

UCEN Manchester Board

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 at Openshaw Campus.

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

Apologies: Amber Ahmed and Justice Ellis

In Attendance: Mark Harris (Vice Principal Adult and Vice Dean), Wendy Pennington (Director of Student Experience and Engagement), Debbie Sanderson (Divisional Finance Director College and Income Team), Michael Walsh (Dean), Janet Faulkner (Director of Academic Standards), Ed Lack (Group Quality and Standards Director), Adam Hewitt (Group Quality Team Director), Orla Wood (Divisional Finance Director), Christine Kenyon (Deputy Principal of TMC), Lorna Lloyd-Williams (Company Secretary and General Counsel) and Sherman Wu (Governance Officer).

Andrea Elson (Director of Curriculum HE), Sarah Deakin (Head of Department – Health Social Sciences and Sport), Micheal Malpas (Programme Leader – Engineering Digital and Management), Angela Tobin (Programme Leader – Engineering Digital and Management) – for Minute No. 29/23

Khadega Al Shair & Jonathan Nyandwe (Student - Level 4 Business), Lucy Parmenter & Nadar Sager (Student – Level 5 Business) and Susie Free and Emily McDonough (Student - Level 5 Criminology) – for Minute No. 29/23

No declarations of interest were received.

The Chair welcomed John Thornhill and Ann Limb to their first meeting.

Part A

21/23	<p>Part A minutes of the meeting of the UCEN Manchester Board held on 22 June 2023</p> <p>The Part A minutes of the meeting of the UCEN Manchester Board held on 22 June 2023, were received and approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair in hard copy.</p>
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22/23	<p>Higher Education Landscape</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health of students • The King's Speech • Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) outcomes • Artificial Intelligence • Student Accommodation • Lifelong Loan Entitlement and modular provision <p>In the last board meeting, the Board recommended aligning the themes of HE landscape report with OfS conditions of registration going forward. The Dean advised that it had been completed to an extent and he would like to seek clarification from the Board on whether they preferred to have the report regularly updated with more focus on OfS conditions of regulation or in more overarching view. It was confirmed that this would be a useful approach.</p>
23/23	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>The Board received an update that the academic board had approved the policies and a list of HE policies would be provided. The Company Secretary added that following an internal audit a group policies framework was being developed and some policies would be included in the cycle of business for this academic year for approval from both UCEN board and LTE group board.</p> <p>Additionally, the Board were advised that an internal audit report on prevent and safeguarding would be circulated to the Board for information. A governor noted that the internal audit report included certain recommendations and inquired about the responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of recommendation. It was explained that audit recommendations were included in the audit recommendation tracker which was monitored and scrutinized by the Audit & Risk committee.</p>
24/23	<p>Principal updates</p> <p>The Board received the following updates from the Principal:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key HE quality metrics demonstrated very good performance across a range of measures and showed UCEN Manchester continuing to operate at a very high level • it was notable that the 2022/23 leavers cohort were directly impacted by Covid in the first two years of their programme and the College would be seeing impact of this in some modest reductions this year, in what were already very high achievement levels data for 2022/23 • Teaching and Learning was noted to be a significant strength in the NSS survey with the highest level of satisfaction achieved by UCEN Manchester for this category. The Board were advised that action planning was in place in response to the areas showing reductions in satisfaction

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good progress against the Access & Participation Plan actions • the Board were advised that Degree Awarding Powers application submitted in February 2023 and no update from OfS on when the process would commence. • it was flagged to the Board that TEF representation had been made on the provisional outcome and the OfS indicated to expect an outcome in 2/3 months • Robust academic infrastructure upholding standards • it was noted that detailed work was underway to analyse student volumes and trends by different UCEN segments to inform a review of the UCEN strategy and a clear market differentiation, recruitment, curriculum and progression strategy
25/23	<p>Learner Outcomes Report</p> <p>The Board were presented with the HE performance data at the end of the 2022/23 academic year and the following key points were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it was highlighted that good levels of attainment had been achieved • continuation rates were noted to be high which were above the sector benchmarks with HND, Foundation Degree, BA, BSc, and Teacher Education performance remained very strong whilst HNC was significantly down on last year <p>The Board were also advised that there were other metrics which illustrated strong levels of performance across UCEN Manchester, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good levels of attendance, above 85% UCEN Manchester expectations • Very good retention rates • Very high and improved pass rates • Good achievement rate <p>As the use of HE-specific metrics continued to evolve, the Board were advised that completion rates would be included as part of the ongoing reporting mechanisms for UCEN Manchester and considerable progress had been made in this area, for example, by eradicating duration data, including more information about continuation rates, and including the OfS categories for different student groups. As UCEN Manchester was part of the wider LTE Group, Quality Team would review how they could best report on metrics which reflected the unique nature of HE-specific performance whilst providing data that allowed cross-business unit comparisons to be made.</p>
26/23	<p>Self Evaluation Document (SED) / Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)</p> <p>The Board were briefed with the key points of Self-Evaluation Document for 2022-23. It was notable to the Board that performance remained very strong and significantly above national benchmark data. However, it was flagged to the Board that there was slight downturn in key metrics in 22/23, following an exceptional year in 21/22, and therefore the overall SED was graded as 'Meets Requirements' as opposed to 'Exceeds Requirements' but teaching, learning, assessment and feedback remained extremely strong, so this had been graded as 'Exceeds Requirements'. Other key</p>

	<p>strengths were highlighted to the Board including continuation rates, completion rates, attainment rates, achievement rates and pass rates particularly at levels 5 and 6.</p> <p>The Board were advised that there were several key areas of improvement including level 4 provision and HE specific performance data. While some of the key metrics had dipped slightly on last year, the Board were reassured that performance remained very high. The Board were notable that several factors such as moving to new facilities, train strike action, cost of living pressures on our students, and industrial action by significant numbers of UCEN Manchester staff had impacted on student attendance rates.</p> <p>A governor inquired whether there was external examiner engaged at every level. It was noted that the engagement of external examiner occurred at different levels, like programme level and school level.</p> <p>The Chair commented that the format of the report was not consistent with the higher education programme and gave some suggestions how to improve the report.</p> <p>A lengthy discussion had been made on how to improve the report and it was concluded that the SED and QEP should be conducted concurrently next year, and the format of QEP would align with the new requirements.</p> <p>ACTION: SED and QEP to be conducted concurrently next year</p>
27/23	<p>National Student Survey (NSS)</p> <p>The Board were provided with the National Student Survey results for UCEN Manchester 2023. The report detailed UCEN Manchester's performance at an institutional level, and programme level and offered a comparative analysis against internal targets, NSS benchmarks and competitors. The report also summarised other mechanisms by which student feedback was captured, given that the NSS survey methodology limits collection to a specific cohort of students.</p> <p>In relation to the survey results, the Board were informed that actions had been put in place and these were being consolidated into an overarching action plan, progress against which would be presented to the next meeting.</p> <p>The Board noted that the score on organization and management, learning resources and mental welling support services were relatively low. A governor inquired how we rectify those major issues. The Principal advised that they would conduct a detailed action process to rectify the issues and to measure the impact. The Board also received assurance that the Dean would capture all the activities undertaken from different programme and departmental levels and pull together into an assessment plan which would be circulated to the board. The Board also deliberated on the reasons behind the students' low scores in the learning resources and welling support and the impact of transition to the new building. The Chair inquired if there was any mitigation plan for the transition and the Board were advised that Project Connect was one of it and continuing support would be also given to colleagues.</p> <p>ACTION: Dean to capture all the activities undertaken from different programme and departmental levels and put together into an assessment plan</p>

	<p>A governor commented that the score on wellbeing was low and inquired about the work undertaken to address this issue. The Board were advised that proactive action had been made to provide wellbeing support and the Board was assured that additional initiatives would be implemented to communicate with students to understand their needs and advise them what support services would be available in the College. The Board was also briefed with the examples of what had been done to support the students.</p>
28/23	<p>Access & Participation Plan (APP) progress update</p> <p>The Board received an update that the current APP plan identified 31 activity targets to monitor and evaluate progress against up until 2024-25. The Board were then taken through the report which detailed the current progress against these and any associated risk. The report also outlined a requirement for a new APP from 2025 and the College would consider the sector-wide Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR), published by the OfS.</p> <p>The Board were advised that there was an intention of the College to create an internal APP Data Dashboard, alongside an enhanced Higher Education Data Dashboard. The Chair-questioned how the theory of change was being utilized in relation to the drafting of the APP and the Board were advised that the evaluation of Project Connect would be used as a reference.</p>
29/23	<p>Curriculum Area Presentation – Business and Law</p> <p><i>Andrea Elson, Sarah Deakin, Micheal Malpas, Angela Tobin, Khadega Al Shair & Jonathan Nyandwe (Student - Level 4 Business), Lucy Parmenter & Nadar Sager (Student – Level 5 Business) and Susie Free and Emily McDonough (Student - Level 5 Criminology) joined the meeting.</i></p> <p>The Board was reported that there were 46 Full Time only active students in total during 2022/23 across the Business and Criminology programmes, enrolled onto Criminology and Criminal Justice and on Business and Management programmes. The Board was also provided with the particulars on the current offers and future developments of the programmes, student numbers and outcomes, and L3 progression.</p> <p>A governor inquired how much time had been spent in developing the link with Novus. The Board was advised that there had been regular visits/trips and meeting with Novus team and the team was actively marketing potential students.</p> <p>Governors then had the opportunity to discuss with the students present their experience and hear from them what they had been doing. A governor asked the student how he could balance face-to-face lesson and online training. The student advised that there were two lessons a week and other time could be spent on online learning or part-time work. Another student suggested the College should provide more support on working adults who might have learning challenges. Students observed that there was network problem within the College which needed improvement.</p>

	<i>RESOLVED</i> that as the items to be considered were deemed commercially sensitive, the Board moved into confidential session.
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Meeting closed at 1.30pm Lunch and Student Q&A .