

University of the Highlands and Islands

Committee Further Education Regional Board (FERB)
Date & Time Tuesday 14th January 2014 at 2.00pm
Location EO1 Ness Walk, Inverness
Purpose Scheduled meeting
Quorum Further Educational Regional Board (FERB)

Present

Michael Foxley (Chair)	WHC
Lydia Rohmer (p) (telephone)	
Bill Ross (p/vc) & Harvey Johnston (vice c)	Orkney College (VC)
Irene Peterson (p)(vc)	Shetland College
Anne Lindsay (p) & Jana Hutt (c)	Moray College
Niall Smith (c) Donald MacBeath (VC)	North Highland College
Brian Chaplin (VC) (c) & Iain MacMillan (p)	Lews Castle College
Penny Brodie (c) & Margaret Munckton (p)	Perth College (VC)
Dianne Rawlinson (p) & Garry Sutherland (c)	Inverness College
Fraser Durie (p), Andrew Campbell & John Coulston (VC) (c)	Argyll College
Willie Shannon (p) (VC)	NAFC
Archie Maclean (VC)	SMO
Bruce Ritchie (c)	HTC
Morven Cameron	HIE
Gordon McGuinness	SDS
Fraser Grieve	SCDI
Patrick O'Donnell	Staff representative
Emma Lawrie	FE Student member
Mike Devenney	Associate Principal FE

In attendance Judith Henderson Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
 Halena McAnulty (SFC) (VC)

Neil Simco (VC)
 Martin Wright
 Linda Stewart in part
 Roger Sendall (*minutes*)

Apologies

Drew Ratter, Carroll Buxton, Hugh Fraser, Rachel Parker, Crichton Lang, Fiona Larg, Hector Morrison, Aideen O'Malley, Boyd Robertson, Janice Annal,

Agenda Item

Action

1 WELCOME

The Chairman opened the meeting and noted that a quorum was present.

Declarations of interest: None

AOCB: None

2 MINUTES

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 28th October 2013 (FERB13-047) were reviewed and approved.

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 **Transitional Funding Bid** – FERB noted that the SFC had agreed to provide £2.1M of transitional funding to assist the University and Academic Partners to implement shared services subject to a number of conditions.

The Chair advised that Court had considered the Shared Services Business Plan on 17th December and that a number of concerns and issues relating to the plan had been identified by members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Accordingly Court had agreed that these should be resolved before Court commit to the proposed structure for delivering shared services. To progress the matter Court had established a short life working group tasked to review the Shared Services Business Plan and the concerns raised by FGPC as a matter of urgency. It was noted that the membership of this group included the Chair of FGPC, Chair of Shared Services Project Board, University Triumvirate and UHI Finance Director.

FERB noted the importance of resolving the issue rapidly and agreed to recommend via the Chair that a special meeting of Court should be convened to progress the matter as soon as possible following the completion of the short life working groups terms of reference.

The Chair of the Shared Services Project Board reported that the Board were continuing to operate and plan towards a go live date for Shared Services through the mechanism of a company of 1st April 2014. He explained that Academic Partner Boards of Management had broadly agreed to the structure identified within the business plan albeit subject to a number of minor conditions and caveats and he also confirmed that each AP Board of Management would have a final opportunity to review the business plan before making a formal commitment.

- 3.2 **Changes to FE Funding** – The APFE reported that three colleges had been identified to participate in a pilot to model and assess impacts of proposed changes to FE funding from the existing weighted sums model to a new credit assessed basis. The changes are understood to be implemented across the sector by SFC in AY 2015/16. It was noted that because a number of UHI colleges have a significant proportion of part time students and that it would be essential to fully understand the potential impact of these changes as soon as possible so as to aid planning and to enable colleges to mitigate against adverse impacts. It was noted that this item should be included on the agenda of the next FEPPF meeting for further detailed discussion.

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The SFC representative confirmed that transitional funding arrangements were generally made available to mitigate issues of any major turbulence following introduction of new criteria.

4 **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

FERB noted paper FERB14-001 provided by the Chair comprising a report on his recent activities including attendance at the FE Regional Leads meeting on 19th December and the University Court on 17th December 2013. The following key point was discussed:

ONS Reclassification of Colleges – The Chair was continuing to lobby the Cabinet Secretary and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury over concerns on the impacts on colleges of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) decision to reclassify incorporated colleges as public bodies. He explained that there was general consensus within government of a need to relieve the burden of compliance with ONS requirements for UHIs five incorporated colleges, however, that there was currently not an agreed solution. The Chair advised that he had requested the Scottish Government to consider treating UHIs incorporated colleges in a similar manner to Academy Schools in England and he encouraged Chairs to lobby their own local members of parliament on this issue.

5 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

FERB noted the terms of reference for the committee (paper FERB14-002) which had been approved by Court on 17th December 2013.

FERB noted that AP Boards of Management may also wish to review and revise their own terms of reference to reflect the new governance structures and to clearly identify where responsibility and decisions should be taken, however, it was noted that some responsibilities could not be passed to FERB until the University had adopted new Articles of Association. FERB noted that the delay in progressing new Articles of Association was related to comments received by the Privy Council from Scottish Government lawyers. FERB noted that Court was becoming increasingly frustrated with the delay in approving new Articles of Association and the negative impact that the delay was having with regard to enabling the University to move forward and implement governance changes. Efforts were currently being progressed with Government to speed up the approval process including a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary.

6 **APPOINTMENT OF REGIONAL CHAIR**

FERB considered paper FERB14-003 prepared by the Chief Operating Officer and Secretary comprising a draft role description and person specification for the role of FE Regional Chair for the Highlands and Islands region.

The Chair reported that as the person currently performing the role he felt that there were currently a number of omissions within the role description and person specification that needed to be included:

1. Reference should be included to reflect the importance of liaison with Chairs and Principals of Academic Partner Colleges.
2. Reference should be made to the requirement to participate in regular FE Regional Leads meetings and other such forums.
3. Reference should be included to the need for liaison with the University triumvirate.
4. The personal attributes section should be amended to reflect that “knowledge of and networks in the Highlands and Islands” was an essential as opposed to a desirable criterion.

FERB agreed to the above four recommendations. In addition, it was noted that FERB considered that the appointment should follow a transparent public appointments process and it was noted that the appointee should be independent member and therefore should not also be a member of an AP Board of Management.

It was noted that FERB wished to progress the appointment process as soon as possible following approval of the University’s new Articles of Association.

7 CONSULTATION – ASSIGNING COLLEGES TO REGIONAL STRATEGIC BODIES

FERB noted paper FERB14-004 in connection with the Scottish Government consultation on assigning colleges to the University. It was noted that a number of APs had submitted individual responses in advance of the deadline for responses of 17th January. These responses would be shared via the APFE.

FERB agreed that the APFE submit a response on behalf of the committee to request that the assignation date for colleges to the University be delayed to no earlier than 1st August 2014.

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8 REGIONAL SUB STRUCTURE

FERB agreed to a number of changes set out within paper FERB14-005 provided by the APFE setting out amended terms of reference for the FE Partnership Planning Forum (FEPPF) and associated governance and reporting structures.

FERB also agreed to rename FEPPF as the Further Education Executive Board (FEEB) and was pleased to note that Lydia Rohmer had been appointed as Vice Chair of the body.

FERB recommended that the Senior Management Curriculum and Quality Team membership should be amended to include Deana of Faculty.

It was noted that further careful thought should be given to increasing membership of the Regional Schools sub group to ensure enhanced engagement with schools perhaps through inclusion of a head teacher or a member of a local education authority.

9 DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT

FERB noted paper FERB14-006 comprising a report on progress in developing the 2014-15 Regional Outcome Agreement submitted by the APFE.

FERB agreed that there was a need to develop and improve mechanisms and sharing of information sets to enable FERB to monitor performance against outcomes and targets by APs.

10 REGIONAL SKILLS INVESTMENT PLAN

FERB received a verbal report from the SDS representative in connection stakeholder responses to the consultation in connection with the draft regional skills investment plan for the highlands and islands including a recent meeting with COHI. It was noted that as a result of input from key

stakeholders that further development work would be undertaken to align local development plans with regional needs and aspirations and that additional streams for enhancing skills in social care, land based industries, entrepreneurship and enterprise would now be incorporated. An updated report would be issued for comment to COHI on 31st March and would be provided to FERB in due course.

FERB noted that whilst Perth College UHI was still excluded from the plan as it was not situated within the highlands and islands economic development area SDS had offered to work with Perth to assist them to develop their own plans that would compliment the regional plan and also to ensure that data sets were versatile and consistent therefore enabling aggregation/disaggregation as appropriate.

11 RESPONSE TO WOOD COMMISSION

FERB noted paper FERB14-007 provided by the APFE comprising an update on developing discussions with Skills Development Scotland in the context of the findings of the Wood Commission.

Enter
L Stewart

12 EUROPEAN FUNDING

FERB considered paper FERB14-008 and also received a verbal report from the Director of European and International Funding providing an update on new EU strategy and funding programmes for 2014-20.

The Chair thanked the Director of European and International Funding for her report and noted the importance of ensuring that FERB's priorities were formulated and articulated in a manner that was consistent with the strategic priorities identified within the regional skills investment plan and the Wood Commission.

FERB agreed that it would be useful to develop a high level view of individual APs capital investment aspirations for the future and it was noted that AP Principals should email any ideas to the APFE who would coordinate the process.

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13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

14 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Next meeting – 12th March 2014