

University of the Highlands and Islands**Committee Further Education Regional Board (FERB)****Date & Time** Friday 13th February 2015 at 2.00pm**Location** EO1 Ness Walk, Inverness**Purpose** Scheduled meeting**Quorum** Half plus one.**Present**

Michael Foxley (Chair)

Janice Annal

Peter Campbell

Niall Smith

Garry Sutherland

Andrew Campbell

Gordon Bushnell

Grant Myles

David Sandison

Caroll Buxton HIE

Gordon McGuiness

Calum MacPherson

Lisa Massie

Patrick O'Donnell

Mike Devenney

Chair of Orkney College UHI VC

Chair of Shetland College UHI

Chair of North Highland College UHI

Chair of Inverness College UHI

Chair of Argyll College UHI

Vice Chair of West Highland College UHI

Chair of Perth College UHI

Vice Chair North Atlantic Fisheries College

Independent member – HIE (phone)

Independent member – Skills Development Scotland

Independent Member

Independent Member

Staff Member

Associate Principal FE

In attendance

Garry Coutts Chair of UHI Court

Lydia Rohmer Principal of West Highland College UHI

Bill Ross Principal of Orkney College UHI VC – in part

Clive Mulholland UHI Principal and Vice Chancellor

Fiona Larg UHI Chief Operating Officer and Secretary

Crichton Lang UHI Deputy Principal

Brian Baverstock SFC Observer

Wilma MacDonald SFC Observer

Linda Stewart in part (By telephone)

Louise MacDonald Student Representation Project manager in part

Roger Sendall (*minutes*)**Apologies**

Jana Hutt Chair Moray College UHI, Brian Chaplin Chair of Lews Castle College UHI, Wilf Weir, Matthew Cameron FE Student Member, Rachel Parker UHISA President, Bruce Ritchie Chair HTC

Agenda Item**1 WELCOME**

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

The Chair welcomed observers from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Chair of the University Court.

Declarations of interest: None.**AOCB:** Incorporated College Board Member Appointments Process (item 4 refers).**2 MINUTES**2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2014 (FERB14-046) were reviewed and approved subject to minor amendment.2.2 The minutes of the FE Executive Board meeting held on 27th January 2015 (FERB15-001) were noted.**Action**

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plan (SIP)

FERB noted that Councillor Drew Hendry had been appointed to lead a working group of key stakeholders to implement actions within the plan and to embed strategic initiatives within complementary regional action plans. Some good progress had been achieved and it was noted that FERB would receive a full progress report at the next meeting.

SDS

3.2 Shared Services

FERB noted that the Shared Services Consultative group would meet on 16th February. The group included representation from six AP Principals. Some good progress had been achieved and further information would be circulated in due course. It was envisaged that a paper would be available for consideration by AP Boards of Management in March/April 2015.

3.3 Student Support Funding 2014/15

The Chair reported that the SFC had identified a national solution to the shortfall in student support funding for 2014/15. A resolution to address a predicted shortfall in 2015/16 student support funding was still being pursued. It was noted that this was an unsatisfactory situation since the issue of insufficient student support funding had arisen each year for the past three years. The Chair encouraged members to lobby Scottish Government and SFC colleagues over the issue to encourage them to identify a long term solution. It was noted that the VPFE would produce a briefing note on key issues to ensure that members had a consistent understanding of the problem.

VPFE

3.4 Update on Merger Discussions

The Chair of Court reported that he and the Chair of Inverness College had met with the Cabinet Secretary to discuss the possibility of a merger between the University and Inverness College, this followed a request by the Board of Inverness College to the University to explore a new relationship in the context of the Post 16 Act and the ONS reclassification of colleges as Public bodies. The Chair of Court explained that the Cabinet Secretary had agreed that a merger could be explored, however, that the implications of a merger would need to be considered carefully in consultation with the University's other APs. It was noted that a meeting with AP Chairs and Principals had been convened for 16th February for an early discussion and to seek AP views.

4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chair provided FERB with a verbal report in connection with his recent activities.

The following key points were noted:

- It was noted that the Scottish Government was keen to encourage all employers to pay at least the Living Wage. It was noted that the University was already committed to such a policy. The Chair requested APs to share information in relation to the numbers of employees who were receiving less than the Living Wage.
- The Chair had recently returned from a visit to Norway to look at "Newton Room" facilities. There was considerable interest in the rooms from key stakeholders and it was noted that FERB would receive a presentation on the concept and potential opportunities at its next meeting.
- The Chair reported that the Incorporated College

Chair

Board Nominations Committee had met the previous day and had agreed to extend the terms of office of the Chair of Lews Castle College UHI and the Chair and members of Inverness College UHI. It was noted that the committee had directed the COOS to write to the Principals of the incorporated colleges to clarify the position regarding member appointments and extensions and the public appointments process.

5 **Scottish Funding Council Indicative Funding for Session 2015/16**

FERB noted paper FERB 15-0023 providing a note of the indicative total funding allocation for the region for the session 2015-16. It was noted that the Principals were meeting on 17th February to discuss the proposed allocation and to consider options for distribution and potential submissions for additional funding. FERB was concerned that the allocation of funds to address rurality issues were much reduced and this was not compatible with the agreed priority within the Outcome Agreement for growth. It was noted that the Chair would write to the SFC on this issue.

VPFE/
Chair

6 **Development of Regional Curriculum Development Plan and ESIF Update**

FERB considered papers FERB15-003a providing an update on progress made towards developing the regions first Regional Curriculum Development Plan, and FERB15-003b providing an update on progress to access European Strategic Investment Funds (ESIF) for related activities.

L Stewart
& B Ross
present

FERB noted that ESIF funding was only available for new activity if it was additional to existing provision or planned activity, accordingly there was a need to clearly identify and verify such provision if the region was to be successful in accessing such funding.

7 **Student Activity Levels Session 2014-15**

FERB considered paper FERB15-004 providing an analysis of regional and individual performance in relation to achieving student number targets in 2014/15 compared with the previous year. It was noted that the region expected to exceed the target by approximately 1%, however, this would primarily be achieved as a result of some APs over performing their targets making up for shortfalls within other partners. FERB noted that there was a need to keep student number targets under continual review and to monitor any trends to ensure that APs were appropriately resourced in accordance with activity.

8 **Regional Outcome Agreement**

FERB considered paper FERB15-005 comprising an update to the Regional Outcome Agreement prepared by the Vice Principal Further Education. FERB agreed to endorse the revised targets for 2014-15/2016-17 contained within the performance measures schedule.

FERB was pleased to note an increase to 34% of FE students progressing into HE, a rise of 1%.

9 **Responding to “Developing the Young Workforce” – Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy**

FERB noted paper FERB15-006 providing an update on actions that are being progressed in line with the above Scottish Government initiative including a proposal from SDS for the University to assume a lead role by forming a “hub” that would coordinate the development and delivery of work based learning initiatives such as Foundation and Advanced Apprenticeships.

10 Student Representation Project

FERB agreed to endorse the proposals outlined within paper FERB15-007 setting out proposed new arrangements for regional student representation from session 2015/16.

Louise MacDonald present.

11 Colleges' Estates Needs

FERB considered paper FERB15-008 comprising an initial list of projects and estates needs identified by APs reflecting aspirations to improve the partnership estate and the learning and teaching environment for all students. It was agreed that a small working group should be established that would include significant independent membership to review and prioritise projects across the region.

Mr Baverstock of SFC reported that the SFC was currently collating submissions from colleges for capital projects in line with a 10 year estates strategy planning process and he suggested that early contact with the SFC would be necessary to ensure that the projects were identified were considered as part of that exercise.

VPFE/COOS

Exit D Sandison 16:10

12 Standing Orders

FERB approved paper FERB15-009 providing a schedule of Standing orders for members of the committee. The following key point was highlighted:

- The Chairs of the APs requested that Court should be asked to amend the terms of reference of FERB to allow all AP Principals to attend meetings in an attendance or observer capacity. It was noted that all the AP Chairs present considered that this would be beneficial to the operation of FERB by providing AP Chairs with access to enhanced support and technical advice during the meeting.

The Chair of Court suggested that the presence of Principals at FERB may alter the dynamic of the meeting with the potential to compromise discussion on key strategic regional issues. He noted that all Chairs currently have good access to their Principal and that the existing process allowed for issues to be routed to FERB via the FE Executive Board (FEEB) also for Principals to attend the meeting for specific items. The Chair and Vice chair of FEEB are in attendance at FERB as per the existing terms of reference. One independent member expressed concern that meetings may become unwieldy with too many attendees present and this may create a lack of balance between independent and non-independent representation that would need to be addressed. The Chair and Chair of Court agreed to raise this issue for consideration and determination by the University Court at the next scheduled meeting on 17th March.

Chair/Chair of Court

13 Draft Financial Memorandum with Assigned Colleges

FERB noted paper FERB15-010 comprising a draft financial memorandum between the University and the assigned colleges. It was noted that the paper had been presented to HEPPRC the previous day where it had been noted that a number of the assigned college boards of management would not have opportunity to discuss or comment upon the draft memorandum before the 28th February deadline suggested within the paper. The COOS had agreed to provide the assigned college boards with a new version of the memorandum highlighting key issues for consideration for their meetings in March and April. In addition the COOS explained that the existing Academic Partner Agreements between the University and individual APs required to be updated and HEPPRC had to try to progress these at the same time as the new financial memorandum

COOS

14 Draft Key Financial Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2013/14

FERB noted paper FERB15-011 provided by the UHI Director of Finance that was based on AP statutory accounts. It was noted that the RAG status for Argl College within appendix two should be green.

15 Risk Management

FERB noted paper FERB15-012 comprising the current FE Risk register and Corporate High Level Risk Reports.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Incorporated College Board Member Appointments Process (item 4 refers)

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next meeting – 15th May 2015 (Meeting time to be confirmed. There is a possible opportunity for members to attend a Beechwood campus open day on the same date.