

CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP
Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee
Tuesday 23 March 2021, 6 pm by Zoom

Members Present: Angela Drisdale Gordon (Chair), Nick Bell (CEO), Tony Johnston, Matthew Green, Max Maalimey (staff governor), Desmond Bishop (staff governor), Temitope Alebiosu (student governor), Ofofonono Iwa (student governor).

In attendance: Zoë Lawrence, Stephen Davis, Grethe Woodward, James Wilson, Angela Jackson, Paul Bradley*, Amanda Thorneycroft*

*attended up to item 4iii

A	Procedural
1	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence ADG welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Colin Smith. ADG as deputy chair had kindly agreed to chair this meeting. There were no other apologies (though DB joined the meeting at 6.25 pm).</p>
2	<p>Declarations of interests in agenda items No interests were declared.</p>
3	<p>i. Approve minutes of the Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee of 2 February 2021 <i>(The minutes were circulated in advance)</i> These were approved as an accurate record for signing.</p> <p>ii. Matters Arising These were covered elsewhere on the agenda or had been deferred to the June meeting of the Committee. It was agreed that a paper providing an update on Marketing would be provided to the Committee within 5 working days of the meeting and a full paper would be included on the June agenda.</p>

	Strategic Matters
4	<p>i. Return to face-to-face teaching SD provided a verbal update on plans to return to full face to face teaching. From 8 March when schools reopened during the current lockdown a blended approach had been taken by the college which generally provided a 50/50 split of face to face and online teaching. Over 1100 lateral flow tests for coronavirus had been conducted since 8 March and all had been negative. By the May half term it was anticipated that the college would return to 100% face to face teaching consistent with government lockdown lifting. Additional remote teaching and Summer schools to 31 July were being offered to supplement interrupted learning. This would be dependant on the pandemic levels continuing to decline and maintenance of staff and student safety. Ofqual had also issued earlier dates for teacher assessed grades (TAGs).</p> <p>TJ asked about the levels of staff absenteeism and whether it was known how many staff had received the first dose of the coronavirus vaccine. SD said that none of the staff were refusing to return though there were some who were shielding. This had not impacted on teaching delivery. It was noted that some colleges had received S44 notices which can be issued to an employer if it is considered unsafe for staff. UCG had not received any. The</p>

Trade Unions had been consulted throughout. Information on vaccine uptake was not available but it was considered that approximately 30% of the workforce was over 50 so it was likely that this proportion had received the vaccine to date.

MG asked if the College had received sufficient testing kits. He also suggested that the college did Easter catch up lessons which other providers were doing. SD confirmed that there were sufficient testing kits and that the take up of testing had been encouraging. Easter catch up lessons had been considered but a decision had been taken to use the time on assessment decisions to be better able to target intervention next term, and workforce planning. NB offered to provide a schedule of the numbers of students that had been back on campus to give a sense of activity to governors. It was agreed that this would be helpful.

TA reported that she was still receiving all her lessons online and had not been invited back for face to face lessons yet. MG said that he was very surprised at this as she was studying maths and English which were core subjects. JW said that unfortunately TA was in a small cohort of adult students who had been affected by a teacher needing to shield and that it was hoped that this position would be resolved after Easter. There would be some English and maths catch up over Easter.

MM said that he thought the return to face to face teaching had been managed well, and that he considered it important the younger students to be back in the college as they tended not to respond to remote teaching as well as adult learners. Overall as a member of staff he said that he felt safe.

ii. Enrolment – Lessons learnt and 2021 Plan

(Paper provided in advance)

PB had provided a detailed paper to the Committee setting out the analysis and lessons learnt from the enrolment process in Summer 2020, and plans for how it would be approached this year. A senior team had been established with clear lines of responsibility and a project plan that could be tracked. The Group Operational Team meeting on 31 March had been extended to an all-day meeting and would be committed to enrolment planning. A dummy run of the process would take place in June.

ADG was aware of the financial loss this year from attrition and tuition fees and sought assurance that there was confidence that there would not be a repeat of this. PB said that there should be confidence in the current plan in terms of the commitment of resources, forensic analysis and the focus it is receiving.

SD emphasised that the pandemic was an unprecedented event and the focus had been on staff and student safety. The online process had been successful to a degree though had brought about some unintended consequences which had had a significant impact. It was important to build on the learning from the previous year.

TJ noted that the College's open days were being promoted on Instagram and asked what the take up had been. The virtual open days at Paddington had taken place the previous week and had been well attended. NB offered to forward attendance numbers by 25 March. The virtual open days at CNWL were planned for that week and face to face open days were also being planned for May.

NB reported that issues with enrolment had been felt across the FE sector. It was considered that this was due to students staying local and not travelling across London,

colleges with a larger A level offer benefiting from grade inflation due to the CAGs, and the increased number of NEETS (not in education, employment or training). A business case had been made to the ESFA for funding for 16-19 year olds to be funded at the prior year level, or an average of the previous 4 years to try to manage the attrition loss. MG commented that it would be useful to drill down into some of the data to better understand trends to be able to focus future communications campaigns. He noted the importance of the A level offer and continued to support this provision to the local community in Westminster. He would be interested to see whether these trends were for the short or longer term and how this would affect marketing campaigns.

MM agreed that a hybrid approach to enrolment would be of benefit to reduce queuing and improve student experience. Though he also thought that it would be important to properly resource the busy enrolment periods. He said that it would be useful to link enrolments immediately with the relevant academic department to start engagement with the student and keep warm activities prior to the term starting.

Issues were raised about the inconsistent ways in which progressing students were re-enrolled for the subsequent academic year. Overall, members welcomed this enrolment paper and looked forward to receiving the additional information offered.

iii. Power BI – Project Update

(Paper circulated in advance)

PB described the Microsoft tool that was being developed to bring together the data from the legacy college systems into a series of dashboards for managers. There had been some delays due to the pandemic. A walk-through of some of the main dashboards had taken place the previous week. The dashboards were interactive and data could be drilled down into or aggregated up. It was hoped to release the first version to VPs and APs within the next week and have the system available to all staff from September 2021 with training support being provided.

SD said that it was hoped that it could be rolled out to governors but the main focus was on providing live data to managers to ensure timely intervention.

MM asked if it was possible to extend the dashboard to parents as this could be helpful in motivating and improving performance for 16-19 year old students. SD said that it could be purposed for that, but at this stage that was not the intention. A parent portal could probably be adapted through Pro-monitor which may be a better solution. DB expressed concern about a further system and that it may not be used effectively. JW said that it was much more user friendly than Pro-monitor and that he thought teaching staff would find it very useful. Members welcomed the progress made and looked forward to the project being fully implemented.

iv. Student Support including Welfare

(Paper circulated in advance)

GW set out the main points of this paper which covered the bursary, enrichment and work experience. In particular GW pointed out the improvements which had been made in-year to the bursary application process and the levels of uptake to date. It was hoped that bursary bonuses could be provided at the end of term. Concern was expressed at the low uptake of the child care bursary. Enrichment had been provided online and had received a mixed success. Work experience had been very successful online as the whole study

	<p>programme had been provided which had been noted by Ofsted in the Progress Monitoring Visit.</p> <p>TA raised an issue with the NSS fund and sought clarification on this which would be addressed outside the meeting. She also asked if it was possible for the student governors to have a meeting with marketing to discuss how the bursary had been communicated. NB agreed to arrange this.</p> <p>TJ asked what happened to unallocated funds and in particular the child care funding. GW confirmed that unallocated resources were paid back to the ESFA and that the child care funding was specifically ring-fenced so could not be re-allocated. TJ asked if it was possible for students to apply retrospectively for the funds, to enable more of it to be used by students. GW said that this was being considered. The bursary was a student entitlement (pending compliance with eligibility).</p>
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Teaching, Learning and Skills	
5	<p>i. Ofsted Progress Monitoring Visit <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>JW described the two recent visits by Ofsted; the interim visit in November 2020 and the more recent Progress Monitoring Visit which had been conducted on 8/9 February. This was a remote inspection though it did triangulate between students, teachers, managers and leadership. The College had been given a judgement of reasonable progress, and the outcome report was consistent with the LT Operational Delivery Plan, and included 2 recommendations. It had been agreed that a further monitoring visit would take place before the main inspection though the offer to waiver the former had been made.</p> <p>TJ congratulated JW and the team for a successful monitoring visit and the helpful paper which demonstrated good use of the template in focusing on the needs of the committee.</p> <p>ii. Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>GW provided an update on the TEL and how this linked to the strategic objectives and operational delivery plan. Good progress was being made after 2 terms. The pandemic had been a catalyst for this in creating the motivation and skills within the organisation. GW highlighted the student digital influencers, and the launch of the national Ed Tech programme led by the DoE. UCG was partnered with Grimsby College of Technology which had shared upskilling modules for staff. KPIs were being enhanced. Immersive rooms were in construction and it was hoped that these could be piloted after Easter. These would allow the same class to be delivered in two different locations, across campuses or with other colleges.</p> <p>OI asked about the digital influencers and how he could apply. GW said that details were on MyDay (student portal) but that she would forward the link. TA thought that the digital influencers were a great idea that would boost student connectivity.</p> <p>TJ commended the level of progress made in 12 months. This was a fantastic achievement by the College. He considered that it was important that the progress made was not lost when the students returned to face to face learning and that this was an addition to our provision.</p>

	<p>iii. HE Update <i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>AJ provided a summary of the main points of the HE Oversight Committee meeting held on 1 March. This included predicted achievement, regulatory compliance with the OfS, enrolment of HE students and student voice. The HE Oversight Committee had considered feedback from the student representative and also the QDP student survey results. It was agreed that more focus was needed on the HE student experience. ADG asked if more would be done to make HE students distinct from FE. AJ agreed that more demarcation would be helpful and that this needed to be considered in a way that would enhance the HE student experience. Members welcomed the update paper.</p>
6	<p>AOB</p> <p>No items were raised.</p>
7	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>8 June 2021</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.02 pm</p>

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 24/03/2021

SIGNED: **Date:**

Angela Drisdale Gordon
Acting TLS Chair

Actions

ref	Action	Lead	Status
3. 02/02	To include an item on the Value Added project on the March Committee agenda	GW/ ZL	Deferred to Autumn term
4i 02/02	For CC to present the findings of the recent review of marketing at the March meeting.	CC	Deferred to June
3	For an update paper on marketing to be provided to the committee within 5 working days of the meeting.	NB/CC	complete
4i	To provide a schedule of student numbers back in campuses from 8 March.	NB	
4i	To forward attendance numbers of the open days by 25 March.	NB	