



**AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE
ACTIONS AND KEY DECISIONS OF THE MEETING**

Meeting Date and Time:	Thursday 28 th March 2024 at 11.30am
Location:	Futureworks and via Teams
Present:	Ian Falconer, Chair
	David McIntyre, Member
	Gwyn Arnold, Member
	Prof. David Vaughan, Member
In attendance:	Alan Doyle, Finance Director
	Ben Norris (Clerk)
	Phill Liggett, Facilities Manager
	Kate Sayer, Secretary

No.	ACTIONS
1	3-year plan for Capital Investment, alongside business planning cycle to be presented to June meeting of ARAC. (3b-1)
2	Summary of the changes in the admissions process, areas for improvement and the current application numbers/conversion rate to be circulated to ARAC before its next meeting. (3b-2)
3	Risk Management Team to consider adding the admissions process as an academic risk on the Risk Register. (3b-3)
4	Executive to consider how independent assurance over academic quality might be enhanced. (3civ-1)
5	Vice Principal to circulate the UKVI application to the committee and present a report detailing the planned processes for dealing with international students to the next meeting in June. (4a-1)
6	[This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.] (4b-1)
7	FD to ask UNIAC to undertake its Cyber Review as soon as possible and draft Scope to presented to the next meeting in June. (5a-1)
8	Board Assurance Framework to be expanded to cover other areas for which assurance is required including academic quality, timeliness of Academic Board actions, capital investment and procurement programmes and UKVI risks. (5a-2)
9	[This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.] (5b-1)
10	[This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.] (5b-2)
11	Scope of UNIAC's governance review to reflect ARAC comments. (6a-1)

No.	KEY DECISIONS
1	Actions which have run past their original deadlines should be given new deadlines wherever possible. See 3b for new dates for overdue actions. (3b)
2	Full detailed Recommendations Tracker to come to every meeting going forward. (3cv)



AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28th MARCH 2024 @ 11.30am
at FUTUREWORKS and via Teams
For General Release

Present: **Ian Falconer, Chair**
Gwyn Arnold, Member
Dave McIntyre, Member
Prof. David Vaughan, Member

In attendance: **Alan Doyle, Finance Director**
Ben Norris, Clerk
Phill Liggett, Facilities Manager
Kate Sayer, Secretary

1. WELCOME BY THE CHAIR AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed the members and set out the order of the meeting. All committee members were present. [This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.]

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- a. Minutes of 14.12.24 for accuracy – the minutes were accepted in terms of content and accuracy.
- b. Action Tracker – the completed actions were signed off by the committee. Actions which have run past their original deadlines should be given new deadlines wherever possible. The following actions were discussed in more detail:
[ARAC]Jan-23 | 5a(3-1) - the fixed assets register is to be created over the summer by the facilities team. ARAC approved a new deadline of 31st August 2024.
[ARAC]Dec-23 | 4b(1) – a 3-year rolling procurement programme is to be created over the summer, and should be completed by September 2024. It will detail the replacement of computers and non-IT equipment (the latter being completed by the end of May 2024). The Finance Director confirmed that a lot of equipment had already been purchased this academic year, which should hopefully help smooth out any issues with missing/faulty equipment. ARAC requested that a formal 3-year plan for capital be presented to the June meeting, alongside details of the business planning cycle.
ARAC noted that the new Procurement Act 2023 which comes into effect in October 2024 does not affect Futureworks.

Several of the completed actions were discussed in more detail:

[ARAC]Dec-23 | 3b(1) - ARAC noted that the admissions processes had been reviewed in relation to how they would be able to process 5% more student applications per year, but not tested for how they would be able to process significantly higher numbers of students because that was not considered to be a realistic scenario at the present time. ARAC was informed that a timelier interview process, and a smoother admissions workflow, would enable the admissions process to be able to cope well with a gradual increase in student numbers. A sales function has been re-established, which was missing in the last academic admission cycle. [This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.]

ARAC asked for a summary of all the changes in admissions and areas for



improvement alongside the current application numbers/conversion rate to be circulated before its next meeting.

c. Matters Arising:

- i. Committee papers – ARAC welcomed the earlier circulation of papers and would continue to accept any urgent matters that may arise within the 14-day period under AOB.
- ii. Self-Evaluations of other committees – ARAC noted that the Academic Board felt that there was an issue with its actions not being shared in a timely manner but was reassured that since that committee was now being supported by the Head of Academic Quality and Standards, this issue was gradually being resolved.
- iii. Risk Management Strategy – the Committee was content for this Strategy to be reviewed every 2 years.
- iv. Board Assurance Framework – the Committee agreed that the issues identified in the BAF accurately reflected the key areas of risk for an academic institution and noted that substantial assurance was planned for financial areas, but questioned the lack of planned independent assurance for academic quality. UCLan does not monitor the taught curriculum closely and the QAA no longer monitor this area, which is a sector wide issue. The Executive was asked to consider how this assurance gap might be addressed.
- v. Recommendations Tracker – the full tracker document had not been part of the original Committee pack but tabled at the Chair’s request. ARAC was reassured by the thoroughness of the tracker and asked that it be presented at every meeting going forward. Members suggested that adding a priority column to the tracker could be useful and target dates should be set and updated if necessary. Also, that this document be reviewed regularly by the Executive Team. The Bison Assist actions Disability Access Risk Assessment | Mar-22 | 2 and Disability Access Risk Assessment | Mar-22 | 15 will be completed before the next meeting - the others relate to fire safety improvements that can only be made at the time of a large-scale building improvement. ARAC was reassured that Futureworks’ building safety arrangements are legally compliant and the outstanding items that remain are classed as very low priority. It therefore agreed that the risk has been addressed and the actions can be closed off. Members suggested that the Recommendations Tracker be used as a template for the Operational Plan which the Vice Principal reported was being developed and would be presented to the Board of Directors on 9th May 2024.
- vi. Review of Staff Handbook – due to some recent changes in employment law, this document is currently being reviewed by Nat West Mentor Digital. ARAC noted that the update will be completed by the end of August 2024.

[Action: 3-year plan for Capital Investment, alongside business planning cycle to be presented to June meeting of ARAC.] (3b-1)

[Action: Summary of the changes in the admissions process, areas for improvement and the current application numbers/conversion rate to be circulated to ARAC before its next meeting.] (3b-2)

[Action: Add the admissions process as an academic risk on the Risk Register.] (3b-3)

[Action: Executive to consider how independent assurance over academic quality might be enhanced.] (3civ-1)

4. COMMISSIONING ASSURANCE:

- a. Matters arising from meetings of other committees – [This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.]
The Vice Principal reported that Futureworks had been granted UKVI student sponsor status on 26/03/24. ARAC was briefed on the application process and the low-risk approach that was taken. [This section contains commercially sensitive information



and has been redacted.]. The risks and administrative load have therefore been assessed as low. ARAC asked to see the risk assessment underpinning the application and a summary of who would be responsible for what etc at its next meeting in June. ARAC noted that a new strategic risk regarding UKVI is to be added to the Risk Register when an international student is expected to register.

- b. Risk Register – ARAC noted that there were no movements in the existing strategic risks on the Risk Register. It found the summary to be helpful although it could be strengthened by identifying who was accountable for checking and monitoring each item. It was mentioned that there was a slight misalignment between the Risk Register and items on meeting Action Trackers, which are not necessarily seen by the same people. However, the department heads see the Risk Register so this should filter through to other staff members. Members suggested that the highest risk items on the Risk Register could be used to form part of the Operational Plan. [This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.]

[Action: Vice Principal to circulate the UKVI application to the committee and present a report detailing the planned processes for dealing with international students to the next meeting in June.] (4a-1)

[Action: This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.] (4b-1)

5. RECEIVING ASSURANCE:

- a. Assurance update – [This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.] ARAC noted that the CMA Review is to be done internally and requested an update on progress to its next meeting.
An internal review had also been carried out at the request of the Executive Team into the Tracking of the Student Fee Payment Process. This is currently being finalised will be presented to the next ARAC meeting.
The Committee discussed what other areas of assurance could be needed, and concluded the following should be added to the Board Assurance Framework:
 - Academic Quality and how the Academic Board might be assured that it's previous concerns about unaddressed improvement actions had been resolved
 - Capital Investment and Procurement Programmes
 - UKVI risks.
- b. Financial Update – [This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.]
- c. Review of regulatory and data return compliance – ARAC was assured by the update.
- d. Update on DAPs – the timeline with milestones was provided with the papers. This is not a live document, therefore it does not clearly show an accurate picture of progress. However the DAPs Steering Group is to be chaired by the Executive Officer going forward, and it is hoped that this will tighten up processes and documentation. A larger more granular worksheet is kept by the steering group which details all the actions and activities required in order to apply for DAPs. [This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.] Progress has been made on staff appraisals which should be ready to commence in the coming weeks. ARAC welcomed the assurance to be provided going forward, but noted there was a lack of independent assurance for such a key initiative.

[Action: FD to ask UNIAC to carry out its Cyber Review as soon as possible and draft Scope to be presented to the next meeting in June.] (5a-1)

[Action: Board Assurance Framework to be expanded to cover other areas for which assurance is required including academic quality, timeliness of Academic Board actions, capital investment and procurement programmes and UKVI risks.] (5a-2)

[Action: This section contains commercially sensitive information and has been redacted.] (5b-1)



[Action: Future Quarterly Management Accounts should be more timely, and include detailed forecasts and variance analysis at budget holder level.] (5b-2)

6. MANAGING ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS:

- a. External Governance Review – the proposed Terms of Reference for a Governance Review by UNIAC was considered by the Committee. ARAC noted that there was no mention of looking at people culture/mix of skills/diversity etc within the Board of Directors, nor the efficiency and effectiveness of communications between the Board and its committees highlighted in the latest Board minutes. ARAC urged that this review should be thorough and carried out by a senior member of UNIAC’s team. ARAC approved the Terms of Reference, subject to the comments outlined above.

[Action: Scope of UNIAC’s governance review to reflect ARAC comments.] (6a-1)

7. REPORTING ASSURANCE:

N/A

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

N/A

9. AOB:

None

10. ITEMS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION:

N/A

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Next meeting is on Tuesday 11th June 2024 @11.30am