

**UPDATE MEETING TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
6TH AUGUST 2020**

REDACTED MINUTES FOR PUBLICATION

An update meeting to the Board was held remotely via Zoom videoconference from 09.00-09.45am on Thursday 6th August 2020. It took the form of an informal briefing by the Principal and no papers were presented in advance of the meeting.

Present:	Ms J Brainch (JB)	(Honorary Treasurer)
	Miss E Campbell (EC)	(Student Trustee)
	Mr C Costigan (CC)	
	Mr J Gellatly (JG)	(Chairman)
	Mrs H Edwards (HE)	(Staff Trustee)
	Mr A Hynard (AH)	
	Dr S Jackson	(Vice Chair)
	Mr A Martin (AM)	
	Prof K Miller (KM)	
	Mr C Turley (CT)	
Mr A Wheaton (AW)	(Principal)	
In attendance:	Mrs L Hughes (LH)	(Note taker)
	Ms P Farrell (PF)	(Lead Student Representative)
Apologies for absence:	Ms A Clack (AC)	(Chair Designate)
	Mrs J E Fawkes (JEF)	(UCEM Secretary)
	Ms A Milambo	(Staff Trustee)
	Ms M Von Tunzelman (MvT)	

1) UPDATE BRIEFING

10747 1.1) DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

10748 There were no conflicts of interest reported.

10749 1.2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

10750 There were apologies for absence from Amanda Clack, Jane Fawkes, Amanda Milambo and Misa von Tunzelman.

10751 1.3) COVID-19 PANDEMIC – ONGOING UCEM RESPONSE

10752 Ashley Wheaton provided an overview, with some slides to accompany the verbal update, on the ongoing UCEM response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The update

covered the general higher education landscape, UCEM finances and new student recruitment, a staff update and progress with redundancies, progress on work as a result of strategic decision making, and the re-opening up of Horizons.

- 10753 **HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE:** AW reported that the sector anticipates a fairly normal autumn intake in terms of domestic students with numbers through the Student Loans Company indicating a near normal level of demand at this time. The larger role is anticipated from international and particularly Chinese students being unable or unwilling to come to the UK to study. This is further compounded by Brexit. Most institutions are planning to operate from Autumn with some increased online delivery alongside a hope for return to normal by semester 2 at the latest.
- 10754 AW is part of the JISC Learning and Teaching Re-Imagined project at the current time. UCEM's project on Take Home Exams is featuring in the JISC promotional work for the project. UCEM has seen a 6% uplift in engagement with take home exams vs previous engagement levels with traditional exams. An uplift in success rates is also evident through this model. This will provide valuable insight for the sector.
- 10755 AW reported that the Government still does not plan any financial support for the sector as a whole, though will engage in dialogue in any dire situations. The Built Environment sector does at least have the Construction Job Retention Scheme to support it. Job losses are anticipated to be significant. It remains a challenging time for the sector as a whole. To date, no meaningful partnership opportunities have arisen for UCEM to explore.
- 10756 **FINANCES:** AW presented an overview of the 2019-20 financial year to end June (July management accounts are not yet available). Income is healthy at just £34K behind a budget of £13M overall, though this includes provisions for the Rathbone liquidation losses, some of which are now anticipated to be reimbursed to UCEM. There are some isolated incidents of students struggling to pay their fees to UCEM, but this is not as significant as might be expected in the circumstances. The cost base is significantly under budget through prudent cost management and an underrun on costs due to Covid-19 (travel and premises costs). Overall, this stands at £600K ahead of plan. UCEM is therefore likely to report an operational surplus for the first time in many years (was £100K in June, likely to be higher for yearend). After investments in projects UCEM stands at a statutory loss of £940K, which is currently £1.1M better than planned.
- 10757 2020-21 was forecast prudently in terms of new student recruitment. Early signs are, however, very positive. UCEM is now forecasting 594 new students in the autumn vs a target of 470. Even compared to recent years this is a healthy forecast. The trend is seen predominantly at postgraduate level and overall UCEM is already at 102% of application target with several weeks still to go.
- 10758 In addition, UCEM has 41 applications to date for the reinstated accelerated route programme where normally this is less than 10. This is particularly good news for UCEM because OfS had been placing Student Number Caps on institutions of 5% over the numbers recruited last year. UCEM had reported zero full time students to the OfS and therefore had not been allocated a number. Following this error, the Department for Education has now confirmed to UCEM it will be treated as a 'new entrant' to the market and therefore will be able to recruit freely and to no capped number.

- 10759 The Board queried what might be driving the positivity in UCEM performance and it is relatively common, particularly at postgraduate level, to see people retraining, career changing and upskilling in a period of economic downturn. The challenge may be sustaining this growth longer term.
- 10760 **REDACTED**
- 10761 UCEM has brought back most staff who were on Furlough, some within Facilities Management and those who volunteered for Furlough remain off work (about five people in total).
- 10762 UCEM is taking Wellbeing pulse surveys of staff and the most recent one indicated that 69% of staff are coping well and feel positive. UCEM is doing its best to support and look after those few at the negative end of this spectrum. UCEM also continues to support its students and their wellbeing as far as possible. It has seen some rise in the numbers of cases referred to the disability and wellbeing team.
- 10763 The across-the-board pay freeze and no bonuses decision was announced to all staff and accepted. Those staff on higher PDR ratings for 2019-20 will receive additional days annual leave. **REDACTED**
- 10764 **STRATEGIC DECISIONS:** The Level 3 programme closure has been announced and staff are working through the required processes diligently. RICS and some major employers were supportive of the decision in anticipation of UCEM's desire to offer a Level 4 qualification that works towards AssocRICS – which is a more relevant product for the market. Some employers have also moved their apprentices to the UCEM BSc Access module in order to potentially have them join the Level 6 programme. Many students are also transferring between the standard Postgraduate route to the new Apprenticeship standards at this level which is positive for UCEM as it carries increased income per student. The potential to transfer in students from other institutions is still being discussed.
- 10765 The delay to the Full Time Offer project was well received by staff and Transform remains on track for launch in five weeks' time. All Transfer Mapping work has now been completed.
- 10766 **RETURN TO HORIZONS:** Horizons opened on 22nd July on a part time basis and about 15 staff have returned to work there. The next priority for UCEM is to determine its future working policies for all staff as September and the anticipated 'return to normal' for most working parents occurs. AH reported that his organisation had paid for antibody tests for all staff. AM reported that his organisation is mandating the return to work in the office in most cases due to risk exposure on GDPR and health and safety grounds. UCEM will be formalising the right environment for the future and will consider any associated costs and vulnerabilities of the institution as part of this.
- 10767** **1.4) INSTITUTIONAL UPDATES**
- 10768 Ashley Wheaton provided further institutional updates covering the National Student Survey (NSS) result, an OfS Reportable Event and the result of the UCEM Employee Engagement Survey.

10769 The Board of Trustees gave a round of applause for the NSS result secured by UCEM. UCEM is now in the Time Higher Education League table at 68th place.

10770 UCEM secured a result of 84% overall satisfaction through the Employee Engagement Survey in late June 2020, its highest ever result and largely reflective of the Covid-19 period. There are some areas to continue to focus on in the coming year but the organisational health theme for the year supports this well.

10771 UCEM intends to submit a Reportable Event on the changes associated with the Full Time Offer and the impact of this on the approved Access and Participation Plan. Given the outcome on the Student Number Gap appeal it is not anticipated this will be contentious in the current climate.

10772 **1.5) GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

10773 Trustees were reminded of the completion of the Trustee Appraisal process which has taken place throughout July and August 2020. Final signed and completed forms should now be submitted to Lyndsay where they haven't yet been. An overview of the outcomes of the process will be presented to the Nominations and Governance Committee on 4th September 2020 and to the Chair Designate as part of her transition to Chairmanship from November 2020.

10774 **1.6) ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

10775 The Board of Trustees thanked AW and his Executive team for steering the institution so well through the pandemic period.

10776 The Board of Trustees concurred the update meeting have been extremely valuable and that UCEM should consider introducing this type of meeting into the schedule permanently.

10777 PF queried the status of UCEM's Hardship Fund. AW responded that applications to the fund had increased in recent months and that UCEM had extended the funds available within this and continues to review every individual case and offer support wherever it can.

10778 The Chairman and Principal thanked Trustees for their attendance at the meeting and there being no further business, the meeting was closed at 09.54am.

The next full Board Meeting will be held on **Thursday 24th September 2020** from 1-4pm

Meetings before 24th September 2020:

Nominations and Governance Committee – 4th September 2020 from 10am-12noon

Finance Committee – 4th September 2020 from 13.00-14.30pm

Signed



Name

John Gellatly, Chairman of the Board

Date

24th September 2020