

**ACADEMIC REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**

**REDACTED MINUTES FOR PUBLICATION**

A Meeting of the Academic Review Committee was held via Zoom video conference from 14.00-16.00 on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

Present:	Tony Burke [TB]	
	Helen Edwards [HE]	
	Phoebe Farrell [PF]	
	Wendy Finlay [WF]	
	Stephen Jackson [SJ]	
	Hazel Lobo [HL]	
	Amanda Milambo [AM]	
	Kenneth Miller [KM]	(Chair)
	Nick Morton [NMo]	
	Ashley Wheaton [AW]	
In attendance:	Hannah Al-Katib [HA-K]	(for item 3.1 only)
	Stephen Bartle [SB]	(for item 2.2 only)
	Nikki Bulteel [NB]	(for item 2.1 only)
	Gethin Edwards [GE]	(for items 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4)
	Jane Fawkes [JEF]	(University College Secretary)
	Kate Greenway [KG]	(for items 4.4 and 4.5 only)
	Lyndsay Hughes [LH]	(note taker)
	Mike Speight [MS]	(for item 3.2 only)

Apologies for absence:

**1) GENERAL MEETING GOVERNANCE**

**1678**                    **1.1/ DECARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

1679                    There were no conflicts of interest declared.

**1680**                    **1.2/ TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABCENCE**

1681                    There were no apologies for absence.

1682                    The Chair welcomed Tony Burke to the Committee. Tony is Head of the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation at the University of Westminster and observed the meeting in October. TB subsequently agreed to become an External Representative on the Committee from October 2021 for a three-year term.

**1683**                    **1.3/ TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AND REDACTIONS OF THE MEETING HELD**  
**14<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2020**

1684 The minutes and proposed redactions (highlighted grey) of the Academic Review Committee held 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were **APPROVED** as a true record. The redacted minutes will be published on the UCEM website in order to maintain compliance with Office for Students Conditions of Registration.

**1685 1.4/ TO CONSIDER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT INCLUDED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA**

1686 An actions summary from the previous meeting was circulated as Paper 1.4 and the Committee noted that the two actions from the last meeting were in progress or were due for discussion later in the agenda.

**1687 1.5/ TO NOTE THE ACADEMIC REVIEW COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1688 Following the appointment of new Trustees and External Representatives in Autumn 2020, the Nominations and Governance Committee undertook a full annual review of all sub-committee Terms of Reference in January 2021. The updated Academic Review Committee Terms of Reference were presented for noting at paper 1.5.

1689 The Committee **NOTED** the Academic Review Committee Terms of Reference V10 but requested that the vacancy for an External Representative relative to Level 3 provision be updated to an External Representative for Apprenticeships more generally and that the University College Secretary seeks to fill this vacancy by the next meeting.

**ACTION: Update the External Representative role in the Terms of Reference to a vacancy for an Apprenticeships External Representative and seek to fill this vacancy by the next meeting of the Committee. [JEF]**

## **2) COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION OF THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS**

### **CONDITION A1: ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN**

**1690 2.1/ UCEM'S ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN**

1691 Nikki Bulteel [NB] and Gethin Edwards [GE] joined the meeting to update the committee on the UCEM Monitoring Report submission (paper 2.1) to the OfS relative to UCEM's Access and Participation Plan 2019-20 (OfS Condition of Registration A1).

1692 GE reported that UCEM had met or exceeded 10 of the 16 targets or milestones that could be measured in the 2019-20 Plan. One could not be measured, and one was not possible to measure due to pandemic. UCEM is confident the remaining targets and milestone will be delivered in future years as a result of the work undertaken towards them in the last year. GE also reported that some APP budget had been diverted to student hardship support due to the impact of the pandemic on the ability to spend the allocated funding as planned. UCEM is now awaiting OfS feedback on the return.

- 1693 The Committee **NOTED** the Monitoring Report, welcomed the outcomes of the first UCEM Access and Participation Plan and thanked NB/GE for their continued focus on delivering the targets within the plan during a challenging year.
- 1694 GE updated the Committee on UCEM's Access and Participation Plan 2020-24. UCEM has been in ongoing discussions with the OfS about amendments required to the plan as a result of UCEM not developing a full time offer as a means to achieving the approved targets. UCEM attempted to submit revised targets to the OfS in March 2021 which were reduced as a direct impact of the pandemic on UCEM and its inability to offer the full-time face to face teaching. OfS were not receptive to a lowering of ambition/targets and as a result UCEM has had to retain the existing targets and will now need to focus on how it can deliver these with its existing programme offering. OfS has not provided any further feedback as yet.
- 1695 The Committee acknowledged the difficulties UCEM will face in fulfilling all aspects of its ambitions in this context. UCEM is actively working to identify alternative means to delivering the targets and one focus will be on apprenticeship provision and working with employers at the early stages of recruiting apprentices that meet the various OfS criteria for APP.
- 1696 The Committee queried the sanctions UCEM would face if it could not deliver the targets. Whilst this is unknown, it is understood that institutions have the opportunity to demonstrate what they have done to seek to achieve the targets where they have not been successful and UCEM will therefore be ensuring it collates this evidence in full. The monitoring return submitted for 2019-20 will be a first indicator of any repercussions the institution might face.
- 1697 The Committee queried UCEM's Hardship Fund activities since the last meeting. NB reported that UCEM had supported at least 50 students through the Government Hardship funding principally in the areas of course fees and digital poverty. UCEM has also spent the full allocation to Hardship under its APP Plan, as well as the full allocation through its own Hardship Fund. A report analysing the extent of UCEM's Hardship Fund support will be presented to the Senior Leadership Team in June 2021 and will be shared with the Committee at the October 2021 meeting. The Committee requested a full discussion and update at the next meeting.

**ACTION: Schedule a discussion on the UCEM Hardship Fund for the next meeting of the Committee. [LH]**

- 1698 The Committee **NOTED** revised Access and Participation Plan 2020-24 submission and the work now underway to meet the existing targets without the key delivery mechanism originally planned.
- 1699 The Chair thanked NB for her contribution and invited her to leave the meeting.

**B CONDITIONS: QUALITY, RELIABLE STANDARDS AND POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR ALL STUDENTS**

- 1700 The Chair reminded the Committee of the role of all Sub-Committees of the Board in monitoring ongoing compliance with OfS Conditions of Registration and that the B Conditions are the responsibility of the Academic Review Committee.

**1701                    2.2/ B2: SUPPORT TO STUDENTS THROUGH THE STUDENT JOURNEY – ADMISSIONS AND PROGRESSION DATA**

1702                    Stephen Bartle [SB] joined the meeting to update the committee on UCEM Admissions and Progression data as part of demonstrating UCEM's support to students through the student journey and its performance in the 2020-21 academic year (paper 2.2).

1703                    The report provided an updated position on student recruitment and re-registration in the current year and the progress on Access and Participation Plan access targets. SB reported two updates to the provisional results reported in the paper, Firstly the final enrolment result was 634, not 626 and the final re-registration result was 80% on postgraduate and 84% on undergraduate, providing an overall result of 83% (on target for the year).

1704                    The Committee **NOTED** UCEM's performance and commended the excellent result in the context of a challenging year and a global pandemic.

1705                    The Chair thanked SB for his contributions to the Committee and invited him to leave the meeting.

**1706                    2.3/ B3: DELIVER SUCCESSFUL STUDENT OUTCOMES – SUCCESS RATES MODULE AND AWARD DATA**

1707                    Gethin Edwards updated the Committee on UCEM's student success rates through the presentation of module and award data (paper 2.3). GE explained that UCEM must measure itself against minimum requirements set by the OfS and that the graphs measure current cohort completion rates against both this and the UCEM M7 targets. GE reminded the Committee that OfS is only concerned with UK domiciled students.

1708                    The Committee noted the common trend in recent years of a significant gap between completion rates of those who commence studies in autumn vs those who commence in Spring at Undergraduate level. Rates on apprenticeship programmes and postgraduate levels are strong.

1709                    The paper also presented the latest module success rates (prior to resubmission, which is underway currently) which shows success rates at levels 5 and 6 are higher than the KPI, however the gap in success rates between apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship students at undergraduate level continues. There is also a notable gap in success rates of UK domiciled and non-UK domiciled students at Level 7. Overall, UCEM is seeing continuous improvement but as OfS baseline targets are set to increase this will need to continue.

1710                    UCEM will seek to interrogate the data further to understand some of the emerging trends in completion rates for various groupings of students. The Committee requested to see this analysis at the next meeting.

**ACTION:                    Interrogate completion and success rate data for explanation of trends in the data, such as the gap in achievement between Autumn and Spring semester starts. [GE/WF]**

1711                    The Committee **NOTED** UCEM's completion and success rate data.

**1712                    2.4/ OFS QUALITY AND STANDARDS CONSULTATION AND POTENTIAL IMPACT ON UCEM**

- 1713                    Gethin Edwards updated the Committee on the OfS consultation underway currently on Quality and Standards and its potential impact on UCEM (paper 2.4).
- 1714                    GE reported the proposals of the consultation and the setting of more challenging baseline numericals relative to completion and success rates. UCEM’s primary concern regarding the consultation proposals is that the baseline targets take no account of differing types of students, institutions and modes of learning (distance education) and it would be more beneficial to use a benchmark approach. The consultation also implies that international students will also be included in the future, where they haven’t to date for UCEM. Overall, the extent to which OfS is monitoring institutions will increase and the importance of data submissions in illustrating the nature of the institution and the level of risk it carries as a provider will be crucial.
- 1715                    NM commended the consultation response UCEM made and recognised the synergies with the response of his own institution. The primary issue is with the shift from a qualitative model to a quantitative model of review, which is likely to make institutions risk-averse and focused on the metrics alone. There are significant concerns for the wider sector in what is proposed and NM hopes there has been sufficient mutual feedback to get the proposals amended.
- 1716                    The Committee **NOTED** UCEM’s response to the OfS Consultation on Quality and Standards and that the second stage of the consultation has yet to be announced but is expected soon.
- 1717                    The Chair thanked GE for his contributions to the Committee and invited him to leave the meeting.

### **3) ACADEMIC PROJECTS**

**1718                    3.1/ UPDATE ON IMPACT OF TRANSFORM AND THE EVALUATION PLAN**

- 1719                    Hannah Al-Katib [HA-K] joined the meeting to update the Committee on the ongoing impact of Transform following launch in autumn 2020 and the Evaluation Plan, which aims to demonstrate how investment in the project has led to the expected outcomes in student success (paper 3.1).
- 1720                    HA-K reported Transform successfully launched in autumn 2020 and work has continued since then with the launch of the Spring modules recently. The new and faster results release process ran successfully for the first semester and students are also just completing the first resubmission process. Transform has one objective left to deliver – the interruption of studies process.
- 1721                    HA-K reported that the evaluation plan is focussed on five fundamental questions and will be delivered through quantitative and qualitative data taken over multiple semesters. The first evaluation point will be after the first year of delivery. A second evaluation point will take place in 2022 to incorporate more data on submissions and interruption of studies. The Committee also considered the value of adding a

third evaluation point over a much longer-term to assess impact on student success, though it was acknowledged it would become more difficult over time to attribute impact to purely Transform.

1722 At the last meeting of the Committee, it was requested that UCEM includes increased focus on return on investment within the Evaluation Plan and this has been more explicitly incorporated. The wider context of the pandemic will also have to be factored into evaluation.

1723 PF stated that some students have found the full removal of exams quite stressful, with the addition of assignments. UCEM will be keeping this under review and a key area of evaluation will include student feedback. In addition, assessments will become more digital over time in line with the assessment strategy.

1724 The Committee **NOTED** the ongoing roll out of Transform and the plans for evaluating the project over the coming years.

1725 The Chair thanked HA-K for her contribution and invited her to leave the meeting.

### **1726 3.2/ OFSTED READINESS AND CLOSURE OF LEVEL 3 PROVISION PROGRESS UPDATE**

1727 Mike Speight [MS] joined the meeting to update the Committee on UCEM's ongoing preparations for a full Ofsted inspection of all levels of apprenticeship provision and progress with the teach-out of UCEM's Level 3 provision (paper 3.2a and 3.2b).

1728 MS reported that UCEM is in scope for a full graded inspection at all levels between now and April 2022, and most likely sooner rather than later. An updated handbook for the inspection framework has recently been issued but does not include any major changes. MS advised the Committee that the content of degrees is outside of scope for Ofsted and that their focus is on the apprenticeship that wraps around the degree.

1729 **REDACTED**

1730 The Committee **NOTED** the encouraging Ofsted Readiness summary and thanked MS for leading on this important work.

1731 The closure of UCEM's level 3 provision is progressing according to plan and is entering the end phase of academic delivery. UCEM is hopeful it will retain tutors to complete delivery. UCEM needs every apprentice to pass first time on every element of the programme in order to close out the provision on target and is supporting students to this end. It will, however, support every student through to completion even if this becomes outside of the ideal timescale and without detriment to the learner experience.

1732 The Committee **NOTED** the progress with closure of UCEM's Level 3 provision.

1733 The Chair thanked MS for his contributions and invited him to leave the meeting.

## **4) ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING**

**1734**      **4.1/ NSS ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS UPDATE**

- 1735      Wendy Finlay [WF] provided an update to the Committee on the activities throughout 2020-21 to impact the UCEM 2021 National Student Survey result and the progress to date with participation by UCEM students. Paper 4.1 was presented to support the update.
- 1736      WF advised that 350 students are to be included in NSS this year with an overall student satisfaction target of 82%. All other students are invited to take the Student Experience Survey (SES). UCEM's focus has been to hit the response rate for the publication threshold. As a result, the participation rate is 65.08% vs 72% this time last year.
- 1737      The Committee considered the levels of confidence in maintaining the satisfaction rate in light of the pandemic having been less disruptive to UCEM than to other institutions. UCEM has had positive feedback about the measures put in place through the pandemic and has been in a strong position due to its online delivery model, but it recognises that it could still be impacted by general pandemic negativity. There are no questions specifically related to the pandemic included in the survey. UCEM also recognises that the impact of the pandemic on the wider sector means that a decision may be taken by the OFS not to publish the NSS Results this year.
- 1738      The Committee noted that, , JEF participated in the OfS NSS Review Working Group on how the survey evolves and remains fit for purpose.
- 1739      The Committee thanked WF for the report and **NOTED** the work undertaken to positively impact NSS 2021 and the successful participation rate achieved.

**1740**      **4.2/ UCEM ENHANCEMENT PLAN**

- 1741      Helen Edwards provided an update on the UCEM Enhancement Plan and UCEM's performance to date against the targets set out in the plan for 2020-21 (paper 4.2).
- 1742      HE reported that UCEM has made progress despite the impact of Covid-19 and Transform on staff capacity and has completed 19 enhancement actions, with 9 enhancement actions still in progress but rated as green and on track for implementation. Eight enhancement action are amber and behind target, 2 are on hold due to Covid-19, 5 have now yet started and 7 have been closed/removed as they have been superseded by events.
- 1743      HE reported that the wider integration of the Apprenticeship Enhancement Plan will take place soon and that self-assessment reporting will also feed directly into the Enhancement Plan in the future. There were 100 actions to undertake around Ofsted readiness also identified, some of which will also move into the Enhancement Plan. UCEM will also be working to better track the impact of enhancements made in the future too.
- 1744      The Committee **NOTED** UCEM's Enhancement Plan achievements this year and praised the exemplary approach taken to tracking and monitoring of activity.

**1745**      **4.3/ ACADEMIC RISK REGISTER**

- 1746 Jane Fawkes provided an updated review of the Academic Risk Register to the Committee, focussing on the key academic risks and how these are being mitigated internally (see paper 4.3). The full UCEM Risk Register is monitored by the Audit Committee.
- 1747 The highest risks are the areas related to compliance with ESFA (E1); meeting the ongoing Conditions of Registration with the OFS (E3); and, Ofsted related to the inspection of Level 6/7 (E2b) following the changes announced by Ofsted in autumn 2020.
- 1748 The Committee **NOTED** the key academic risks to the institution and were content that these are being appropriately mitigated. The Committee commended the approach taken to risk management at UCEM.

**1749**                    **4.4/ PSRB ACCREDITATIONS**

- 1750 Kate Greenway [KG] joined the meeting to update the committee on UCEM's professional body accreditations (paper 4.4), providing a summary overview of the status of each accreditation and accrediting partner, and where recent accreditation activity has taken place /where outstanding activity remains.
- 1751 The Committee queried whether there were contradictory requirements from the various bodies where multiple accreditations exist for a single programme. UCEM has not experienced any issues or conflicts in this scenario but did acknowledge there are differing approaches between the various bodies and the confidence of the industry/employers in those bodies does vary.
- 1752 The Committee **NOTED** the current status of UCEM's accreditations with professional bodies.

**1753**                    **4.5/ EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

- 1754 Kate Greenway also presented to the Committee UCEM's latest External Examiners Report 2019-20 (paper 3.2).
- 1755 KG reported some extremely positive commentary in the report about processes and staff at UCEM. The report provides useful contributions and strong evidence for UCEM's permanent Degree Awarding Powers application. The Committee congratulated the UCEM team on such excellent feedback.
- 1756 PF suggested that students be provided with some of the outcomes and quotes included within the report as there is still a perception that marking and feedback is unfair. KG/PF agreed to discuss how best to present this to students outside of the meeting.

**ACTION:                Share some of the External Examiners feedback with students.  
                                 [KG/PF]**

- 1757 The Committee **NOTED** the External Examiners feedback report 2019-20 and commended the very positive comments contained within it.
- 1758 The Chair thanked KG for her contributions and invited her to leave the meeting.



## 5) MATTERS FOR NOTING AND REPORTING ONLY

### **1759                    5.1/ PERMANENT DEGREE AWARDING POWERS APPLICATION UPDATE**

1760                    The Committee **NOTED** the brief update provided in paper 5.1 on the ongoing delay to assessment of UCEM's application for permanent Degree Awarding Powers as a result of the pandemic and OfS reduced capacity.

### **1761                    5.2/ ACADEMIC BOARD AND DELIBERATIVE COMMITTEE UPDATES**

1762                    Under the Terms of Reference for the Academic Review Committee, the Committee should receive regular updates on all aspects of UCEM's Academic Governance. Summary reports from the Academic Boards and Deliberative Committees in 2020-21 to date were provided in papers 5.2a-5.2e and were **NOTED** by the Committee.

### **1763                    6/ ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1764                    The Chair informed the Committee that this was the last meeting Phoebe Farrell would participate in as her term as UCEM's Lead Student Representative will end in summer 2021. The Chair thanked PF for her contribution to the work of the Committee and her insights from the student perspective throughout her time in the role.

1765                    The Chair thanked TB and NM for their contributions; the external perspectives bring significant value to the Committee and the academic matters it reviews.

1766                    With no additional items of business reported, KM thanked the Committee for their contributions, and called the meeting to a close at 15.44pm.

#### **Date of next meeting:**

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021 from 14.00-16.00pm, via Zoom videoconference**

**Signed:**



**Name:**

**Kenny Miller**

**Position:**

**Chair, Academic Review Committee and Independent Trustee**

**Date:**

**21<sup>st</sup> October 2021**