

**CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP**  
**Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee**  
**Monday 28 March 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), Amish Nathwani (observer).

**In attendance:** Zoë Lawrence, James Wilson, Angela Jackson, Claire Collins, Malgorzata Zielinska, Gabe Manthorp, Nicola McLean, Jim Gallagher\*, Bilal Bobat.

\*relevant agenda item only

A	Procedural
1	<p><b>Welcome and apologies for absence</b>  Apologies had been received from Matthew Green and Melek Mandal.</p>
2	<p><b>Declarations of interests in agenda items</b>  No interests were declared.</p>
3	<p><b>i. Approve minutes of the Teaching, Learning and Skills Committee of 24 January 2022</b>  <i>(The minutes were circulated in advance)</i>  The minutes were approved as an accurate record for signing.</p> <p><b>ii. Matters Arising</b>  Matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p><b>iii. Grey Box</b>  No items were raised for discussion.</p>

A	Strategic Matters
4	<p><b>i. Power BI Demonstration</b>  JW demonstrated the Power BI dashboard to the committee. It had been in use by staff since December 2021 with a limited functionality and was continuing to be developed. Some of the data sets were not yet complete so reporting on some aspects was not yet reliable. JW showed the dashboards available for enrolments, attrition, retention, and attendance. Attendance was about 72% which was slightly lower than the previous year. TJ asked whether this was a result of some students never attending or whether it was sporadic attendance across the cohort. JW said that it was more the latter. The pandemic was now impacting absence levels as student were off sick with covid rather than isolating. All efforts were made to re-engage students following an absence. SD said that this pattern was consistent with the retention data, and it was the position in many colleges following the pandemic. TJ asked if there was a similar tool to the Bradford Factor scoring for absence that could be adapted for education. JW explained that poor attendance did not necessarily mean poor engagement and several factors including completion of work was also considered. Work was progressing on an attendance strategy which included better understanding of what the barriers were to attendance and what additional support students needed. The pandemic had caused some students to lack confidence, to feel isolated and with mental health issues which was preventing them attending college. Members welcomed this demonstration.</p>

**ii. Academic Risk Register**

*(Risk Register provided in advance)*

JW highlighted the six main themes in the risk register which included the covid pandemic, recruitment to leadership and management posts, MIS, English and maths achievement, and value added. The recruitment difficulties being faced by UCG were widespread with over 6000 vacancies across the FE sector. There was also a shortage of agency staff with competitive rates of pay. Efforts were being made on internal solutions and promotions. This included the recent appointment in English and Maths where the CM had been internally promoted. DB commented that some HPLs had been employed by the college for quite a number of years and asked if it was possible to make them permanent members of staff. CC said that discussions with recognised trade unions were taking place on this issue currently. Members noted the risk register.

**iii. Enrolment Planning**

*(Papers circulated in advance)*

JW presented his paper which set out the progress made to date on preparations for this Summer's enrolment and the approach that was being taken. TJ and DB sought clarity on the process for those students awaiting GCSE results and had been given a conditional offer. JW explained that assurance was given that if their expected grades were not achieved then there would be alternative courses they could enrol on at the college, they would not be turned away. Progressing adults and those with unconditional offers were able to enrol before the Summer break. MM commented that the systems for the interview process were currently not working well. JW acknowledged this and that there had been a pause in its use until the issues could be resolved. AN asked about the use of social media used in marketing for enrolment. Instagram was the main application used to target 16–18-year-old students and the marketing used the separate college brands. Members noted the action being taken in response to the Chalkstream research in relation to school liaison and to target specific areas of London. Interview training was also being rolled out to all relevant staff. Members noted the reports.

**iv. Portfolio Review**

*(Paper circulated in advance)*

JW set out the main points of this paper which included the course offer, how this aligned with local needs and national government policy including 'Good Work for All', National Skills Fund and the Green Skills Hub. Several L2 and 3 programmes had been adjusted so they better aligned with progression to T levels. The level of growth in student numbers was moderate and would be through an increase in class sizes. There was an overall increase in teaching hours as a result of the changes to the funding agreement which would equate to 4.3 FTE additional staff. A capex cost of £130k was expected to upgrade and reconfigure a small number of teaching spaces.

TJ thanked JW for the comprehensive review and asked to what degree employers as a main stakeholder had been involved in the process. JW said that employers should be involved but at the moment this varied depending on the career cluster. Engineering, construction and the built environment had strong links with employers in Camden and Brent, but the dialogue was less well developed for business programmes and there would need to be additional focus. SD commented that the Skills Bill currently in parliament would place the need to consult with employers in law. He acknowledged that there were still some less developed areas for the college but there were plans in place through First London, Collab and other business forums to improve employer links. It was noted that the

	<p>portfolio review was demand-led. ADG expressed concern at the withdrawal of some health and wellbeing courses. JW said that this was due to a poor take up of 16–18-year-old students but the provision would continue for adults. It was considered important to respond to demand and repurpose the offer. TJ asked to what degree UCG was collaborating with other colleges which was being encouraged in national policy initiatives. SD said that this was also an area in development and collaborations with other colleges were being initiated. The government initiative was removing the barriers and more colleges were willing to engage. Work was developing with the West London Alliance and Harrow &amp; Uxbridge college on some programmes. The benefits of working with partners to improve areas of provision was recognised. Members noted the report.</p>
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<b>Teaching, Learning and Skills</b>	
5	<p><b>i. Predicted Achievement</b> <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>JW reported that predicted achievement for this year was currently up on the previous year except for supported learning which was at 98% from 100% the previous year. Where the mode of assessment was exams however, the achievement level was more difficult to predict. TJ commented how it was heartening to see the improvements which reflected the hard work of the college staff. He asked how confident JW was in these predictions at this stage when last year the predicted achievement and actual failed to match. JW explained that the previous year’s issues had not been foreseen and were a result of interventions not being followed through. Additional leadership support had now been put in place which was hoped to ensure more realistic predictions. SD also said that more key assessment points and additional controls had been introduced for English and maths to mitigate risks, though exam based assessments were more difficult to predict. To date exam attendance had been good. TJ as link governor for English and maths had recently met with the AP and was impressed with their approach and focus. He felt confident in the improvements being made.</p> <p>ADG commented on whether poor behaviour of some students was having a negative impact and what measures were being taken. JW acknowledged this which was thought to be as a result of the pandemic in reducing the levels of social interactions and the increase in stress and mental health issues. The behaviour issues were confined to 16-19 year old students at the Paddington campus. There had been an increase in suspensions and exclusions in response, though students continued to receive support to complete their courses where possible. A range of other support including mentoring, enrichment and safeguarding were offered to students.</p> <p><b>ii. Business Development Unit - Apprenticeships</b> <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>MZ presented the main points of her paper which included apprenticeship starts, achievement and developments within the sector. Recruitment to apprenticeship programmes had increased but were still not at pre-pandemic levels. Work was progressing to improve data compliance and develop a single team across campuses. The Apprenticeship Accountability Framework had introduced some flexibilities so that those on shorter term employment contracts could be eligible for apprenticeships. SD explained that this was currently a complex area in its interface with curriculum and the forthcoming levy review. Off the job training would be included in the upcoming monitoring visit by Ofsted. TJ asked how UCG’s achievement rate compared to national rates and whether timely apprenticeships were still monitored. MZ said that national data had not been</p>

provided during the pandemic years so it was not possible to know our position compared to other providers. End point assessments had also been delayed due to the pandemic so the measure for timely completion had been lifted currently. Given the issues with the pandemic including lockdowns and job losses, 60% achievement on apprenticeships was considered to be good. MZ suggested how UCG's own employer levy could be used to bring in more apprentices to the organisation or to develop existing staff.

### iii. HE Update

*(Paper circulated in advance)*

GM provided an update on HE and the management arrangements now that the HE Oversight Committee had been disbanded. These included three workstreams with action plans and an overarching strategy. GM also reported that the OfS conditions of registration were now complete and there was no further action arising from the QSR which took place in November 2019. UCG had responded to three formal consultations from the OfS. New HE courses in Sport and Chemistry were due to be introduced plus the prospect of a PGCE. ADG offered her support in this area as a former member of the HE Oversight Committee which was welcomed. TJ commented how it was good to see that the focus on HE had been retained and asked about the plans to link with a non-London based university. GM said that a potential partner was still being sought but other links within London were being made. TJ asked what the levels of expected growth were over the time of the strategy. GM hoped that this would increase to 500 students by 2025. TJ suggested that there could be further consideration of the target market in the strategy. SD thanked GM for his work in leading this area of the business and the potential that was now starting to come through which included degree apprenticeships and PGCE qualifications which would support UCG's plans to develop staff within the organisation. Members noted the report.

### iv. Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (Gatsby)

*(Paper circulated in advance)*

NMc set out the main points of her paper which included students' personal development, employability, destinations and the Gatsby benchmarks. The investment in this area was positive with 12 dedicated careers staff providing impartial advice to students. An action plan was in place to ensure that 100% score would be reached on the Gatsby benchmarks. MM asked if she thought there were enough careers advisors. NMc explained that this was often one of the roles that was difficult to recruit to and at busy times such as enrolment and to support UCAS applications other staff could be used flexibly to support this area. Training for this had been put in place. SD commented that nearly 90% of those who applied to university each year were offered a place. Members noted the report.

### v. Financial Support / Bursary Policy

*(Draft policy circulated in advance)*

NMc explained that this policy had recently been reviewed as part of an ESFA audit which had recommended that the policy be more transparent and clear. These changes were included in this draft. **The Committee agreed to recommend this policy to the Corporation for approval.**

### vi. Admissions Policy

*(Draft policy circulated in advance)*

AJ said that this policy was quite similar to the previous year though some small changes had been made for clarity. The HE admissions policy was consistent with OfS requirements. The date for review was adjusted to October 2023 to align with the admissions process. **The Committee approved the Admissions Policy.**

6	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>Complaints Policy and Procedure</b>  <i>(Draft policy circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>JG explained that the policy was largely similar to the previous version. Nomenclature had been updated, and drafting improvement for clarity. The main changes concerned an increase in the response times as part of the process to allow for more complex complaints to be properly investigated. These changes better reflected actuality of implementation and improved the process for users. <b>The Committee agreed to recommend the policy to the Corporation for approval.</b></p>
8	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b>  13 June 2022</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.11 pm</p>

*Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 29 March 2022*

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