

CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP
Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee
Wednesday 14 June 2023, 6 pm by Zoom

Members Present: Colin Smith (Chair), Angela Drisdale Gordon, Stephen Davis (CEO), Tony Johnston, Max Maalimey (staff governor), Grethe Woodward, Liz Jones, Desmond Bishop.

In attendance: Zoë Lawrence, James Wilson, Angela Jackson, Sal Hamaida (Head of Marketing and Student Recruitment), Lee Boresta (Interim Assistant Principal – ECBE), Gabe Manthorp (Assistant Principal), Claire Collins, Ed Grover (MIS Manager), Melissa Drayson (External Review – Governance).

Procedural	
1	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Patricia Aquino.</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 15 March 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>

CIRRICULUM FOCUS	
4	<p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>i. Accountability Agreement AJ explained that the background to the Accountability Agreement (which was a new DfE requirement) had been discussed at the Corporation meeting in March. The paper from that meeting was included in the grey box for information. AJ presented the draft Accountability Framework to the committee. She described how it responded to the London Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) bringing relevant stakeholders together to tackle a range of skills shortages. UCG cut across two sub-regional areas. The agreement was prepared at a strategic level focusing on increasing the labour market, understanding of the needs of the local unemployed, progression to higher education, and tackling digital exclusion. Once the Corporation had approved the document it would be submitted to the DfE and published on the UCG website. TJ welcomed the document and appreciated the work which had gone into it. He suggested how the visual representation of the campuses could be improved with the inclusion of the drawings of the new Wembley Campus. AJ said that that would be done as part of desk top publishing. The Committee agreed to recommend the Accountability Agreement to the Corporation for approval.</p> <p>ii. Curriculum Presentation – Engineering, Construction and the Built Environment (Willesden) CS introduced LB to the meeting to provide the second in a series of curriculum presentations. These provided opportunities for the committee to triangulate other information being presented, but also understand curriculum developments and hear from wider curriculum staff. LB provided useful background on the context of ECBE, its links with</p>

	<p>industry, use of technologies, integration of maths and English, how trauma informed practice has supported students, and the anticipated improvements in attendance and achievement. He also referred to new grant funding which was enabling new qualifications in green skills, and the recruitment efforts to create a more stable staff base going forward.</p> <p>CS asked what had changed regarding tracking achievement to give confidence in the current predictions. LB said that there was much more rigor involved and the predictions were based on the assessment of completed work and not speculation. GW asked about the adaptations for students mentioned in the presentation and for LB to expand on this. LB explained that more consideration was being given to students social, moral, and domestic circumstances to support them to attend and achieve. He gave an example of trauma informed practice and how the staff worked with the individual student to accommodate their needs and use the skills of the staff, funding availability and training to best effect.</p> <p>TJ asked about the status of the 10 vacant posts and the expected success in being able to appoint to them. LB said that there were 10 posts across Willesden and Kings Cross sites and 5 at Paddington Green which were all now out to advert. Some of the current agency staff were interested in applying, and there had also been some interest from industry applicants. He was expecting a mix of existing teachers and some newer to FE. SD noted the extent to which social support was needed for many students in the current socio-economic environment, and the need to be mindful of ensuring a diverse workforce in ECBE to respond to student cohort diversity.</p> <p>ADG asked if approaches to sharing best practice on attendance had been used across the cluster. LB confirmed this but felt that in many cases attendance was largely to do with the personal circumstances of the learner. LJ asked about the status of the sustainable house. LB confirmed that it was 40% built and was used as much as possible in study programmes for students. He invited governors to visit the Greens Skills Centre to view it. The house would continue to be used to test products by the industry once complete. JW provided some context to ECBE, particularly that it included a wide range of students with complex arrangements. LB had been instrumental in applying for a £500k capital grant which had enabled the development of three comprehensive study spaces with green skills kit.</p> <p>CS thanked LB for his presentation and answers to questions. The Committee appreciated the opportunity to understand more about this area.</p>
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Teaching, Learning and Skills	
5	<p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>i. Predicted Achievement</p> <p>JW explained the current position following the CAD in May providing assurance that the process was much more robust than that of the previous year. Predicted achievement for 16–18-year-old learners was above that of 2021/22 including English and maths, though this lagged behind the national rate (NR). Excluding English and maths vocational qualifications show an increase of 7.2%. Adult learners were showing a marginal increase of 0.8% including English and maths. This did not include the additional enrolments in term three. Nine areas have shown good improvement. Overall, compared to other London colleges UCG had improved in the NRs and was no longer bottom.</p>

TJ thanked JW for the paper and asked how confident he was that the momentum would continue, and whether the NRs would be reached. JW said that it was important to recognise the issues for English and maths pre-pandemic and then the issues with engagement in vocational qualifications during the pandemic which had taken some time to recover from. There was a good improvement now in vocational qualifications though English and maths was still a risk due to the large numbers of learners. JW hoped for a continued trajectory and that realistic improvement targets should be set. JW explained that the intention was to continue with the current plan of action through another academic cycle to give time for the benefits to embed. He was confident of improvements but less sure on pace. It was noted that those who do not achieve their qualification still often arrive at a positive destination after leaving UCG. This was 90% last year.

LJ asked how UCG compared with other London colleges with a similar demographic. JW said that Croydon and Barking and Dagenham colleges appeared to be similar on demographics and were currently performing poorer than UCG according to the NRs. West Thames college in Isleworth was one of the more successful colleges. Some colleges NRs may also be influenced by a sizable sixth form centre element.

ADG asked about staff development and the UCG method. JW said that this was referred to in a later paper but confirmed that this was key including the new developmental approach to lesson observations.

SD reminded members that UCG students were on average one grade lower on prior attainment than those enrolled at other London colleges. Historically the legacy colleges achievement had been in the 70 percentile. He stressed that teaching initiatives needed to be supported by good financial health and college infrastructure to succeed. Plus the importance of how the college aimed to create opportunities for the lives of all students.

ii. Education Programmes for Young People – Position Statement

GM set out the main points of his paper, how the improvements to the EPYP had formed part of the College Operational Plan, and alignment with the balance score card and KPIs created a strong basis for quality improvement. He set out the structures and frameworks which had been put in place for intervention and monitoring and was pleased to report that attendance had remained stable to the end of the academic year. Major developments in green skills space were reported, together with collaboration with the National Theatre for Performing Arts learners. The QDP survey also showed positive movement. GM talked through the actions to be taken forward and those in progress as detailed in the paper.

CS asked GM about his understanding of key measures that were effective in improving attendance. GM said that it was notable that attendance was good in areas with established staff teams with effective pastoral support and engagement. He gave the examples of science and IT at CNWL. Training was to be provided on the roles of tutors and the contribution they make to attendance and punctuality levels. CS asked if agency staff received the same induction as other staff. CC said that this was not the case but the information was to be provided to them in an alternative way such as a handbook.

GW said that this was a useful paper of the progress made since the previous inspection and to be able to see all the initiatives coming forward and the incremental impact they were having. She noted the attendance monitor for English and maths and asked if it was possible to see the impact of this yet. GM said that it may be difficult at this point but

attendance for GCSE exams had been positive. Further information would be provided in the SAR in the Autumn term.

LJ thanked GM for the paper and congratulated him on the creative solutions being implemented. She commented on the good tutorial practice and how this best practice could be shared. GM said that it was the intention to use the Advance Practitioner Group for this to target interventions where most impact could be made. LJ asked what GM thought was the biggest single reason for student non-attendance. GM said that this was probably inconsistent or poor teaching and learning. He was of the view that if students enjoyed their lessons and had a positive experience they would attend. SD said that this was also reliant on the dexterity of the pedagogy and the importance of having sufficiently skilled teaching staff.

TJ asked about the AP role for innovation and what this would include. GM said that it covered a range of approaches including quality and performance management systems to information and data reporting. TJ also asked about the use of IA in maths and English. AJ confirmed that there was a pilot currently underway, and further roll out would be dependent on the results of the pilot.

MM commented that on attendance there was overemphasis on the classroom and that it was also important to ensure students were enrolled on to the right courses, and the behaviour policies also needed to be effective.

iii. Teaching and Learning Balance Score Card

JW presented the current metrics many of which had been covered in the meeting already. He also reported the lesson observation outcomes for different staff groups, and the introduction of the new developmental approach less reliant on grading. Members welcomed the report and noted the changes.

iv. Student Experience and Outcomes Risk Register

JW set out the 11 risks, which were new, which were also on the strategic risk register (above tolerance), and which were likely to be removed at the next review. He updated the committee on the progress made on the MIS migration and that there were now a greater number of reports available that did not need to be compiled manually. SD mentioned that the Audit Committee had suggested more subjective approaches to the risk register for existential risks that had not come up through the operational risk registers and a reality check of the strategic risks. He sought the Committee's views on this. In general the committee were appreciative of the current approach and thought the risk register good.

iii. Safeguarding Report

AJ presented the term's safeguarding report to the committee. She reported a significant increase in the number of concerns which mostly related to mental health, depression, and suicidal thoughts. Sexual abuse concerns had decreased but the college was not complacent about this. Most concerns continue to be from female students, aged 16-19 at the Paddington campus. Concerns by ethnic diversity were included in the report. AJ updated the committee on E-safe arrangements and notifications, plus the full range of safeguarding activities including cooling bands for students with anxiety, food, and clothing banks, first aid training on mental health and how the profile of prevent and safeguarding was being raised for apprenticeships. Committee members congratulated Dianna Brown for her NAMSS award for the food and clothes banks and her appearance on Channel 5

	<p>discussing period poverty. DBS checks on the SCR were up to date. The Committee noted this report.</p> <p>iv. Summer Campaign – Enrolment and Marketing</p> <p>SH explained how the non-enrolled report and review from the prior year had informed the key recruitment areas for this year’s campaign. The budget had been increased to take account of inflationary pressures, but also to focus on efforts through social media and paid content as set out in her paper. EG described the process taken to evaluate and develop the enrolment process from that of the previous year and he set out the changes that were being made that would streamline the system and improve experience. MM commented on the single point of entry, the potential for long queues and access to careers IAG. EG said that the queues would be minimised by the first stage being much shorter, and IAG was included in the process. TJ expressed appreciation for the work that had gone into the customer journey and asked SH about approaches to increase the engagement on social media. SH said that the focus was on the paid adverts and this filtering through algorithms onto the more organic media platforms. It had proved to link up incrementally which had increased the number of clicks on the website and subsequent applications in a short space of time. TJ commented on the student awards and some of the amazing student stories and how this may be included in promotional materials. SD asked for an analysis of the paid and organic media to be undertaken to be able to demonstrate where there was the best return on investment.</p>
6	<p>AOB</p> <p>ADG asked about the student members of this committee. ZL explained that one of the student members had left the college due to a change in their personal circumstances, which had impacted on the other student member as they knew and supported each other in the role. Steps were already underway on the appointments for the next academic year so hopefully the student input would improve.</p>
7	<p>Date of next meeting November TBC</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.12 pm</p>

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 15 June 2023

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

ACTIONS

Ref	Action	Owner	Status
04i	For the Accountability Agreement to be recommended to the Corporation for approval	ZL	Complete
05iv	For an analysis of the paid and organic media used in the marketing campaign to be undertaken to be able to	SH	

	demonstrate where there was the best return on investment.		
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