

CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP
Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee
Wednesday 15 March 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), Nusret Saleem (Interim Assistant Principal), Bilal Bobat (Assistant Principal – Creative Industries).

A	Procedural
1	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Patricia Aquino. Kieran Joseph had recently stood down as a student governor as he was no longer a student at UCG.</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 23 January 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 or were for a future agenda.</p>

CIRRICULUM FOCUS	
4	<p>i. Business Career Cluster <i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i> NS provided a short presentation about the business career cluster and how she had led a phase of intervention to make significant improvements to its performance. There had been a decline in student achievement over a number of years with a poor pass rate at level 2 due to students failing the exam component of the qualification. She explained how a fresh management team was now in place and a range of measures including a focus on attendance and generation of work from the students, plus accountability and ownership of the outcomes by the staff. There had been a high churn of staff as a result of the new management team but this had allowed new and enthusiastic teachers to be appointed which was boding well for the future. She highlighted how business courses could be contextualised in other parts of the college.</p> <p>CS supported the contextualisation to apply learning. He also noted that 63% of T&L was RI and asked NS if there were any themes coming through from this? NS explained that this was mostly regarding poor expectations of students on attendance, punctuality and readiness to learn. There was however, good subject knowledge. Four teachers were inadequate at the first observation and were resistant to the support being provided to improve and subsequently left the organisation. There had been challenges with recruiting teachers, but alternative full-time teachers had now been appointed, including those being developed from within the organisation.</p>

	<p>TJ thanked NS for the good presentation and asked more about contextualising business in other courses. NS described how this may be done with marketing and performing arts. TJ was supportive of this, particularly using real business examples. It was hoped that this could be taken forward during this next academic year.</p> <p>TJ noted that the worst case predicted achievement was still a very slight decline on the previous year and asked if there was confidence in exceeding this? NS said that she was cautiously optimistic and that more would be known following the results of the exams which took place in January. She said that the exam attendance was good at 80%. There was also still time to put in place any additional intervention.</p> <p>TJ commented that business was sometimes a choice of last resort and sought views on the impact if it was not offered for 12 months to give time for improvements to be implemented. Did NS think that they would go to another college or do an alternative course at UCG? NS thought that they would probably go to another college. She did think there may be merit in reducing the scale of the provision slightly in the same way that had previously been done with A levels, then to scale it back up once running well. JW also commented that it was seen as a generic subject which may be substituted with lower-level IT or fresh start courses.</p> <p>SD congratulated NS on the positive impact that had been made in the curriculum area in a relatively short space of time. He noted that the exam attendance was higher than class attendance, and that students continued to be engaged.</p> <p>GW noted the cultural shift and ask how the area felt different. NS provided some examples of how this cultural shift was felt including parent contact at a recent evening event. LJ congratulated NS in her strategic approach and asked about the difference in the staff cohort. NS said that the new team was ideas-rich and solution focused which was a significant change from the resistance and hostility felt previously. She said there were regular meetings and sharing of resources across the team, with clear line management structures.</p> <p>CS thanked NS for her clear presentation.</p>
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Teaching, Learning and Skills	
5	<p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>i. Chalkstream Non-Enrolled Report</p> <p>SH presented this research report, which had also been conducted the previous year. She highlighted the key themes relating to lower conversion rates, location and course offer, and the use of Vector which was a tool to identify market share. The work on school liaison was also progressing well in finding out what courses school leavers were interest in. SH highlighted A level economics in particular. This report would help inform curriculum planning and the summer enrolment campaign. She also mentioned the training of curriculum staff in interview techniques.</p> <p>TJ welcomed the detail of the report. He noted the high number who applied but were not converted into enrolments and that if only a small proportion of these (5%) were converted that would make a significant difference to funding levels. He also noted the comments on the delays in communication by the curriculum teams and asked about how this could be</p>

resolved. SH said that the transfer from the enrolment to the curriculum teams was at the interview stage and that work had been put in place on customer service and interview technique to try to sell the college more to the students, to encourage students to choose UCG. The dates for interview were also now set in advance and not on an ad hoc basis. Continued communication with applicants was also being made following a conditional offer.

SD said how the research was of value strategically and in the medium term but felt more work would be beneficial on segmentation by age, and prior attainment. He also queried if there was sufficient data post-pandemic on learner behaviours and if these were temporary.

LJ asked if there were any cultural issues, particularly resistance to change. SH said there were some differences between legacy and more recently appointed staff, but her focus was on providing the skills needed.

ADG commented on the incredible improvement in the standard and quality of the papers. She highlighted the value of the interview as part of the enrolment process and the importance of building those relationships. She asked how the voices of existing students was being captured and used in this process. SH said that student focus groups across age groups and career clusters were taking place to inform marketing.

AJ mentioned that taster days were also being provided to students with a conditional offer where they would meet student ambassadors and have the opportunity to meet with other existing students.

Members welcomed this paper and the actions being taken forward.

ii. Curriculum Portfolio Review

BB presented the main points of his paper on the portfolio review highlighting the challenges of introducing 4 T levels and managing the transition from BTEC qualifications. Members asked how the work experience element of T levels was being tackled. BB said that this was the main focus currently and work was progressing with external partners and support from the ETF. Some subject areas had made more progress than others and there was still more to do.

TJ highlighted the questioning by Ofsted as part of the recent inspection on the level of employer input to the assessment of local skills needs. He noted that it was referred to in the paper but would welcome more detail. BB said that there were many developments in this area working with LSIPs, the West London Alliance and other agencies to promote green and digital skills. Each career cluster linked with the LSIP and their own industry area.

LJ asked about the portfolio review process whether it was annual and more information about the work experience element of T levels. BB confirmed that this process was annual to ensure that the curriculum offer responded to external factors. Whilst there had always been an element of work experience in FE courses this was more significant in T levels at 45 days (9 weeks). JW mentioned that LSIPs had been brought in as part of the outcomes of the Post 16 Act and were only just beginning to make traction in some areas. The portfolio review was including this work so that it was strategic, rigorous and accountable.

TJ acknowledged this and sought more detail to inform future inspections.

ADG noted the decant at Wembley and Willesden and asked how student experience had been taken into account. Assurance was provided that the plans aimed to limit any negative impact on student experience as far as possible.

MM queried whether more investment was needed in staff to be able to deliver T levels. SD said that he was not overly concerned about this as existing staff would be able to deliver the programmes. Salary levels for staff were generally competitive with other colleges across London. The availability of labour was the more pressing issue. He was more concerned about the students being able to transition to T levels from other courses of study, and the need to balance student and employer needs and interests. AJ commented that grants for specialist equipment for T levels had been received.

iii. MIDES Data

AJ explained that this data collection by the AoC was voluntary and was a useful benchmarking tool against similar colleges. The focus of the report had been on deprivation scores and prior learning in English and maths. The majority of students who enrol at UCG were from areas with greater deprivation and a higher proportion had no grade for English and maths compared to other colleges. She explained how the data informed curriculum planning, the use of bursaries, induction processes and the use of the tuition fund. AJ also mentioned that the college had recently won an award for the food and clothes bank provided to students.

ADG asked how this data was used to influence learner attainment. AJ said that it was used at a career cluster level and progress could be seen on our value added scores. Training to support trauma informed learners had also been provided. GW said that this information was not new, though welcomed the report for context. She asked about progression to T levels for L2 students particularly entry requirements. This issue was acknowledged and the degree of T level provision had been initially scaled back based on learning from other colleges.

TJ asked about the definitions for the deprivation bands and whether we should be investing more to support these students. It was thought that the bands were based on post code but AJ would revert to the AoC to confirm this for the next meeting. Pastoral support for students was already well-embedded as this was not a recent change, though resource issues were recognised.

iv. Predicted Achievement

JW presented an improving picture of achievement and the approach taken on CAD process to reach more realistic predictions which had been more rigorous. At the current time comparisons were only possible with prior years as the national achievement rates (NARs) were yet to be published. These were expected by the end of March. Improvements to adult achievement were thought possible from additional enrolments this term. Plus predictions may be firmer following the recent mock exams.

CS asked if there was scope for improvement to the best-case scenario. JW said that the best case had been made on an optimistic view of the risks and the worst case on a pessimistic one. There was potential still for some high-risk learners to improve. Retention was also still high which was positive.

TJ congratulated JW on the work being done and celebrated the predicted improvements from the prior year. He noted the high exam attendance in business and asked if this could

	<p>be replicated in other areas. JW said that he was optimistic that this was the case. GCSE mocks would be starting soon which would be a useful indicator. TJ asked if it was possible for this to be included in the paper for Corporation later in the month.</p> <p>ADG asked about attendance levels. English and maths continued to be a challenge that was negatively impacting on attendance for 16 – 19 year olds. Attendance for adults was better. KPI reviews had been undertaken within curriculum areas which triangulated attendance, retention and predicted achievement, and the level to which students were still engaged in their learning. It was noted that the Power BI project had not delivered the expected outcomes on producing real time data. The MIS migration project was now underway and was expected to complete by July 2023.</p> <p>ii. IAG / Gatsby Benchmarks AJ presented this paper on the college’s progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks and the actions being taken to address any shortfalls. This focus was mostly in regard to work experience and support for UCAS applications. The team structure to support this was also currently under review.</p> <p>iii. Student Experience and Outcomes Risk Register JW presented the risk register which showed 10 risks, 4 of which were above tolerance. These included the MIS migration, Ofsted, English and maths achievement, and performance against NARs. The register set out mitigation plans for each. CS commented that as the Ofsted inspection had taken place in November was it possible to breakdown the grade into provision areas and for the college to self-assess within those for the risk register to be able to gauge progress and level of risk. TJ suggested that the student outcomes risk be updated to recognise more recent actions. SD welcomed these supportive comments, and the progress made, but overall the objective had not been met and he was keen to be transparent with the governing body. ADG commented that the papers for the meeting demonstrated a joined-up approach, with maturity and honesty.</p> <p>CS closed the meeting by thanking the presenters and guest presenters. He acknowledged the improved papers, their conciseness and the coherent approach being taken.</p>
6	<p>AOB No items were raised.</p>
7	<p>Date of next meeting 14 June 2023</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.17 pm</p>

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 16 March 2023

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

ACTIONS

Ref	Action	Owner	Status
05iv (Jan 23)	Table of concerns by category, dated actions, and the list of safeguarding events as part of student support and tutorials be included in the next safeguarding update	AJ	Complete
05iii	To provide definitions of the deprivation bands used in the MIDES report.	AJ	Complete