

UCEN Manchester Board Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2026 at Openshaw Campus.

Present	Alison Blackburn (Chair/Governor), Rachel Curry (Principal/Governor), John Thornhill (CEO/Governor), Cheryl Dunn (Co-optee), Philip Johnson (Governor), Rhona Bradley (Governor) and Maureen Khumalo (Student Governor)
Apologies	None
In Attendance	Adam Hewitt (Group Quality Director HE), Mark Harris (Vice Principal Adult and Vice Dean), Wendy Pennington (Director of Student Experience and Engagement), Debbie Sanderson (Vice Principal Resources, Planning and Performance), Michael Walsh (Deputy Principal and Dean), Orla Wood ((Divisional Finance Director), Ed Lack (Group Director Quality and Standards), Helen Ashley Taylor (Director of Governance and Company Secretary) and Sarah-Jane Gilmore (Deputy Company Secretary).

The meeting opened at 10:00am and was quorate with at least 4 members present including at least two LTE Group governors.									
Colleagues and students left the room for the restricted item									
16/26	Restricted Session (Separate document)								
Colleagues and students re-entered the meeting									
17/26	Apologies No apologies had been received. The Board welcomed Maureen Khumalo as a new member, and noted that she was also a member of the UCEN Manchester Academic Board.								
18/26	Declarations of interest No new declarations of interest or loyalty were made to the standing register of interests or in relation to any specific agenda items.								
19/26	Minutes of the meeting of the UCEN Manchester Board The minutes of the meeting of the UCEN Manchester Board held on 13 th November 2025 were received and approved as an accurate record. The minutes were to be reviewed by the Company Secretary to create Part A&B and would then be signed by the Chair in hard copy.								
20/26	Meeting Actions and Matters Arising The Board noted that actions from the previous meeting were completed or progressing as expected. On actions noted as ongoing the Deputy Company Secretary advised:								
<table> <tr> <th>Action</th><th>Update</th></tr> <tr> <td>Deputy Principal and Dean to consider visuals to best present the acronym and an expanded form of the name alongside strategy in Autumn 2025</td><td>Work is ongoing in relation to this as part of the wider LTE Group brand architecture which will be reported to Group Board</td></tr> <tr> <td>Involve the Student Union in the group strategy objective relating to carbon reduction. Vice Principal Resources, Planning and Performance to action as appropriate.</td><td>The CRP is going to Exec before the end of December, at which point we will have an approved plan and will involve students as per the action</td></tr> <tr> <td>Deep dive on offers made based on applications within performance report next meeting</td><td>Covered in part under Item 12 – Performance Report. Due to the relatively low number of offers and</td></tr> </table>		Action	Update	Deputy Principal and Dean to consider visuals to best present the acronym and an expanded form of the name alongside strategy in Autumn 2025	Work is ongoing in relation to this as part of the wider LTE Group brand architecture which will be reported to Group Board	Involve the Student Union in the group strategy objective relating to carbon reduction. Vice Principal Resources, Planning and Performance to action as appropriate.	The CRP is going to Exec before the end of December, at which point we will have an approved plan and will involve students as per the action	Deep dive on offers made based on applications within performance report next meeting	Covered in part under Item 12 – Performance Report. Due to the relatively low number of offers and
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		acceptances at this stage in the application cycle it is proposed to cover this item in greater detail at the 09/07/2026 Board meeting
21/26	Principal's Overview The Principal informed the members that a potential upcoming Ofsted inspection of initial teacher training provision was addressed in the Quality Update paper, asking for their support in any governor meeting required with Ofsted.. The Board noted that the review of sector risks identified by the Office for Students (OfS) had been completed and integrated into the UCEN Manchester risk register. They discussed including the Ofsted inspection in the risk register, acknowledging that a broader review of the Group risk register had been commissioned; however, time constraints had prevented its full incorporation in the current cycle. The Board was updated on sector developments concerning student legal claims against higher education institutions over reduced provision during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although one case was settled without judgment, multiple institutions faced potential claims. UCEN Manchester had adhered to all guidance during this period and resumed face-to-face delivery early, with no indication of widespread involvement from further education colleges in the legal claim. Only one enquiry was received following media coverage. Action: Vice Principal Resources, Planning and Performance to further review and assess the potential risk arising from sector-wide claims and ensure appropriate reflection and linkage within the risk register. Delegate: Vice Principal Resources, Planning and Performance Date: 9-Jul-26 The Board considered the potential implications of such claims and questioned whether this posed a financial risk and if there were interdependencies with broader risks, including student well-being and the impact of lockdown measures. It was acknowledged that risks of this nature could be interconnected and require holistic consideration. The Board supported the inclusion and monitoring of this risk within the risk register and requested further assessment of its scale and impact.	
22/26	Degree Awarding Powers The Board was updated on significant advancements concerning Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs). Seven Validation Panels had taken place and Academic Board meetings had thoroughly examined panel reports, and initial degree programmes were being advertised for September enrolment. The Board reviewed the OfS DAPs monitoring framework, which included quarterly self-assessment reports, three being relatively brief reviews followed by a comprehensive fourth submission in January, supported by evidence. This process would contribute to the annual monitoring assessment, with the first review planned for January and March 2027, including a site visit in February. If progress is successful, full DAPs could be granted for three years, with a further review before any transition to indefinite awarding powers. The Board discussed the structure of the DAPs process, including the flexibility of the monitoring schedule and the adaptability of programme approval within subject areas. Clarification was awaited regarding Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) awarding powers. The Board examined the progress tracking of the DAPs plan, confirming an independent assurance approach with regular collaboration between Group Quality and UCEN Manchester to oversee delivery. The LTE Group Student Protection Plan, required by the Office for Students (OfS), has been developed to reflect the potential risks of not achieving full DAPs after probation. The plan has undergone executive scrutiny pending OfS approval. The Board discussed governance arrangements, including the role of the Academic Board. Further clarity on the Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference was to be presented to the UCEN Manchester Board and LTE Group Board. Action: Dean and Company Secretary to cross check the Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference in response to the DAP approval and probationary period and present to the UCEN Manchester and LTE Group Board. Delegates: Dean and Company Secretary	

	Date: 9-Jul-26 The Board reviewed existing mitigation strategies, including validating partner relationships, and noted positive progress in the DAPs plan. The Student Protection Plan was approved for OfS submission, subject to Executive review, with delegated authority arrangements to be clarified at the July meeting. Quarterly DAPs monitoring reports will be shared through governance channels for oversight. The Board received the update on Degree Awarding Powers for assurance.
23/26	Update from Academic Board The Board was informed that the Academic Board had held an extraordinary meeting to approve the validation of degree programmes before the UCAS deadline, followed by a planned meeting in February. The Terms of Reference for the Assessment Boards had been reviewed and approved and incorporated amendments to meet Office for Students requirements as part of the Degree Awarding Powers probationary process. The Board discussed conditions from panel reviews and questioned how assurance was obtained that these conditions were met. Although conditions were mentioned in the minutes and approvals were granted, the panel confirmation process required clarification. The secretariat prepared reports after panel meetings, allowing members two weeks to confirm conditions before circulating them to all members prior to Academic Board for approval. The Board stressed the importance of transparency in governance records and agreed that future minutes could be more detailed in future to document the panel's conditions review process. Concerning the Academic Board Terms of Reference, it was agreed that any changes to the Terms of Reference should be approved according to the reviewed Scheme of Delegation. The Board received for information the Update from the Academic Board subject to delegated authority review noted at 22/26.
24/26	Quality & Standards Update The Board received a detailed Quality and Standards Update encompassing Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and a potential Ofsted inspection, the Higher Education Internal Quality Review (HE IQR) for Level 4 Media Make-Up, Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) monitoring, Quality Enhancement Group (QEG) activities, and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics. It was noted that the HE IQR for Level 4 Media Make-Up had not met the requirements, although subsequent improvements had positively impacted outcomes. QEP monitoring was completed, with performance data still pending, and one area remained amber concerning achievement rates. A targeted approach was adopted, focusing on two enhancement areas every two weeks. The QEG convened three times a year, emphasising collaboration and identifying effective practices across UCEN Manchester. The Board was informed that the ITE provision would undergo a standalone Ofsted inspection, with the source of funding for the student determining the students in scope. A renewed Ofsted toolkit had been implemented, with ongoing fortnightly preparation meetings now underway. A matrix assessed toolkit readiness, with no red-rated areas, although some amber ratings indicated evidence gaps aligned to the renewed framework. The Board reviewed sector intelligence from other institutions' inspections, noting an increased audit-like focus on the specifics of the framework and student-mentor engagement. Inspectors may meet Board representatives. UCEN Manchester board had a member with ITE experience to support this engagement. Questions arose regarding the ITE programme structure, cohort composition, and inspector expectations. The programme ran part-time over two years, with the inspection scope varying by cohort inclusion. Internal oversight covered the full cohort, demonstrating effective teaching and learning. Governor training would support preparedness. The Board received the Quality & Standards update for assurance.

25/26	HE Fees Policy & Rates [REDACTED]
26/26	Access & Participation Plan The Board received information about the Access and Participation Plan (APP), which details the institution's strategy for supporting students from areas with multiple deprivations. The mitigation actions included targeted academic support programmes aimed at addressing outcome disparities. The Board discussed these interventions and questioned whether such support constituted differential treatment. It was noted that while targeted support was available to students with higher deprivation indices, participation remained voluntary, with a universal support offer enhanced by targeted one-to-one academic assistance. The Board examined the oversight arrangements for the APP and learned that, although there was no formal annual reporting to the Office for Students (OfS), internal monitoring mechanisms provided assurance regarding delivery and impact. The Board received the Access and Participation Plan update for assurance.
27/26	UCEN Manchester Strategy The Board was informed that the UCEN Manchester strategy had been crafted following the approval of the revised vision, which had been well received by staff. Ten strategic objectives were aligned under the Destination 2030 framework, with delivery organised around three key themes. The Board learned that an application to offer modular provision under the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) had been approved. During discussions, the Board considered the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), noting their explicit connections to group-level KPIs, with supporting measures to demonstrate delivery. Several KPIs were to be presented at the upcoming LTE Strategy Day. The Board explored how the "uniqueness" of provision would be measured and challenged its measurability. While uniqueness claims are common across the sector, the distinctive value lies in the combination of provision, necessitating work to define measurable indicators. The Board considered how this positioning could be strengthened, including through interdisciplinary approaches. Evidence of impact could include all students participating in collaborative projects over a defined period. Both qualitative and quantitative measures would assess educational gain, including student self-assessment at entry and developmental tracking. The Board resolved to approve the KPI framework while noting its ongoing development. Executive discussions had considered the broader KPI framework at the group level, although not all curriculum-specific measures would be included. The Board discussed the alignment between UCEN Manchester KPIs and Destination 2030 indicators. While some measures contributed indirectly to group outcomes, work was needed to strengthen direct alignment. The Board emphasised establishing baseline data and requested a plan to identify and track such baselines. Where baseline data were unavailable, KPIs would be reviewed.
28/26	Performance Report The Board was informed that the performance report offered an overview of safeguarding, student wellbeing, staff metrics, and financial performance. Safeguarding and Prevent activities continued to align with The Manchester College, featuring a shared strategy that included Student Union engagement and considerations for freedom of speech. To date, no Prevent referrals have been made, with processes well established through City Council engagement. The Board deliberated on whether the absence of referrals indicated low risk or underreporting, noting that increased reporting could reflect student confidence. Prevent activities remained a work in progress, requiring monitoring, especially given emerging local and national risk profiles and geopolitical tensions. The Board was informed that the campus environment remained cohesive, with no evidence of community division, although differing perspectives were anticipated. Student well-being support was available for all students and taken up by approximately 229 students, with efforts underway to enhance

	data quality and identify students declaring disabilities. The Board discussed barriers to support uptake and noted that effectiveness depended on student engagement. The role of academic staff in identifying and supporting students was emphasised, although staff awareness needed reinforcement. The Board noted that staff and HR metrics remained positive, with low staff turnover and favourable sickness absence data. It was further reported that financial performance remained stable overall, and no significant health and safety risks had been identified. The Board was informed that an increase in reported health and safety incidents reflected improved reporting practices rather than an increase in underlying risk. [PART REDACTED] The Board received the performance report for information.
Date of next meeting 9 th July 2026	
	----- Chair ----- Date
Meeting closed at 13:05	