

UCEN Manchester Board

Minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2022 at 2pm at OP116/117.

Present: Justice Ellis, Cllr John Hacking (Chair), Philip Johnson, Lisa O’Loughlin (Principal), Malcolm Todd.

In Attendance: Linda Barlow (Assistant Company Secretary & Legal Officer), Rachel Curry (Deputy Principal), Janet Faulkner (Director of Academic Standards), Mark Harris (Associate Dean), Ed Lack (Group Quality and Standards Director), Wendy Pennington (Director of Student Experience and Engagement), Debbie Sanderson (Divisional Finance Director College and Income Team), Michael Walsh (Vice Principal and HE Dean) and Lorna Lloyd-Williams (Company Secretary and General Counsel).

At the start of the meeting, in acknowledgement that this would be John Hacking’s final meeting as member and Chair of the UCEN Manchester Board, the Principal thanked him for his valued contribution to the Board and development of UCEN Manchester. The Board echoed the Principal’s comments and thanked him for his support to the Board and the governance of LTE Group.

Part A

<p>20/22</p>	<p><i>Lisa O’Loughlin left the meeting.</i></p> <p>Part A minutes of the meeting of the UCEN Manchester Board held on 24th June 2022</p> <p>The Part A minutes of the meeting, of the UCEN Manchester Board, held on 24th June 2022, were received and approved as an accurate record, and signed by the Chair in hard copy.</p>
<p>21/22</p>	<p>Acknowledgement of appointment of Chair Designate</p> <p>The Board welcomed Malcolm Todd to his first Board meeting who had recently been appointed to the Board as member and Chair Designate.</p>

22/22 **Learner Outcomes Report**

The Board received the above report which contained an overview of the HE performance data as at the end of the 2021-22 academic year. It was explained that the report had a deliberate HE focus on metrics and regulatory body requirements that feature in that environment.

The main highlights of the report were summarised which included significant improvements in retention, pass, achievement rates, high grades and provisional continuation rates. It was explained that continuation rate data was still provisional as at the time the report was produced enrolment data was still in production but would likely be around 88% which was significantly up on last year. It was reported that enrolments were down on the previous year which is a continued trend.

It was reported that although outcomes were extremely strong, there were small pockets of underperformance which included Level 7 performance and HND achievement rates which had dipped slightly but was based on a small number of students.

A breakdown of retention, pass and achievement rates by curriculum department was shared with the Board. Part A set out historical data based on the historical curriculum structure and Part B set out current data based on the new curriculum structure. It was flagged that rates in the School of Management, Digital and Engineering were low and an area of focus.

A breakdown in attendance, retention, pass and achievement rates in Teacher Education was shared and it was noted that overall performance remained very strong, despite some small dips in performance, especially notable in PGCE performance.

Comparative performance data between different groups of learners was shared and it was explained that it is presented as it would be looked at by the Office of Students (OFS). The following key factors were flagged, achievement rates had improved significantly for all groups of students, the achievement rate gap between white students and Asian students has narrowed significantly from 13.1pp in 20/21 to 5.3pp in 21/22.

In response to a query about how the data aligns with benchmark groups and the Access and Participation Report (APP), it was confirmed that the

	<p>continuation benchmark was 78.9% with the OFS trying to achieve 10% above that. With regard to the APP, it was confirmed that there was no significant gaps but more granularity of data was needed to understand the different factors such as how course quality and learner experience impacted on different groups of learners with different backgrounds.</p> <p>The Board positively noted the report and the quality of information it included.</p>
<p>23/22</p>	<p>Self-Evaluation Document 2021/22 and Quality Enhancement Plan 2022/23 Progress Report</p> <p>The Board received a summary of the UCEN Manchester Self-Evaluation Document for 2021/22 (the “SED”) which had been recently validated by the Group Quality Team.</p> <p>It was explained that the SED had been built on QA codes and internal drivers and the Board was asked to acknowledge the extremely strong improvement in quality which was higher than other business areas in LTE Group.</p> <p>It was explained that subject to Board approval the next stage of self-assessment was to formulate a robust Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to accompany the SED which would address any Areas for Enhancement (AfEs) identified as part of the self-evaluation process.</p> <p>A review of the 2021-22 QEP was presented and the Areas for Enhancement (“AFEs”) identified in the SED and rag rated amber included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Student achievement rates on Foundation Degrees and Level 4 Higher Nationals require improvement.</i> • <i>Adapted approaches to teaching, learning and assessment of students on Higher Technical level 4 programmes require improvement.</i> • <i>A very small minority of EE reports which have flagged serious issues/actions that require immediate attention require robust action plans and monitoring.</i> • <i>National Student Survey Results are below the benchmark: Overall Satisfaction, Organisation and management, Learning Resources</i> • <i>Enrolment numbers have declined significantly over the last 3 years, leading to less income and a reduced curriculum offer.</i> • <i>Not all areas of UCEN Manchester make an adequate contribution towards achieving Access and Participation Plan (APP) targets.</i>

It was noted that AFE5 - 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 was rag rated red.

The 2022-23 QEP would be brought to the next Board meeting for scrutiny.

Overall Self-Evaluation Grades for 2021-22 were highlighted and four out of the six areas were rated as 'exceeds requirements' (Overall Effectiveness of UCEN Manchester, Academic Standards, Teaching, Learning Assessment and Feedback and Leadership and Management, with two areas rated as 'meets requirements' (Access and Participation and Student Engagement).

Comparative data against the prior year was presented for six areas (Overall effectiveness of UCEN Manchester, Data and Wider Outcomes for Students, Quality of teaching, learning, assessment and feedback, External Examiners' Reporting, Quality of Student Engagement, including NSS and Effectiveness of leadership and management. Five out of the six were rated as 'meets requirements' with Quality of Student Engagement, including NSS rated as 'meets requirements with conditions.'

Three Areas for Enhancement ("AEFs") were highlighted as areas for focus and more information was needed to understand and drive performance.

- Reportable data sets on student performance have improved significantly but remain under-developed.
- While the achievement rates of Black students have increased, the gap between Black and White students has widened.
- There are inconsistent approaches to sharing research and scholarship to inform and enhance teaching and learning.

All AEFs would feed into the QEP.

In response to a query about how difficult it was to make a difference to the AEFs and on what timescale, it was explained that it was a challenge and because of the Group structure not all changes are within the control of UCEN Manchester and some were resource and funding dependant. It was further explained that some AEFs are systematic and some year on year, but it was expected that all seven would be impacted in year.

	<p>The Board reflected on the AEF's and in particular the need to ensure that facilities are continually assessed to ensure that they are fit for purpose and that the curriculum is developed to meet local skills needs and promote growth in student numbers.</p> <p>In response to a query about developments in UCEN as a result of the creation of the new schools, it was explained that the new schools and re-aligned departments and teams to exclusively HE had led to some improvements on the curriculum. In addition, work on marketing and brand identity had had a positive impact as students begin to identify and associate with them which had also been identified in the responses to the National Student Survey (NSS).</p>
<p>24/22</p>	<p>National Students Survey Report 2021-22 (“NSS”)</p> <p>The Board received an overview of the NSS results for 2022.</p> <p>It was articulated that the report details UCEN Manchester's performance at an institutional level and programme level and provided a comparative analysis against internal targets, NSS benchmarks and competitors. An operational plan and NSS action plan was being developed to ensure that areas of good practice and areas for improvement are monitored and evaluated through the Quality Leadership Team (QLT), and to embed curriculum actions into the SED and QEP processes.</p> <p>It was explained that the OfS have recently undertaken an NSS consultation and as a result had made a number of the changes to the NSS in 2023, which were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of question 27- the overall satisfaction rate which was noted as particularly significant as this question is most used as the 'headline figure for institutions and comparison of student satisfaction between different providers. • Introduction of two new questions around freedom of expression and mental health / wellbeing support. (How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services? During your studies, how free did you feel to express your ideas, opinions, and beliefs?) • The survey will change to direct questions with a four-point answer scale. (Very good; Good; Not very good; Not at all good; This does not apply to me.)

- The NSS will be reviewed regularly, normally every four years with scope for additional reviews as appropriate.
- From 2024-25 the period for students to respond to the survey will be shortened, to reduce data requirements on universities/colleges.

The Board reflected on how the removal of question 27 would enable the collection of data around satisfaction rates and the challenge it posed to students and institutions alike.

In response to a query about the how students will be socialised on the new freedom of expression question and the Likert scale, it was explained that internally the Likert scale is not used and that work was needed to implement the NSS changes to ensure that students can interpret the new questions in time for the next survey.

The Board noted the following key issues:

- The participation rate was 83% (target 80%) which was up +5% points on the previous year.
- Overall satisfaction rate for UCEN Manchester was 78% (target 85%) which was up +11% points on the previous year. It was explained that the national benchmark for institutions of the same type was 73%.
- Performance against the key NSS categories showed that organisation and management at course level and learning resources remained a challenge, whereas the learning community category had significantly increased.
- Performance at Programme level reflected high levels of satisfaction on the FdA Childhood and Youth Studies, FdA 3D Modelling and Animation for Games and Media. The lowest performing programme was the BA (Hons) Theatre and Performance and the FdA Make Up Artistry and FdA Special Effects programmes.
- The overall satisfaction rate was higher than all four of the GM Universities and BIMM which are not comparable in terms of size and scale.

The key themes emerging from the survey comments were highlighted to the Board and included:

- Timetabling: Late changes made to timetabling, which reflected a lack of communication from staff teams.
- Teaching teams. A lack of staff diversity in some areas.
- Support Services: Some support services hard to reach.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openshaw Campus: The Cube: Concerns around The Cube and facilities available to students. • Community ethos: A strong sense of community is felt amongst students. • Staff: Staff are approachable and go the extra mile. <p>In response to a query about how prevalent was the key theme “A lack of staff diversity in some areas” it was confirmed that it was a repeated view over previous surveys that staffing profile doesn’t always reflect the student population.</p> <p>The Board reflected on the wider issue of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) and discussed the need to benchmark around the Race Equality Charter in order to address the requirements in the APP and the potential for focus groups to test some of the assumptions around diversity. The Board was made aware that at Group level an EDI Governor had been identified to focus work in this area.</p> <p><i>The meeting adjourned at 15.32pm and reconvened at 15.45pm.</i></p>
	<p>RESOLVED that as the items to be considered were deemed commercially sensitive, the Board moved into confidential session.</p>
	<p>-----</p> <p>Chair</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Date</p>