



**AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JULY 2020 @13.00  
FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

Present: **Ian Falconer, Chair**  
**Gwyn Arnold, Member**  
**Alan Doyle, Member**

In attendance:

**Ben Norris, Clerk**  
**Colin Ralph, Executive Officer**  
**Phill Liggett, Facility Manager**

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies from Kate Sayer.

**2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

None.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

- a. Accuracy: 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020 Minutes (**paper 1**) was grammatically correct with minor errors to be amended. Minutes were approved subject to amendments.

**[Action: KS to make amendment on minutes.]**

- b. Matters Arising and Action Tracker as at 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 (**paper2**) – it was noted that some of the items were not yet due so should not be highlighted if this is the case.
- i. 18-19/1.5cii – the commissioning of an internal auditor to begin some work on data/fraud control will commence once access to the building is more accessible. All items on the Action tracker referring to internal audit are to be merged.
  - ii. 19-20/1.4a – a full review of the committee structure is underway and will go to the Board of Directors in August. This will include the formalising of the Executive Team. A proposal to create a Health and Safety Committee is being considered.
  - iii. 19-20/1.6a – Calendars of business – planning the annual work of all the main committees is ongoing and has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. The business of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee will be cross-referenced to the recent CUC guidance.
  - iv. 19-20/2.4a – Stakeholder needs analysis – work is ongoing and further consideration into Futureworks' stakeholders is needed.
  - v. 19-20/2.4a – Strategic plan – work is currently underway on developing this document.
  - vi. 19-20/3.4a - Board Effectiveness Review – the latest review of progress will be presented at the next meeting.
  - vii. 19-20/3.5 – Risk management processes – the formal documentation of this work has been postponed due to COVID-19. However, the Committee noted that a clear risk-based approach has been evident in the response to the pandemic, demonstrated clearly by the facilities team in their management of the return to work plan. This positive work should be reported back to the Board of Directors.
  - viii. 19-20/3.8a – Financial Director to invite internal auditor to a future meeting of the A&RA committee – this was noted by the Financial Director.



- ix. 19-20/3.8a – Financial Director to include forecast outturn within quarterly management accounts – this was included at the last meeting of the Board of Directors and will be presented in future meetings.
- x. 19-20/3.9 – Chair to provide a template plan for what should be overseen annually by the A&RA committee – template now exists and progress to be discussed in this meeting.

**[Action: all complete actions to be removed from the Action Tracker document. Combine all Internal Audit actions. Reformat actions which are not yet due in Action Tracker.]**

**[Action: Secretary to reformat Board Effectiveness Review document for next meeting.]**

#### ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION, DISCUSSION AND/OR RESOLUTION:

##### 4. COMMISSIONING ASSURANCE:

- a. ARAC Annual Report - Progress has been made by the VP and FD and a first draft is expected to be distributed in the coming weeks. The group discussed the arrangements for ensuring the quality of data submissions to regulatory bodies and the importance of clear channels of communication for delivering data to the Board. The Vice Principal is to draft a separate report to the Board, to include a section on data quality, which will be available to the Committee at its next meeting. The committee will underpin each of the five main assurance statements required in its Annual Report with examples of how that assurance has been given.
- b. External Audit – the Finance Director reported back to the ARAC committee about the conclusion of the External Audit tender process. It is proposed that the current external auditor be maintained for this academic year plus two additional years, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee recommends their appointment on this basis to the Board of Directors. One of the other auditors who submitted a tender is to be kept in contact with, and may be utilised for specialised projects going forward.

#### RECEIVING ASSURANCE:

##### 5. OTHER ASSURANCE REPORTS RECEIVED SINCE LAST MEETING:

- a. Summary of regulatory guidance from OfS – the proposed temporary condition Z3 and its potential effect on Futureworks was discussed. The Committee noted that Futureworks was not thought likely to be in breach of the condition. With reference to the new student intake, a risk-based approach is being utilised and the provision of additional academic support is being investigated. Regarding other OfS updates, Prevent visits at Higher Education Institutes are currently suspended due to COVID-19 social distancing measures. The Committee was assured that any issues raised by OfS documentation that were relevant to the A&RA and the Board of Directors had been noted and mitigation demonstrated.
- b. COVID-19, Implications and planning for September 2020 – the Facility Manager detailed the risk-based approach used towards building and facility access, and this was demonstrated in the documentation provided (**papers 6a-d**). To date, all targets have been met and clear communication channels continue through the COVID Risk Management Team to the Executive Team. The Accountable Officer (Principal) reports that there have been no events of concern since the campus opened. A standardised approach to hardware and software support for students is being



sought. The Committee was satisfied by the thoroughness of the approach demonstrated and that appropriate controls were set and regular monitoring and feedback was taking place.

The Committee discussed the importance of ensuring consistently high academic quality standards. It was noted that this had the potential to impact more significantly on students with learning disabilities. Assurance of academic quality should be given to the Board of Directors by the Academic Board.

The ongoing review of the student complaints process is being undertaken with the COVID-19 crisis in mind and in accordance with OfS/CMA guidance. The risk of the adverse impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of staff and students was noted. Mental health counselling provision within staff private health cover is to be bolstered and will be communicated to staff. The Committee noted that the Principal was about to send a formal communication to all staff on this issue. The Committee welcomed this timely action, which would be appreciated in these difficult circumstances.

- c. CUC Higher Education Audit Committee Code of Practice – the Committee discussed the content of the report and the extent to which it should be adopted by Futureworks. GA and FD to present advice on implications of CUC compliance to the Board of Directors in August.

**[Action: Clerk to consider sending a regular summary of OfS updates to all staff]**

**[Action: Academic Board to give assurance to the Board of Directors that academic quality will be monitored and evaluated throughout the ongoing crisis. The A&RA committee to receive draft of data assurance report to the Board of Directors at next meeting in September.]**

**[Action: Board of Directors to evaluate the extent to which the updated CUC Code should be adopted.]**

**[Action: Principal to email to staff regarding mental health support provision.]**

#### **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY:**

#### **REPORTING ASSURANCE:**

##### **6. ASSURANCES**

- a. A&RA Chair's report: a workplan for what should be overseen across the 20-21 year has been deferred to the next meeting due to COVID-19.
- b. Committee self-evaluation – the Committee is to complete a self-evaluation after the Board of Directors has reviewed the CUC document in August.

**[Action: Chair to forward on workplan to Secretary.]**

##### **7. FURTHER ASSURANCES:**

- a. External Activities Policy/Outside Work Policy - The draft policy was presented and discussed, with some suggestions made by the Committee. A revised draft will come back to a future meeting. A register of staff external activities could be held and updated annually in line with DAPs requirements.
- b. Prevent Review and Risk Assessment/Action Plan – significant work has been done on these documents and processes which are now more accessible. Staff training is underway. External speakers and subject titles are to be logged as a monitoring mechanism. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee agreed to assure the Board of Directors that the Prevent Action Plan and Risk Assessment addresses OfS requirements and seems proportionate.

##### **8. REVIEW OF MEETING AND MATTERS FOR REPORTING TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**



All matters for reporting to the Board of Directors were covered in the body of the meeting.

**9. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

The next scheduled meeting of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee is:  
22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 @ 10.00 in Main Meeting Room and via Teams.