administration Service continued to have a negative impact on the student experience and staff morale and created a risk around academic quality assurance, particularly related to Board of Examiners and student survey results.
2. Release of Board of Examiner results on Canvas during non-working hours and/or just prior to the weekend does not allow staff to support students appropriately, particularly where there were mental health issues that may be exacerbated by release of marks.

(Confidential Agenda paper 13, refers).

**AUDITS**

*Minutes 140 - 142 are confidential and available to Members and Officers in Attendance only.*
SUMMARY OF AUDIT PROGRESS

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

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

(Confidential Agenda paper 14, refers).

ONGOING AUDITING OF THE UNIVERSITY’S PUBLIC INFORMATION FOR COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

The Committee received a report from Lisa Uttley Director of Academic Services and Jackie Hulse, Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance.

Minute 141 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.

(Confidential Agenda paper 15, refers).

AUDIT OF COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP LEADER ACTIVITY

The Committee received a report from Alison McLauchlin, Dr Barbara Brownie and Dr Marjolein Groefsema, Associate Directors of Academic Quality Assurance.

Minute 142 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.

(Confidential Agenda paper 16, refers).

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND REGULATIONS (UPRs)

UPR AS14 (STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS) - MINUTE 113.5 REFERS

The Committee noted the proposed amendments to UPR AS14 for the 2022/23 academic year, regarding the Serious Adverse Circumstances (SACs) process. An updated version would be circulated once Academic Board approval of proposed changes had been received.

(Confidential Agenda paper 17, refers).

UPR AS12 (ASSESSMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS AND CONFERMENTS) - MINUTE 114.2 REFERS

The Committee noted the amendments to UPR AS12, Appendix 1, to reflect approved changes to the University's approach to coursework extensions and appeals. An updated version would be circulated once Academic Board approval of proposed changes had been received.

(Confidential Agenda paper 18, refers).

OTHER BUSINESS

OFS ANALYSIS OF DEGREE CLASSIFICATIONS OVER TIME

The Committee received a report from the Chair.

On 12th May 2022 OfS published an analysis of degree classifications for English HE Providers over time, showing changes in graduate attainment from 2010-11 to 2020-21.

145.2 It looked at changes over time in the proportions of students receiving a first or upper second class degree from English HE Providers, and focused on 'unexplained attainment', i.e., the extent to which the increase in awards since 2010/11 can (or cannot) be explained by observable factors.

145.3 In terms of 1st+2.1 awards (Good Honours), UH awarded 83.6% in 2020/21 (compared to 67.2% in 2010/11) which placed UH 62nd out of 143 English HE Providers. But OfS statistical analysis suggested that 26.9 of the 83.6% was 'unexplained'.

145.4 In terms of 1st Class Honours, UH awarded 43.7% in 2020/21 (compared to 18.8% in 2010/11) which placed UH 31st out of 143 English HE Providers. But OfS statistical analysis suggested that 33.5 of the 43.7% was 'unexplained'.

145.5 OfS were worried that unexplained grade inflation risked undermining public confidence in HE, which was why they had put in place Ongoing Condition B4 which required UH to award qualifications that were credible compared to those granted previously.

145.6 OfS would intervene should they identify significant increases in unexplained attainment for a provider and investigate further.

145.7 It was agreed that this information could be discussed and shared with internal colleagues only.

(Confidential Agenda paper 19, refers).

146 QAA QE-TNE REVIEW UPDATE

The Committee received an update from the Chair.

146.1 The Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Higher Education (QE-TNE) review took place at the end of March 2022. The draft report had not been received yet. The Committee would be updated on the outcome of that review at the next meeting in October.

147 THE GLOBAL ACADEMIC FOUNDATION (GAF) ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received a report from Zoe Aslanpour, Strategic Academic Lead for GAF.

147.1 The Global Academic Foundation (GAF) and University of Hertfordshire (UH) franchise partnership started in 2018-2019. Based on a list approved by the Higher Education Ministry in Egypt, 15 programmes including the international foundation (IFP) from six UH Schools had now been validated and successfully launched at GAF.

147.2 There were currently 700 students. It was expected that this number would significantly increase each year. The pandemic had prevented the CPL from visiting however it was agreed how important for visits to take place once restrictions had lifted.

147.3 The Committee thanked Zoe for her thorough report and for her attendance at the meeting and noted that from next academic year the annual report would be received by the Collaborative Provision Assurance Group (CPAG) and would include an action plan going forwards.

(Confidential Agenda paper 21, refers).

148 HERTFORDSHIRE INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE (HIC): PROGRESSION ARRANGEMENTS TO UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES

The Committee received a report from Scott Isaacs, Head of UK Partnerships.

148.1 The Committee received a proposal to amend the current progression requirements. The current requirements were that students passed 120 credits prior to progression to Level 5. HIC and several Schools were in support of amending the current requirements, to enable HIC students to be treated in line with their UH counterparts.
148.2 The Committee recommended that the schools names be added and agreed that further discussion to resolve practical issues needed to take place. A follow up report would be provided at the next meeting in October. (Confidential Agenda paper 22, refers).

STANDING ITEMS

149 ACADEMIC REGISTRY UPDATE

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

149.1 The Committee received an update on the core activities of Academic Registry during June 2022. The report showed that the team were still under extreme pressure because of higher student numbers and increased staff turnover. Two additional posts would be advertised shortly.

149.2 FAQs for students would be circulated following consultation with Associate Deans of School Academic Quality Assurance.

(Confidential Agenda paper 23, refers).

150 DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS UPDATE

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

150.1 A new DA management system had been procured and the pilot would commence January 2023.

150.2 The University had been successful in the reapplication to the Register of Approved Training Providers.

150.3 External audit by BDO of subcontracted DA provision has been completed and had been successful with no recommendations. Declaration will be sent to ESFA once received.

150.4 Proposed changes made to ESFA funding rules will have a significant impact on employers and training providers going forward. These will be implemented from 1 August 2022.

151 CHECK LIST FOR COMMUNICATIONS

The Committee agreed the outcomes of this meeting.

152 PEOPLE DEVELOPMENTS

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

153 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.

154 EMERGENCY BUSINESS

The Committee received a report from Catherine Rendell.

154.1 A small change had been made to UPR SA17 v03.0 – Student Suspension of Studies Regulations - This involved reverting back to the original text so that the School decided whether a student may exceptionally submit an assessment during voluntary suspension, not the programme board.
154.2 These regulations relate to taught programmes only. Any attendance requirements relating to research-based provision would be set out in UPR AS10.

154.3 The Committee approved and agreed to the changes and were informed that the Standing Working Party would agree on behalf of the Academic Board.

(Confidential Agenda paper 28, refers).

154.4 The Committee wanted to take this opportunity to thank Dr Barbara Brownie for all of her hard work during her time at UH and for her contribution to the committee and wished her well for the future.

155 THE NEXT MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2022 FROM 09:30 HOURS 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 20 September 2022 and reports submitted by 27 September 2022.