

CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP
Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee
Thursday 09 November 2023, 6 pm by Zoom

Members Present: Colin Smith (Chair), Stephen Davis (CEO/GP), Tony Johnston, Max Maalimey (staff governor), Grethe Woodward, Liz Jones, Desmond Bishop (staff governor), Gashtiar Muhamadi (student governor), Tim Ryan, Tanya Rose.

In attendance: Zoë Lawrence, James Wilson, Angela Jackson, Nicola McLean.

Procedural	
1	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Ana Chimbembe (student governor).</p>
2	<p>Declarations of interests in agenda items</p> <p>No interests were declared.</p>
3	<p>i. Approve minutes of the Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee of 14 June 2023 <i>(The minutes were circulated in advance)</i> The minutes were approved as an accurate record.</p> <p>ii. Matters Arising The actions from the previous meeting were covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p>iii. Review of Terms of Reference (ToR) The proposed changes to the ToR were agreed for recommendation to the Corporation for approval.</p>

CIRRICULUM FOCUS	
4	<p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>i. Curriculum Presentation – Foundation Learning NMc gave a short presentation on Foundation Learning setting out the actions that had been taken since the last full Ofsted Inspection in November 2022. There was a range of actions but it centred largely around the recruitment and retention of staff and their training and development. CS asked what strategies helped the most in improving recruitment and retention. NMc explained that it was of benefit to have a pool of staff to work flexibility on a casual basis, but for these to be directly employed by the college and therefore able to access training and development opportunities more easily. She said this created a better sense of loyalty with those employees impacting retention.</p> <p>TR asked what the reasons were behind the high levels of staff turnover. NMc said that in the majority of cases staff were poached by special schools who were able to offer higher pay. The skills needed were quite niche and sometimes difficult to find. UCG aims to offer progression opportunities and also considers pay elevation to retain staff.</p> <p>TJ commented on the challenges in receiving the funding for high needs learners from the relevant London boroughs. NMc confirmed these difficulties and that every effort was being made working with finance colleagues to complete funding forms and invoice earlier</p>

	<p>to prevent delays in securing the funding. She explained that the invoices were often challenged, due to the lack of recognition of the level of funding needed to support certain individuals. Support for deaf students was quite expensive for example. AJ confirmed that the tensions with funding from the London boroughs was significant.</p> <p>GW thought the plans supported staff well, and asked what impact had been made to date and what feedback had been received from staff. NMc said that in the lesson observation window all staff improved. Additionally at the recent monitoring visit when interviewed staff could articulate their training support and how it was making an impact to their practice, including the role of mentors. Members welcomed this update on foundation learning, and thanked NMc for her presentation.</p>
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Teaching, Learning and Skills	
5	<p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>i. Self-Assessment Report</p> <p>SD referred to the SAR validation meeting which had taken place on Friday 03 November which was attended by 8 governors including 5 from this committee. He reminded members that it had been 12 months since the last full inspection and following this the grade for high needs learners had been increased from 3 to 2 in this year’s SAR. TJ asked when SD thought the next full inspection would be following the monitoring visit in October, and the timing of next year’s SAR in relation to that. SD said that he anticipates that the SAR would be prepared earlier in the academic year, but would need to bring in destination data, VA and achievement. The timing of the next full inspection was uncertain.</p> <p>Members commented positively on the SAR process as it brought together the SLT with the next tier of management who performed well at the validation meeting particularly on quality of education. TJ said that he thought those who presented their areas of the SAR did so with depth, concisely and were confident in their knowledge. Overall, it was a good meeting and valuable practice on the narrative ahead of an Ofsted inspection.</p> <p>The Committee resolved to recommend the Self-Assessment Review to the Corporation for approval.</p> <p>ii. Student Achievement 2022/23</p> <p>JW was now able to report the final position which was very marginally up on that reported to the Corporation on 18 October. It was noted that this final outcome was much closer to predictions than previous years. Some curriculum areas had performed better than others. CS asked what actions had taken place to improve the predictions. JW said that it should be noted that for adults there were in the region of 15,000 enrolments so it was not always possible for all these to be accurate, however it was largely as a result of scrutiny of the students’ work, which had been sampled and checked with increased rigor. GW commented on the movement being in the right direction and commented whether the distance from the NARs would present an issue at inspection. JW acknowledged this in that not enough students were achieving at the end of their course and the increase needed to be larger. This was thought to be possibly more of an issue in English and maths. TJ noted the improvement for the Health, Well-being and Care curriculum area and asked if lessons learnt were being shared. JW confirmed this. MM said that in some areas there was a reduction in teacher administration workload which had enabled more time to be spent with students, plus the focused CPD had been impactful. SD explained that the benefit of</p>

accurate predictions was that the resources and interventions could be appropriately applied. Underestimating achievement through predictions was as unhelpful as overpredicting. He particularly congratulated maths & English for their predictions which were very accurate. This was particularly challenging with exam-based subjects. The support from the Advance Practitioner Group was also beneficial.

iii. Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

JW explained that the college had committed to providing an hour of CPD each week. This had been in place for three years, and was a considerable investment for the college in its permanent teaching staff. The paper provided evaluated the progress made since the introduction of this CPD hour and proposed next steps. The CPD hour offered a comprehensive programme of CPD including a subscription to ETF courses, and linked with the developmental lesson observation process which had started to be rolled out (pending agreement with recognised trade unions). CS asked if apprenticeship assessors were included. JW said that they were outside of the remit as this only included teachers directly employed by the college. CS asked what measures had been put in place to assess the impact of the CPD. JW said that it was beginning to show impact through a consistency of approach which was noted at the recent monitoring visit, though not in every class. Overall, it was felt that the changes were sustained. TR offered information about the AoC and Guilds providing technical resources for teachers in plumbing and electrical that the college may want to utilise. GW thanked JW for the good quality papers, and asked when it was expected that the number of TLA development coaches would increase? JW said that recruitment was taking place currently and this was expected to be implemented by the New Year, but would also take into account student numbers and affordability.

LJ asked for more detail on the Advance Practitioner Group (APG) and the role that they offered. JW explained that their role had evolved more recently to focus on course management, structure and delivery with the TLA development coaches focusing on teaching and learning in the classroom. The APG were an internal group who provided intervention support in a curriculum area that required improvement or was considered could perform better. There was an opportunity cost with these arrangements as remission was given to lessen teaching load of those in the APG. It was noted that UCG teachers had less teaching load than those at other London colleges. LJ applauded the investment in teaching and learning and asked how differentiation was being taken forward, and how this CPD responded to the Ofsted feedback at inspection. JW explained that the CDP centred around the six main priorities identified through the inspection process. He was satisfied that differentiation was adequately addressed, and that the trauma informed learning was part of that. Areas of improvement identified from learning walks were followed up and training support provided. A community of learning was developing. SD reminded the committee that three out of four aspects of provision were considered to be good, with only provision for 16-19 year olds which was graded RI. This was the area of focus to bring it level with the other provision areas. AJ confirmed that differentiation was a key element of lesson observations with meeting individual learner needs being paramount.

TRo welcomed the paper and asked about continuity and building on the CPD offer to retain engagement. She asked how UCG was demonstrating the evidence base of CPD impact. JW explained that the CPD offering included a number of set pieces for all teaching staff, and provided examples of these, together with bespoke units which individuals could take for their personal development. He also explained the recent improvement to the lesson observation process and how this was now more consistent and comparable. TRo asked how this approach was woven into the performance development review (PDR)

	<p>process. SD commented that until relatively recently there was not a systematic PDR process in place. This has now been put in place for the whole college staff which created a top down and bottom up approach to personal development. This was enabling a more sophisticated and professional approach to developing staff and created wider metrics to evaluate impact. Members welcomed the detailed paper and interesting discussion.</p> <p>iv. Enrolment and retention</p> <p>JW provided a summary of enrolment numbers, and that following census attrition was 12% which was an expected level. More enrolments for ESOL, (which were termly) and other subjects would be taken during the year. Overall, the enrolment position was considered to be satisfactory. JW explained a decision taken not to enrol a group of fresh start students in October, as this would not have been in the college’s interests regarding the safety of staff and students on balance. A further fresh start enrolment would take place in January. MM welcomed the decision that had been taken on this. TJ commented on the challenges managers face with certain groups of students. He also enquired about the non-enrolled research which was usually undertaken, and whether the learnings from that have increased the levels of retention. JW confirmed that the learning was useful. Steps had been taken to reinvigorate student induction, keep warm approaches for applicants and training had been provided for interviews. LJ asked if it was possible to provide the national attrition percentage for comparison purposes.</p>
6	<p>Student Engagement</p> <p>i. Exclusions and Complaints</p> <p>Complaints – The number of complaints this year had fallen, including the number that were formal and of those complaints which were upheld. Most related to the behaviour of staff. TJ asked what sanctions were put in place for staff should a complaint against them be upheld. AJ said that this would depend on the nature of the complaint, but options may include training and support to improve. There would always be an action pending the complaint. Members noted the report.</p> <p>Exclusions – There had been 23 exclusions in 2022/23 which was a reduction on the previous year. Exclusions were always considered as a last resort. Efforts had been put into implementing the Learning and Behaviour policy and making expectations with students very clear. The decline in student behaviour following the covid pandemic was a sector wide issue. TJ asked about the use of knife arches in the college. AJ made it clear that there had not been any knife related incidents on college sites though there had been a very small number offsite near campuses. Knife arches were used on occasions on an ad hoc basis as a deterrent and students reacted positively to their use, reporting that they felt safe within college buildings. Members noted the report.</p> <p>ii. Safeguarding Annual Report</p> <p>This report was discussed briefly at the Corporation meeting on 18 October, but had not been discussed at committee level due to the timing of the meetings. It was on the agenda for this committee to give members the opportunity to raise any other questions. The rise in mental ill health, and the provision of Mental Health and Well-being Offices and Mental Health first-aiders was noted.</p>
7	<p>i. Student Experience and Outcomes BSC</p> <p>Members reviewed the BSC and discussed the executive’s proposed changes to the targets for achievement so that they aligned with the SPH objectives, and also were more realistically achievable. The 3% increase on achievement used the May 2023 CAD</p>

	<p>predictions as its baseline. It was noted that the reset target was still below the national achievement rate. TJ asked if the 3% increase was achievable. JW said that they were currently confident that this target could be met, particularly as they could address areas of weaker performance identified from this year’s results. TR asked if the target was aspirational enough as it was lower than the NARs. SD said that it was important to take into account the attributes of the student cohort post pandemic and that a significant proportion were from deprived backgrounds. This context was important.</p> <p>Members also discussed the proposal to have upheld complaints as the target rather than a target of all complains. The number of complaints received overall would continue to be reported to this committee, that data would not be lost. The proposal to remove exclusions as a target was also discussed as this was considered a poor target. In some cases exclusions were necessary to protect the safety of students and staff in the college, and if used as a target would provide the wrong incentives.</p> <p>The committee resolved to recommend the proposed changes to the BSC targets to the Corporation for approval.</p> <p>ii. Curriculum Operational Plan JW explained how the plan brought together all the elements which had been discussed at this meeting, and that it was being used to monitor progress. It also brought in the elements of the balance score card and risk register. Members welcomed and noted the plan.</p> <p>iii. Risk Register Most of the risk areas had been discussed elsewhere on the agenda in detail. However JW also explained the risks that had been closed out, and that English and maths was no longer separated out, but included in all qualifications for 16-19 year olds. Three risks remained outside the acceptable risk tolerance and included mitigating actions. Members noted the risk register.</p>
8	<p>AoB</p> <p>Admissions Policy AJ presented this policy which had not changed since the version the previous year other than updates to nomenclature. The Committee resolved to approve the Admissions Policy.</p>
9	<p>Date of next meeting Wednesday 24 January 2024</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.06 pm</p>

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 10 November 2023

SIGNED: **Date:**
Colin Smith
TLS Chair