

UHI | INVERNESS

MINUTES of the MEETING of the LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE held via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 12 March 2024

- PRESENT:** Dee Bird, Matthew Millward, Chris O’Neil, Mark Sheridan, Russell Edwards
- CHAIR:** Dee Bird
- APOLOGIES:** Stephen Sheridan, Pauline Tuthill, Holly Pearce, James Millar, Arvinder Kainth, Elizabeth Keegan, Wendy Grindle, Quality Manager
- OBSERVERS:** Director for Centre for Living Sustainability
Director of Research for Biodiversity and Freshwater
- ATTENDING:** Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality
Operations and Commercial Manager
Information Systems Manager
Governance Officer

The Governance Officer brought to the Chair’s attention that this meeting was not quorate. The Chair agreed with the Governance Officer but noted that no items for approval were being presented at the Committee meeting and decided to proceed with the meeting. In case Committee’s approval was needed the paper will go to the next Board Meeting on Tuesday 26th March 2024. Minutes are to be emailed to all Members to be approved retrospectively.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

There were no declarations of interests, statements of connections or transparency statements noted.

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

a.) Minutes of the Learning, Teaching and Research Committee held on 05 December 2023

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Learning, Teaching and Research Committee held on 05 December 2023 were **AGREED** as a correct record.

Action 1: Minutes of the Learning, Teaching and Research Committee held on 12 March 2024 to be emailed out to Committee members for approval.

2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

- **Corporate Parenting Plan – COMPLETE** - The Governance Officer advised that this would be included within the Board Development Plan which will be brought to the Board of Management Meeting in June 2023 for Board review. Two resources will be looked at: Who Cares Scotland and CDN.

Action: Corporate Parenting training session has now been scheduled for Thursday 16th March.

Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

- **QAA Presentation – COMPLETE** - The Vice Principal – Student Experience and Quality advised that she had reached out to the new lead but has yet to meet with them to discuss this. The Committee was advised that a Short Life Working Group was being formed to discuss the Tertiary Education Framework and noted that the Vice Principal – Student Experience and Quality had requested to join this group and will update the Committee as more information becomes available. UHI Inverness is now involved in national discussions through CDN VP group. This VP group is now also a member of UHI Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee where this action is being discussed.

Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

3. STUDENT RETENTION REPORT

Information Systems Manager joined the meeting.

Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality and Information Systems Manager spoke to their joined report which provided the Committee with an update on student retention and progress against targets for 2023/24.

The early withdrawal date for FE full-time students has been brought forward from 1st November to 4th October in line with SFC guidance.

Progress in achieving our FE full-time targets indicates that we are in line with our overall retention target for FE full-time students. Work is ongoing to minimise partial success, therefore we have the potential to exceed our % success target.

The current overall withdrawal rate for full-time HNC and HND students is currently greater than the same point in 2022/23. This has been identified as an area for action with Curriculum Leaders tasked with identifying areas for action to minimise further withdrawals and partial success to achieve our successful completion target.

Following items had been highlighted:

- Early Withdrawals - for FE full-time students are at 4.7%, which is greater than at the comparative figure of 3.0% on 4th October 2022. It is not expected that there will be further change to the early withdrawal rates.
- Further Withdrawals - further withdrawals have continued to rise since last reported on 5th December 2023.
- Successful Completion progress against targets for full time students for 2023/24 :
 - FE full-time – 71%
 - HE full-time – 65%

The Committee expressed their concerns in regard to high withdrawals rates and asked if there is data confirming reasons for them. Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality confirmed that all students who decide to leave are asked for the reasons behind their decision, with employment being named as

one of the strongest factors when it comes to course withdrawals. It has been added that students and communities are still recovering after Covid; the new GA qualifications will allow students to study and work at the same time, and within the next few years the balance should be regained.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality and Information Systems Manager for their detailed report.

Information Systems Manager left the meeting.

4. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT UPDATE

The Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality spoke to her report which provided the Committee with an insight into the sector discussions about the new tertiary quality enhancement framework (TQEF) which is intended to be in place for AY 2024-25 and will replace the current quality assurance arrangements for UHI Inverness.

The quality assurance and enhancement arrangements for colleges and universities are currently being reviewed with a view to there being a single tertiary quality enhancement framework. Education Scotland currently oversee the quality assurance arrangements and provide external scrutiny. In AY 24-25 there will be a move away from the current model of quality assurance for UHI Inverness, and for all colleges.

SFC invited QAA Scotland to deliver a detailed plan for a new approach to national enhancement activity across the tertiary sector and work has been ongoing since last AY. There has been a significant amount of consultation with the sectors on the proposed new model, and UHI Inverness has been well represented.

In comparison to current annual visits by Education Scotland the new framework will be scheduled around a visit every 5 years followed by a formal review, with self-evaluation report being provided by the institution on an annual basis. Details are still subject to change.

The Chair thanked Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality for her detailed report.

5. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP REPORT

The Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality presented the report on behalf of Quality and HISA.

Following items had been highlighted:

- Changes to HISA team with Inverness Depute President – Activities & Welfare stepping down from post in February 2024.
- Student Voice Representatives – 75 recruited to date.
- HISA Spring Elections 2024 – with voting system opened from 11/03/2024 till 14/03/2024 with results announced in the afternoon on 14/03/2024.
- Student Feedback – gathered via surveys, class focus groups and marketing campaigns.
- Student Engagement Reps – 14 students signed up so far.
- Activities & Events – a number of events had taken place in Semester 2.

The Principal joined the meeting.

The Committee expressed their concerns in regard to low levels of student engagement reported on. The Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality confirmed that this issue has been recognised already and measures will be put in place in next AY to address and mitigate a number of core issues relating to student engagement.

The Chair thanked Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality for presenting the report.

6. KPI MATRIX

Operations and Commercial Manager spoke to his report which provided the Committee with the update in regard to performance measures year to date as at period 07 February 2024.

Thirty-six measures are in scope year to date, with twenty measures being satisfactory (Green), eleven unsatisfactory (Red), three marginal (Amber), while

two measures (GA and Senior Phase enrolments) are being benchmarked this year and have no target.

The Committee had been provided with a short summary in regard to measures that have had their KPIs amended due to RAG status change, or a material change in actual/target since the last report to the Board on 13th February 2024.

The Committee discussed all Performance Measures provided, welcomed all achieved targets and a further discussion around the targets still not achieved took place.

The Chair thanked Operations and Commercial Manager for his detailed report.

7. RESEARCH UPDATE

The Committee asked the Director for Centre for Living Sustainability & Director of Research for Biodiversity and Freshwater to deliver a shorter presentation to Members present in the LT&R meeting and had suggested to the Chair of the Board for Research to be invited to Board Creative Space at the start of the Board meeting scheduled for 25 June 2024.

Directors of Research for Centre for Living Sustainability & Biodiversity and Freshwater delivered their presentation to the Committee and highlighted the key objectives of the current research strategy:

1. To continue to grow our centres of research, their excellence and transformational impact.
2. To maximise opportunities for innovation and knowledge exchange (KE), ensuring that our research has relevance and a positive impact on our communities.
3. To provide an accessible, engaging and thriving research environment for our students and researcher community.
4. To provide opportunities and a supportive environment for academic staff to develop their research and scholarship activity.

The presentation provided examples of current and historical research activities and involvement with local communities.

The Chair thanked both Directors for their detailed presentation.

The Committee members commented on a number of positive examples of various activities shown, community engagement and future objectives.

The Chair of the Board confirmed that Board Members would benefit from the same presentation delivered to them at the June meeting, so they can better understand the symbiosis between biodiversity and sustainability and research being the framework that connects both of them. Staff need to understand the holistic relations between research and university environment but also the involvement of local communities and organisations.

8. QUARTER 2 - COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Committee members were asked to familiarise themselves with the report provided and contact to the Chair and Governance Officer with comments if needed.

9. MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES - CONFIDENTIAL

The Committee noted the minutes of the Student Journey and Enhancement Committee Meetings held on 12 December 2023, 18 January 2024, 22 February 2024, and the minutes of Research and Innovation Committee held on 26 September 2023.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY 11 JUNE 2024 AT 4.30 P.M.

Signed by the Chair: _____



Date: 11/06/2024