CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP
Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee
Tuesday 10 November 2020, 6 pm by Zoom

Members Present: Colin Smith (Chair), Angela Drisdale Gordon, Nick Bell (CEO), Tony Johnston, Matthew Green, Desmond Bishop (staff governor), Temitope Alebiosu (student governor), Ofofonono Iwa (student governor).

In attendance: Zoë Lawrence, Stephen Davis, Grethe Woodward, James Wilson, Angela Jackson, Lynne Graham*
*for relevant agenda item only

A	Procedural
1	**Welcome and apologies for absence** CS welcomed members to the meeting. There was 100% attendance, no apologies. Student governors were introduced and welcomed to their first meeting. Angela Jackson, the newly appointed Vice Principal, was also introduced.
2	**Declarations of interests in agenda items** No interests were declared.
3	i. **Approve minutes of the Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee of 8 June 2020** *(The minutes were circulated in advance)* These were approved as an accurate record for signing. ii. **Matters Arising** The item on Business Development has been deferred to a future meeting of the committee. Due to the changes in priorities and workload as a result of coronavirus it had not been possible to bring a paper to this meeting. iii. **Request to raise Grey Box items** None were raised so item assumed as read for information.
4	**Terms of Reference** ZL explained that the ToR were reviewed every two years. This time it had coincided with the new Strategic Plan which had been approved in July. The ToR had been redrafted to link directly with the strategic themes and underpinning legislation. The function of the committee had not changed though there had been formatting and drafting improvements. The ToR in draft had been shared with the GSR Committee and SLT prior to coming to this committee. ADG commented that the EDI aspects were not sufficiently apparent within the TOR though she noted that EDI was an underpinning element. ZL agreed to review them in light of this point. Pending these slight amendments, Members were content to recommend the ToR to the Corporation for approval at the December meeting.

	Strategic Matters
5	i. **Curriculum KPIs - Dashboard** *(Paper provided in advance but had been late)* JW set out the main points of the paper particularly on attrition which was 6% above that of the previous year pre-census which would impact on the funding position. Mitigating

actions were already underway working with borough councils to re-engage NEETs back into education. The number of NEETs between the ages of 16 – 25 claiming universal credit had grown by 300% during the pandemic. Adult attrition and headcount was currently stable.

CS enquired if the position on attrition was being experienced by other colleges. This was thought to be the case, and it was known that some other London Colleges had not met their enrolment targets for 16-18 year olds. CS asked what the engagement strategies were if other college were also targeting their re-engagement efforts at the same pool of individuals? SD said that UCG's digital presence was strong, a number of online open days were being arranged with significant numbers already committed to attend. It was considered that the demand was there, but it was necessary to extend the reach through the boroughs and DWP. Benchmarking data through MIDES was expected soon which would be able to provide some helpful context across the sector.

TJ challenged the level of attrition particularly for 16-18 year olds as high – 19%. SD explained that some pre-census attrition was expected and this was usually in the region of 13%. There had been an increase of 6%. Various reasons for this increase were being considered, including any deficiencies in the online enrolment platform, whether this was sufficiently personalised, and the lack of social interaction in college due to coronavirus restrictions. The college environment this year was significantly different.

TA asked what was being done to engage students more generally. She was mindful that many did not prefer online learning and wanted more interaction in the classroom. She felt that some subjects including maths, was difficult to teach online.

GW acknowledged that the college buildings were not the usually lively places due to the limits being put on the number of people in the buildings at any one time. Contact was being made to those students who had withdrawn to understand why, but also to see if it was possible to re-engage them. The College was keen to involve students in how best to engage and had set up focus groups to work on this.

JW explained that the E&M attendance data was currently incomplete as it had not been possible to extrapolate this data from the wider attendance data at the moment. Attendance ranged from 75 – 89% depending on the career cluster which was consistent with previous years. Sickness, isolation and authorised absence were not included in the attendance percentages. These reflected the actual numbers in lessons (online and physical).

TJ asked to what degree it was considered that digital poverty was impacting on attendance and attrition levels. JW said that the provision of laptops to 16-18 year olds had been brought forward before census point, and in future years there may be benefit in not waiting, though it was difficult to know the number of laptops to order. 16-18 year olds were receiving a laptop on loan.

TA asked why only 16-18 year olds were automatically issued with a laptop on loan and not adult students. SD explained that to some extent this was a resourcing and prioritisation issue. 16-18 year olds were below the age of participation and needed to be in training or education. However, £800k had been allocated to the bursary scheme to allow eligible adult students to purchase a laptop which they would own.

		OI asked what options were available to adult students who did not meet the eligibility criteria to buy a laptop. SD said it may be possible for these students to purchase a laptop from the college at a significantly discounted rate, but acknowledged that there would be some students that would fall outside of the criteria. The position would be kept under review, but as much as possible had been done to provide the maximum digital access with the resources available at the current time.

ii. Academic Risk Register
(Risk Register provided in advance)
SD presented the academic risk register. He explained that it was mostly similar to the previous version, though a new risk had been included for the impact of coronavirus. CS noted risk 3.2 and asked what progress had been made. SD said that they were in the process of appointing 14 curriculum managers but the number of applications received for these post was quite low which may hinder the appointment process. ADG asked where the posts were being advertised. This was through the Guardian, FE Jobs and other appropriate forums. DB expressed concern that managers were not coming forward from within the organisation. SD reported that a third of the applications received were from internal applicants.

TA asked about the reduction in face to face learning as a result of coronavirus and that there was a risk that this was impacting on achievement and student experience. She explained that the contact time with her teacher had reduced from three hours to two hours with increased independent learning. She challenged why most school children were attending school face to face on a full time basis, but that the college was not offering this. JW said that the college was doing its best to provide a balance between protecting the college population from coronavirus outbreaks, and providing some face to face teaching. He explained that it was being kept under review and welcomed students' feedback. Classes were split between two sessions with teachers delivering the content twice. The independent work should be specified and returned for marking.

TJ queried the scoring prior and post mitigating action/control measure and whether these were sufficiently reflecting the changes. SD said that he would reconsider them. |

	Teaching, Learning and Skills	
5	i.	**Self-Assessment Review**
(Paper circulated in advance)
GW presented the SAR which had been moderated by governors on 26 October. She explained that at that point finalised data had not been available, which was now included in this draft. The overall grade remained at 3 (requires improvement) which had not changed since the inspection in November 2019. The coronavirus lockdown had impacted on some areas which were noted. The strengths and areas for improvement had been reflected in the QIP. The actions within the QIP would be completed in due course and brought back to the Committee. DB challenged why coronavirus was not an area for improvement in the QIP. GW explained that this was an environmental factor that the college had to respond to, not a weakness, and the response to it would be included in the actions.

The EDI data was welcomed which would be analysed at all levels and incorporated into the curriculum level QIPs to tackle areas where pass rates for certain student groups was lower than average. TJ raised some queries on the data comparisons, and the national rates |

included in the ethnicity data table. He also asked to see this data for the past 5 years to be able to identify trends. ADG echoed this view that the trends and trajectories were important. JW said that it would be possible to provide this information though some data may not align which would need to be taken into account. Presentation through graphs may also be useful.

Clarity was sought from members on how the SAR, QIP and Learning and Teaching Operational Delivery Plan (LTOP) related to one another. GW explained that the QIP was the annual action plan to address areas of improvement identified by the SAR. The LTOP provided the longer-term 3 year plan to underpin the strategic theme, and to achieve the Ofsted Good. ADG expressed concern about the complexity, and that the multiple levels were potentially confusing. GW explained that the development of QIPs was a two way process in that that curriculum level QIPs would inform the UCG one, and they would have different levels of detail.

Members were content that the SAR accurately reflected the position of the organisation and were content to recommend it to the Corporation for approval at the December meeting.

ii. **Teaching & Learning Operational Delivery Plan**
(Paper circulated in advance)
This had been covered under the previous item.

iii. **Achievement Rates – Update (R14) 2019/20**
(Paper circulated in advance)
JW presented his factual paper on the achievement rates. This included detailed tables of achievement for students with protected characteristics. JW explained that further analysis of this data would be completed at curriculum and course level to identify any patterns and actions to address them. ADG said that she was pleased to see the data and the approach being taken to respond to students who may not be achieving at the level that they should be. It was hoped that this could be further considered at the EDI Working Group meeting later in the month. GW said that the college was also intending to analyse data for students in receipt of free school meals and looked after children. TJ asked if it was possible to consider gender differences, as there are gender issues in some communities.

iv. **Value Added**
(Paper provided in advance)
SD described the premise of his paper on Value Added, and how this approach to consider the starting point and progress to be made for each individual student should have a positive impact on outcomes for students and student experience. He explained that there currently was not a systematic approach to VA, and that Melanie Guymer had been seconded to take this work forward. It would involve changes to how teaching was delivered in the teaching space. Members noted the paper and looked forward to receiving updates on progress.

v. **Ofsted Interim Visit**
(Paper provided in advance)
GW explained that Ofsted had paused all their inspections as a result of the coronavirus lockdown, but they were making non-judgmental supportive visits to all colleges graded as RI. They were principally assessing how the curriculum had been adapted in response to the pandemic, how this had met the needs of learners and safeguarding. They were not visiting

	lessons in their reviews, only meeting with managers. MGr and CS echoed the supportive approach from their experience at other providers, and that the focus was on sharing best practice. TJ noted that during the first few weeks in lockdown snap polls had been completed to get initial student feedback. He asked if something similar had been done at the beginning of this term. GW said that snap polls had not been done, but the QDP survey would be issued towards the end of November with results due in time for the Corporation meeting in December. The survey had been adapted to include coronavirus questions.
6	**AOB** **i. Partnerships and Subcontracting** *(Paper circulated in advance)* LG provided a short commentary on her paper which set out UCG's approach to subcontracting provision. This included the number and range of subcontracting partners, safeguarding processes, due diligence and external audit. ADG asked if there were plans to further increase the subcontracting element. LG said that a due diligence process was currently underway with a further contractor for expansion, but the degree of fit between the two organisations was important. TJ was aware of concerns from the ESFA for subcontracting provision and asked what the business case was for it; what were the benefits of subcontracting for UCG? LG said that it expanded our geographical spread, enabling learning from wider and more hard-to-reach communities who may not normally be able to access college learning. ESFA concerns had centred around full subcontracting without sufficiently robust procedures to ensure VFM and quality of teaching. There were also advantages in having a supply chain to be able to tender and deliver on larger contracts. SD added that the funding arrangements now for AEB in London may mean that subcontracted provision reduces over time. He was of the view that colleges added value in the partnerships by ensuring safeguarding processes and improving student experience. **ii. Exclusions** GW provided a verbal update that there had only been one exclusion this term to date. **iii. Complaints** *(Paper circulated in advance)* GW explained that the number of complaints was generally similar to that received the previous year, though there were 18 more, and more had been upheld. The majority of complaints concerned the quality of service. A new complaints logging process had been put in place from Sept 2020 which would enable improved analysis and use of complaints feedback which would be used in performance reviews. Complaints data would be used to improve student experience. TJ asked how many complaints concerned distance learning and the impact of coronavirus lockdown. GW said that there were complaints received about lockdown particularly about access to practical lessons and difficulties accessing materials online. NB said that complaints had also been received about centre assessed grades. **iv. Link Governor Protocol** *(Paper circulated in advance)*

	ZL explained that this draft protocol had been developed with curriculum colleagues. It set out the arrangements for link governors, what the purpose was and what it was not. She was seeking the Committee's endorsement to take this forward. Members commented how link governors were best practice in well performing colleges and the benefits of the arrangements for them as individuals but also for managers in understanding more about governance. The informal approach was supported to enable governors' flexibility depending on how much time they had available for activities. The Committee were in support of the protocol. **Student Governors** Members welcomed the contribution of the student governors at this meeting as it was found to be very insightful. It was hoped that the student members would be able to attend all future meetings. It was suggested that a specific regular item on student feedback be included on the agenda.
7	**Date of next meeting** 2 February 2020 Meeting closed at 8.27 pm

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 11/11/2020

SIGNED: …………………………………   Date:
Colin Smith
TLS Chair

Actions

ref	Action	Lead	Status
4	To review the ToR for EDI focus and include for recommendation to the Corporation at the December meeting	ZL	Complete
5i	For the SAR to be included on the Corporation agenda for approval at the December meeting.	ZL	Complete
5v	Result of QDP Student Survey to be included on Corporation agenda in December.	ZL	On agenda
6	For a regular item on student feedback to be included on the agenda for future meetings.	ZL	Take forward by Chair