LUMINATE EDUCATION GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY CENTRE LEEDS BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 26 JUNE 2023

Board Members Present

Aisha Ali-Khan (via MS Teams)	Co-optee
Javaad Alipoor (via MS Teams – up to item 10)	Co-optee
Colin Booth (via MS Teams)	Group CEO
June Dennis (via MS Teams)	Co-optee
Mark Garratt	Governor and Chair of the Board
Katie Miller (via MS Teams)	Co-optee
David Tipple	Staff Member

The quorum for the meeting was three board members (including one governor member)

Other Attendees

Laura Cavanagh (up to item 8)	Head of Communications
Rebecca Fores (up to item 14)	Associate Dean
Melanie Halstead	Director of Governance
Bill Jones	Deputy CEO & Executive Principal
Reece Longden (via MS Teams)	HE Officer
Sarah Marquez	Dean of Higher Education
Gemma Simmons-Blench (via MS Teams)	Deputy CEO Curriculum & Quality
Joanne Tysson	Head of HE Quality & Student Support
Paul Ward (via MS Teams)	Head of Finance Business Partnering
David Warren (via MS Teams – from item 8)	Group Vice Principal, Development
Joe Wilson	Principal, Leeds Conservatoire

The meeting took place at the Leeds City College Park Lane Campus and via MS Teams and started at 5.30pm

MEETING ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

1. **Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence**

   The Chair welcomed new board members to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies for absence were received from Cameron Lee (Student Member). As this would have been Cameron's last meeting, the board conveyed its thanks and best wishes to him. It was noted that Reece Longden (HE Officer) would join the board as student member with effect from 1 July 2023.

2. **Determination of Observers/Attendees at the Meeting**

   The board agreed attendees/observers at the meeting as per the above attendance list.

3. **Declaration of Interests in any Agenda Items**

   Board members were reminded of the requirement to declare their interest in any agenda items; none were declared.

4. **Minutes of Meeting of the Board held on 27 March 2023 and consideration of any Actions or other Matters Arising**

   The board considered the draft minutes of its meeting held in March 2023 and reviewed the rolling list of actions and other matters arising from previous meetings. With regard to the

latter, it was noted that all identified actions appeared separately on the agenda for this meeting or had been added to the following year's reporting schedule.

5. Communications

<u>Chair's Communications</u>
The Chair congratulated Sarah Marquez on her recent appointment as the permanent Dean of Higher Education.

<u>Office for Students (OfS) Communications</u>
The Dean updated the board on recent OfS communications which included the recruitment of assessors to carry out quality assessments (as part of the OfS's new role as Designated Quality Body), further consultation on the publication of the NSS (National Student Survey) and the publication of OfS funding for next year. With regard to the latter, the board discussed the opportunities available to the University Centre, particularly around higher level apprenticeships.

<u>Feedback from Group Board</u>
The Director of Governance provided feedback from meetings of the Group Board held in April and June 2023. In April a revised Group Memorandum of Understanding and Scheme of Delegation had been approved; this was now available to board members via the virtual boardroom (VBR). It was noted that John Toon (current Vice Chair of Luminate Education Group) had been appointed as Chair Designate, replacing Shaid Mahmood as Chair of Governors with effect from 1 November 2023. At its meeting in June the Group Board had agreed to proceed with four Further Education Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF) capital projects and two Post-16 Capacity Fund projects, further details of which would be shared later in the meeting.

6. Review of University Centre Leeds (UCL) Board Terms of Reference

The Director of Governance presented minor revisions to the board's terms of reference for 2023/24 the main one being to add oversight of non-recognised provision to the board's responsibilities, as previously discussed.

RESOLVED:
That the Group Board be recommended to approve the UCL Board's revised terms of reference for 2023/24.

STRATEGY, POLICY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

7. Luminate Education Group 2023-25 Strategy

The board considered and provided feedback on the draft strategy with those who had attended the world café in February recognising how that event had shaped the refresh. Suggestions for further refinement included rewording of the HE section to read more positively, a review of the Aims (which members felt read more like Values) and rewording of the section describing University Centre Leeds provision to make it more specific. It was also suggested that accessibility of the document (use of colours etc) be reviewed. The Head of Communications thanked board members for their feedback and undertook to incorporate the suggested changes.

8. Luminate Education Group Curriculum, Student Growth and Property Strategy

The Group Vice Principal Development presented an overview of the group's Curriculum, Student Growth and Property Strategy, highlighting the major capital project to relocate the University Centre to the Mabgate site. It was noted that the construction programme for the new University Centre provided for handover in May 2025 in readiness for a September 2025 opening.

9.   **Higher Education (HE) Fees and Refunds Policy**

The Dean presented a proposed HE Fees and Refunds Policy for the 2024/25 academic year. Tuition fees were raised in 2020/21 to £7,950 for the majority of programmes with the option for the higher cost subjects such as Creative Arts courses to charge up to £9,250. It was proposed that, in line with inflationary rises, UCL consider raising fees for 2024/25 to £8,745 for full time programmes (part time would typically be half of this fee). Based on the current year's recruitment an increase of 10% would equate to additional income of £351,390 (based on 442 FT students).

Board members considered the proposed fees policy in the context of competitor fees, market sensitivity and UCL's Access and Participation Plan. With regard to the latter, there was a discussion around increasing fees further, to just below £9,000, and targeting the additional income to support disadvantaged students. The possibility of increasing fees further still following the move to Mabgate was also discussed. The Dean undertook to review the proposed fees policy, and bursaries in particular, in light of feedback from the board.

It was also noted that UCL was currently in the process of applying for a Tier 4 licence which would provide the opportunity to recruit international students and broaden income streams. The following fees were proposed for international students:

(a) Foundation Year: £13,200 with a £6,600 reduction on level 6 fees
(b) Undergraduate: £14,000 - £18,500 per annum
(c) Postgraduate: £14,000

Board members suggested a further review of bursaries for international students.

RESOLVED:
That the Group Board be recommended to note the current proposal around HE fees and to delegate approval of the final HE Fees and Refunds Policy for 2024/25 to the UCL Board.

10.   **Group HE Student Information System**

The board received an update regarding progress with the development and implementation of the new system and in particular the current risks around the planned implementation date of October 2023. It was explained that the risks were attributable to greater than anticipated work required on the part of Tribal resulting in a delay in testing of the system (originally planned for June). Board members were assured that work was ongoing with the project teams to identify priority actions, with Tribal having appointed a contractor to work two days per week on the project. The Head of HE Quality & Student Support undertook to keep board members informed of progress.

11.   **Review of University Centre Leeds (UCL) Risk Register**

In reviewing the risk register, the board focused its discussion on three new risks. These related to implementation of the new student information system (referenced above), implementation of the new student VLE (virtual learning environment) and reduction of apprenticeship recruitment in science.

It was reported that plans were in place for the new VLE (BlackBoard/Anthology) to be fully operational for September 2023. The implementation project had included the establishment of a team of BlackBoard trainers working across the various departments who were rolling out training to all teams and a programme of support sessions for staff.

With regard to apprenticeships, the science department had a long-standing relationship with, and provided training for, a significant employer within the region who had recently

tendered for another apprenticeship provider. The indications were that this would impact on recruitment at level 4 only, however the Dean advised that it did pose a risk to the viability of that apprenticeship offer. Further opportunities for recruitment to the programme were currently being explored.

Board members questioned whether a risk relating to the National Student Survey (NSS) should remain on the register in light of UCL's good survey results in recent years. The Dean undertook to consider this following publication of the next survey results.

RESOLVED:
To approve the current iteration of the UCL risk register, including the mitigating actions in place and planned by management.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND SCRUTINY

12. Student Protection Plan

Board members were reminded that the Office for Students (OfS) requires that higher education providers articulate and publish the plans they have established to mitigate the potential negative impact on students should their programme of study, campus or institution close.

The Dean then presented for the board's consideration an updated Student Protection Plan for the University Centre, summarised as follows:

Risk Number	Risk	Update / Change
1	Suspension/closure of programmes	Update: Where a continuing programme has reduced student numbers as a result of high attrition levels. Mitigation in place: Previous measures to secure minimum numbers Teach out of current students Develop plans for distance learning delivery modes
2	Major changes to programmes	No change
3	Loss of staff due to either illness or leaving UCL	No change
4	Withdrawal of validation arrangements	Mitigation added: Apply for, and secure, Degree Awarding Powers.
5	Campus Closure	No change

6	Institutional Closure	No change
7	IT Failure	No change
8	New Risk Added: Failure to retain registration with the OfS, impacting on funding, revocation of awarding powers.	Mitigation: Regular monitoring of key performance indicators in alignment with OfS conditions of registration. Effective quality assurance mechanisms in place which have been confirmed through external quality reviews. Business Planning and Performance Review process in place. Work with the OfS to minimise disruption to students through 'teach out' mechanisms. Support students to transfer to alternative providers if necessary.

As part of the board's review it was confirmed that the plan took account of the guidance provided by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and aligned with the OfS ongoing conditions of registration. Following approval by the OfS, the plan would be made available to current and prospective students through publication on the website.

RESOLVED:
To approve the updated Student Protection Plan for submission to the OfS.

13. **Applications Report**

It was reported that applications for 2023 entry were down (1225 compared to 1432 in 2022) but acceptances were up (236 compared to 192). Board members noted the previous low levels of internal progression and heard from the Associate Dean about the strategies adopted to improve internal recruitment for September, aligning with Leeds City College's progression week in June. An incentive was being offered to all progressing students in the form of a loyalty bursary with eligibility requirements including completion and passing of a full level 3 programme and meeting the UCAS requirements for entry onto the chosen degree programme.

Board members went on to discuss the importance of knowing the data and focusing on potential conversions. It was noted that UCL was currently third in terms of where students were applying. Board members emphasised the importance of targeting those students that were not enrolling to any institution and the Associate Dean advised of the work taking place with the careers team in that respect.

14. **Finance**

Financial Position and Forecast 2022/23
The EBITDA position at the end of May 2023 represented an adverse performance against the year to date budget. It was reported that financial performance was below target when compared to budget, with income lower due to not meeting HE recruitment targets in year. In considering the reported variance, board members noted that this had been partly offset

by savings in pay and non-pay due to vacant posts and proportionate savings generated by lower recruitment.

<u>Operating Budget 2023/24</u>
Having discussed the income and expenditure assumptions contained therein, the board approved the draft operating budget for 2023/24. The budget provided for EBITDA of £1,178k (12.0%) and was recommended for consolidation into the group budget.

15.   Luminate Education Group Service Survey Analysis

Board members were pleased to hear that satisfaction with service areas (Finance, ITSS, Human Resources/Organisational Development, Estates and Student Catering) was generally very positive. The board's discussion focused on the common themes regarding areas of improvement which included ensuring that policies were clearly written (Estates & ITSS), the timeliness of services (Estates) and knowing who to contact with queries (HR&OD). Overall the board welcomed the positive trajectory for shared services across the group.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm

Signed: ………………………………… (Chair)   Date: ……………………………………...