

**CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP**  
**Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee**  
**Wednesday 13 March 2024, 6 pm by Zoom**

**Members Present:** Colin Smith (Chair), Stephen Davis (CEO/GP), Tony Johnston, Max Maalimey (staff governor), Liz Jones, Tim Ryan, Tanya Rose.

**In attendance:** Zoë Lawrence (Director of Governance), James Wilson (Deputy Principal), Angela Jackson (Deputy Principal), Luci Ord (Director of Business Development and Apprenticeships), Aurora Lewis Green (Head of Marketing and Communications)\*, Bilal Bobat (Assistant Principal Creative Industries), Nicola McLean (Assistant Principal).

\*for specific agenda item only.

| <b>Procedural</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| 1                 | <p><b>Welcome and apologies for absence</b></p> <p>Apologies had been received from Ana Chimbembe (student governor) and Gashtiar Muhamadi (student governor).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2                 | <p><b>Declarations of interests in agenda items</b></p> <p>No 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 24 January 2024</b><br/>The minutes were approved as an accurate record.</p> <p><b>ii. Matters Arising</b><br/>There were no matters arising.</p> <p><b>iii. Grey Box</b><br/>CS referred to the two documents in the 'grey box' which had been provided for information only. These were an internal audit report for English and maths, and an audit paper which had reviewed the Office for Students conditions of registration. Members noted these papers.</p> |

| <b>CURRICULUM FOCUS</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| 4                       | <p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p><b>i. Apprenticeships</b><br/>LO made a short presentation setting out some of the key facts about apprenticeships at UCG including the numbers of apprenticeship and courses, achievement against national levels, how they operated with employers including the student contract, and the new electronic system that helped track apprenticeships' progress. She also explained the new ESFA dashboard and when this was updated. An overview of income streams from employers was also provided.</p> <p>TR (who was the apprenticeship link governor) asked what LO thought the main risks were to not meeting predicted achievement. LO explained that issues with the assessment for</p> |

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|  | <p>the refrigeration and air conditioning programme were presenting the largest risks. This was a national problem that was being addressed in liaison with City &amp; Guilds. It concerned the terminology used in the assessment paper that many candidates could not understand. Additionally plumbing students needed to use another provider for their end point assessment as this was most cost effective. TR asked if the refrigeration students had been included in the predicted achievement figures at the current time given the issues. LO said that this was being treated with caution.</p> <p>TJ thanked LO for a good presentation and noted the number of apprenticeship students. He asked how UCG compared to other colleges and whether there was scope for expansion in this area. LO said that the numbers were about average for London. There was potential for growth, but she wanted to ensure that the quality of provision was in place and that it wasn't expanded too quickly at the expense of quality. There was potential to have another 80 refrigeration apprentices for example. Electrical apprenticeships were also an area which could increase in numbers for which the end point assessment was done internally by UCG.</p> <p>LJ asked about the structure of apprenticeships and how this was managed. LO explained that there was a central team that arranged the off-the-job training, and a bank of assessors who visited the student with the employer. This was all managed by the Business Development Team. JW commented that apprenticeships had recently moved into curriculum from previously being line-managed elsewhere in the organisation. This helped co-ordination of the off-the-job training element. He commented that the issue with the refrigeration and air conditioning course was a national problem and commended LO for being pro-active in trying to resolve it.</p> <p>TR noted that there were SLAs with employers and asked if these had been established with curriculum areas as well. LO said that they had not, but regular meetings took place and plans were documented.</p> <p>CS noted that there were some apprenticeships that were beyond funding time limits and asked how this was being managed. LO said that the college did not want to lose the associated funding, so workshops were set up to continue to engage the students to completion. In some cases the delay to complete had been affected by the Covid pandemic but it was expected that all these would complete by the end of July.</p> <p>Members thanked LO for a clear and informative presentation and discussion.</p> |
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| <b>STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND OUTCOMES</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <b>5</b>                               | <p><i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i></p> <p><b>i. Chalkstream Non-enrolled Research Report</b><br/> ALG presented the findings from the Chalkstream non-enrolled research. Compared to the previous year the number of applications and conversions had slightly decreased in both college campuses. The main reasons for non-enrolment were stated as location and finding a more suitable course elsewhere. The majority interviewed said that the college could not have done anything differently to have influenced their decision, though slow communication was sited as an issue. ALG set out the marketing and communication actions that would be taken forward this term in preparation for enrolment in August. These included a focus on the main student catchment areas, increasing and having a new</p> |

approach to digital media which had now been brought in house, more involvement of teachers and parents, increased keep-warm communications, a new school liaison officer and student focus groups to really understand the process from their perspective. In the longer term she was also hoping to redevelop the website.

TJ thanked ALG for the detailed presentation and that it provided a lot of information for consideration. He noted the decline in applications and the lower conversion rates and asked which would be the focus for improvement. ALG said that whilst the application numbers had declined this was still at a reasonable level, but it would still be of value to keep the applications coming in. The conversion rates would be tackled by more and better keep warm activities and contact on social media. TJ asked about the value of interviews being part of the process. ALG said that she would normally expect that this be part of the process, but accepted that this can be resource intensive. An interview could create a relationship between the college and the student if done well and can be effective in increasing conversion rates. She also commented that taster days and other events can also be a useful physical experience for students in getting to know the college.

TJ asked about the marketing spend on bus and tube advertising compared with more digital approaches. ALG said that there was still a place for out-of-home advertising, but the digital approach in the past had not been robust enough and most of this was outsourced so UCG did not have its own data to know what was effective. Both approaches have their place and would be taken forward.

TR asked if the evidence from the non-enrolled report and feedback from marketing fed into the course planning, and whether the differences in the estates in Willesden and Paddington impacted enrolment. ALG said that the estate in Willesden was an issue and some members of the local community already thought the college had closed and relocated. She would be putting effort into the messages that it was open for business as usual. SD said that enrolment information was not included in course planning at the current time specifically other than attrition information.

Members thanked ALG for her in-depth and helpful presentation.

## **ii. Curriculum Portfolio Review**

BB presented this paper which had been renamed Curriculum and Intent Planning. He highlighted the changes to the curriculum in each area of provision stating the rationale for this and how it contributed to student progression. The review also considered staff stability and progress made in delivering quality provision from the previous year. Difficulties were expressed about finding work placements in the digital sector for the relevant T levels with much of this industry working remotely. Plans were in place to broaden the number of stakeholders for work placements. Labour market intelligence had informed decisions on extending welding and fabrication to L1 and L2 provision to support the national focus on technical qualification and meeting the needs of London. Members noted the impact of the curriculum reforms that limit the choice of course offer at L3, and the additional hours requirement for English and maths. Impact on student numbers and income was also considered.

CS noted the challenge of delivering the additional hours for English and maths and the risks associated with this. BB said that these changes would require additional maths teachers and it would be necessary to compete with other providers (colleges and schools) for this resource. It was planned that the recruitment campaign would begin by Easter to secure teaching staff for the August enrolment. TR suggested that the additional hours

may be delivered within the curriculum area reducing the need for additional maths teachers. CS also asked about the resources needed to deliver the new T levels. BB said that there had been support from the DfE for this which had enabled the college to suitably equip itself for T levels.

TR noted the struggle to recruit sufficient numbers of students for T levels the previous year and asked how confident the college was that students would be ready to progress to L3, and meet the entry criteria. BB said that consideration had been given to this and in science and accounting they were confident that there would be enough students to progress to ensure the programme was viable. Recruitment targets for Construction and the Built Environment were being carefully considered to be realistic.

SD commented that the changes to English and maths hours and funding was challenging. Funding would only be received if the student attends and was retained, both being difficult for this cohort of learners. How this would be managed was difficult to judge and it would be necessary to look into it in more detail.

LJ applauded the explanations provided and the strategy in the paper. She expressed concern about securing work placements for T levels and asked how this would be progressed. BB said that ECBE was generally employer rich but in other T levels this was very challenging needing sustained effort. The college had gained experience from the previous year and was constantly learning. Employer links through governors was also invited for the breadth of work placements planned and the potential growth.

TJ asked if the planned new finance system would be able to provide data on profitability of each curriculum area to aid decision-making as part of the process, and to inform marketing. SD said that it was the intention to create this for each career cluster, but not at course level, and this would take into account any weighting from the ESFA. Non-profitability would not necessarily be a reason for non-continuation of a programme of study. High needs programmes for example were more costly to deliver but were important to deliver to support local need.

### **iii. MIDES Data**

AJ presented this paper which provided a subset of the MIDES data focusing on deprivation and English and maths attainment. She explained that MIDES comprised monthly returns from all colleges involved which could be used for comparison purposes. It was highlighted that 50% of UCG's student cohort was from the three lowest deprivation bands, and that a higher proportion of UCG's students compared to other colleges were without a maths or English qualification equivalent to grades 4-9 at GCSE. AJ also commented that there may be a move away from functional skills L1 qualifications to GCSE as this was preferred by students. TR asked if UCG looked at progress measures / value added. AJ confirmed that this was part of the MIDES data and it was considered but there was more scope to embed it. TJ asked when a decision would be made on withdrawing functional skills L1 and whether any learning could be used from other local colleges on this. AJ said that discussions were on-going and a decision was expected later in the month.

### **iv. Predicted Achievement**

JW provided a summary of predicted achievement for CAD1 which was showing a reasonable improvement overall above or on target, though still slightly below national rates (NR). The increase for 19+ was just above NR. He was conscious that previous years' predictions at this point in the year had usually come in lower at year end, but in those years retention was also lower. Retention was at a good and higher level this year which

increased confidence in these predictions. JW highlighted the few curriculum areas which were currently below target and made comments on each. A number of areas were performing significantly better than the previous year, which were also discussed. These included business which had undergone a complete restructuring and leadership change. The stability of the staff team in ECBE was also noted. JW explained to the committee the actions that were being taken forward to embed strong teaching practices which included development coaches, the advance practitioner group, detailed assessment of critical functions and clear impact measures and performance data. He felt that all the measures put in place were now starting to come together and provide tangible and sustainable change.

CS commented on Business and ECBE and the significant improvement made in those areas which should not be underplayed. Also the extent of the opportunities provided in supported learning including internships which should be celebrated as well as the achievement of the qualification. TJ echoed this and congratulated JW on progress made at this point in the year and asked how we demonstrate some of this progress for the next Ofsted Inspection. JW said that it was not possible to influence the timing of the next inspection and though the teaching in the classroom that the inspectors see would be key the data was included in their considerations. The fact that not enough students were achieving their qualification had been a limiting factor in previous inspections and it was positive that this was changing. There was now a positive change in outcomes and a narrative to accompany that. TR asked what approaches were being taken regarding those students that were unlikely to achieve. JW said that these had been identified and were being tracked. Value added measures were being used but this was not yet an automated process.

SD commented that the investment made in teaching quality that the Corporation had supported the previous year was beginning to come through. This included investment in the support given to teachers as well as the automation of systems and provision of data to support performance improvement. He thanked the committee for its support as it had meant a financial deficit. He thought it was a good example of the executive working well with governance.

LJ said that she thought this paper very impressive, and it was good to see the commitment and investment aligned. She acknowledged the hard work that had gone into getting to this point and how all the efforts were showing results for the students. She particularly commented on the sense of meeting students individual needs and care. JW thanked the committee for its supportive comments and that the progress being made was as a result of all staff working together, wanting it to work. He noted comments made earlier in the discussions about quality over quantity and growth being at a manageable rate. In future apprenticeships would be included in the predicted achievement paper.

**v. Student Experience and Outcomes Balance Score Card and Risk Register**

JW acknowledged that quite a few areas of this paper had been covered elsewhere on the agenda. Attendance was at around 74% which was lower than target but sustained. Attendance for 19+ had increased slightly. He highlighted the four risks on the risk register, two being above tolerance and that two had been closed out. The actions in relation to the two highest risked had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Members noted the BSC and risk register.

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|          | CS thanked the executive for the carefully prepared and thoughtful presentations and papers and congratulated them on the progress made. SD thanked the committee for celebrating the progress, but assured it that there was no complacency. |
| <b>8</b> | <b>AoB</b><br>No items were raised.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>9</b> | <b>Date of next meeting</b><br>Wednesday 12 June 2024<br><br>Meeting closed at 7.52 pm                                                                                                                                                        |

*Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 14 March 2024*

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