



REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2024 at 2pm
Via Teams

Present: Prof Chris Gaskell (independent, Chair) CG
 Prof Gary Crowe (independent) GC (*items 1 – 3 inclusive*)
 Prof Paul Johnson (external, co-opted) PJ
 Liz Watts (staff) LW

Attending: Steph Frazer (student union president) SF
 Sarah Hopkinson (acting dean) SH
 Debra Swift (academic development manager) DS
 Thomas Furness (academic registrar) TF
 Jackie Schillinger (company secretary) JS

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.	Opening items
1.1	Apologies and Declarations: Apologies were received and accepted from Marcus Clinton and Casey Crispin. The Student Union President Steph Frazer attended in Casey's place to provide student voice input to the meeting. No declarations of interest were made to the meeting.
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1.3	RESOLVED: The minutes of meeting held on 23 November 2023 were approved as a correct record.
2.	Educational performance and quality and the performance of staff
2.1	<p>UCR Performance dashboard report: Academic Registrar TF presented a solid report with encouraging signs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic integrity cases are down significantly, exceptional circumstances cases are far fewer now, attendance has dropped but this is not affecting performance and retention is currently in line with last year. The team has a good grasp on at risk students in terms of risk of withdrawal and this number is reducing with close monitoring and support, with this number being significantly less than last year. - Compliments and complaints reporting was considered with some very positive comments made especially on the Wednesday afternoon enrichment activities and the student societies with the vast majority of teaching and learning comments positive too. Good news was reported on previous complaints around the courtyard café not being open enough and this is now staffed daily 8.30am to 2.30pm by catering staff, though catering in general is still a theme seen coming through especially around the price of items. In response to further questioning in the meeting, it was agreed that the team would seek feedback on pricing at the next student feedback. The committee welcomed the external review of catering that was taking place and noted that this could consider cost of living and pricing with in this context. PJ agreed to share the University's approach to cost of living issues and any evaluation of impact. - National Student Survey (NSS) areas of organisation and management are looking strong in current module survey responses, and this is very good to see this improvement. Overall, the survey results are very good and provide substantial assurance on the NSS this year. The committee thanked the team for all their work on achieving improvements in key areas and especially on the parity now between

<p>2.2</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p> <p>2.5</p>	<p>Foundation and BSc feedback which is strong across both as well as excellent feedback in relation to the quality of teaching and learning on the Canine course.</p> <p>- Staffing is relatively stable, and the vet nursing team is re-staffed and looking very positive. Investment in staffing has enabled a new post of student experience and outcomes officer, which should make a positive contribution. There are no themes coming from exit interviews and these are generally positive, with people moving on for other opportunities mainly. A question on how UCR measures staff engagement was posed. It was agreed that this is a key part of any staff survey and executive team will ensure this is measured in the next staff survey.</p> <p>Part B: Student Applications and Recruitment: Academic Registrar TF presented an update on student recruitment for 2024-25. He emphasised his focus on modelling for active growth and measuring against this. In this context, on 30 January UCR was down on applications target but this was mainly in vet nursing which is not a concern as offers are expected to meet the target. There is an increase in Agriculture, Bakery and Patisserie and Animal Science applications are doing well. Top Up is strong with the target already met. Areas to look at currently are Equine and Sport. The committee agreed that whilst this is early days, the overall data is encouraging, and the team has a good grip on the data. It was agreed by all that conversion of applications will be critical and if this goes well UCR could see growth in first year numbers in 2024-25. A question was raised on planning for overall numbers declining and where to seek growth. Discussion followed on the pinch points and potential reasons for lower interest with ideas for re-shaping the offer in some areas. In Equine, it was noted that the recent Equine Industry Skills Board feedback was positive on the programme meeting employer needs which gives some assurance that the offer is on the right track. The committee looked forward to an update at its next meeting and overall, welcomed the more positive signs on recruitment at this early stage.</p> <p>Student Voice Report: Acting Dean SH and Student Union (SU) President presented a report on the student voice mechanisms and feedback so far this year. This included feedback on the approach to the development of employability and career-ready skills, a discussion focussing on student experience and key areas which scored lower satisfaction rates in the 2023 National Student Survey, namely course organisation and management, feeling challenged to do best work and access to resources. Changes to the UCR Student Council meeting format have led to some useful discussions and feedback to inform strategy development and improvements to the student experience as well as foster partnership working with the student body. However, attendance by UCR Student Council Reps is not as high as it could be and so the team is seeking to address this as well as gaining feedback from student cohorts through group tutorials led by Programme Leaders. The committee supported the closer working of UCR team and the SU to promote and maximise opportunities for student voice engagement. Actions to follow up include You Said Wed Did communications, with for example use of the new SU TikTok and use of a wider range of communication modes. The committee looked forward to hearing how this develops.</p> <p>UCR Quality Improvement Plan Monitoring: Acting dean SH presented her progress report against the 2023-24 quality improvement plan, evidencing good progress against the identified priorities of Curriculum Development; Access and Participation Plan; UCR Student characteristics and improvement; Continuation, completion and progression; Educational Gain; Teaching, Assessment and Feedback; Research, Innovation, Scholarship, Professional Practice and Employer Engagement; Staff Professional Development and Academic Practice; Learning environment and academic support; Learning resources; Student engagement in improvements and National Student Survey. The report was received with thanks by the committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED: The committee reports it received substantial assurance from the meeting on the educational performance and quality and performance of staff, with encouraging early signs on a stable or potential slight growth position on recruitment for next year, to be monitored at its next meeting.</p>
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3.	Strategy
3.1	Curriculum Development Report: Academic Development Manager DS reported good progress on curriculum development with planned annual work on schedule and a focus on diversification of the current offer through the provision of target awards from exit awards, part time modes of delivery and alignment to occupational standards in preparation for increasing higher and degree apprenticeship provision. An Office for Students bid to support growth in degree apprenticeships has been successful to support this development work. The committee received the report welcoming the continued good progress, with the committee emphasising the work on marketing and promotion of the offer to support growth. In response to questions, it was confirmed that there is capacity to deliver this, supported by the Apprenticeship and Business Hub team and whilst there are no current plans to deliver distance learning, it could be possible in future. The committee welcomed the greater flexibility now being built into the offer which supports the work on the Access and Participation Plan.
3.2	Tuition Fees 2025-26 were recommended to remain unchanged, and this was supported by the Committee.
3.3	Strategic Risk Review Report: In the committee review of higher education provision, the level of risk exposure on a decline in quality and student outcomes for UCR was considered low, with good assurance on continued quality, evidenced by the recent student survey results. In relation to the higher risk on HE income and student numbers, it was noted that the recurrent grant was significantly down this year due to the way the data was reported, and the team are doing work on the classification, and this may lead to a re-classification and ensure this does not impact as much next year. The committee were content with the work going on as far as possible with a continued focus on marketing and promotion to support recruitment.
3.4	RESOLVED: To report strong strategic curriculum development and good management of strategic risk, and to recommend the approval of the 2025-26 UCR tuition fees remaining unchanged at the current level.
4.	Governance
4.1	Impact Evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student survey results are very strong and evidence that UCR has been able to build on the significant improvement in NSS results for 2022-23 with further improvement. Student satisfaction this year could still be impacted by factors to do with the overall environment including the catering services, but the UCR café opening has been resolved and this has been welcomed by the students. - Quality Improvement Plan monitoring shows good progress on the planned quality improvement actions for 2023-24. - Management is working now more closely with the SU continues to focus on the quality of its communication to students in terms of ensuring that a stronger message on 'you said, we did' is received by students. - Strong strategic curriculum development and good management of strategic risk is reported - Recommendation of the approval of the 2025-26 UCR tuition fees to remain unchanged at the current level. - Review of the student recruitment picture whilst remaining challenging is now showing encouraging signs especially in relation to first year recruitment.
5.	Consent Agenda/Items for Assurance
5.1	The following items were received for assurance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scholarly Activity Report - UCR Academic Board minutes - UCR Student Experience Committee (formerly Board of Studies) minutes It was agreed that the HESES return will be reported formally via the next meeting.
6	Closing items
6.1	There was no other business reported to the meeting.

6.2	RSEOLVED: The date of the next meeting is Thursday 13 June 2024 at 2pm to be held in person at the college and university centre.
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The meeting closed at 3.40pm

Confirmed as a correct record: 21 June 2024

Chair: Chris Gaskell