

UCEN Manchester Board

Minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2021 at 10:07am in Openshaw, OP116/117/118.

Present: Kimoni Bell, Cllr John Hacking (Chair), Philip Johnson, Lisa O'Loughlin (Principal) and Peter Winter.

Apology: Justice Ellis

In Attendance: Amy Avery (Assistant Company Secretary & Solicitor), Jennifer Foote MBE (Company Secretary and General Counsel) and Michael Walsh (Vice Principal and HE Dean)

Via Teams: Alison Close (Group Finance Director), Rachel Curry (Deputy Principal), Mark Harris (Associate Dean), Susan Holden (Director of Quality, Standards and Strategic Partnerships), Christine Kenyon (Deputy Principal), Edward Lack (Group Director of Quality), Wendy Pennington (Director of Student Experience and Engagement) and Debbie Sanderson (Divisional Finance Director College and Income Team)

No declarations of interest were received.

Part A

22/21	<p>Part A minutes of the meeting of the UCEN Manchester Board held on 25th June 2021</p> <p>The Part A minutes of the meeting, of the UCEN Manchester Board, held on 25th June 2021, were received and approved as an accurate record, and signed by the Chair in hard copy.</p>
23/21	<p>Student Outcomes Report for 2020-21</p> <p>The Board received the above report which contained an overview of the HE performance data as at the end of the 2020-21 academic year. It was noted that the strong outcomes had informed the development of department-level Self-Evaluation Documents ("SEDs").</p> <p>The main highlights of the report were summarised which included improved attendance rates, achievement rates and continuation rates as well as an enhanced and positive in-year retention and increased high grades across the entire provision with solid performance across departments (except Engineering and Sport & Public Services). The small decline in pass rate was noted.</p>

	<p>The Board tested around the data which had been collected this year, compared to the prior year, and the underlying reasons for the differences were explained which had prevented a direct comparison being possible with the previous year.</p> <p>In answer to a query, the explanations for the decline in performance in Engineering and Sport & Public Services were explored. It was explained that issues had been identified during the year and remedial action, now beginning to deliver a positive impact, had been put in place. In the interests of scrutiny and rigour, the Board challenged these explanations and received assurance that the focus would be to improve the outcomes in these two areas in the QIP.</p> <p>Members were pleased with the overall performance outcomes especially in light of the pandemic which had necessitated numerous adaptations to suit the learners' needs during lockdowns which had presented significant challenges.</p>
24/21	<p>Self-Evaluation Document 2020-21 and Quality Enhancement Plan</p> <p>The Board received the UCEN Manchester SED for 2020-21 (the "SED") following the validation by the Group Quality Team of departmental SEDs. The key message that UCEN Manchester was in a good position in relation to the SED was positively noted. Members reviewed and reflected upon the enhancement priorities in the SED.</p> <p>Some of the key strengths identified in the SED were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>very good and further improved student outcomes across retention, achievement, attainment and continuation rates;</i> • <i>excellent achievement and attainment rates on Level 6 programmes; and</i> • <i>excellent adaptations to teaching and assessment practices to effectively manage learning through the pandemic.</i> <p>Some of the Areas for Enhancement ("AFEs") identified in the SED included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>National Student Survey results were below the benchmark;</i> • <i>the Programme Leader role was neither adequately defined nor consistently implemented, leading to a lack of accountability, rigour and impact within the performance of a number of programmes; and</i> • <i>enrolment numbers had declined significantly over the last three years, leading to less income and a reduced curriculum offer.</i> <p>It was understood that the next stage would be to formulate a robust Quality Enhancement Plan ("QEP") to address the AFEs identified by the SED and drive continuous improvement across UCEN Manchester. The QEP would then be monitored for the remainder of the 2021-22 academic year and would be subject to quarterly reviews. In the interests of scrutiny and assurance, the QEP would be presented to the Board for the next meeting, on 4th March 2022.</p> <p>It was articulated that UCEN Manchester had been restructured and there were challenges to be met regarding obtaining reliable data. It was highlighted that the role of quality was critical to ensure that UCEN Manchester would achieve its ambitions. It was essential that further scrutiny would take place regarding UCEN Manchester's Acceptance and Participation Plan to continue the enhancement journey.</p>

	<p>The strategic and stakeholder implications and risks of the SED and QEP were flagged.</p> <p>It was brought to the Board's attention that The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework ("TEF") had recently been reviewed, and a modification to its ratings system would be made.</p> <p>The Board was assured that it would be kept apprised of the evolving quality landscape which was anticipated to continue over the next two years and how the changes would impact UCEN Manchester.</p>
25/21	<p>National Students Survey Report 2020-21 ("NSS")</p> <p>It was articulated that the NSS took place from 6th January to 30th April 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had caused substantial disruption to the students and their studies. The NSS results were the lowest rates that had ever been received.</p> <p>A report was provided to the Board containing an in-depth analysis of UCEN Manchester's disappointing NSS results following their publication by the Office for Students (the "OfS") in July 2021.</p> <p>UCEN Manchester's results showed a decline from the prior year for '<i>overall satisfaction</i>', which was the key indicator, in all nine categories and was below the benchmark in four of the nine categories (Teaching and Learning, Learning Opportunities, Academic Support and Organisation and Management). Further, UCEN Manchester's NSS results were significantly below the benchmark for Learning Resources. However, it was encouraging that UCEN Manchester's results were above the benchmark in four of the nine categories (Assessment and Feedback, Learning Community, Student Voice and Students Union).</p> <p>UCEN Manchester's participation rate in the survey was 77% (against a target of 75%) which was positively noted.</p> <p>The overall satisfaction rate for UCEN Manchester was 66.9% (a decrease of 16% from 2019-20). The national benchmark was 71% and the internal performance target set by Governors for 2020-21 was 85%.</p> <p>There were six COVID-19 questions in addition to the main survey which students had the option of answering which 38% of students responded to.</p> <p>The Board reflected upon the NSS results for UCEN Manchester's main competitors for 2020-21 and for the prior two years.</p> <p>The strategic and stakeholder implications along with the risks were highlighted to Members.</p> <p>In the interests of scrutiny and oversight, the Board considered the NSS results and the strategies for improvement for 2021-22.</p> <p>In response to a query regarding the monitoring of the improvement plan leading up to summer 2022, assurance was given that steps had already been undertaken to</p>

	<p>ascertain students' satisfaction levels and to identify future steps. Two student pulse surveys had been carried out which evidenced the drive for improvement in this area.</p> <p>In answer to a further query regarding escalation if improvements were not evidenced by December 2021, it was confirmed that a follow-up process would ensure issues were rectified.</p> <p>The reasons why UCEN Manchester was unable to meet some students' expectations were explored which included the pandemic. It was explained that statutory education (for 16-18s) had received priority with students who were imminently due to sit exams. There were also still some issues to be addressed regarding facilities. Assurance was provided to the meeting that work was being undertaken to ascertain how students could be supported in the event of a further lockdown. Lessons would be learnt from departments which had successfully managed communications with students.</p> <p>The Board was pleased that a strategic and detailed action plan to guarantee that students' satisfaction returned to the requisite levels in 2022. It was acknowledged that some of the student dissatisfaction surrounding Covid and a lack of face-to-face learning could not be avoided.</p> <p>Assurance was provided that in-year monitoring and improvements would be made to achieve enhanced NSS results in 2022.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED that as the items to be considered were deemed commercially sensitive, the Board moved into confidential session.</p>
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The meeting closed at 12:33 pm.