

UCEN Manchester Board

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023 at City Campus Manchester.

Present: Rachel Curry (Principal), Philip Johnson (via Teams), Malcolm Todd (Chair).

Apologies: Amber Ahmed and Justice Ellis

In Attendance: Molly Butcher (Student Union President) Rachel Curry Principal), Janet Faulkner (Director of Academic Standards), Mark Harris (Vice Principal Adult and Vice Dean), Adam Hewitt (Group Quality Team Director), Ed Lack (Group Quality and Standards Director), Kate Mackenzie (Deputy Company Secretary and Solicitor), Wendy Pennington (Director of Student Experience and Engagement), Debbie Sanderson (Divisional Finance Director College and Income Team), Michael Walsh (Dean) and Lorna Lloyd-Williams (Company Secretary and General Counsel).

Andrea Elson (Director of Curriculum HE), Nicole Donnelly (Lecturer HE and Chris Miller for Minute No.16/23.

Haleema Tabassum(Student-Level 4 HTQ Computing), Hassan Azad- (Student- Level 6 Computer Network Security) and Peter Connell (Student-Level 6 Software Development) attended at the close of the formal meeting for lunch and Q&A.

No declarations of interest were received.

Part A

10/23	<p>Part A minutes of the meeting of the UCEN Manchester Board held on 9 March 2023</p> <p>The Part A minutes of the meeting of the UCEN Manchester Board held on 9 March 2023, were received and approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair in hard copy.</p>
11/23	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>The Board received an update for assurance and noted the action completed together with the five items that had been incorporated into the agenda for the meeting. It was noted that the Future U action was scheduled for the November meeting.</p>

12/23

HE Landscape

The Board received a paper detailing the current issues and policy developments in the HE landscape with a particular focus on those which pertained to the issues under consideration during the meeting. The issues covered were:

- Freedom of Speech
- NSS results consultation
- Lifelong Loan Entitlement
- Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)
- Student Fees and funding
- Impact of cost of living
- Equality of Opportunity Risk Register

The Board was informed that in each case the leadership and management team were considering the implications of the issues flagged and next steps were being formulated. The intent to produce a report for each meeting was signalled. The Board welcomed this space for the Board to be able to engage and debate, cognisant that the landscape was complex and fast changing with the potential for impactful policy changes to take place at short notice. The Board also gave a steer that for a future meeting an update on conditions of registration would be helpful.

ACTION: Dean

The lifelong loan change to HE funding and the distinction between prescribed and non-prescribed was highlighted as important for the Board's consideration moving forward. Previously non-prescribed had fallen under the remit of TMC. In particular a greater focus would be required around processes and outcome data. The change was also noted to present opportunities for the development of that provision with a linkage to higher technical qualifications and also aligned to computing (on the agenda later). The student fees and funding were also given focus and in particular the more recent issue of the funding fee cap of £9,250.

The Board noted that, the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act had come into effect on 11 May 2023, and had strengthened the legal duties on higher education providers in England to protect and promote freedom of speech on campuses for students. This was deemed as an important development and in response to questioning it was confirmed that UCEN Manchester currently operated a freedom of speech policy and this was in the process of being reviewed and revised where appropriate. The meeting focused on the importance of ensuring that this policy was suitable for the HE landscape, and assurance was provided that the intent was for a standalone policy (separated from TMC) to be embedded. Members considered this to be imperative. Whilst reflecting that traditionally UCEN Manchester did not invite a significant number of guest speakers, a Student Union (SU) perspective on this was sought and received, and the refinements to processes aligned to this area were shared.

Apropos of the policy discussion it was judged appropriate that an update on relevant policies be brought back to the next meeting to consider which should now also be distinguished and split out from TMC as part of UCEN Manchester's evolution. A

	<p>student perspective on the same and the need to be mindful of any impact on the student protection plan was also alluded to .</p> <p>ACTION: Dean</p> <p>The NSS consultation around the change in methodology for reporting NSS survey results was also given focus aligned to the impact on the communication of results.</p>
<p>13/23</p>	<p>Marketing Update , Applications and Acceptances Report</p> <p>Marketing</p> <p>The Board received a comprehensive marketing update which included the strategy for 2023/24, applications over the period, resource mapping, investment/ budget split, distance travelled , YTD and Q3 reporting, clearing overview and campaign collateral. The differentiated marketing approach and parallel strategies driven by the dual profile of UCEN Manchester Students was reiterated (Minute No. 02/23 refers). The clearing campaign was shared. It was flagged however that this was not traditionally an area that had translated into a large number of enrolments .</p> <p>Applications and Acceptances</p> <p>The Board received an update on the application figures as at 11.06.23 . Applications were 0.6% down on last year but 10.9% up on UCEN Manchester’s 3-year average. This was despite the national application picture evidencing a drop of 2% on prior year. Level 4 applications were 1.83% up on last year and 12.43% up on UCEN Manchester’s 3-year average . 19.2% of all applications were internal progression. Level 6 students were still submitting RPA applications as their Level 5 courses ended and these numbers were therefore predicted to increase on last year.</p> <p>Applications were reported as above or equivalent to prior years across the Faculty of Creative Arts and Media but were down in Business & Law, Healthcare and Counselling. A member queried and received assurance around the viability of the counselling provision. It was highlighted that late applications to these areas had been targeted through the Adult Open Evening on 25th May with 83 registrations for HE. The courses that had seen a particular increase in applications and those that had shown a decline were detailed. HTQ Computing and Cybersecurity were noted to have been amongst those courses which had evidenced an increase which was positive as this was an area of focus for the forthcoming year . For completeness the Board was presented with a comparison data table mapped against prior years and split by school and faculties.</p> <p>The Board received an update on the HE acceptances as of 21.05.23 and noted that firm UCAS acceptances were up 17% on prior year which the team confirmed supported their higher confidence levels of achieving enrolment target. 536 RPA applications had been received compared to 562 acceptances this time last year . More level 6 RPAS as alluded to were expected to close the gap to last year . The curriculum plan and targets for L4, L5(progressing)and L6(progressing) were detailed as compared to prior year. The focus on RPAS after the initial concerted prioritisation of UCAS in the relevant period was once again highlighted here (Minute No.02/23) refers.</p> <p>Having recognised that applications were down, the Board probed the ratio of applications to enrolments . This was confirmed to vary between faculties, with the</p>

Arden data flagged as having skewed the figures due to being lower due to capacity. The Board tested whether the clearing stretch target was ambitious enough based on data from HEFCE having evidenced significant volumes of students in clearing. The confidence level in the clearing campaign to attract and translate to additional students was also tested. The target of 70 had been set but it was confirmed that UCEN Manchester would not stop at this should the numbers land above those predicted. If however the strategic intent to revise the target up be deemed necessary it was flagged to the Board that this would require additional financial resource. It was confirmed that there was no contingency available to support additional spend and any decision to increase on this would require movement within the existing marketing envelope. A debate then ensued on the merits of spending additional sums on the clearing campaign versus the return on investment. In prior years it was confirmed that the money spent on clearing had not delivered value for money. The Board gave healthy challenge to this assumption in light of the new campus and the new HE offer and signalled that this aligned to the wider question and debate around the Group's ambition for UCEN Manchester and its evolution. In conclusion it was agreed that the merits in regard to any enhanced clearing approach be tested with marketing and the feedback be provided to the Board for assurance.

ACTION: Dean

The Board also sought clarity on the cost of acquisition per student across all areas. This varied depending on the route to enrolment, and the average cost of enrolment was flagged from the papers as presented. In light of the detailed discussion, it was agreed that for the next meeting Louise Marsden (Group Marketing Communications and Public Relations Director) be invited to present the overarching strategy and afford the Board the opportunity ask further questions.

ACTION: Dean.

An update on the 2023-24 internal progression campaign and strategic activities was shared. It was noted that internal applications for all level 4 courses were currently 238 compared to 218 as at 12 June 2022. The Board probed the teams view on the relative success of the progression outcomes when measured against the effort that had been required. Whilst it was considered there was always more that could be done, the green shoots in terms of progression were cited as evident. The dedicated work and approach of the recruitment, outreach and admissions team was shared aligned to this. The current work in train, which was scheduled to start the following day, around progression mapping and gap analysis to inform a targeted approach was shared together with the suggested actions to be taken. For the assurance of the Board it was confirmed that internal progression was a regular agenda item on UCEN Manchester's Quarterly Business Review meeting with an emerging view on the need to map an approach to the differentiated appetite of two distinct cohorts in the college aligned to progression (16-18 and adult) with the the adult space presenting a lot of opportunities for internal progression. The strategy around this was being given increased focus.

14/23

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) 2022/23 Progress Report

The Quality Enhancement Plan for 2022-23 (“QEP”) was received by the meeting in the interests of scrutiny. An update following the school- level QEP monitoring point in April 2023 was also provided . The key message was that the standard of the UCEN Manchester school-level QEPs was good, and the evidence base for progress made was convincing in the majority of cases. As most of the targets focused on quantifiable outcomes, the majority of action points were rated as ‘amber’ on the grounds that action had been taken to address the AfE, but that measurable data did not currently exist to suggest that the target had been fulfilled; in that event, it was not possible to record a ‘green’ rating. It was anticipated that many of the ‘amber’ ratings would change when the QEPs were monitored during the subsequent monitoring point in August 2023. Assurance was provided that this position was not unusual for this time of year. It was noted that for the first time that the wider operational functions in UCEN Manchester (Directorate of Student Experience and Engagement, and Directorate of Academic Standards) had been included in QEP monitoring that year.

A number of schools had reported good progress against the actions that had been set in their QEPs. A key focus for almost all curriculum school QEPs was student engagement generally and enhancements in NSS scores. Other areas of focus included progression and retention on a minority of programmes, industry engagement, data management, and student monitoring.

In relation to the Business- Unit level QEP, a verbal update on progress was provided as the second monitoring point since the last Board meeting had only started on 8th June. Most of the action points in the QEP were RAG rated amber. It was understood that the final review point would take place in August 2023 . It was reiterated that many of the QEP AFI targets related to UCEN Manchester’s strategic intent and therefore a number of them were about augmenting the provision further rather than focusing on underperformance.

Further to Minute No. 03/23 the Board gave focus to AFE 5 (*While the achievement rates of Black students have significantly risen, the gap between Black and White students has widened*) and the additional paper pertaining to the deep dive and curriculum gaps was received. The Board was reminded that overall the achievement rate gap was roughly 10pp difference between performance of these groups of students. Whilst the achievement rates across UCEN Manchester were very high for all groups of students and were significantly above the sector average UCEN Manchester wanted to understand at a more granular level what drove the gaps in performance between different groups of students . The meeting received a data table for 2021-22 which showed achievement rates of both black and white students split by curriculum area. At this stage of the process the analysis was indicative of curriculum performance rather than ethnicity being central to the issue but there was recognition that significant further work was required before any firm conclusions and action plans would emerge .The leadership team sought further support and counsel on the matter from the UCEN Manchester Chair outside of the meeting and this was agreed .

ACTION: Dean and Chair

The Board challenged the current approach to rag rating and expressed a concern that the current mechanism of ragging all actions which were in progress but had not yet

	<p>translated to a completed outcome , amber, did not feel like sufficient assurance /signposting of the current position of strategic risk. It was confirmed that this was an established quality reporting mechanism across the Group and the rationale for the same was explained. A discussion on whether extra narrative would assist was mooted and it was highlighted that Boards had specifically sought less narrative and the potential for unintended consequences needed to be borne in mind . In order to provide an extra level of comfort for the Board it was suggested that the subtle interdependencies between the QEP and the risk register be reflected in the risk register.</p> <p>ACTION: Dean</p>
<p>15/23</p>	<p>Update from Academic Board and Minutes</p> <p>An update from the last Academic Board meeting, held on 26 May 2023, was provided to the meeting for information along with the draft minutes.</p> <p>The proposals to simplify and streamline the Academic Governance structure within UCEN Manchester whilst making it more effective and efficient were highlighted.</p>
<p>16/23</p>	<p>Curriculum Area Presentation- School of Computing and Cybersecurity</p> <p><i>Andrea Elson , Nicole Donnelly and Chris Miller joined the meeting.</i></p> <p>Further to Minute No. 02/23 the Board received a presentation on the current and future curriculum offer within the School of Computing and Cyber Security. The Board reflected on its prior concerns around enrolment.</p> <p>An update on student numbers and outcomes was provided with the greatest demand in software development evident. It was highlighted that the new CCM had supported with external recruitment. The Board positively noted the exceptional student outcomes with achievement rates having further improved in 2021-22 to 93% (+3%pts) and high grades to 89% (+22%), of which the majority were first class honours. A summary of the GM skills needs mapped to computing was shared. Competitor analysis alongside the current UCEN Manchester offer and recent development was articulated which included the renaming of the Computer Network Security pathway to Cyber Security (Defensive Threat Detection). The UCAS and L3 progression split by course areas was detailed.</p> <p>The marketing strategy and activity was given focus and the Board positively noted the student attendance at the HTQ celebration event in June 2023 wherein UCEN Manchester had been represented by one of its HTQ students and the Dean of UCEN Manchester at a House of Lords event to celebrate the achievements of the first cohort of students . The future ambition and progression pathways for the curriculum area were highlighted. The meeting also received a very detailed summary of the extensive collaborative working initiatives with industry partners and employers, including events, taster sessions and speaking events that had taken place. The long- term strategy for engagement in this space was also shared and the employability opportunities this had and continued to generate .</p> <p>The meeting tested and received assurance that the curriculum team had all they needed from both the UCEN Manchester Board and leadership team. Having noted</p>

	<p>the employment opportunities created due to the collaborative endeavours the Board tested how entrepreneurialism was promoted with the school . It was acknowledged that this was not as prevalent and that work on softer skills was an area that required some focus. The meeting also considered the issue of work experience/ live briefs which was not mandated by the courses and had been taken out due to the student demographic in the main tending towards mature students with full time jobs and who did not have the time to take these opportunities up. In answer to a question the student demographic was confirmed to be a predominantly mature , adult , male cohort. In response to this the Board probed how the school was developing women in STEM. Details of collaboration with a proactive industry women’s network was shared. Following a further question it was confirmed that significant outreach activity had taken place in the adult space .</p> <p>The meeting sought to understand in more detail the competitive market in the undergraduate space and this was detailed. The revision of the curriculum offer to facilitate progression routes was alluded to. The focus for the next two years aligned to the future demand and skills gaps was also detailed. The Board also probed and received confirmation as to the differentiation of the UCEN Manchester offer compared to competitors and the added value and support offered was alluded to which was not prevalent in a larger/ traditional university setting .</p> <p>The Board sought and received the curriculum team’s view on blended learning. Successful pilots had been carried out and from both a student and tutor perspective the flexibility to offer this was welcomed . The Board thanked the curriculum team for their input and gave a steer to the leadership team that further curriculum area presentations from other schools would be welcomed in the future.</p> <p>ACTION: Dean</p> <p><i>Andrea Elson , Nicole Donnelly and Chris Miller left the meeting.</i></p>
<p>17/23</p>	<p>Student Protection Plan Update</p> <p>The Student Protection Plan was presented for approval. It was noted that only minor amendments had been made to the plan approved prior year namely around housekeeping matters due to role and campus location changes.</p> <p>The Board noted the commitment in respect of teach out provisions and sought clarity on the plan. The Board was taken through the process that would be followed including agreements with validating bodies.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Student Protection Plan as presented be approved.</p>
<p>18/23</p>	<p>OfS Annual Compliance Report</p> <p>The Board noted that the OfS conditions of registration required assurance to ultimately be provided to the governing body regarding compliance with those conditions. The Board received for assurance and information at this stage a draft schedule which outlined when and how the Board could expect assurances for each of the conditions of registration. Some areas were still to be determined. It was confirmed that once further iterated it would come back to the Board for further consideration. Once</p>

	<p>approved it was flagged that the schedule would then be incorporated into the business schedule of the Committee structure feeding into the Board.</p> <p>The Board considered that it would be helpful to understand the flow of decision making on all elements and the Board’s responsibilities . It was also noted that some approvals would also flow through to Group Board.</p>
<p>19/23</p>	<p>UCEN Manchester Cycle of Business 2023/24</p> <p>The draft cycle of business for 2023/24 was presented for consideration and approval. It was noted that the items alluded to above in regard the OfS Annual Compliance Report required inclusion.</p> <p>ACTION: Co. Sec & GC</p> <p>Whilst the Board appreciated that this remained a live document and therefore could be the subject of additions as the year progressed fundamentally it was :</p> <p>RESOLVED that the cycle of business for 2023/24 as received be approved, subject to the additions as above.</p>
<p>20/23</p>	<p>Annual Students’ Union Report</p> <p>The Students’ Union (SU) Annual Report was received, which provided a summary of the team structure and work of the SU over the past 12 months . The societies and clubs, socials and events, campaigns and external connections were summarised. Challenges and recommendations were also given focus.</p> <p>It was signalled that the challenges and future considerations in the main mapped to sustainability and the future direction of the SU offer . It was intimated that it was now the appropriate juncture for a review of the SU constitution. The perceived need to ensure parity of SU engagement for TMC students was considered important and whether the SU should remain combined (UCEN Manchester and TMC) or split out was mooted .</p> <p>It was flagged that through the activities of the SU there was now a higher expectation of delivery and through outreach from other Students’ Union Presidents, the SU’s involvement with the Greater Manchester Students Assembly (GMSA) was testament to this.</p> <p>The Board thanked the SU president for their remarkable tenure, progress made and baseline established from which to move forward. The ambition to determine how the level of support of the SU could be replicated in TMC without diluting to the UCEN Manchester offering and the need for a review of the constitution was endorsed by the leadership team . It was also signalled that the work carried out on the cost of living crisis needed to be absorbed by the UCEN Manchester BAU budget.</p> <p>From a quality perspective whether the SU could play a more formalised role was considered an area that the new SU president might seek to engage with. Having digested the update members sought to understand how feedback on the output of</p>

	<p>students' engagement was transmitted back to them. It was acknowledged that continued work on closing the feedback loop was required.</p> <p>The risk to those campaigns which the SU President had personally driven forward. To mitigate against this a structured handover was in development which would incorporate a calendar of standard items for focus. It was agreed that it would be helpful to have an action plan created which outlined those challenges and which specified which actions were owned by UCEN Manchester and the SU respectively so that these could be driven forward. It was agreed that it would be prudent to have an annual report with an actions plan attached. For the next meeting it was agreed that an update be provided by way of action plan and any update on the constitutional issue.</p> <p>ACTION : Dean and incoming SU President</p>
	<p>RESOLVED that as the items to be considered were deemed commercially sensitive, the Board moved into confidential session.</p>
	<p>----- Chair ----- Date</p>

Meeting closed at 1.07pm Lunch and Student Q&A .