

**SHORT BOARD APPROVAL MEETING  
25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021**

**REDACTED MINUTES FOR PUBLICATION**

A short approval meeting was held remotely via Zoom videoconference from 09.30-10.00am on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021 with the sole purpose of giving final approval to the OfS Financial Return, the revised Access and Participation Plan submission and the approval to defer any Ofsted Monitoring visit for level 3 provision before any full inspection later in 2021.

Present:	Ms W Appleby (WF)	
	Ms J Brainch (JB)	(Honorary Treasurer)
	Prof N Braisby (NB)	
	Miss E Campbell (EC)	(Student Trustee)
	Mr C Costigan (CC)	
	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)	
	Ms M Von Tunzelman (MvT)	
	Mr C Turley (CT)	
	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:	Ms A Clack (AC)	(Chairman)
	Ms A Milambo (AMi)	(Staff Trustee)

**1) BOARD APPROVAL MEETING**

**11072      1.1) DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

11073      There were no conflicts of interest declared.

**11074      1.2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

11075      There were apologies for absence from Amanda Clack and Amanda Milambo. The Board **NOTED** that Amanda Clack would be briefed on the outcomes of the meeting later today by the Principal in order for her signature/approval as Chair to be formally added to that of the wider Board.

**11076**      **1.3) TO APPROVE THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS FINANCIAL RETURN**

- 11077      UCEM is required to submit an Annual Financial Return to the Office for Students (OfS), which is one of the ongoing OfS Conditions of Registration. The return includes financial forecasting of income up to and including 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025, cash flow, forecasting of projected student numbers as Full Time Equivalents (FTE), as well as details of grants, remuneration of the Head of the Provider, and data related to Access and Participation projected spending.
- 11078      The Board **NOTED** that the initial submission was made to the Office for Students on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 (the OfS deadline) following a review and sign-off process undertaken by the Honorary Treasurer, Principal and Deputy Principal. A four-week verification process is then undertaken between the OfS and the provider ahead of the final submission deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The Finance Committee reviewed the data tables (paper 1.3a) in the return in full on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and were content to recommend them to the Board for Approval. The submission will be accompanied by a '*Commentary*' which was not reviewed by the Finance Committee, but which has now been drafted and is included for Board approval at paper 1.3b. The Accountable Officer must sign off the return by noon on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021.
- 11079      The Board was advised that the Finance Committee had queried the growth in income and costs and the key risks that the OfS is likely to focus on. TM reported that this would most likely focus on cash and institutional viability and therefore the explanation of the income growth from apprenticeships in the *Commentary* would be key. It was also noted that control of costs would be equally important, but as UCEM will not go into a negative cash position and for the first time in many years it will not fund its operations through its reserves, this is also a positive story to tell in the *Commentary*. As a result, the Committee was happy to pre-approve the return and recommend approval by the Board, albeit noting that the *Commentary* had yet to be reviewed. The Board **NOTED** the minutes of this meeting at paper 1.3c.
- 11080      The Board **NOTED** that the data and *Commentary* had been reviewed and approved in detail by the Executive and that both would be submitted at close of day Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The Board did query whether the Finance Committee could have full delegation of authority to sign off the return, given that it is based on the Annual Accounts and the Board fully scrutinised these in November 2020. However, the Board **NOTED** the OfS guidance specifically requires Board oversight and sign-off, and as such a full audit trail of the approval is necessary.
- 11081      The Board had no further questions or comments on the submission as presented and expressed their gratitude for the full discussions and scrutiny that took place at the Finance Committee. The Board **NOTED** that the aim is to align the UCEM Board meetings with OfS reporting requirements and that this would be the case in November 2021. The cycle of meetings has misaligned for 2020-21 because the OfS had extended the Financial Return reporting deadline, thus necessitating the additional approval meeting.
- 11082      The Board of Trustees **APPROVED** the Financial Return submission and **NOTED** that the Chair would be briefed on this approval and the final documentation later today in order to allow final submission by 1<sup>st</sup> March and Accountable Officer signature by 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

11083 The Board expressed its thanks to all the staff involved in bringing the Financial Return together and acknowledged the significant work involved in this.

**11084** **1.4) TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS TO THE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR SUBMISSION TO THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS**

11085 The Board was reminded that since UCEM's Access and Participation Plan (APP) was approved in September 2019, several institutional decisions have directly impacted the Plan. These were the decision not to proceed with a blended full-time offer and the introduction of an online full-time offer from September 2020, alongside changes to the ways in which student number calculations are derived for UCEM students.

11086 UCEM contacted the Office for Students (OfS) in December 2020 regarding these changes and was advised to resubmit a revised APP for re-approval. On 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021 a group of academic trustees met to review the proposals in the resubmission, in order to give the wider Board full assurances of the soundness of the revisions and to recommend that it can be approved for submission to the OfS by early March. Ensuring the revised plan is approved is an essential component of UCEM's ongoing registration as an Approved (Fee Cap) provider with the OfS.

11087 At the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, the trustees reviewed all of the proposed changes. These included the narrative amendments focused on the removal of the blended full time offer and the modes of study for UCEM students, the updated investment table and all associated target changes and an overview summarising the changes from the original approved plan. These were all presented to the Board in papers 1.4. The Trustees **NOTED** the commitment to review the UCEM admissions policy as part of demonstrating ongoing commitment to widening participation, the retention of Target PTS3 which had previously been challenged by the OfS and that the changes only reflect the full-time provision (all targets for part time students remain unchanged). They also **NOTED** the reduced budget and associated targets that would now form the plan which may represent a risk with OfS due to a perceived lowering of ambition. The Trustees reflected upon the balance of risk between not securing re-approval for the amended plan versus lowering the investment and targets of the original plan to reflect the new reality of UCEM's situation.

11088 The Board endorsed the recommendation from the group of academic trustees that UCEM will present an honest, measured and realistic interpretation of its new circumstances as a result of the pandemic within its revised plan. It **AGREED** that the proposed approach was prudent, sensible and necessary and that the changes are not significant but simply reflect the impact of Covid-19 on the institution.

11089 The Board thanked the UCEM team for their comprehensive work in revising the plan and the trustees that reviewed the proposed amendments in detail on 17<sup>th</sup> February. The Trustees **APPROVED** the proposed changes to the UCEM Access and Participation Plan 2020-24 for submission to the OfS in early March.

**11090** **1.5) TO APPROVE THE INTENTION TO REQUEST DEFERRAL OF ANY OFSTED (LEVEL 3 ONLY) MONITORING VISIT**

11091 The Board was advised that following updated guidance, UCEM now believes it is back in scope for an Ofsted Progress Monitoring Visit (PMV) for Level 3 provision with immediate effect due to its classification as a new provider that is due a full inspection and which received a new provider monitoring visit two or more years ago (August

2018). The anticipated widening of Ofsted inspections to include higher education apprenticeship provision remains out of scope until at least April 2021 for all providers and if a PMV were to take place it would be a remote two-day inspection of level 3 provision only.

- 11092 As any PMV would mean UCEM is potentially subject to two Ofsted inspections in short succession (as UCEM believes it will be one of the first providers inspected in full after April 2021), UCEM proposes implementing a request for a deferral of inspection based on Ofsted's own criteria upon notification of an inspection. This is on the grounds that UCEM's level 3 provision is in the process of being taught-out and closed and therefore no purpose will be served through the inspection. The request for a deferral is by no means guaranteed and UCEM will continue preparations for all eventualities.
- 11093 The reasons for deferral include the impact of the ongoing pandemic and its associated impact on staff of prolonged home working and home schooling, the ongoing resourcing challenges across UCEM's academic teams, the continued roll out of Transform enhancements for the Spring semester and the workload involved in being newly prepared for Ofsted inspections at higher education levels.
- 11094 The Board commented that this decision could be taken by the Executive without recourse to the Board for approval but **NOTED** that in the event of notification of a visit, the sanctioning of the decision by the Board may add weight to the deferral request.
- 11095 The Board requested that assurances be presented in the near future on UCEM's ability to meet expectations in a full inspection by Ofsted of its Level 6 and 7 apprenticeship provision. JEF assured the Board that papers were being presented to both the Audit Committee (4<sup>th</sup> March 2021) and to the Board (25<sup>th</sup> March 2021) that should provide this reassurance.
- 11096 The Board **APPROVED** the Executive request to defer an Ofsted Progress Monitoring Visit on immediate receipt of notification in order to reduce workload and stress on the UCEM team, this being in light of the Level 3 closure and the anticipated inspection of the full apprenticeship provision later in 2021.

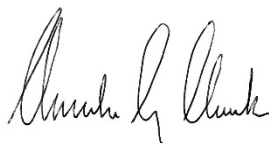
**11097** **1.6) ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 11098 The Principal thanked the Trustees for their attendance and participation at the meeting and there being no further business, the meeting was closed at 10.00am.

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

**Meetings before 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021:**  
4th March – Audit Committee

Signed



Name

Amanda Clack

Position

Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Date

25<sup>th</sup> March 2021