

CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP
Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee
Monday 24 January 2022, 6 pm by Zoom

Members Present: Colin Smith (Chair), Angela Drisdale Gordon, Stephen Davis (CEO), Tony Johnston, Max Maalimey (staff governor), Temitope Alebiosu (student governor), Natalie Dweh, Desmond Bishop (staff governor), Matthew Green.

In attendance: Zoë Lawrence, James Wilson, Angela Jackson, Claire Collins, Pippa Tiller, Malgorzata Zielinska, Ben Verinder (Chalkstream)*

*relevant agenda item only

A	Procedural
1	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence Apologies had been received from Melek Mandal (student governor).</p> <p>SD introduced Pippa Tiller (Vice Principal) and Malgorzata Zielinska (Interim Head of Business Development) to the meeting.</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 20 September 2021 <i>(The minutes were circulated in advance)</i> Other than a slight typo these were approved as an accurate record for signing.</p> <p>ii. Matters Arising Matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p>iii. Grey Box No items were raised for discussion.</p>

Strategic Matters	
4	<p>i. Curriculum KPI - Dashboard <i>(Paper provided in advance)</i> JW set out the main points from the dashboard including student enrolments against target, planned teaching hours, retention, attrition and attendance. Student enrolment had met the original targets. The teaching delivery hours were matched against student numbers and would be reflected in the revised budget which would be reviewed by the Finance & Resources Committee later in the term. Attrition and retention were reported to be back on track after an increase the previous year due to issues with the enrolment process. Attendance continued to be an issue but initiatives were being implemented to tackle this. Lesson observations continued to improve in line with the previous years' trends.</p> <p>TJ asked if the executive had a pan-London view of student enrolment at other colleges. Anecdotally it was thought that other London colleges had under-recruited.</p>

CS asked if there was confidence in the retention figures and whether registers were up to date and the data was robust. SD explained that retention was measured post census and there may be a time lag in updating records to allow for efforts to re-engage students prior to finally being withdrawn. It was also necessary to inform the local boroughs about the withdrawal of students aged 16 – 18 for safeguarding purposes, as all young people under the age of 18 should be in some form of training or education. SD said that there were some data issues still being resolved, but the attendance figures included English and maths.

CS welcomed the lesson observation figures and questioned whether this would be reflected in improved achievement. JW said that the lesson observations were only part of the quality process and that further assessments were being completed to triangulate this data and validate the process.

ADG commented that attendance was a persistent issue and perhaps could benefit from a more substantive review to better understand non-attendance and lack of engagement. She had not seen any significant improvements year on year though it was noted that the pandemic had adversely affected attendance. SD reminded the committee that student engagement was positive during the pandemic even though attendance was more challenging with remote delivery and this was continuing. Recent attendance at exams was high. He suggested bringing termly attendance data to the Committee to so that improvements and the impact of interventions could be seen more easily.

TJ asked to what degree English and maths attendance was affecting the overall attendance rate and whether the payments being made to incentivise student attendance was having an impact. JW said that he did not have the E&M data separately so was unable to respond. The payment incentive was thought to be working and would be continued until the end of the academic year. MM said that he understood the attendance issues during the pandemic, but also thought that the lesson cancellations and teacher absence had added to the problems in dis-incentivising students to attend. He expressed concern about the current approaches in enforcement and suggested that new ways to encourage student attendance should be considered. JW said that he acknowledged that a punitive approach was not always beneficial but attempts were being made to influence student behaviours and support engagement. The current interventions had been developed in consultation with curriculum teams and were consistent with the UCG method of dual investment. The role of the tutor in encouraging attendance was also considered to be important. AJ was doing further work on an attendance strategy which involved talking to students to better understand their concerns. SD encouraged MM to share his ideas and best practice in this area. **Members noted the report.**

ii. Student Engagement – Progress against plan

(Paper provided in advance)

AJ explained that the pandemic had caused delays in implementing this strategy but it was now considered to be back on track. She highlighted the key elements of the action plan and how these were progressing and being embedded. ND was in full support of this work and commented how important it was. SD reminded members that this strategy set out a continuum from informing to collaboration and that good progress was being made though it varied by career cluster. CS noted the curriculum forums and requested that Link Governors be invited to these.

TJ cross referenced the action plan with the student survey which had shown differences between campuses and asked if this was mirrored in other areas of student engagement. AJ confirmed that this was the case and different solutions were needed at different campuses. A new role had been created to support this at Paddington for example. SD also referred to the Change-Makers initiative at the Westminster Campus. MG commented that this was an initiative with Westminster City Council. **Members noted the report.**

iii. Student Survey results

(Paper circulated in advance)

AJ reported a 66% response rate to the survey which provided a robust data set on which to plan and prioritise changes. The overall aim was to be in the A or B quartiles. This had not yet been achieved, but there was good progress made since the survey 12 months ago which was benchmarked against over 100 other colleges. It was noted that there was a notable difference between the campuses. Actions plans were being taken forward in each curriculum area.

MM said that he had attended one of the survey focus groups in his curriculum area and felt uncomfortable receiving the direct criticism from students, and thought that more senior staff and governors should receive this feedback. SD considered that the direct feedback to curriculum teams was useful in being able to identify themes for improvement. He hoped that these could then be taken forward in a depersonalised way. Through the UCG Method it was hoped that confidence would develop for these more challenging conversations.

TJ noted that the feedback on spelling and grammar was low in the survey and asked if software AI was being implemented to assist with this. JW said that this had been stalled as a result of management changes but would be re-addressing this.

ADG welcomed the positive response rate and asked what specific actions were being taken to address the needs of certain learner groups for EDI. AJ said that QDP (who run the survey) did not provide this data at curriculum level so this would need further work. SD said that he thought that the survey provided a positive picture for 4 out of 5 campuses. Improvements were happening and it was important to consider whether it was happening quickly enough and making sufficient impact. **Members noted the report.**

iv. Student Destination Data

(Paper circulated in advance)

SD presented this preliminary report and promised a more detailed version at the next meeting in March which would show the data by learner groups. This survey had a 62% response rate which provided a good level of confidence in the results. Overall around 88% of students were going on to a positive destination following their studies at UCG. This was higher than the achievement rate which was encouraging. Some students surveyed reported benefits of attending college that were not directly related to their qualification which included socialisation, online protection and physical and mental well-being.

MM said that he thought the college could do more to support students into careers and better understand the value of their qualifications. He suggested more talks and career fairs to inspire students. TA agreed with this comment and welcomed more careers workshops and seminars. ND said that this report was worthy of celebration and emphasised the importance of teacher relationships in supporting students into the next stages of their careers and removing barriers of low aspiration. AJ confirmed that career

	<p>fairs were being planned together with support for student progression. Work experience was also built into many study programmes. Members noted the report.</p> <p>v. Chalkstream Report – non-enrolled study <i>(Reports circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>CC introduced this item providing an overview of the main points from the report and the key actions being taken forward. BV provided a short presentation of the main findings of the research which concluded that location was the deciding factor for many students; the college attracted applications from a wide area; the competition was other colleges in the sector not employment and that due to these factors it made marketing more challenging. Those enrolling for L2 courses at Paddington found the enrolment process most complicated.</p> <p>TJ asked if the pandemic had influenced the degree to which students were prepared to travel. BV said that he did not think that this was of significance, as there was a good indication of lengthy journeys along main train routes. He explained that the college was attracting applications and was a front runner for many students but had a poorer conversion rate. He suggested school liaison, improvements to the interview process to compel students to enrol, and more keep warm activities from application to enrolment to increase the conversion rate. He confirmed that the college was attracting a significant number of applications and that conversion was easier than attraction.</p> <p>TJ noted the low number of influencers in student decisions. BV acknowledged this and the importance of school liaison at all levels. MM asked if the environment was competitive because of there being many other colleges or the activities of those colleges. BV suggested that the competition was a result of transport links in that it made the wide range of FE options to students viable. The feedback from the research showed that the enrolment process itself was generally considered to be good. Reference was also made of the importance of progressing existing students into the next level. Members noted the report.</p>
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Teaching, Learning and Skills	
5	<p>i. EDI Achievement – Action Plan <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>JW highlighted the headline trends in his report including ethnicity and gender differences which had been developed into an overall action plan which was reflected in separate career cluster action plans. ADG applauded the level and detail of the data which had eventually been collated and was keen to see these action plans be fully integrated and be part of the work to improve learner experience. TJ also welcomed the data and that it would inform discussions at the Governor Strategy Day in March. He was also keen to see this embedded and understand how governors could support this strategically and influence how it is taken forward in the curriculum. Gender differences across courses were noted. Members noted the report.</p> <p>ii. Lesson Observations <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>JW reported that the paper set out the result of lesson observations which had taken place during October and November 2021. The grades awarded had been amended in consultation with staff and trade unions to reflect Ofsted grades. A developmental approach in line with the UCG method was being adopted. Overall the results of the lesson</p>

	<p>observations were considered to be positive and in line with a continued trend of improvement. TJ asked if there was any differentiation observed between permanent staff and HPLs as the former may be more committed to the organisation. This information was possible to collate but was not readily available. MM said that UCG should move away from HPLs to increase the number of permanent contracts to increase buy-in and commitment. SD said that CC and AT were doing a piece of work looking into this and the financial impacts liaising with trade unions. Members noted the report.</p> <p>iii. Learning and Teaching Operational Delivery Plan <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> This report had been provided for information to demonstrate progress since the last meeting and how all the elements being discussed on the agenda came together. Property had been added as a new area. Members noted the report.</p> <p>iv. Safeguarding Report <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> Following the retirement of Grethe Woodward AJ was now the strategic safeguarding lead. Diane Brown remained the DSL. AJ confirmed that safeguarding remained effective and that regulatory obligations had been met. Her report showed the increase in safeguarding concerns since the last report and that most of these concerned mental health. The improvements to sexual harassment reporting had resulted in 11 cases being reported which was considered to be good progress. The single central record was up to date. Local safeguarding induction for staff was also being addressed. ND said that she was looking forward to attending the Strategic Safeguarding meeting later that week and would share some of her ideas on staff induction. ADG welcomed the recording of data for looked after children and asked if this was available for other learner groups. She also asked about the absence of Prevent in the report. AJ confirmed that the data would be broken down in other meaningful ways and that the omission of Prevent was an oversight and she would pick this up with ND at the Strategic Safeguarding meeting. Members noted the report.</p> <p>v. Value Added <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> This paper provided a greater level of detail on the report presented at the previous meeting. It had been compiled by Learning Plus UK. PT said that overall students at UCG were making expected progress in line with national benchmarks. Training for VA would be rolled out to middle and senior managers during February and March. It was noted that those enrolling at UCG attained 1.5 grades lower at GCSE. Students in receipt of bursaries or FSMs achieved the same VA as other students. TJ asked how the VA may be incorporated into marketing in respect to additional support the college provides. SD said he would reflect on this. The higher VA from a course delivered by UAL was noted and that this was likely to be due to a high performing teacher. Members noted the report.</p>
6	AOB No items were raised.
8	Date of next meeting 28 March 2022 Meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 25/01/2022

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

Actions

ref	Action	Lead	Status
4i	Termly reports of attendance data to be brought to the next and future meetings of the committee to better show the impact of interventions.	JW	