



HARTPURY

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE HARTPURY UNIVERSITY

Minutes of a Meeting

2:00pm Wednesday 10th February 2021

Via Videoconferencing – Microsoft Teams

Present: Prof. Ian Robinson (IR) – Chair
Ms Jenny Arroud (JA) – University Board Staff Governor
Dr John Selby (JS) University Governor
Ms Alison Blackburn (AB) University Governor
Mr Joe Goodenough (JG) – University Student Governor
Mr Russell Marchant (RM) – Vice-Chancellor/Principal

In Attendance: Ms Rosie Scott-Ward – Pro-Vice-Chancellor
Ms Lucy Dumbell (LD)- Academic Registrar
Ms Gillian Steels (GS) – Clerk to the Governors
Ms Claire Whitworth – Vice-Principal Further Education

Apologies: -

		ACTION & ACTION DATE
QuESTHE 01/02/21	Welcome and Apologies Apologies were received as detailed above.	
QuESTHE 02/02/21	Quoracy It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.	
QuESTHE 03/02/21	Declaration of Interest The Clerk advised that members' interests would be taken as those disclosed in the Register of Members Interests. It was noted that the Vice-Chancellor and Principal was a member of the University and College Boards. There were no declarations of members' interests for agenda items.	
QuESTHE 04/02/21	Minutes of the Last Meeting The Minutes of the meeting held on the 4 th November 2020, subject to one typo, were agreed to be a true and accurate record.	
QuESTHE 05/02/21	Matters Arising An Action Update log had been provided to update members on progress of actions. Visibility Degree Outcome Statement the Academic Registrar advised that she was reviewing this, and making it accessible by the Search function. It was	

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	noted that it was challenging to make the website accessible for the many purposes it was used. Annual Quality Report - presentation of Teaching Qualifications on page 25 - The Academic Registrar advised she had amended this to improve the presentation. Upper Degrees – the chart had been reviewed and consideration was being given to the next iteration of the Degrees Outcome Statement. The guidance did not currently require an annual update but most organisations were undertaking a light touch update.	
QuESTHE 06/02/21	Covid – 19 Update	
	The Vice-Chancellor updated on Hartpury's latest response to the ongoing pandemic. He commented that Hartpury was operating reasonably smoothly in the reinforced lockdown. A number of students continued to travel in and there were about 116 on site, the majority of whom were behaving responsibly. The Lateral Flow testing station was operating well. The government's announcement of plans from 8th March was awaited.	
	The Committee NOTED and ENDORSED the COVID-19 Update.	
QuESTHE 07/02/21	Academic Response to Lockdown 3	
	The Pro-Vice-Chancellor confirmed that plans were in place to respond when the government guidance changed. It was noted that the majority of delivery in semester 1 had been mixed delivery. It was noted that placements had been challenging due to the restrictions, but that they had continued in some sport and landbased areas where this could be achieved within the guidelines. Research continued to be progressed with adjustment made where necessary to respond to the constraints. It was noted that as much assessment as possible had been moved on line. Pre September there had been a great deal of preparation for a Covid impacted period including: some significant regulatory changes, such as penalty and cap variations for late submissions etc., guidance to staff and students, communication to applicants and returning students setting out what to expect, staff development to support online and blended teaching, development of systems to be ready to respond to changes in government guidance. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor advised that the third lockdown in January had impacted differently on the academic delivery coming straight after Christmas, rather than as it had in the first lockdown where it had been possible to move assessments more easily. For the third lockdown Hartpury had taken a "no disadvantage approach" rather than a "no detriment approach". This had been discussed with the Student Union and supported. It was noted it would be in place for the entire student course. A governor queried whether the adjustments made to the regulations had continued in force. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor advised that they had been slightly changed, for example to allow uncapped resits whether a student had submitted or not.	
	Governors queried whether the outcome position was different. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor advised that they had noted a higher submission rate of assessments, particularly in sport and for males, as had been highlighted in the	

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	previous lockdown. It was queried whether this reflected greater engagement or the impact of changes to assessments. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor advised that external examiners had confirmed they were comfortable with the changes made to assessments. It was confirmed that engagement would continue to be monitored at programme level. It was noted some assessments, such as Veterinary Nursing were continuing in person, in line with government guidance. Generally assessment was considered to be progressing well. There had been an issue with some online monitoring software which had been required by the Veterinary Nursing Accreditation Body which had caused an issue for 4% of students. This had been investigated and was believed to be a connectivity issue. Those affected had been given the opportunity to sit an on-site paper based exam.	
	Semester 2 had been moved back a week to provide staff with additional preparation time. This had been appreciated by staff and accepted by students once the rationale had been provided. Plans were in place to deal with a variety of scenarios including a phased return from 8th March or an extended lockdown. It was noted that if lockdown continued past Easter it could be very challenging.	
	It was noted that students had appreciated the Comms from Hartpury which included emails from the Vice-Chancellor and webinars from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor.	
	The student governor commented that there were some benefits from on-line delivery – for example he had recently had to do a 15minute presentation which previously he would have delivered in person which would have required a 3 hour journey both ways. It was agreed there could be a positive legacy for some aspects of delivery going forward. The student governor also commented that on the whole students understood the restrictions in place reflected the need to keep students and staff safe.	
	The staff governor advised that staff were engaging in some informal activities to maintain communication such as coffee mornings etc. The briefings from the Vice-Chancellor and Principal were appreciated by staff. She noted that the Testing Station was working well and that it was a quick process. The student governor confirmed this.	
	A governor queried whether Hartpury had sufficient testing kits. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal advised that currently they had sufficient kits and PPE. They were being used for visitors and external contractors as well as staff and students. He considered the Testing Team was doing a very good job, currently they could process 300 a day. Consideration was being given to how this could be increased, it might be necessary to train additional staff.	
	It was noted that not all universities had been as responsive as Hartpury, and that unfortunately students could not always discern this initially. When students raised concerns through the Covid Inbox or with staff, issues could generally be resolved, but this could be time consuming and draining for staff. Governors recognised this and also considered that Hartpury's approach, perhaps reflecting scale, had been significantly more supportive than many other institutions. It was highlighted that the University Learning Centre had remained open 24hrs a day when many other institutions had closed such resources.	

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	The Academic Response to Lockdown 3 was NOTED and ENDORSED.	
QuESTHE 08/02/21	OFS Update – Latest Lockdown should not Lead to Lost Learning	
	The Committee had been provided with a report relating to a recent communication from the Office for Students (OfS) to Accountable Officers (14th of January, 2021) which stressed that Lockdown should not lead to lost learning and raised some areas for consideration by an institution and its Board to provide assurance that learning was being safeguarded. The Report provided an overview of the approaches by Hartpury University in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as required by the letter. The report considered that overall, Hartpury believed it had made the right decisions, and taken the right approaches in light of the national situation and government restrictions. Hartpury had instigated a wide range of communication methods throughout, to both applicants and students. These communication methods had evolved in response to student feedback. Thanks were recorded to the Student Union for their support in this incredibly challenging situation. The support given by the Chair and Vice Chair of QUEST, who were involved during the two major lockdowns, acting as critical friends in the finalisation of some decisions, was also recognised. The Committee agreed it was a helpful and clear report, which provided assurance that standards were secure at programme level outcome level. The Chair queried whether the Committee could be confident of the position at module level. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor advised that module leaders could request variation to a module specification but none had been requested in semester 1, no issues had been flagged by External assessors and all modules had run. On this basis she considered that assurance could also be taken at a module level. It was agreed this report would also be taken to the Board as an Annex to the HE Report.	Pro-Vice-Chancellor Mar 2021
	The Committee NOTED and ENDORSED the Hartpury response to the OFS correspondence that Lockdown should not lead to lost learning.	
QuESTHE 09/02/21	KPIs 2020/21 Update	
	The Committee considered the KPI update, noting particularly that: NSS: Hartpury students were now engaged in the NSS survey, and while completion rates were low, this was to be expected considering the current circumstances. TEF: The OfS has confirmed TEF will continue, all be it in an evolved format. It is likely that we will be required to submit a new TEF application in the 2021-22 academic year. RKE open access compliance: The figure remains stable. In-year retention: This continues to be positive, especially considering COVID-19, although we have recently seen an increase in suspension of studies. These have largely resulted from wellbeing concerns and or struggling with online delivery. Proportion of staff to students: We use a crude method of dividing the student FTE by the staff FTE. The staff data does not include vacancies / temporary cover. Had it done so, then the figure would have been 22, which	

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	is still an increase on the previous year. It was noted this would be carefully monitored as we progress through the academic year and planning for next year. Committee members commented that the figures were generally pleasing, although one governor queried the open access compliance figure of 91%, recognising the numbers were small. He agreed to take this off line with the Academic Dean.	
	The Committee NOTED the KPI outturn for 2020/21 to date.	
QuESTHE 10/02/21	Annual Quality Report Monitoring	
	The Committee had been provided with an update on progress towards the action plan from the Annual Quality Report 2019-20. It was noted that of the 10 actions due before end of January 2021 6 of these were now complete. The remaining 4 actions were all in progress. Governors were very pleased with the level of progress achieved, particularly given the many other pressures on staff.	
	The Committee NOTED the Annual Quality Report Update.	
QuESTHE 11/02/21	Careers Survey Report – including Graduate Employment Survey Output	
	The Committee had been provided with a detailed Careers survey report which had been submitted and accepted via the Academic Board Jan 2021. At the Academic Board highlights had been discussed and future actions for Hartpury University were agreed. The following points had been highlighted: - Graduate outcomes were a new survey that was introduced by HESA in June 2020, which looked at graduate outcomes 15 months post completion at Hartpury. While there were some similarities, it is not directly comparable to its predecessor Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) and we are also awaiting further OFS key metrics which will come from this new methodology. Many of our competitors had not taken up the use of this data from a marketing perspective, using either old DHLE data or their own collected data. However institutions need to recognise that the employability area is facing growing coverage and interest from both the Government and media to highlight or demonstrate the value of universities to both student experience and impact to the labour market. - The timing of this results release has also been a useful opportunity to align dual responsibility between departments and the Innovation, Careers and Enterprise (ICE) team, to ensure a robust approach was established in the reviewing of results and aligning action plans for both Departments, that matches the University strategy, ultimately setting targets to continuously improve the student Graduate Outcome. Departments fed back that ICE hosting an 'intervention' discussion around the results was beneficial, allowing all academic staff to review information and contribute to agreement	

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	of clear actions going forward. - The results provided evidence that Hartpury Graduates were highly employable post-graduation, with around half following careers in the industry of study and the remaining majority following careers that utilise the skills developed whilst here at Hartpury. 96% of Hartpury graduates find employment within 15 months and our Veterinary Nursing students achieving 100% employability. Whilst comparing against our own previous data for improvement purposes is not possible, Hartpury does compete well across key metrics such as the above against established universities Harper Adams, Loughborough and Royal Agriculture University. The Committee agreed it had been a comprehensive and helpful report.	
	The Committee NOTED the Careers Survey Report.	
QuESTHE 12/02/21	Contextualised Offer Making	
	The Committee had been provided with a paper which advised that the Head of Admissions had proposed the suspension of the previous conditional, unconditional scheme. At the same time, he had proposed the adoption of a contextual offer making scheme, allowing us to factor in circumstances which may have impacted on a applicants ability to make the entry criteria for a programme. The Scheme had been approved by SMT (in order to enact the scheme in a timely way) and was brought to the Committee for noting and comment. It was confirmed the scheme could be altered, should there be significant concern or suggestions by QUEST. Governors recognised that there had been interesting coverage in the press on these issues over the year, and noted that a number of institutions had continued to issue Unconditional Offers. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor commented that it was a challenging position, and highlighting that in sport a number of our competitors were continuing to offer unconditional offers. A governor commented on her support for contextualised offer schemes and queried whether we had taken good practice from other institutions. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the Head of Admissions had spoken to a number of organisations to gain feedback. It was confirmed the scheme would align to the Access and Participation Plan, and that the aim was to also align it to targets and industries. It was confirmed it had been supported by applicants.	
	A governor highlighted a typo on page 54. He also advised that because of the reference to "no lower than the published minimum" he had then tried to identify this for courses and found it difficult to do. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the minimum was set within the Admissions Policy. The Academic Registrar checked and confirmed this during the meeting. The importance of being able to use the scheme when the organisation had hit its growth targets and to ensure it had other measures to the tariff that it could use to ensure that Hartpury continued to be a diverse organisation.	
	The student governor commented that the Unconditional Offer had provided him with an opportunity to access Hartpury and that he considered it important that those with the passion and commitment for a subject were not	

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	excluded through a selection process that focused entirely on tariff points. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor confirmed Hartpury was keen to ensure that drive and passion in an applicant could still be recognised, but stressed that it was critical to ensure that only students who could succeed were allowed on courses.	
	The Chair of the Committee commented that a first step would be to review the contextualised threshold to be applied. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor confirmed this would be reviewed. She advised it was expected that the Tariff would increase. The Vice-Principal Further Education commented that this was the right time to be reviewing this, given that the methodology on the grading for A'level and Btecs was currently being consulted on.	
	The need to be able to maintain flexibility to respond to individual circumstances was stressed. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor advised that if the government were to move away from funding Foundation years that this would be a more significant problem. She confirmed that Hartpury was providing GuildHE with retention and progression data to demonstrate the benefits of the Foundation year.	
	The Committee agreed that the Contextualised Offer Making Scheme as presented should be supported with a review undertaken after a year and a report provided to the Committee in February 2022.	Pro-V-C Feb 22
	The Committee NOTED the Contextualised Offer Making Scheme.	
QuESTHE 13/02/21	Student Union Update	
	The Committee had been provided with a report which updated on the ongoing work of the Student Union. The ongoing strong voice of the Student Union was welcomed.	
	It was noted the Liberation officers were now in place and had started working on the campaigns and raising their profiles: It was noted that the President for Representation, Sophie Savage, had regular meetings with the Pro Vice-Chancellor and had joined Rosie in a webinar updating students on the work that the SU have been doing to support students and Hartpury. It was highlighted that two rounds of SU Forums had taken place, with overall attendance at each around 100 which was the largest number of reps engaging in SU forums since the rep system started. It was noted that feedback indicated that, apart from small pockets of specific issues, which are in hand, students feel positive about their online learning experience and Hartpury's approach to the pandemic. Students were keen to express their recognition and appreciation to staff – they feel that staff are going above and beyond to make online learning accessible, useful and engaging.	

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	It was noted that new guidance had been provided for students on a range of issues. The range of societies, including two new ones was noted. The breadth of the SU activities was noted.	
	The Pro-Vice-Chancellor thanked the Student Union for their considerable work during this challenging period.	
	The Chair of the Committee commented that the reports being considered gave a sense of a strong academic community with exec, staff and students contributing together and valuing each other. The student governor commented that despite lockdown he felt more part of the Hartpury family than he had done previously. Thanks were recorded also to the Student Union Manager.	
	The Student Union Update was NOTED.	
QuESTHE 14/02/21	Termly Complaints Report – Autumn 2020/21	
	The Committee considered the report for complaints received for HE students during the period, September-December 2020, detailing the category of complaints and whether they were upheld or not. Approximately 1% of our students had submitted a complaint during 2019/20. The Complaints Policy identifies that complaints should be dealt with in three stages: 1. Informal stage – to resolve the complaint as close to the source of the issue and in as timely a fashion as possible. 2. Formal stage – if the informal stage outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant then the complainant may request the complaint is considered formally. This involves appointing an investigating officer (who is ideally independent to the complaint area). 3. Appeal stage – if the formal stage outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant then the complainant may request a review led by the Vice-Chancellor. At the end of this process the complainant can approach the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome. HE formal complaints are now recorded as requested by the OfS using the agreed categories. In the period from September – December 2020 we received 6 formal complaints relating to University students. One appeal was made to the Vice-Chancellor for this period. The complaint was related to the livery fees. The appeal was not upheld. No appeals were referred to the OfS for this period. Informal Complaints <u>Covid Response Informal Complaints</u> The Covid Response team have dealt throughout the term with enquiries and complaints which have not progressed to formal complaints.	

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	The Covid Track and Trace email account received 916 emails. Some complaints were received, mostly surrounding the time taken for contacts to be advised to isolate. However, when the process and reasons for the delays were explained, many parents/students understood the time taken and were grateful for the efforts of the Track and Trace team. The COVID Response email was resourced 7 days/week including during the Christmas break (excluding Christmas Day) to ensure appropriate and timely responses to students, staff and parents. • Total emails sent = 3,398 • Total emails received = 4,087 • Team developed just under 40 standard email templates/stock responses A high proportion of emails were related to individuals seeking clarification of guidelines or in response to communications sent out, for example; returning home at weekends for work purposes during lockdown, Wales firebreak restrictions, travelling between tiers, international travel, requests to return home to self-isolate, mass testing & student travel window, etc. <u>Informal Academic Complaints</u> Since September four informal academic related complaints have been received relating to 2019/20 (in addition to the 8 already received). There was a range of reasons for informal complaint received during 2019/20. There were two themes that recurred (albeit in small numbers): • Scheduled contact hours felt not to delivered as expected; • Supervisors in project modules felt to not provide expected support to submission, where an initial supervisor left during the module. During the autumn term we received 2 informal complaints, both related to service issues about course and supervision experience	
	The Committee agreed it was helpful to get a broader view of complaints within the organisation through the addition of informal complaints.	
	The Committee NOTED the Autumn Term 2020/21 Complaints Report.	
QuESTHE 15/02/21	Academic Board Minutes –	
	The Committee noted the minutes.	
QuESTHE 16/02/21	Any Other Business	
	It was noted that two items of business had been carried forward to the June Committee meeting: Terms of Reference and Planned Curriculum Developments. Access and Participation Plan - OFS had advised they would require a monitoring report by 18th April which would be before the next Committee meeting. It was agreed to establish a subgroup of Alison Blackburn, Ian Robinson and John Selby to review the planned submissions electronically between meetings. The format of the report required was not expected to be known until mid-March.	

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	Academic Structure - it was noted a post of Dean of Enhancement had been put in place – this was an 18 month appointment initially and was expected to be an external appointment. The role would support the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Registrar and focus on the Quality and Data Cycle. The Dean of Research and Knowledge Exchange's title and remit had also been reviewed. He maintained responsibility for Research and Knowledge Exchange and the Heads of Department and his new title was Academic Dean.	
QuEST 17/02/21	Dates of future meetings-all commence at 2.00pm: 29th June 2021 (agreed new date), 9th November 2021 The meeting closed at 4pm	