



**Minutes of the Higher Education Committee meeting  
held on 9 February 2023 on MS Teams**

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| <b>Committee members</b> | Pat Wilde     | PW | Committee Chair   |
|                          | John Evans    | JE |   |
|                          | Wilf Hudson   | WH |   |
|                          | Ian Tunbridge | IT |   |
|                          | Jane Warren   | JW |   |
| <b>In attendance</b>     | Ryan Thomas   | RT | Head of Higher Education                                |
|                          | Wendy Randle  | WR | Director of Governance                                  |
|                          | Kate Wills    | KW | Group Deputy Principal, Curriculum and Quality (DP C&Q) |

|          |   | Action |
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| <b>1</b> | <p><b>WELCOME</b></p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Lee Charnock.</p> <p>There were no further interests to declare than those previously disclosed on the register of interests.</p>  |        |
| <b>2</b> | <p><b>MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2023</b></p> <p><b>2.1</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p><b>2.2 MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <p>The Committee reviewed the matters arising report circulated in advance of the meeting and noted the following update:</p> <p>A Gant chart has been put in place for course approvals following the HEAB meeting.</p> <p>The HE strategy action plan will be presented at future meetings in order for Committee to monitor progress.</p> <p>It was reported that the Vice Principal of Land Based has resigned and that the College are exploring management of the land based provision moving forward.</p> |        |
| <b>3</b> | <p><b>Committee membership update</b></p> <p>It was reported that John Chudley has stepped down from the role of co-opted Committee member with immediate affect due to other commitments and that the Group Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality will continue to liaise with him regarding HE strategy, particularly alternative ways of offering provision.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to appoint a further co-opted Committee member who has experience of delivering HE in FE, is potentially working out of region (given the potential for conflicts around</p>  |        |

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|                          | <p>competition), a partnership manager from a university, or has skills linked to higher degree apprenticeships.</p> <p>Sarah Gruitt is the new HE student Governor and will be invited to attend the June HE Committee meeting.</p>  | <p>WR/<br/>PW</p> <p>WR</p> |
| <b>STRATEGY AND RISK</b> |   |                             |
| <p><b>4</b></p>          | <p><b>HE STRATEGY 2022 -2026</b></p> <p><b>Progress review, focus on recruitment</b></p> <p>The Committee received the paper circulated in advance of the meeting and the spreadsheet detailing the planned provision was shared. The following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The College propose pausing recruitment to HE provision at Bicton in order to review, reflect and implement strong provision that meets student and local needs moving forwards.</li> <li>▪ The College propose pausing recruitment to HE provision at Rosewarne.</li> <li>▪ There are good student numbers at the Stoke campus and the College are focussing on activities to keep potential students engaged as well as reviewing accommodation options.</li> <li>▪ The College plan to pause recruitment to all animal and equine programmes at Stoke in order to review and ensure the offer meets local and student needs.</li> <li>▪ There remain ongoing applications at Newquay; numbers are lower than expected. The responsibility for the campus will be with the Group Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality in light of the Vice Principal of Land Based leaving the Group.</li> <li>▪ The HE provision at the St Austell campus is small and focussed on children and young people, it is proposed that recruitment to the foundation degree at STAC is paused and the possibility of running this provision at another campus, either Eden or Camborne, is explored in order to improve student experience. The College plan to redevelop the HE offer in this curriculum area the STAC new build is in place.</li> <li>▪ There is no change to the Golf provision. There are lower numbers as expected due to the Covid impact on FE provision. There will be a Masters cohort for the first time.</li> <li>▪ Numbers are expected to grow at Falmouth on the Operational Yacht Science programme though the College remain concerned with the level 5 offer.</li> <li>▪ Recruitment to Social Health and Welfare at the Camborne campus, along with Sport provision, has been paused due to low numbers. The College wish to maintain their relationship with Cardiff Metropolitan University to deliver FdSc Sport and Exercise Science in September however the numbers are a concern.</li> <li>▪ Consolidation of programmes to include Photography within Art and Design is being explored.</li> <li>▪ A strong offer in Games Design is required to meet demand.</li> <li>▪ Further work to improve student numbers is Computing is required.</li> <li>▪ There is no engineering offer due to no student interest.</li> <li>▪ Growth in Counselling remains consistent and the College recognise the infrastructure required in order to maintain the provision. There is student interest in a new foundation degree in Psychology and Criminology.</li> <li>▪ There has been a slight drop in student numbers on the Eden campus with increased work at programme level and around module delivery to determine what will run from September onwards.</li> <li>▪ There will be a planned reduction with some rationalisation at both Eden and Newquay, to strengthen quality of provision.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee recognised the difficulties in making the decisions due to student numbers and the risks presented yet supported the College with the proposals.</p> |                             |

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|                 | <p>The Committee noted the decline in HE provision at Exeter College and other colleges delivering HE and challenged the decision to remove a significant amount of the HE provision from land based when considering the links between the Land Based strategy and the HE strategy and the provision required to support industry. The challenges to appoint lecturers to deliver the programmes presents a significant risk.</p> <p><b>Outcomes from the HE proposition session</b></p> <p>The Committee reflected on the above session held on 30/01 as requested by Board, noting it had been a useful session in upskilling Board on the HE provision and position within the College and the challenges, not only for the College, but within the FE sector, given Universities’ encroachment on Colleges’ applicant pools.</p> <p>It was reported that the College have agreed investment in marketing in order to improve student numbers and raise the profile of the Group in delivering HE.</p> <p>The College are exploring provision profitability, recognising the importance of the impact of curriculum on finance and how to direct resource. There is further work required in order to rationalise HE on fewer sites to support investment of infrastructure. Strategic development remains focussed on provision with a clear market rationale.</p> <p>The College remain confident that there continues to be a market for students.</p> <p>The following actions were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Align the KPIs to OfS, provision type, numbers, contribution.</li> <li>▪ The HE Strategy action plan will be reviewed to incorporate outcomes from the HE Proposition session and this Committee meeting, to include clear milestones, and that the HE Committee will monitor progress against the action plan at its termly meetings.</li> </ul> | <p>KW/<br/>RT<br/>KW/<br/>RT</p> |
| <p><b>5</b></p> | <p><b>HE related risks on the Risk Register and assurance required</b></p> <p>The report circulated in advance of the meeting highlighting the HE risks was received by the Committee. It was noted that the risk register is mapped through to the operating statement. The risks were reviewed and the following points were noted:</p> <p>OfS – the TEF has been submitted, the grading outcome will be received in the summer term; a decline from a silver grading could impact on the desirability of the HE provision offered by the College.</p> <p>T&amp;F group – the Governor led task and finish group identified some inconsistencies in student support across the group; there is now a College group in place to review and improve this.</p> <p>Staff retention – this risk is across the Group with specific issues in HE. There are strong student numbers in agriculture at Stoke yet the College are struggling to recruit suitable lecturers having advertised five times with no suitable outcome. New incentives have been identified and HR are developing relationships within land based. In response to Committee member question the College have committed to running these programmes and are considering specialists to deliver modules, using skills sets from the Rural Business School (RBS) and moving some staff from FE to HE.</p> <p>Curriculum – the College are focussed on ensuring that employer links (e.g. Employer Advisory Boards) contribute in a meaningful and measurable way to both FE &amp; HE.</p>   |                                  |

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|                            | <p>Student numbers - the College are currently undertaking student number projections for next academic year. Finance have been included in all of these conversations at an early stage, so that there is a clear understanding by all concerned of the impact of decisions regarding recruitment on campus and overall budgets.</p> <p>A Committee member reflected on the potential impact of the change in student fees structure, the College felt this would not impact on student numbers.</p> <p>Estates – the College recognise where there has been underinvestment in sites resulting in poor quality resources which might impact on quality of education, noting that although the land based investment strategy has been agreed funds have yet to be identified for curriculum innovation.</p> <p>In response to Committee member challenge, the Committee were assured that immediate Health and Safety concerns raised regarding equine management were being responded to and that a scheme of works was in place for residential accommodation available to HE students.</p> <p>Accommodation – the College are piloting an initiative in Newquay; taking on two B&amp;Bs to provide accommodation for students within walking distance to the campus. The concerns expressed about the lack of self-catering facilities for students at the accommodation have been noted.</p>  |  |
| <b>Operational Updates</b> |   |  |
| <p><b>6</b></p>            | <p><b>Balance Scorecard/ KPIs</b><br/> <b>To include a data update: enrolments, attendance, retention, suspension and withdrawal, continuation, success and progression.</b></p> <p>The Committee received the report circulated in advance of the meeting and noted the below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attendance is under target, yet the College remain at the top end of attendance when benchmarked nationally.</li> <li>▪ Retention is an area of concern with a loss of students at the Eden campus. Further advice and guidance about programme content for students joining in September is required.</li> <li>▪ The College are reviewing the 47 students in suspension of studies to understand the reasons and the likelihood of their return. This will also include improved reporting.</li> <li>▪ A new KPI linked to student voice will be created following the weakness of NSS response rate and therefore a weaker area in the TEF.</li> <li>▪ The College plan to review the KPIs moving forward and align to OfS for the next meeting.</li> </ul> <p>In response to Committee member questions the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students are leaving due to a number of reasons; continued mental health issues, external factors and financial challenges, particularly true with higher degree apprenticeships.</li> <li>▪ The College will pause recruitment to HE provision at Bicton for Sept 23 as the offer does not best meet industry or student need; this will provide time to get a suitable infrastructure in place.</li> </ul> |  |
| <p><b>7</b></p>            | <p><b>Student Voice/ Beyond the Boardroom (BTB)</b><br/> <b>NSS/Student Complaints</b></p> <p>The Committee received the report circulated in advance of the meeting. The Committee reflected on the consultation undertaken with students from Newquay, Golf and Eden for the TEF submission noting that negative comments expressed in the NSS had not been reiterated in the consultation. The College plan to review the management of the NSS and consider how the College can strengthen student voice, by encouraging a greater participation in the Survey. It was noted that the College have not had a consistent approach to managing concerns and feed back to students clearly; changes now implemented</p>  |  |

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|  | <p>to support this process to include time in tutorial and mid module feedback to ensure quick responses. This should increase the visibility of what has been done to address issues raised by students. Additionally staff are being supported in managing complaints at an earlier informal stage. The College take complaints seriously and have a thorough, rigorous process; there are concerns, however, that where complaints are passed to the University of Plymouth (for students not on FDAP programmes), students can experience considerable delays in obtaining resolution.</p> <p>In response to a Committee member question on what percentage of complaints that are formal are upheld and what are not, it was noted that often there will be partial decision. It was agreed that complaints data will be reviewed at the next Committee meeting.</p> <p><b>BTB visits completed and potential for further visits</b><br/>The Committee considered BTB activity, agreeing the below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Details of the programme committee meetings will be shared with Committee once received.</li> <li>▪ WH will visit Newquay in summer term.</li> <li>▪ PW will visit Falmouth and Sisna.</li> <li>▪ The open days are scheduled and will be circulated to Committee.</li> </ul> | <p>KW/<br/>RT</p> <p>WR<br/>WH<br/>PW<br/>WR</p> |
| <p><b>8</b></p>                          | <p><b>SUMMARY OF HEAB MINUTES</b><br/>Circulated in advance of the meeting, it was noted that the Committee Chair had attended this meeting and that key points had been considered during earlier agenda items. It was proposed that Jamie Hanson, who is overseeing College wide activity surrounding internal progression from FE to HE, be invited to present at the next Committee meeting to feed in on discussions linked to the HE strategy.</p> <p>In response to Committee member questions the following points were noted:<br/>The quality of degree proposals reviewed at HEAB Committee vary, noting a new pairing system to support those with less experience of putting forward proposals is being implemented, that a detailed template is in place to support the development of proposals and that good practice examples have been shared to guide proposals. A Committee member noted the impact an ‘editor’ could have on programme development and the marketing of programmes.</p>   | <p>KW/<br/>RT</p>                                |
| <b>COMPLIANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE</b> |   |  |
| <p><b>9</b></p>                          | <p><b>Office for Students</b><br/><b>TEF update</b><br/>The College expect to receive the outcome from the TEF submission in May/ June. In response to a Committee, through completing the TEF submission the College have learnt how to receive student views and provide feedback in a more streamlined way so that students feel listened to.</p>  |  |
| <p><b>10</b></p>                         | <p><b>HE Fees 2024-25</b><br/>It was noted that the HE fees for 2023/24 have been previously fixed and that the College are not recommending any changes for 2024/25 as the fee cap has not changed and the fees are considered to be competitively priced, if slightly higher than in some areas in the South West.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the College are considering incentivised packages to include industry qualifications in order to add value and strengthen the USP; these areas could in turn justify increase a future in fees in future years.</p> <p>Research undertaken by the College indicates that the funding to fund a second a degree and qualification for a loan appear to be key questions asked by prospective students. It is not always the</p>   |  |

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|                  | <p>case that a second degree cannot be funded and therefore this needs to be made explicit. and that it is difficult to unpick why people are not joining if they cannot afford it.</p> <p>A review of the additional £10k fees paid by students on the Golf programme for accommodation in Spain and flights is scheduled, with the Committee requesting assurance at a future meeting that these fees are not resulting in the College making a profit; a report was requested for the next committee meeting.</p> <p>The 2024/25 fees, to include information on value for money will be presented for recommendation to the Board at the June meeting.</p> | <p>KW/<br/>RT</p> <p>KW/<br/>RT</p> |
| <p><b>11</b></p> | <p><b>Impact of the HE Committee meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Safeguarding</li> <li>▪ Sustainability – the Committee had considered the sustainability of provision and financial sustainability.</li> <li>▪ EDI</li> <li>▪ Health and Safety – assurance received regarding equine provision.</li> </ul>  |                                     |
| <p><b>12</b></p> | <p><b>Communication between Committee/ Board</b></p> <p>The HE Committee would like to raise awareness with the F&amp;R Committee and Board, the implications of student numbers on the budget for both this year and following years.</p>   |                                     |
| <p><b>13</b></p> | <p><b>DATES OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>14/06/22</p>  |                                     |