

MINUTES of the MEETING of the LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE held in the Boardroom, 1 Inverness Campus on Tuesday 5 March 2019

PRESENT: Andrew Bowie, Sarah Burton, Robyn Kennedy, Shawna McKinnon, Helen Miller, Fiona Neilson, Chris O'Neil, Tom Speirs, Tina Stones

CHAIR: Sarah Burton

APOLOGIES: Gavin Ross

ATTENDING: Depute Principal
Depute Principal Academic Development
Head of Curriculum
Head of Student Services
Head of Research Development
Secretary to the Board of Management

The Chair welcomed Tina Stones, new co-opted member and Ken Russell, Depute Principal Academic Development, to their first meeting of the Committee

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee held on 4 December 2018 were **AGREED** as a correct record, were **APPROVED** and signed.

2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Committee considered each of the actions and **AGREED** that those which had been completed could be removed from the list.

The Chair suggested that the order of the agenda be changed to allow each of the report authors to speak to their reports. This was agreed

3. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR

The Chair reminded the Committee that the position of Vice Chair had previously been held by Ollie Bray prior to his resignation as a Board Member. She nominated Tom Speirs to the vacant post and this was seconded by Andrew Bowie.

The Committee **AGREED** to recommend to the Board of Management that Tom Speirs be appointed to the position of Vice Chair of the Learning, Teaching and Research Committee

4. QUALITY CULTURE - A CONVERSATION AND REVIEW

A report by the Principal advised that he had commissioned a review of ICUHI's quality culture, process, implementation and perception in order to seek an independent and critical analysis following publicly reported failures. A recently retired Depute Principal with responsibility and experience across the sector for

quality management and assurance had been commissioned to act as a 'critical friend' and given access to all aspects of the quality process and environment.

The review concluded that the College had very good and robust quality systems in place but there were issues of consistency in their application. Most of the recommendations and ideas had been implemented and the issues with lack of consistency were reducing. These were being monitored under the current processes.

The Committee **WELCOMED** the many strengths identified within the report and felt assured that the College was moving forward with improvements to its quality culture.

5. **CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT**

A report by the Head of Student Services presented the annual report for corporate parenting for annual year 2017-18. The College had published its first Corporate Parenting report in April 2018 to summarise the progress made since the publication of the Corporate Parenting Plan in October 2016. It was now a requirement for every college to publish an annual progress report. The report detailed the work the College did with students from a care-experienced background to reduce any barriers, which individuals might face. It was anticipated that the College would be required to submit the report to the Scottish Government by April 2019 and publish it on the College website.

The Committee discussed the report and **REQUESTED** that the Head of Student Services review the references to non disclosure in paragraphs 4 and 9 of the report to ensure that there was no inconsistency between the statements made.

In answer to a question, the Head of Student Services confirmed that it would be very beneficial to roll out the Aim High project to further secondary schools in Inverness, particularly Millburn Academy and Inverness High School but resource limitations prevented this at the present time.

It was confirmed that the online Corporate Parenting Training module could be made available to Board Members.

The Committee **AGREED** to recommend the corporate parenting annual report 2017/18 to the Board of Management for approval

Shawna MacKinnon left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

6. **STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

A joint report by the Head of Student Services and Student's Association Co-ordinator provided an update on the progress made with the formal student partnership agreement (SPA) for session 2018-19 as well as a number of other aspects of student engagement.

- The target figure had been met for the number of class representatives and it had been exceeded for those engaging in training.
- There had been a very positive response to nominations for the three paid HISA officers for the next academic year.
- The change in format for SRC meetings had been very positive and there was now genuine engagement by students.

- Stephanie Gardner (4th year Accounting and Finance BA Hons) had been shortlisted for the Sparqs class representative of the year
- Work was ongoing to ensure that the eight themes of the partnership agreement were more visible and tangible to students
- Action plans were well underway for the three aspects of the partnership agreement which were the focus for the year, namely collective responsibility, student voice in partnership and student life.

The Committee **NOTED** the good progress being made.

7. **HISA INVERNESS REPORT**

A report by the Student Engagement Officer provided an update on the activities of HISA Inverness since the last meeting as follows:-

- Class representatives
- Regional events
- Local events
- Paid officer elections

HISA had agreed its first policy at the Regional Council event, namely that there should be parity of experience for all students across the partnership

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

8. **RESEARCH CENTRE SUCCESSION PLANNING**

A report by the Head of Research Development referred to the necessary change in leadership in 2019/20 for the Rivers and Lochs Institute and the Centre for Remote and Rural Studies. This was both a challenge and a significant opportunity for the future direction and development of research at Inverness College and UHI. There were risks associated with the recommended way forward, but there was a greater risk in attempting to maintain the status quo and failing to maximise the potential of building upon the successful foundations created over the last few years.

The Committee discussed the options within the report, the risks involved in recruitment, the limited scope for additional funding and the suggestion that this was a key example of where strategic funding should be made available from the University.

The Committee **NOTED** that the preferred option, as outlined in the report, would be submitted to the next meeting of the SMT for approval.

9. **STUDENT RECRUITMENT 2018-19**

A report by the Depute Principal provided an update on student recruitment for 2018-19, which included information by qualification and by fee status. The current student activity indicated that:

- FE recruitment should make the credit target, however, it remained a challenge to do so.
- HE recruitment (FTE) was forecast to be below the funded undergraduate target. The position had improved and it was anticipated that the final position could be less than 10 FTE short of the target.
- The PG target had been exceeded by 30 FTE.

All movement was being factored into budgets going forward.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and **REQUESTED** that a report on international targets be submitted to the Committee in the future.

10. STUDENT RETENTION

A report by the Depute Principal provided a summary and analysis of retention rates for students in 2018-19 across levels and modes of study, as well as a summary of the ongoing work as part of the College Improvement Project. The latest retention data indicated that a further improvement had been made in early retention rates for students on full-time FE programmes.

Two main strands of activity promoted through the college improvement project had been implemented across the college during 2018-19, namely the new approach to course committee meetings and project 2018-19: The early student journey.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

11. 2017-18 COLLEGE SECTOR PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A report by the Depute Principal provided a summary of the college sector performance Indicators (PI) for 2017-18, published by SFC on 29 January 2019. Success rates for full-time and part-time FE students at the college continued to improve and were now ranked third highest of all the larger colleges in Scotland.

The college's HE provision was not returned through the college statistical returns. However, the college sector national PIs were useful for benchmarking the Higher National (HN) provision. An analysis showed that overall, the college's success rate for students on full-time HN provision was 69.6% in 2017-18, compared to a national success rate of 71.3%.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

Chris O'Neil left the meeting.

12. CURRICULUM REVIEW

A joint report by the Depute Principal Academic Development and Head of Curriculum reflected on the developments in hand for the next two academic sessions, particularly on FE and HE. An initial exploration of the landscape for the development of offerings had been conducted and reference was made to curriculum developments including approvals and re-approvals to ensure that the offerings of UHI, Inverness College were current and relevant and were in line with the strategic aims and objectives.

During discussion, it was stressed that in order to expand the distance learning market penetration, improvements to the website and an enhanced presence on aggregator websites was required as well as faster conversion processes and greater clarity regarding the value proposition. Regarding the value proposition there was concern about the already high rental rates for the residences and it was understood that a decision had been made by UHI to increase the rates for the next academic year.

The college had control of the content of the FE website, but not of the HE website. Similarly, it had control of the FE admissions process but not the HE admissions process. The Committee expressed concern that the highest risk to international and revenue growth was out with the control of the College.

The Chair thanked the Depute Principal and the Head of Curriculum for a very informative report.

The following items were included in the agenda for noting only and therefore no discussion took place at the meeting.

13. CUSTOMER SERVICES EXCELLENCE REVIEW FINDINGS

A covering report by the Head of Student Services and the Quality Manager provided an update on the findings from the recent Customer Service Excellence (CSE) review, which took place on 31st Jan / 1st Feb.

14. HALF YEARLY COMPLAINTS REPORT

A report by the Quality Manager provided an analysis of complaints year to date, which covered quarters 1 and 2.

A request was made for some further clarification on the figures within the report. It was **AGREED** that a response would be sought from the Quality Manager and e-mailed to the members of the committee.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 5 June 2018 at 8.30 a.m.

Signed by the Chair:

Sarah Borthwick

Date:

4th June 19.