

ACADEMIC REVIEW COMMITTEE

20 JUNE 2024

REDACTED MINUTES FOR PUBLICATION

A meeting of the Academic Review Committee was held via Zoom video conference from 10.00am-12.00pm on Thursday 20 June 2024.

Present:	Prof. Alison Cotgrave [AC] Helen Edwards [HE] Dr. Wendy Finlay [WF] Jon Hubert [JH] Dr. Stephen Jackson [SJ] (Chair) Hazel Lobo [HL] Paula Shaw [PS] Ashley Wheaton [AW]
In attendance:	Kate Deakin [KD] (for item 3.2 only) Jane Fawkes [JEF] (University College Secretary) Ruth Grindey [RG] (for item 2.3 only) Lyndsay Hughes [LH] (Clerk to the Board of Trustees) Prof. Ange Lee [AL] (for item 2.2 only)
Apologies for absence:	Prof. Nick Braisby (NB) Susan Dawson (SD) Ben McManus [BM]

1) GENERAL MEETING GOVERNANCE

2117 1.1/ DECARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2118 There were no conflicts of interest declared.

2119 1.2/ APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

2120 There were apologies for absence from Susan Dawson, Ben McManus and Prof. Nick Braisby.

2121 New member to the Committee and Professor Alison Cotgrave (External Representative) gave a brief introduction to herself. Ben McManus was also formally welcomed as a new member. It was also noted that this was Stephen Jackson's first meeting as Chair since the retirement from the Board of Kenny Miller in April 2024.

2122 1.3/ MINUTES AND REDACTIONS OF THE MEETING HELD 18 JULY 2023

2123 The minutes and proposed redactions (highlighted grey) of the Academic Review Committee held 18 July 2023 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. The new Chair of the Committee, Dr Stephen Jackson, who was present at the meeting in July 2023, signed the minutes on behalf of the Committee.

2124 1.4/ MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS SUMMARY

2125 An actions summary from the previous meeting was circulated as Paper 1.4 and the Committee noted that the only action on-going (presentation of a proposed Academic Career Framework to the Committee) is deferred to a future meeting.

2126 1.5/ ACADEMIC REVIEW COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

2127 The Committee noted that its Terms of Reference were last reviewed and approved in February 2024 by the Nominations & Governance Committee. There have been membership changes since then, so they are re-presented for approval. The changes reflect the retirement of Chair Prof. Kenny Miller and appointment of Chair Stephen Jackson, appointment of Prof. Alison Cotgrave and Ben McManus to the Committee and the retirement of Prof. Nick Morton from the Committee.

2128 The Committee **APPROVED** the Academic Review Committee Terms of Reference V16.01 for finalisation and publication as the new V17.0.

ACTION: Finalise and republish the updated Academic Review Committee Terms of Reference V17.0. [LH]

2129 1.6/ CHAIR'S ACTION: ACADEMIC REVIEW COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

2130 The Committee noted the Chair's Action approved by the outgoing Chair of Academic Review Committee, Professor Kenneth Miller, to approve the draft Academic Review Committee Annual Report for 2022-23 for presentation to the Board of Trustees in April 2024. It was noted the report had been approved this way, without Committee oversight, as would be usual, due to changes in scheduling for the Committee which meant it did not sit in autumn 2023.

2) STRATEGIC ACADEMIC PROJECTS

2131 2.1/ (RE)VALIDATION AND (RE)APPROVAL EVENTS IN 2023/24

2132 Wendy Finlay presented an update to the Committee on the (re)validation and (re)approval events held year to date in 2023/24 as part of the strategic institutional goal to develop greater breadth of offer at UCEM as outlined in paper 2.1.

2133 WF highlighted that there had been a huge effort across UCEM in the current academic year to deliver on the breadth focus within UCEM's CX Strategy. In total there have been successful outcomes for nineteen programmes – five new apprenticeship programmes will launch in September 2024 and four existing apprenticeship programmes have been re-approved. In addition, there have been two new degree programmes validated and 8 revalidations of existing programmes. Paper 2.1 outlined all the conditions (just 3 in total), recommendations (21 in total) and commendations (22 in total) received through these processes. UCEM is now

working through the development of all the modules for these programmes, associated operational implementation and on building a pipeline of students to join the programmes. WF confirmed that the wholly new programmes are in the areas of planning and architectural design.

2134 The Committee **NOTED** the successful periodic review, (re)validations and (re)approvals held year to date which are in support of UCEM's Reach and Breadth ambitions within the CX Strategy and fully acknowledged the volume of work in delivering this by the teams involved.

2135 **2.2/ RESEARCH UPDATE AND RESEARCH DEGREE AWARDING POWERS**

2136 Ange Lee joined the meeting to present to the Committee a research update and the latest update on UCEM's journey towards securing Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAPs) as outlined in paper 2.2, which contribute to the depth ambitions within the CX strategy.

2137 Ange provided a brief overview of activity to build up UCEM's research profile and presence since the Committee last met. This year has been focussed on delivering research growth and building a culture of research within UCEM. AL outlined UCEM's efforts to grow the type and breadth of research it undertakes but that the institution is challenged by being ineligible to submit to large funding bodies. Despite this, UCEM has been awarded five new research projects this year totalling £120,000, this includes British Council grants as well as other funders, which is building up the breadth in evidence. UCEM is also building up its Research Repository of publications and has evidence to show this is being downloaded and many research outputs are published in quality journals. UCEM is also now publishing an Annual Scholarship Report.

2138 UCEM agreed about 8 months ago to make a Research Excellence Framework submission (REF) in order to become eligible to bid for UKRI grants from 2029. UCEM is being supported in this work by Professor Tony Thorpe, former Dean of Loughborough University. The Team has delivered training events to staff to ensure they understand the Framework, its requirements and how UCEM will be judged as part of growing the culture and understanding of quality research at UCEM. Harold Samuel Research Prize funding has been used to support academic staff with research work. It is likely UCEM's submission will be small and focussed but there are case studies of such submissions having a positive result.

2139 UCEM continues to pursue its ambition to launch research degrees in the future and has made a formal submission to a potential validating partner. UCEM is in stage one of a two-stage process which is progressing positively so far with UCEM still hopeful it could offer research degrees by October 2025. UCEM will need to see 30 research degree completions through the validating partner before it can secure RDAPs itself. The potential validating partner does not currently offer Professional Doctorates so these would be traditional PhDs, at least initially.

2140 The Committee recognised that development of research capacity at UCEM is a long-term project but welcomed the very positive foundations for a research culture that have been put in place at UCEM and the support of all teams in working towards this ambition, which has required commitment and change to current practices in some departments.

2141 UCEM is growing its support to current staff to develop their research credentials and outputs. This includes mentorship, a writing retreat and research events – the results of which should be evident by this time next year. UCEM is aiming for a more modern approach where teaching remains core but research supplements and benefits that.

2142 The Committee **NOTED** the progress update on UCEM’s research activities as it evolves into a research-led institution and the update on UCEM’s RDAP ambitions and progress in securing a validating partner. The Committee **AGREED** it should update the Board fully on this area of UCEM work and ambition to ensure they understand the progress being made.

2143 The Chair thanked AL for her contribution to the Committee and invited her to leave the meeting.

2144 **2.3/ DISCUSSION ITEM: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

2145 Ruth Grindey joined the meeting to present to the Committee a paper which the Academic Board recently discussed on the potential for adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) within UCEM as outlined in paper 2.3. The aim of the paper was to generate discussion and bring external perspectives to the debate within UCEM about the implications of AI and how the benefits can be captured.

2146 RG highlighted that AI continues to move at a pace. UCEM is testing its use in terms of optimisation and productivity gains it could bring about. UCEM has also done a skills survey internally which has demonstrated there is a significant skills development issue for all staff within UCEM in terms of using AI, as well as students and employers. UCEM has also benchmarked AI in terms of how other institutions are already making use of it. AI has huge potential for UCEM in terms of analysing data and information. The conversations around AI have changed over the last year very much towards how AI can be used and working in partnership with it, rather than a fear of its consequences around authenticity, ethics, plagiarism and governance.

2147 The purpose of the Academic Board discussion was to consider what UCEM’s USP should be in terms of adoption of AI. The consensus was to focus use of AI on frontline student engagement work with AI naturally supporting UCEM’s core purpose to build a more sustainable built environment through augmented student outcomes. UCEM should therefore focus on accessibility, relevance and finding ways to be more efficient. UCEM will also use AI in resourcing efficiencies. The Academic Board agreed that as a next step UCEM should draw together a proposition for the adoption of AI within education and set up a working group to lead on the design and implementation of any enhancements.

2148 It was suggested that whilst UCEM has commenced its AI journey, it needs to consider fully the options of working with students on their use of generative AI, which the working group will start to consider in the near future. UCEM’s working group should also devise a policy on acceptable usage and the University of Sydney’s policy was recommended to UCEM as an exemplar. This includes explicitly where AI can and cannot be used by students, and ensuring students are open and transparent where AI has been used. It was noted however that writing an AI policy is very challenging as the landscape and development with AI changes so frequently.

Guidance may be more appropriate than a policy, to include support for students on how to ask AI a question, get the outputs and then assess the validity of them.

- 2149 It was recommended that UCEM reviews its programme and module level learning outcomes to ensure they are robust enough against AI, which many institutions are currently undertaking. Strengthening training for staff with regards to AI will also be essential – staff need to be aware themselves so they can recognise when AI has been used and they also need to recognise opportunities to make use of AI themselves. Strengthening academic offenses policies will also be required.
- 2150 It was commented that UCEM must also be aware of AI use within the professions it serves in order to appropriately prepare students for the work they will undertake in the industry.
- 2151 The Committee **NOTED** the common problems and differences of approach towards AI and welcomed the external perspectives into the discussion at UCEM on this important matter for the future of education. The Committee also welcomed the recommendations of areas for guidance, policy review or action that UCEM should be considering as next steps on its AI journey.
- 2152 The Chair thanked RG for her contribution to the Committee and invited her to leave the meeting.

3) ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING

2153 3.1/ STUDENT RETENTION AND PROGRESSION

- 2154 Wendy Finlay presented an update on student retention and progression (paper 3.1), intended to prompt discussion on ways to maximise engagement and reduce withdrawals. The paper had been discussed by Academic Board on 3 June 2024.
- 2155 WF reminded the Committee that UCEM has an ambition within its strategy that 70% of students will achieve a full award for the programme they initially registered on, and that a further 15% will achieve at least a minimum of an intermediate exit award. These targets are not being met as yet but gains have been made in recent years in terms of module success rates. UCEM's model, however, allows for disconnect between programmes and modules, where a student can still be registered on a programme but choose not to register for another module. These students often ultimately withdraw from their programme, and this contributes to missing the agreed targets and has a financial implication given UCEM's funding model. UCEM's Academic Board discussed this issue in detail and work is now commencing focussed on intake and retention, with the aim of reducing the initial withdrawal rate and to close the continuation to completion gap seen on an ongoing basis.
- 2156 The Academic Board discussed the factors that lead to student withdrawal at UCEM, one of the most significant of which is students being time poor. Work will therefore be undertaken to analyse the common points at which withdrawals are seen and how the provision could be adapted to reduce the impact, looking at flexibility in patterns of delivery and assessment, enhanced guidance on admissions, assessment workload and deadlines, and enhanced support services. The aim is to develop an Intake Retention Improvement Plan for work to commence from autumn 2024.

- 2157 The External Representatives commented that engagement levels have been a challenge for many institutions since the Covid-19 pandemic, with issues ranging from being time poor to lack of motivation, cost of living and the student experience of university simply not meeting initial expectations. It was noted that UCEM could do something really positive with its online provision to support these issues, particularly around workload, assessment and flexibility and in provision of appropriate guidance upfront on what to expect when studying with UCEM. HL commented that the revalidation sought to be more programme-focussed to support longer-term programme outcomes and building a cohort community.
- 2158 AW commented that UCEM will also need to be more confident in presenting its offer to the market as distinct for the very specific type of students the institution has – those who are predominantly time poor – and accept it has a very different offer in the market to traditional universities. It was also noted that the full-time undergraduate sector is expected to achieve 90% in terms of student outcomes, with 91% continuation and UCEM’s ambition is to meet this same level of student outcomes for part-time students. The development of an offer which is a precise fit for the type of students who come to UCEM is therefore essential.
- 2159 It was noted that UCEM is also undertaking substantive work on developing student community, to avoid students studying with UCEM in isolation, and that this should have associated impacts on retention. There is also potential to explore what UCEM can do for employers in terms of support, training and guidance on expectation setting, withdrawals and retention rates – as the key peer group UCEM students interact with most.
- 2160 The Committee **NOTED** the discussions held at Academic Board and the work UCEM will be undertaking to better understand circumstances of withdrawals and how it can best support students and employers. The Committee welcomed the external perspectives on this issue and look forward to hearing how the work progresses through the autumn semester.

2161 3.2/ APPRENTICESHIP KPIS AND SCORECARD

- 2162 Kate Deakin joined the meeting for item 3.2.
- 2163 KD provided a brief overview of the updated KPI scorecard which outlines UCEM’s current performance against KPIS and the ESFA Accountability Framework, as outlined in paper 3.2 and 3.2a.
- 2164 KD particularly highlighted that UCEM has a strong relationship with the ESFA and is managing expectations around performance on the Qualification Achievement Rate (QAR). The ESFA is, as a consequence, content with UCEM’s performance, despite it remaining below official expectations. The national achievement rates on the chartered surveyor programme were published in March for the academic year 2022-23 with the national average at 21.7%. UCEM secured 42.8% which was markedly above any other provider.
- 2165 The ESFA have introduced some changes which have reduced the withdrawal measure from 35% to 20% - UCEM’s rate is 5.6% so this measure is green. In addition, the ESFA have removed the EPA phase from the learners planned end date measure which is also positive for UCEM and moves this measure into green (from needs improvement). The two areas which remain red for UCEM are QAR and retention.

UCEM has been raising the profile of the issue for a long time and there is alignment, particularly with the Trailblazer Group, to make enhancement and reduce the barriers for providers and apprentices alike. Alongside this, UCEM has seen a steady increase in retention in every cohort through its internal activities and everything within the institution's control is moving on a positive trajectory.

2166 REDACTED

2167 The Committee **NOTED** the current performance against the Apprenticeship KPIs and the activities underway across UCEM to address the Qualification Achievement Rate performance. It was also noted that the problems are not unique to UCEM, nor to any apprenticeship that still remains on a non-integrated EPA and there is genuine hope that this will be changed to integrated in the near future.

2168 The Chair thanked KD for her contribution to the Committee and invited her to leave the meeting.

2169 3.3/ UCEM ENHANCEMENT PLAN

2170 Helen Edwards presented to the Committee an overview of UCEM's enhancement Plan and work through 2023-24 to deliver it as outlined in paper 3.3 and 3.3a.

2171 HE reported that this was the Q3 update and Q4 will be completed at end July. There is still time to turn some metrics green and overall good progress has been made in 2023-24. Any non-complete items at year end will be scrutinised and impact assessments where actions have been completed will be undertaken. Success has been slightly hampered this year by the volume of work in validation and revalidation that has been undertaken. Planning is now underway for next years' Enhancement Plan actions, which is being led by the Student Enhancement Group and intends to be more focused and prioritised, drawing on useful learning out of TEF.

2172 The Committee **NOTED** the current status of UCEM's planned enhancements (2 completed enhancement actions, 28 enhancement actions still in progress but on track, 9 enhancement actions behind target and 3 enhancement action showing as red and at risk of not being delivered by the stated deadline – one of which was only recently added) and the steps that UCEM is taking to plan enhancement initiatives for the next business year.

2173 3.4/ DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT 2022-23

2174 Helen Edwards presented to the Committee the Degree Outcomes Statement 2022-23 as outlined in paper 3.4a and which must be published before the end of the current academic year.

2175 HE commented that a working group was convened to review the data and update the statement. It also went through an external review, QSEC and Academic Board. The proportion of students achieving a good honours degree has remained broadly consistent over the last three years, following an increase in the years prior to that, partly attributable to change in learning and teaching practices at that time and partly attributable to a change in type of students since then. UCEM now has more apprenticeship students and data consistently shows these students are more successful due to the enhanced support they receive through their studies.

Attainment rates are also higher in younger students than mature and white students than ethnic groups, though the gaps are now narrowing, probably as a result of widening participation work. Other areas covered in the report include enhancements to teaching and learning practices, areas of good practice and risk/challenges. It is hoped that the focus on retention in recent years will have further impact on these outcomes in future years.

2176 It was commented that this report does not reflect overall student success and focuses only on achievement of a 'good honours degree', but the purpose of this report is compliance with the OFS expectations. Many UCEM students who complete their programmes are therefore not reflected within this. Analysis also needs to review those lower degree classifications to interrogate where UCEM is improving **all** degree outcomes.

2177 The Committee **APPROVED** the Degree Outcomes Statement 2022-23 for publication before the end of the academic year.

2178 3.5/ ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT AUDIT OUTCOMES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS

2179 Helen Edwards presented to the Committee the outcomes of an internal audit into Academic Misconduct, which has been reviewed by the Audit Committee in late 2023 which had suggested Academic Review Committee should have oversight of ensuring the recommendations were addressed, as per paper 3.5 and 3.5a.

2180 The audit reviewed UCEM's Academic Misconduct processes, whether they meet regulator requirements and if they are fit for purpose. An action plan was put in place following the audit to address the recommendations, against which there has been good progress to date. UCEM is making revisions to its academic misconduct procedures and videos have been created for initial reviewers to help guide them. UCEM has also introduced a generative AI statement and is preparing further advice on this for both staff and students. A review and benchmarking exercise has been undertaken to look at penalty point tariff systems to help inform UCEM's approach. Further analysis on data from 2022-23 compared to previous numbers of cases has now been completed which demonstrates that the changes made have reduced numbers of initial investigations quite significantly and the numbers of students being contacted to explain themselves. A Chair's Decision process was also implemented to reduce panel meetings, which has reduced the number by half and meant student interventions occur earlier. Assessment team workload has also reduced in terms of assessment reviews.

2181 The Committee **NOTED** the outcomes of the Quality Audit Group's audit of academic misconduct at UCEM and **NOTED** the progress to date in addressing the recommendations made in the audit findings.

2182 3.6/ ACADEMIC DELIBERATIVE COMMITTEE FOCUS

2183 The Committee was advised that each academic deliberative committee would continue to rotate presenting to the Committee its work over the last year and plans for the year ahead. At this meeting, Helen Edwards, on behalf of the Chair of QSEC, presented an overview of the work of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee and its plans for the next academic year as outlined in papers 3.6 and 3.6a.

- 2184 HE reported that QSEC has delegated powers from Academic Board for UCEM's higher education awards and for reviewing and enhancing student facing policies. There is a Student Representative on the Committee and it meets five times per year. It has received reports on admissions, safeguarding, prevent, appeals/complaints and external examiners and looked at further enhancements in these areas. QSEC also reviews the UCEM Enhancement Plan and domestic and international accreditations, as well as the code of practice development programme.
- 2185 For the year ahead, QSEC will be further developing UCEMs Code of Practice and accompanying policies, as well as a more substantive review of student facing policies, linked to a compassionate communications initiative. There will be work undertaken around implementing the University Mental Health Charter, pushing for a whole institution approach to mental health and wellbeing. There will also be a focus on quality and governance processes to support new partnership opportunities in the future. Work will continue on new programme validations and there will be accreditation renewals with the CIOB and CABE. Finally, QSEC will retain monitoring and oversight of its sub-committees, including the Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring Committee.
- 2186 The Committee was content that the academic management of UCEM was being well managed through its deliberative committees and welcomes the opportunity to gain visibility on the work underway across UCEM. The Committee **NOTED** the work of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee for the year concluding and the year ahead.

4) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2187 4/ ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 2188 The Chair asked if there were any comments on the papers for noting and report at item 6 and none were raised.
- 2189 The Chair thanked all the external representatives for their continued commitment to the Committee and the valuable perspectives they bring to the academic matters it reviews.
- 2190 There were no additional items of business reported.

5) CLOSE

2191 5/ MEETING CLOSE

- 2192 The Chair called the meeting to a close at 11.58am.
- 2193 The date of the next meeting is Thursday 21 November 2024.

6) MATTERS FOR NOTING AND REPORTING ONLY

- 2194 The following matters were circulated as a separate pack for noting or comment via email in advance of the meeting. They were not discussed in the meeting.

2195 **6.1/ EXTERNAL EXAMINERS REPORT 2022-23**

2196 The Committee **NOTED** the feedback contained within the External Examiners (EE) Report 2022-23 and that overall EEs continue to have confidence that UCEM's academic standards are being maintained. The Committee also **NOTED** the areas for enhancement identified by the EEs that have been taken on board and incorporated into UCEM's enhancement agenda.

2197 **6.2/ APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL MEMBER TO ACADEMIC BOARD**

2198 The Committee **NOTED** that Marc Winsor was appointed to the UCEM Academic Board under the employer representative category for a three-year term of office from September 2023- September 2026.

2199 **7.3/ ACADEMIC DELIBERATIVE COMMITTEE UPDATES**

2200 The Committee **NOTED** the deliberations of the Academic Boards held on 4 March and 3 June 2024.

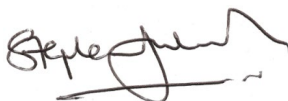
2201 The Committee **NOTED** the deliberations of the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committees held on 22 October 2023 and 1 February 2024.

2202 The Committee **NOTED** the deliberations of the Research Committees held on 7 September 2023 and 11 January 2024.

2203 The Committee **NOTED** the deliberations of the Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring Committees held on 20 February and 16 April 2024.

Date of next meeting:

Thursday 21 November 2024, via Zoom videoconference

Signed

Name

Stephen Jackson

Position

Chair of Audit Committee

Date

21 November 2024