

LUMINATE EDUCATION GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY CENTRE LEEDS BOARD HELD ON MONDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2022

Present

Colin Booth	Group CEO
Mark Garratt (Chair)	Governor
Cameron Lee	Student member
Katie Miller	Co-optee

The quorum for the meeting was three members (including at least one governor)

In Attendance

Melanie Halstead	Director of Governance
Eleanor Harris	Governance Manager
Bill Jones	Deputy CEO and Executive Principal, Leeds City College
Sarah Marquez	Interim Dean of HE
Gemma Simmons-Blench	Deputy CEO, Curriculum & Quality
Paul Ward	Group Head of Business Partnering
Joe Wilson	Principal, Leeds Conservatoire

The meeting took place at the University Centre and started at 5.30pm. Prior to the meeting start board members were given a tour of the University Centre building.

PART 1 - MEETING ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed attendees to the inaugural meeting of the University Centre Leeds (UCL) Board and introductions were given. There were no apologies for absence recorded.

2. Determination of Observers/Attendees at the Meeting

The board agreed and welcomed attendees/observers at the meeting as per the above attendance list. Confirmation was given that the recruitment of additional members is under way and that the board terms of reference allow for up to 12 members.

3. Declaration of Interests in any Agenda Items

The Chair reminded board members of the requirement to declare their interest in any agenda items; there were none.

4. Communications

4a) Chair's Communications

The Chair informed board members that he had spent the day meeting staff members at University Centre and Quarry Hill and extended his thanks to the Interim Dean of HE and all staff involved for a useful and informative day.

4b) SU Officer's Update

There were no updates that would not be covered by later items on the agenda.

4c) Office for Students (OfS) Communications

The Interim Dean of HE provided the board with an overview of recent communications from the OfS. The board heard that the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) had now been relaunched following a review and the remit of the data return now included both prescribed and non-prescribed provision, such as higher apprenticeships. Assurance was given that tracking this wider data set is being discussed as part of the implementation of the new HE student records system. It was noted that OfS had also launched its B3 baseline conditions, which added an extra category of 'does not meet thresholds' to the bronze, silver and gold TEF categories and the OfS will investigate any institution that falls within this category.

The board was informed that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) will no longer be the designated assurance agency for higher education from March 2023. The Interim Dean of HE explained that this will have implications for the University Centre's application for degree awarding powers, but it was not yet known where the responsibility for quality assurance in higher education would sit in the future. In addition, the board heard that consultations had been launched by the OfS regarding the introduction of a risk register for equality of opportunities, which would look at attainment gaps and impact and a consultation regarding the introduction of conditions of registration relating to tackling harassment and sexual misconduct. The board discussed these two consultations, noting that this was part of a wider move by the OfS towards measuring impact and agreed that, while this will be challenging to measure, it is important and the University Centre already does a lot of outreach work with schools that could be evidenced.

4d) Feedback from Group Board

The Group CEO updated the board on some of the key topics of discussion at the most recent Group Board meeting on 17th October:

- The Group Board reviewed the strategic risk register, which has been updated to include a risk relating to the potential for industrial unrest. The UCL Board noted that the probability of this risk continues to rise.
- A deep dive presentation into the recruitment and retention of staff was given. The board heard that a number of initiatives are being implemented to aid recruitment, but that this continues to be a challenge sector wide.
- The Group Board agreed a strategy to cease its role as sponsor of the White Rose Academies Trust.
- Approval was given for the procurement of Tribal SITS as the new student records system for higher education. Updates regarding the implementation of this system will be brought back to future UCL Board meetings.

5. Board Terms of Reference, Reporting Schedule and Link Governor Arrangements

The UCL Board reviewed its Terms of Reference, which had previously been approved by the Group Board. It was confirmed that the wording of the Terms of Reference would be reviewed to ensure it is clear that non-prescribed HE is included within the remit of the board when these are brought back for their annual review in June. With regard to the Link Governor arrangements, the board was informed that, within the framework provided, there was flexibility to allow the board to decide the distinct roles of link governors for the University Centre. The roles and individual link governors would be agreed once more board members had been appointed.

RESOLVED: That the board approve the annual reporting schedule for 2022/23.

6. Overview of Luminate Education Group and University Centre Leeds

The Group CEO and Interim Dean of HE presented an overview of the development of the Group since its establishment, the Group's key strategic aims and the curriculum offer,

current performance and future plans for University Centre. The board heard that the formation of the University Centre Board is part of the incremental process of developing the Group's governance structure, which continues to evolve along with the Group. As part of the overall governance structure for the Group, the UCL Board will play a role in shaping the new Group strategy, which will be finalised in late 2023. The Group CEO emphasised that teaching and learning is at the heart of what Luminate does and this has further increased in importance at University Centre as it becomes more of a focus for the OfS.

The board heard that the development of shared professional services, with the intention of increasing efficiency, reducing costs and removing duplication, is a strategic priority at Group level. The Group CEO explained that developing effective shared services will require the right balance of shared and localised provision as well as a cultural shift from those both providing and receiving the services. The Chair noted that he had seen a good example of this developing in the HE marketing team during his meetings that day.

The Interim Dean of HE provided an overview of the current curriculum at the University Centre, highlighting that this is largely focused on vocational and higher skills qualifications with an aim of creating a path for progression for level three students already studying within the Group. The board heard that the curriculum has been shaped with the needs of the students in mind, with students attending two days a week on campus, acknowledging that many students need to work around their studies. It was noted that the impact of this can be seen in retention levels, which have now exceeded pre-Covid rates. However, the impact of Covid-19 is still being felt on achievement levels and additional in-programme support has now been made available to students to try and improve achievement rates.

The board discussed the plans for the development of a new site for University Centre at the Group's Mabgate campus, which would provide potential space for growth for the provision and situate University Centre students alongside the Group's other adult learners, with communal social facilities to create more of a campus feel for these students.

PART 2 – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

7. Review of UCL Risk Register

The Interim Dean of HE presented the report and drew the board's attention in particular to the update against risk FB1600:2 *'failure to invest in HE accommodation'*, noting that efforts were being made to ensure that the current University Centre building continues to be maintained to an adequate standard until the building at Mabgate is complete and that any new equipment purchased will be able to be moved across to the new site. The board noted the removal of risk FB1600:8, relating to working with agents, and the addition of a new risk relating to the failure to recruit sufficiently well qualified staff. The board heard from the student member that student feedback indicated the impact of these recruitment challenges was being felt on some courses.

The board discussed whether a risk should be included regarding carbon net zero and members were informed that this is a strategic priority at Group level and a focus of the curriculum to prepare students for living in a carbon zero economy. It was confirmed that the University Centre Board would have an opportunity to agree the strategic priorities for the University Centre during the year and could adopt a priority regarding net zero if the board felt it appropriate.

RESOLVED: That the board approve the updates to the University Centre risk register.

8. Proposed Targets for 2022/23 – For inclusion in the Group Strategic and Operational Development Plan

The board heard that the proposed targets had been set with the intention of returning to pre-Covid-19 levels, with the exception of NSS, which had performed well this year and was

therefore targeted to maintain this level of performance. It was explained that student recruitment levels had dropped this year and cautious targets for 2023/24 had therefore been set to reflect this and provide realistic figures.

RESOLVED: That the board recommend the proposed targets for inclusion within the Group Strategic and Operational Development Plan.

9. HE Fees and Refund Policy 2023/24

The board noted the 2023/24 fees and refund policy, which had been approved by the Group Board in July 2022. It was explained that future iterations of the policy would come to the University Centre Board for approval and recommendation to Group Board. The board heard that the next incarnation of the policy would likely propose an increase in fees as the current fees have been in place for around 4 years.

PART 3 – PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND SCRUTINY

10. National Student Survey (NSS) Results

The board commended the overall incredibly positive performance of the University Centre in the NSS, noting that the University Centre had achieved the highest overall satisfaction rate in Leeds and student satisfaction had increased in all areas except learning resources. In exploring the reasons for the low score for learning resources, the student member explained that student feedback highlighted issues with the size of the study zone and a lack of awareness regarding the availability of learning resources. It was proposed that this could be improved by offering incentives for use of the library, embedding the use of the library within programmes and increasing understanding of the range of learning resources available. The board heard that issues highlighted in teaching and learning in some courses would also be addressed and plans for improvement developed.

11. Update on Student Enrolment 2022/23

The Interim Dean of HE explained that the actual enrolment figures for 2022/23 were as per the figures reported under item 8 on the agenda. The board heard that, although enrolment is below target, this is reflective of the situation in the college based higher education sector as a whole, which is seeing a trend towards higher volumes of applications followed by higher levels of withdrawals, decreasing overall enrolment numbers.

12. Overview of University Centre Leeds Operating Budget 2022/23

The Group Head of Business Partnering presented the report, noting that the budget for the University Centre had originally been set as part of the overall budget for Leeds City College and had subsequently been split out for the purpose of reporting to this board. It was reported that £10.9m income had been budgeted for the University Centre, formed mostly from tuition fees, resulting in a positive EBITDA position, well above the Group target. However, it was noted that this would likely be reduced once the P3 forecast was available, due to the below target student enrolment numbers this year.

The meeting closed at 7.27pm

Signed: (Chair) Date: