

UCEN Manchester Board

Minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2022 at 10:03am via Microsoft Teams.

Present: Kimoni Bell, Jacqueline Dunn (Student Governor), Justice Ellis, Cllr John Hacking (Chair), Philip Johnson, Lisa O'Loughlin (Principal) and Peter Winter.

In Attendance: Amy Avery (Assistant Company Secretary & Solicitor), Rachel Curry (Deputy Principal), Jennifer Foote MBE (Company Secretary and General Counsel), Mark Harris (Associate Dean), Susan Holden, Christine Kenyon (Deputy Principal), Edward Lack (Group Director of Quality), Wendy Pennington (Director of Student Experience and Engagement), Debbie Sanderson (Divisional Finance Director College and Income Team) and Michael Walsh (Vice Principal and HE Dean).

Observer: Maryanne Letham (Student Union President)

No declarations of interest were received.

The Board welcomed Jacqueline Dunn as the new Student Governor to her first meeting.

The Board expressed its thanks to the following attendees as this was their final UCEN Manchester meeting:

- i. Peter Winter (Co-optee);*
- ii. Susan Holden (Director of Quality, Standards and Strategic Partnerships); and*
- iii. Amy Avery (Assistant Company Secretary & Solicitor).*

Part A

01/22	<p>Part A minutes of the meeting of the UCEN Manchester Board held on 19th November 2021</p> <p>The Part A minutes of the meeting, of the UCEN Manchester Board, held on 19th November 2021, were received and approved as an accurate record, to be signed by the Chair in electronic form.</p>
02/22	<p>Self-Evaluation Document 2020/21 and Quality Enhancement Plan 2021/22 Progress Report</p> <p>The Board received a summary of the UCEN Manchester Self-Evaluation Document for 2020/21 (the "SED") which was built around the departments as they were in 2020/21.</p>

	<p>The Quality Enhancement Plan for 2021-22 ("QEP") was received by the meeting in the interests of scrutiny. It was noted that the aim of the QEP was to drive continuous improvement across UCEN Manchester.</p> <p>The progress of the QEP in addressing the Areas for Enhancement ("AfEs"), identified by the SED, had been tracked to December 2021 which was the first review point in 2021/22. Most of the action points in the QEP were RAG rated amber. It was understood that the next review point would take place in April 2022 with the final review in September 2022.</p> <p>It was flagged that the restructure in UCEN Manchester had caused some logistical issues which had been overcome. The key message was that the standard of the UCEN Manchester QEP was good and that progress had been made in most areas.</p> <p>The following AfEs were highlighted to the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Afl 4: National Student Survey Results are below the benchmark: Overall Satisfaction, Organisation and management, Learning Resources.</i> It was articulated to the Board that a vital part of the strategy was to increase participation rates due to the direct correlation between high participation and overall satisfaction rates. Assurance was provided that the participation rates had already significantly improved since the same point last year, which was positively noted, especially due to the concern in this area in 2020/21 which was a national issue. • <i>Afl 6: Enrolment numbers have declined significantly over the last 3 years, leading to less income and a reduced curriculum offer.</i> It was explained that there remained a shortfall in enrolment numbers but a strategy was in place to resolve this. • <i>Afl 8: Student Support QIPs are not always suitably focused on bringing about improvements in UCEN Manchester</i> This was being addressed as a plan had been implemented to support vulnerable/at risk learners and was on track to be improved. Retention rates had advanced this year and were higher than at the same point in the prior year. The figures were expected to be enhanced further by collaboration between Student Support Services and the business units which would enable additional areas to be reviewed in 2022/23. <p>In response to a query, the interconnection between the only red RAG rated AfE in the QEP (AfE 5 as set out below) and Project Connect was explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>AfE 5: The Programme Leader role is neither adequately defined nor consistently implemented, leading to a lack of accountability rigour and impact within the performance of a number of programmes.</i> <p>It was clarified that although some time slippage had resulted from delays associated with Project Connect, AfE 5 would need to be achieved irrespective of whether Project Connect was implemented. It was understood that Project Connect was now progressing.</p>
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	<p>In answer to a concern regarding an absence of any AfEs that were RAG rated green, it was articulated that the QEP had only just been prepared. The Board was assured that it was normal at this point for the indicators to be either red or amber. The expectation was for the indicators to turn to green in Autumn 2022, which the meeting was satisfied with.</p> <p>In response to a further query regarding the speed at which the AfEs were being addressed and the long term nature of some AfEs, it was explained that it was not possible for some issues to be fixed within one year and therefore some of the AfEs needed to remain in the QEP over a longer period of time.</p> <p>The Board noted the improvement priorities articulated in the QEP.</p> <p>Members considered it would be helpful for the next QEP update for the board meeting on 24th June 2022 to flag which AfEs remain there year-on-year.</p>
03/22	<p>HE Fees Policy & HE Fees 2023/24</p> <p>The tuition fee rates and the tuition fee policy for 2023/24 were received by the Board, for review and approval, to meet the on-going Office for Students' registration requirements.</p> <p>No increase was proposed to the fees. It was flagged that the fees the students paid in their first year of study would not rise in the subsequent years of study.</p> <p>In response to a query, the fees charged under the different tiers were explained which was dictated by when a student began their course.</p> <p>It was noted that there were minimal proposed amendments to the HE fees policy.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the HE tuition fees and the HE Fees Policy, as set out in the report, be approved for 2023/24.</p>
04/22	<p>Applications Report</p> <p>The Board received an Applications Report which contained an overview of the current position regarding internal (from TMC) and external applications to study at UCEN Manchester. It was explained how critical the monitoring of the student application data was to achieving the budget and to the Estates Strategy and the overall UCEN Manchester Strategy.</p> <p>Internal applications had substantially increased on the prior year which was positively noted. Overall, applications were significantly higher than in previous years by 234 which was the highest level achieved for at least four years. This indicated that the implemented in-year activities to address the shortfall in enrolments in 2021/22 were having a positive impact. Applications were particularly encouraging in Manchester Film School, Management and Digital and Counselling & Teacher Education. The opening of the new City Centre campus was expected to maximise enrolment figures. Growth in enrolment was required in Health & Social Care and also in Childhood and Youth Studies. In general, UCEN Manchester was cautiously optimistic but the Board</p>

	<p>were made aware that work was required to convert applications into acceptances and then into enrolments.</p> <p>The Board was presented with comparison data against prior years which was articulated to the meeting.</p> <p>It was understood that the ‘Accelerate2Industry’ initiative would incentivise progression from TMC and would help convert applications into enrolments. The rationale behind the initiative was tested. The particular courses had been selected to address the city’s digital skills needs and in terms of the quantum of courses it needed to be manageable from a financial perspective. Further, the initiative was in recognition that many of TMC’s students faced economic challenges and the award would help to ameliorate those concerns. It was emphasised that the initiative was in addition to the bursary that all UCEN Manchester students received regardless of where they had studied previously. The potential reaction of students who had not progressed from TMC was debated. It was confirmed that there was no evidence to suggest that the initiative had disincentivised other students. It was articulated that 75% of TMC’s students were from widening participation post codes or lower starting points and therefore steps were required to support these students to progress onto further study. The Board was satisfied with the underlying rationale for this incentive.</p> <p>In response to a query regarding the economic implications of providing courses with low student numbers, the usual minimum numbers were confirmed. It was articulated that if a decision was taken not to run a particular course due to inadequate enrolment numbers, alternative course options were offered to students. It was explained that sometimes courses did still proceed where economies of scale could be achieved by combining the teaching of certain elements. The Board was assured that the figures were closely monitored and that steps were taken where necessary to avoid negative economic impacts and to run courses offered wherever possible in the best interests of the students.</p> <p>The January starts were presented and the ambitious targets were reflected upon. It was understood that the government’s consultation on HE Regulations was being considered by UCEN Manchester. This included a greater emphasis on modular provision which would provide scope for in-year enrolments. It was highlighted that the efficacy of January starts required a review. The government had stated an ambition to raise the perception of technical qualifications. The Board would receive a report for the next board meeting of the consultation and the implications for the UCEN Manchester strategy.</p>
05/22	<p>Update from Academic Board – minutes</p> <p>An update from the last Academic Board meeting, held on 11th February 2022, was provided to the meeting for information along with the draft minutes. The rationale of why this was provided to the Board was articulated. The main points discussed at the Academic Board meeting included: UCEN Manchester’s Break in Study Policy, UCEN Manchester Pearson Academic Regulations, UCEN Manchester Quality Enhancement Plan, the UCEN Manchester Strategy, DAPs process and next steps, Student Voice Report, Tuition Fees and Policy for 2023/24, Minutes of Curriculum, Quality and</p>

	Standards Committee from 14th January 2022, UCEN Manchester's new MA and three year honours degree for the Arden School of Theatre and the OIA Statement for 2021.
	RESOLVED that as the items to be considered were deemed commercially sensitive, the Board moved into confidential session.
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The meeting closed at 12:37pm.