

**UPDATE MEETING TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
19TH JANUARY 2021**

REDACTED MINUTES FOR PUBLICATION

An update meeting to the Board was held remotely via Zoom videoconference from 09.00-09.45am on Tuesday 19th January 2021. It took the form of an informal briefing by the Principal and no papers were presented in advance of the meeting.

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

1) UPDATE BRIEFING

AC welcomed the Board to it's first meeting under her Chairmanship. AC confirmed she will be establishing a Board WhatsApp group for informal discussion.

11031 1.1) DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

11032 There were no conflicts of interest reported.

11033 1.2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

11034 There were apologies for absence from Alastair Martin, Nick Braisby and Chris Turley.

11035 1.3) COVID-19 PANDEMIC – ONGOING UCEM RESPONSE AND OPERATIONAL UPDATE

11036 Ashley Wheaton provided an overview of 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 the latest closure of Horizons.

11037 **HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE:** AW reported that the sector continues to face unprecedented challenges and that UCEM has been fortunate to be immune from many faced by traditional institutions. The Office for Students and Department for Education have issued almost daily communications to Accountable Officers over the last month. An emerging hot topic for the sector is refunds and complaints for tuition fees. The Treasury is considering what can and should be done sector-wide on this matter and UCEM has concerns it may be subject to a one-size fits-all policy in response to this, where UCEM's provision does not warrant this. AC requested this be added to the UCEM risk register.

ACTION: Add the potential risk of a sector-wide policy on tuition-fee refunds to UCEM's risk register. [JEF]

11038 NSS 2021 is underway and includes some new questions regarding institutional responses to the pandemic. There are also a number of OfS consultations underway currently to which UCEM responds individually and collectively through GuildHE.

11039 Doubts remain as to when and how the Ofsted inspection framework will be implemented for higher education institutions but Ofsted is known to be recruiting inspections for this level who will undertake training from 12th April so it seems unlikely any inspection would be before then.

11040 Susan Lapworth, Director of Regulation at OfS, wrote to all institutions last week to request all Boards of Governors review in detail and approve the institutional approach to ongoing compliance with the CMA to ensure students are in receipt of what they are promised. This review will form part of the March Board meeting. The sector as a whole has been criticised for poor student communications and UCEM is in the process of filming some very clear video messages that set out the support available through the Spring semester in the context of UCEM itself facing ongoing challenges of delivery associated with the pandemic.

11041 Finally, it has been confirmed, alongside the cancellation of exams, that there will be no student caps on institutions in 2021. Many institutions are lowering their entry requirements as a result in order to capture the market/income.

11042 **FINANCES & STUDENT RECRUITMENT:** AW outlined the ongoing pressures on the Finance Team with continued working from home and the new reporting requirements of the OfS (completing the Audit by autumn 2020 followed by the Financial Return now being prepared). As a result, the latest management accounts available to present to the Board are for November 2020. At that point in time UCEM was £111K ahead on income, £136K under on pay costs and £12K under on non-pay costs, putting the institution £236K ahead of revised budget overall. UCEM is further

underspend on Business Planning Costs. This trend has continued through December and the confirmed position will be available by end of the week.

- 11043 The first forecast for Spring recruitment and enrolment is positive and despite the challenges the industry continues to face, UCEM is forecasting 537 new students vs a target of 505. If this materialises UCEM would close the year at 322 students ahead of target – some 33% up. This is within the context of employers not recruiting because of the ongoing pandemic which affects UCEM’s apprenticeship targets.
- 11044 **REDACTED**
- 11045 **STAFF UPDATE:** It has been a challenging start to the year with the re-introduction of a nationwide lockdown on 4th January. Whilst this is not unique to UCEM, the institution is feeling the challenges of maintaining staff wellbeing during ongoing homeworking and home-schooling at this time of year. As a result, UCEM has immediately re-introduced as much flexibility in working patterns as possible to all staff negatively impacted. UCEM has also offered the use of recycled redundant laptops to staff for home schooling, has re-confirmed the wellbeing support available to staff and has commissioned MIND to undertake wellbeing training with staff over the coming weeks. In addition, it has been confirmed that university workers are now all classed as key workers meaning UCEM parents can now access key worker childcare provision if they so wish. The monthly wellbeing survey saw a small rise in the December results, but this is expected to drop again in January. UCEM is committed to offering as much support as it can in the knowledge it cannot change the bigger picture.
- 11046 Despite this support, it is clear some teams face significant workload issues on top of this and the Executive is now actively focussing on ways it can respond to this and mitigate the associated risks to the institution.
- 11047 **CLOSURE OF HORIZONS:** Horizons closed fully on 8th January 2021 in line with the latest strict lockdown policy of the UK Government. UCEM plans to launch a consultation with staff from end Feb about longer-term working practices, policies and any associated contractual changes this will necessitate. This will include line manager decisions on the appropriateness of roles for any continued home working.
- 11048 Trustees queried whether the ongoing lockdown conditions had had a further impact on UCEM’s application for permanent Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs). JEF confirmed that UCEM had approached OfS for a further update on when the process would re-open in December and it was clear UCEM was not yet a priority for assessment. UCEM is aware of at least one institution whose DAPs expire before UCEM’s which is now being assessed. The delay is disappointing as UCEM has now prepared its Self-Assessment Document and if the delay persisted for a further 6-12 months this would need significant review and updating.
- 11049 1.4) PREPARATIONS FOR THE BOARD MEETING IN MARCH 2021 / BOARD LEADERSHIP GROUP DISCUSSIONS**
- 11050 AC has now undertaken individual meetings with all Trustees as part of her commencement in the role of Chair of UCEM. AC is intending to use her first full meeting of the Board in March as an opportunity to review progress against the 5-year strategy (after 2-years) and to refocus on the core priorities. For the other

meetings in 2021 there will be external speakers invited to present at each Board meeting.

11051 **1.5) PROPERTY WORKING GROUP (PWG) UPDATE**

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11053 REDACTED

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11055 REDACTED

11056 **1.6) ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

11057 The Chair and Principal thanked Trustees for their attendance at the meeting and there being no further business, the meeting was closed at 09.43am.

The next full Board Meeting will be held on **Thursday 25th March 2021** from **1-4pm**

Meetings before 25th March 2021:

28th January – Nominations and Governance Committee

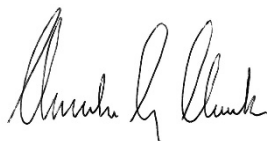
11th February – Finance Committee

23rd February – UCEM Quarterly Business Review (discretionary attendance)

25th February – 30-minute Board meeting to sign-off UCEM Financial Return

4th March – Audit Committee

Signed



Name

Amanda Clack

Position

Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Date

25th March 2021