

**CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP**  
**Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee**  
**10 November 2025, 6 pm by Zoom**

**Members Present:** Colin Smith (Chair), Airina Gordon (staff governor), Tim Ryan, Tanya Rose, Janet Davidson, Jessica Amarteifio (student governor), Stephen Davis (CEO/Governor).

**In attendance:** Zoë Lawrence (Director of Governance), James Wilson (Principal), Nicola McLean (Assistant Principal), Rob Boucherat (Interim Director Innovation and Enterprise), Aurora Lewis Green (Head of Marketing and Communications).

\*for relevant agenda items only

<b>Procedural</b>	
1	<p><b>Welcome and apologies for absence</b> Apologies were received from Serene Stennett.</p>
2	<p><b>Declarations of interests in agenda items</b> No additional interests were declared.</p>
3	<p><i>(Minutes and all papers for the meeting were provided 7 days in advance)</i></p> <p><b>i. Approve minutes of the Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee of 11 June 2025</b> The minutes were approved as an accurate record.</p> <p><b>ii. Matters Arising</b> There were no matters arising.</p>

<b>PRESENTATIONS</b>	
4	<p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p><b>i. Curriculum Transition – Presentation</b> JW presented his paper detailing a case for setting up a space and resources to provide a transitional pathway for students who enrol at the college not yet ready to learn. The paper detailed the qualification level of the majority of 16-18 Year old learners, their attainment in English and maths, the proportion of learners with learning difficulties, Education Health and Care Plans, high needs and looked after children. A significant proportion of students’ first engagement with UCG was at enrolment with no prior knowledge of their needs. Paddington Campus was also situated between gang groups which has impacted on the nature and number of behavioural issues and incidents involving students. The number of exclusions and suspensions had increased year-on-year.</p> <p>The proposal JW offered in the paper included the creation of a delivery model that supported students’ transition from more specialist provision into mainstream further education. Part of the process would be to work with other local agencies to support students with a clear sense of progression, not create a pupil referral unit within the college. There would also need to be a discussion with funding agencies particularly if the delivery model included a reduction in teaching hours.</p> <p>BB brought to the committee’s attention the synergies of the proposal with the recently published White Paper. These included the curriculum review for level 2 pathways, the</p>

	<p>focus on English and maths attainment, post-16 destinations from school settings, and a reduction in the number of NEETS (Not in Employment Education or Training).</p> <p>Members discussed the proposal and questions were raised on how students would be referred to such a pathway; if this was at enrolment or later, how local authorities and schools would be engaged in the process, whether it would involve subcontracting, and how students’ study programmes would be agreed especially when most students were uncertain about what they wanted to do. JW explained that the focus would be on preventing withdrawals and there would be a dialogue with the feeder institution. It was likely that this alternative pathway would be offered in place of suspension or exclusion, but consideration would be on a case-by-case basis. Currently the dialogue with local authorities on high needs learner placements could be adversarial and this needed to change to be able to have constructive conversations about students’ needs. Subcontracting had not been ruled out, though the intention was for this provision to be in-house. Students would be able to mix and match their study programme so that it would be tailored to their needs and interests. It was unlikely to be in place for this academic year.</p> <p>SD challenged the committee to consider the wider implications of the proposal in particular how it might alter the educational character of the college with this cohort of learners, whether UCG’s staff had the right skills to support these students, and the financial impact particularly in relation to the Wembley Project. He suggested the Committee considered the wider strategic implications of affordability and whether it could be delivered. There were possible trade-offs on the balance score card.</p> <p>NMc highlighted the emphasis on inclusion in the new Ofsted Framework and the increase in young people claiming universal credit with a majority stating mental health as a reason. There was a sense of moral obligation to these learners. TRo acknowledged that the proposal would require resourcing including the upskilling of and training for staff. This population of learners was increasing which couldn’t be ignored, so it would be important to consider alternative routes like this that was being proposed. TRy suggested that it would be useful to have a clear criteria for learners to be included on this proposed pathway as at the moment it seemed very broad.</p> <p>Overall the committee concluded that there was merit in considering an alternative pathway for these students who were not yet ready to learn and were supportive of the proposal being developed further to be presented to the next meeting of the Committee in January 2026.</p>
--	--

<b>TEACHING, LEARNING AND SKILLS</b>	
<b>5</b>	<p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p><b>i. Self-Assessment Report</b>  RB presented the SAR which had already undergone a detailed review at the SAR validation meeting on 21 October 2025. The SAR proposed an overall grading of 2, with the exception of behaviour and attitudes. It concluded a strong judgement on skills and that safeguarding was effective. <b>The Committee resolved to recommend the SAR to the Corporation for approval.</b></p>

**ii. Student Achievement 2024/25**

JW provided a summary of the headline achievement rates for 16–18-year-old and adult provision. For 16-18 years olds this was 2.9% above the prior year, and 0.1% below the balance score card target, but 4.9% below the national rate. For adults, achievement was at 89.2%, 2.5% above the prior year, 0.5% above the balance score card target and 1.4% above the national rate. Achievement for each career cluster was included in the paper with areas of significant improvement and decline highlighted with explanations. Improvements in student achievement for English and maths were noted, including the increase in the number of students taking these exams at UCG and that the continuation of GCSE in place of functional skills was proving to be beneficial. There had been a small drop in high grades for maths. The decline in apprenticeship achievement was explained and would be addressed in year.

CS commented on the success of the business career cluster which had a 21.3 % improvement on the prior year. He also asked about the rigor being used for predicting achievement as the actual was some way off the predicted in June 2025. RB explained that a new reporting point had been introduced at week 11 (November) and that a clearer RAG rating for risk had been introduced to Pro-Monitor against a standard criteria. The less accurate predictions were only in a small number of areas and this was being addressed. TRy asked if UCG had commissioned a further provider for value added. JW confirmed that ALPS would be used going forward. MIDES data was also available for English and maths grade movements and would be brought to the next meeting of the committee in January 2026. SD said that accurate predictions were often reliant on the teacher knowing the students which can be impacted by poor attendance. Overall, the committee welcomed the improvements in achievement and noted the actions to address areas in decline.

**iii. Lesson Observations and Development Coaches**

AE provided a summary of her paper setting out progress on the developmental observation model and how this related to other training and support initiatives, and the TLA Developmental Coaches. Overall, good progress was being made embedding TLA activity across UCG and it was being impactful. Stretch and challenge continued to be an area of development for all career clusters except for CID where it was a strength. The central CPD hour was well attended. Opportunities for peer observation were being pursued this academic year to share best practice.

CS asked if AE was confident that the CPD being offered was reaching the right staff. AE said that the advanced practitioner group and teaching resources were available to teachers right from the start of term and as part of new teacher induction so there was comprehensive coverage. 277 lesson observations had taken place with follow up options. In most cases the teachers were proud to show the improvements made. TRy asked if there was work scrutiny and if learner feedback was sought. AE said that work scrutiny was not pursued, however a search activity was undertaken using a sample of students work against assessment plans which had proved to be beneficial. Students were talked to as part of lesson observations where this did not interrupt teaching. Feedback from students generally correlated with the student survey. SD commented on the amount of work being taken forward to improve teaching quality and asked how UCG was differentiating this offer to reflect the teaching staff profile, for more experienced teachers and those who were newly qualified or from industry. He suggested that a risk approach be taken to focus resources for a more sophisticated approach and be developed into a Learning and Development strategy.

	<p><b>iv. Summer Campaign &amp; Enrolment</b></p> <p>ALG presented her paper on the marketing and enrolment campaign from the Summer. It provided an overview of the key metrics including organic and paid media, the increase in the conversion rate from application to enrolment, website statistics, volumes of students enrolling and costs/value for money assessment. Actions that would be taken forward to improve enrolment the following year included reconsideration of assignment of budget between college sites and a new website. SD noted the number of impressions and asked how these could be converted into enrolments. ALG explained that there were in general 8 clicks before an action so impressions were possibly not the right indicator. However, she felt that improving the college’s reputation through awards and celebrating its successes would be a positive contribution. SD asked if there was evidence of UCG’s external reputation and whether this was something that could be taken forward. ALG agreed that this would be a valuable piece of work and would action it. TRy thanked ALG for the detailed paper and asked if in future it could include student numbers data longitudinally at RO4, and if it was understood which communications channel was most effective. ALG agreed to provide the RO4 data and that the marketing team definitely had insight into the most effective channels which would inform budget allocations for the following year. Each year a detailed evaluation of the marketing campaign was undertaken and changes made as a result.</p>
<b>STRATEGIC</b>	
6	<p><b>i. Student Experience &amp; Outcomes BSC</b></p> <p>JW provided a brief summary of the balance score card noting that several areas had been covered elsewhere on the agenda in detail. Attendance data had been broken down by provision type and level. JD asked how persistent absences were being addressed. JW said that this was done by the tutor with support from progress coaches and there were improved reporting mechanisms in place for absences including automatic messages to parents for younger learners. Incentives and rewards schemes to support attendance were also in place. NMc mentioned that attendance checks were also being done around campuses to make sure those students in college attended their lessons, and there were also attendance champions.</p> <p><b>ii. Risk Register</b></p> <p>The risk register had not changed significantly since the Summer term. Student achievement was the main risk against the national rates which had been covered under a previous agenda item. The committee noted the risk register.</p> <p><b>iii. New Education Inspection Framework</b></p> <p>CS provided a short summary of his paper which outlined the main features of the new Ofsted framework. The detailed inspection toolkit had been included in the Grey Box for information. CS highlighted that whilst attendance continued to be important, context was now taken into account with reference to understanding reasons for non-attendance. Inclusion and belonging were also key themes which spoke to UCG’s values. CS explained that the starting point of any inspection was the expected standards and it was necessary to achieve a secure fit. From that point judgements would be either up or down the scale where there were deviations. He thought that the expected standards were not a match but a higher bar than the Ofsted good grade of the previous inspection framework, except that the skills judgement was measured against the previous Ofsted judgement. The cycle of inspections was unknown in terms of when UCG could expect to be inspected again under this new regime.</p>

STRATEGIC	
<b>7</b>	<p><b>i. Exclusions</b> The exclusions for 2024/25 were set out in the paper of which there had been 40. These were broken down by student group noting that a student may fit more than one criteria. Some exclusions had been effective immediately due to the nature of the offence and duty of care and safeguarding responsibilities towards other students and staff. The upward trend on the number of exclusions was continuing into 2025/26 with behavioural issues and incidents particularly at the Paddington campus. It was noted that the college was being less tolerant of poor behaviour this year in the interest of other students and their learning. The committee noted the report.</p> <p><b>ii. Complaints</b> RB said that there had been an increase in the number of informal complaints in 2024/25 as the intent was to address matters as soon as they arose before becoming a formal complaint. The paper set out the 9 formal complaints that had been received and the nature of each. None had been completely upheld – only partially. Complaints were a useful feedback mechanism and would continue to be monitored.</p> <p><b>iii. Student Learning &amp; Behaviour Policy</b> RB explained to the committee the updates to the policy which had been outlined in the covering paper. The main changes concerned the appeal process to the Principal in section 10. <b>The Committee resolved to recommend the policy to the Corporation for approval.</b></p> <p><b>iv. Safeguarding Annual Report</b> NMc provided a summary of the Safeguarding Annual report detailing the increase in safeguarding referrals in the last academic year, with mental health concerns as the largest category. The gender split for referrals was almost equal between male and females. There had also been an increase in the number of sexual abuse/assault concerns. 80 % of students referred to safeguarding were aged 16-18, and there had been 240 esafe concerns. The top ethnicities with safeguarding concerns were from Arab backgrounds, and any other black backgrounds. The committee valued the detail and comprehensive nature of the report.</p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>AoB</b></p> <p><b>i. Freedom of Speech Policy</b> ZL explained that as UCG was a higher education provider and registered with the Office for Students (OfS), it was obliged from 01 August 2025 under Part A1 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 to take steps that were practicable for it to secure freedom of speech within the law for staff, students and visiting speakers. The Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech had been updated to reflect these new obligations which were mainly detailed under para 1.3. Most of the remaining parts of the policy remained unchanged from the prior version. The policy was based on a template policy provided by Eversheds. <b>The Committee resolved to recommend the Freedom of Speech Policy to the Corporation for approval.</b></p>
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b> 26 January 2026</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.09 pm</p>

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 11 November 2025

**SIGNED:** ..... **Date:**

Colin Smith

TLS Chair

**ACTIONS**

REF	Action	Lead	Status
<b>05ii</b>	MIDES data to be included on the agenda for the January meeting of the committee.	JW	<b>Complete</b>
<b>05iv</b>	To take forward an assessment of UCG's external reputation.	<b>ALG</b>	<b>Complete</b>