

CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP
Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee
17 March 2025, 6 pm by Zoom

Members Present: Colin Smith (Chair), Stephen Davis (CEO), Max Maalimey (staff governor), Tim Ryan, Tanya Rose, Janet Davidson, Moosa Abuelzein (student governor).

In attendance: Zoë Lawrence (Director of Governance), James Wilson (Principal), Nicola McLean (Assistant Principal), Rob Boucherat (Interim Director Innovation and Enterprise), William McAdoo (Head of Technology Enhanced Learning)*

*for relevant agenda items only

	Procedural
1	Welcome and apologies for absence CS welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Serene Stennett.
2	Declarations of interests in agenda items No additional interests were declared.
3	<p><i>(Minutes and all papers for the meeting were provided 7 days in advance)</i></p> <p>i. Approve minutes of the Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee of 20 January 2025 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.</p> <p>ii. Matters Arising There were three matters arising. Two were covered elsewhere on the agenda. The third related to the value added report.</p> <p>Value Added (VA) WMc explained that the company providing the value-added analysis had gone into administration so that it was not possible for there to be any further analysis or comparisons with national rates. A new provider for the VA service was being sought and it was anticipated that this would be secured to be able to provide a similar analysis of VA as that of previous years.</p>

	PRESENTATIONS
4	<p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>i. Curriculum Presentation – A levels JW gave a presentation on the context, journey and next steps in relation to A levels for science and maths which had seen a decline in recent years. The presentation included data from 2017/18 at the time of the college merger to present, the impact of the changes from 2 tier to linear qualifications on retention and achievement; how the pandemic had affected this area of provision and associated staffing issues. Demand was also considered along with enrolments onto other level 3 provision.</p> <p>CS asked who were UCG's target audience for A levels. JW explained that it was common for A level students to have specific needs which the college was able to fulfil more readily than sixth form colleges. The entry requirements at UCG were set to ensure the student</p>

	<p>could achieve but could be considered to be slightly more accommodating and flexible to those of selective sixth form colleges. CS asked if it was possible to combine A levels with BTEC qualifications. JW said that currently this was not possible, and the timetable blocks did not allow it, but consideration was being given to this for some newer A levels being introduced (such as criminology). TR asked how many A level students were at UCG. JW said that there were 120 (approx. 300 enrolments). Comments were made how the A level offer needed to be seen strategically in competition with other providers and that it attracted student applications for A levels and other courses.</p> <p>TRo asked to understand more about the impact on student enrolments and also whether it gave those studying GCSEs a more direct route to A levels. JW confirmed that student recruitment was a focus and there were other issues such as the decant at Willesden to consider. There was no impact particularly regarding internal progression as GCSEs were only offered in English and maths to those students who had not attained the required grade before coming to UCG. JW commented that it would be better to improve the A level offer than to stop offering it. JD asked about the capacity to improve the A level offer. JW said that interventions and support had been put in place for A2 A level students this year to teach out the subjects that had not been enrolled to this year. On entry requirements he said that UCG would be doing a disservice to students by accepting them if they could not meet entry requirements. TR commented that A levels were often the easier route to HE, and if stopped could be more difficult to restart.</p> <p>SD said that strategically as an GFE college the offer should include T levels, vocational qualifications, A levels, and apprenticeships and he thought this full offer to be the college's moral obligation to its communities. He commented how in recent years there had been a significant investment in teachers which would be lost if A levels were not delivered. He did not think that reducing the A level offer any further was the right option. He suggested that it may be possible to create an A level centre in part of the college campus to improve A level students' experience. The evidence from the recent Ofsted inspection on improvement was supportive of this approach.</p>
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	TEACHING LEARNING AND SKILLS
5	<p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>i. Ofsted Report</p> <p>JW explained the process from the receipt of the draft report to this final version and highlighted actions being taken which had been committed to as part of the inspection. These included English and maths achievement, improvements to A levels and roll out of developmental lesson observations. CS noted that the self-assessment process with governors had concluded RI, though the inspectors rated the college as good. What did JW see as the difference. JW said that the inspection came at the time when many of the interventions that had been put in place such as the developmental lesson observations, CPD hours, developmental and progress coaches, started coming together and making the necessary impact. The other aspect was clarity and transparency in understanding areas of strength and weakness in the college and actions being taken which was open to the inspectors. JD asked about the next steps and the empowerment of staff to retain the momentum. JW said that there was already a nurtured environment of trust and motivation for continual improvement and the intent was to keep this positive dialogue going. SD commented how the future could be challenging with reductions in adult funding, the number of 16–18-year-old students potentially declining, and that the level of</p>

investment and structural shift to achieve the Ofsted good could not be maintained. A more distributed leadership model was needed for which there were associated risks.

ii. Predicted Achievement

RB explained how the CAD 1 position had been assessed at the end of the first term using RAG ratings for students based on work completed. This showed the best case and the worse case scenarios. 16-18 year old students best case was 80.7% and adults/ 19 + at 87.4% at this point in the academic year. Pro-monitor and workbook data had been used for the assessment. RB highlighted the areas where student achievement was above the previous year and also areas where there was some decline. Rapid improvement plans had been put in place in areas of decline. It was noted that some areas of 19+ provision had been negatively impacted by the funding methodology. T levels were not included in this paper as there were currently no national rates. The range from best to worst case was noted as quite broad and that a conservative approach had been taken. CAD 2 at the end of the second term could usually be a better indicator. Improvements in maths and English were noted with the exception of English at the Willesden campus. Mock exams for English and maths had been completed in mid-March which would inform future predictions.

CS asked what intervention would be put in place for a student rated red. JW said that these students were identified in each curriculum area, and that these may also include students who had withdrawn. There was no set intervention for red students as they would be considered on a case-by-case basis, but often additional work was set and revision sessions. TR welcomed the use of Pro-Monitor and asked about the role of managers in progressing student achievement. JW said that this was for each curriculum area to take forward together with search activity which included sampling and scrutiny of students work. JD asked if students were clear about their own targets. This was confirmed and that target setting was becoming more systematic. Students also understood what they needed to do to improve.

MM commented that staff shortages in some areas of the curriculum were having an impact on falling achievement. RB said that achievement was not falling but had actually increased by 5% which was significant growth in year. SD said that there were no classes without teachers and where there were staffing issues this was usually in areas which were known to be difficult to recruit to. MA asked about the level of experience that teachers had. It was acknowledged that there were some teachers with a varying level of experience and that it was often difficult to strike the right balance between industry experience and teaching ability in vocational areas. Incentivising people from industry to come into teaching when salaries were often lower was challenging.

iii. Curriculum Intent and Planning

BB set out the annual process for the college's curriculum offer which included assessment of financial viability, people (demand and teaching staff), and estate and equipment, and how to address any underperformance. Consideration was also given to learning pathways to L3, apprenticeships and class size.

MM challenged the staffing for the plan querying shortages. RB commented that the campaign in April 2024 meant that all teaching vacancies were filled so the vast majority of curriculum areas began the academic year in Sept 24 with a full complement of staff (whether permanent or HPL). The same plan was in place for this year, and it was expected to be achieved. SD commented that there were no classes without teachers, except motor vehicles where recruitment was difficult. TR asked if there was an average class size for

efficiency. It was explained that this was not a case of one size fits all as some specialist classes were limited by equipment for example, but minimum numbers had been ascertained for viability. JD asked how stakeholders and employers had been involved in the process. BB said that they had been fully involved through skills forums and evidence from partner feedback. JW commented that the whole curriculum intent and planning process was a call for action with curriculum areas to justify and validate their positions. The Committee noted the Curriculum Intent and Planning paper.

iv. QDP Student Survey

RB explained that this paper was being brought back to the committee now that the data was complete and that it included responses from the paper-based questionnaires. There was a 56% response rate which was slightly low of the 60% target. Most of the responses were confirmed to be in the C quartile, though 12 were in the B quartile and 1 in D. Action plans and focus groups were being taken forward in response to the survey outcomes. The next survey would be issued in April after the Easter holidays but before the main exams start. The intention was for the majority of this to be online and to move away from paper-based questionnaires. SD commented that the survey was only one touch point with students and that 1400 students responded to the Ofsted questionnaire which showed positive feedback. CS also commented that Link Governors were a useful touch point with students.

TR asked how the questionnaire was distributed. This was electronically through MIS and students were encouraged to complete it during tutorials. It was thought that the lower response rate for the Autumn term survey may have been due to the timing of it clashing with the Ofsted inspection. JD asked if survey responses were assessed in terms of student groups. RB confirmed that it was, and it was reported to the EDI committee and fed into action planning. MA commented that there was a tendency for adult students not to be honest in their feedback to protect their teachers, and that there were several surveys for adults to complete. RB said that the survey was intended as a genuine vehicle to receive student feedback to bring about positive change and improvements to the student experience. Honest feedback was sought from all students. RB acknowledged that adult students also received the London Learner survey, but attempts were made that these were spread out over the academic year, so students did not feel inundated with surveys.

v. Quality of TLA – Progress

HA explained that the paper provided an update on the paper provided at the November meeting of this committee. It reflected any actions from the Ofsted inspection and any in-year progress against the plan. She highlighted that students were being trained to be included in teacher recruitment and micro-teaches. The TLA plan also optimised alignment with student experience initiatives and EDI actions. She was pleased to say that the improvement project phase was now coming to an end, and the initiatives were now embedding into normal practice. TLA peer group work was also taking place with other London based colleges.

CS commented on the use of learners in lesson observations and whether this could be expanded. HA said that this was in development and once the model had been evaluated it would be possible to take it further. It was hoped that the verbal feedback now provided could be extended to students completing an assessment form as a parallel data set for recruitment decisions. TR asked if there was a correlation between the lesson observation outcomes, attendance and CAD 1 predictions. HA said that this has not been looked at closely though themes were identified. JW said that there were 13 measures of curriculum performance and that it was about teachers being self-aware within a community of

	<p>learning and improvement. MM commented that the work HA was taking forward on TLA was effective and brought about positive change.</p> <p>vi. Enhancing Student Experience & Outcomes Balance Score Card JW presented the BSC, and it was noted how this summarised the other items on the agenda. JD asked how attendance was being monitored. NMc said that this was a constant effort with weekly and monthly reporting.</p> <p>vii. Student Fitness to Study Policy NMc explained that this policy had not significantly changed since the previous version other than staff responsibilities to reflect the organisational structure. She had also consulted all those involved in the review of the policy. The Committee resolved to approve the policy.</p> <p>viii. Safeguarding Termly Report NMc talked the committee through the key points of the termly safeguarding report, highlighting the increase in demand and that the college would be able to offer bereavement counselling support to students. She also referred to the Connect ED Partnership which was a positive development for UCG. JD (safeguarding lead governor) commented on the role of HR in safeguarding and whether this could be picked up more in the report. NMc said that staff training and the SCR were already reported but JD was welcome to look into this further at the strategic meetings with the Safeguarding team as part of her role. The Committee thanked NMc for the detailed and helpful report and all the effective work being done to support UCG's student population.</p>
8	<p>AoB No items were raised.</p>
9	<p>Date of next meeting Wed 11 June 2025</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.08 pm</p>

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 18 March 2025

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