

The City College, Board of Governors Meeting: 30/11/23 Start time: 2:00 pm/End time: 0:00 pm/Venue: Onsite: Conference Room, TCC / Online – Microsoft Teams

Present: Uroy Clarke (Chair), Tasneem Riaz (Director), Ian Woolgar (External), Mike Potter (External), Kate Marie Diver (Current Student), Susan Riaz (Secretary), Naweed Riaz (Staff, legal advisor, in attendance)

Apologies: Ramona Padurean (Alumni) and Collin Chikanma (Alumni) could not attend.

Amanda Banks (External), Mattias Scheibel Larsson (External) stepped down as members of the board.

Item	Key points raised:	Actions	Who?	When?
<b>1) Apologies</b>	Amanda Banks (External), Mattias Scheibel Larsson (External) have both stepped down as members of the Board.  Apologies: Ramona Padurean, Collin Chikanma	None	N/A	N/A
<b>2) Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>	<b>UC</b> welcomed everyone to the Board, including the new member, KD.  Previous minutes (June 23) circulated and agreed on. <b>TR</b> to publish these on the website.	None	N/A	N/A
<b>3) Report from the Director/Chair</b>	<b>UC</b> discussed a forthcoming vote on whether members agree with IW taking over as Chair of the Board. <b>IW</b> to send out information about himself to members. <b>TR</b> suggested that if the Board has any concerns they email her or			

	<p>UC directly. If members are happy and nobody objects, IW can be confirmed for the next meeting to Chair the meeting next time. There were no disagreements about this.</p>			
<p><b>4) Matters Arising</b></p>	<p><b>Risk Register:</b>  <b>TR:</b> (Shared the updated risk register). Nothing much has changed, although ratings have gone down. Everything in red is a really problematic issue. For example, there is a red rating for the premises, which means the risk that you cannot access the building and there is insurance for this and a risk plan in place.  <b>UC:</b> Suggested the risk register should be shared in future.  <b>KD:</b> If there are no impending lease negotiations, or major works, could this not be downgraded from red? What is the reality of losing access to the building? I wonder whether that is a bit high.  <b>TR:</b> We just wanted to highlight the importance of not being to get access to the premises. Especially for acupuncture which has a lot of practical work. For other courses, you could go online. For acupuncture though you cannot graduate. It is in our thoughts to say that is very important – it can go down, but that is really the only reason it is there, and in red, because we are not an online institution. You were not part of the meetings in Covid times, but MP was at the University and his students could not graduate as they could not access the clinic, but we managed to do this through a painful period of keeping students in bubbles, etc. We did go to extreme lengths, whereas the University did not do that.  <b>MP:</b> We did an online clinic, but I agree that the University had to make a University wide decision and they could not do something different for acupuncture. I agree that the risk rating is being unkind to ourselves.  <b>TR:</b> There is also a lower rating for utilising or recruiting staff. That refers to staff leaving during term time, which happens rarely but it does happen. Other than that, losing key staff could be a problem</p>			

	<p>or leave the College as a whole unable to operate and having to teach out. We are transparent and held to account by people such as you on the Board. We do have funded courses, which can be blocked. We may not be able to carry on without students on funded courses and we are still struggling at the moment. The acupuncture course alone is not enough to prop up the College due to low numbers, being admin heavy, needing extra assistants, etc., which pushes up the cost of the course. However, apart from that, everything is looking good, and we are hoping our numbers will grow to pre-Covid levels. We had 387 students in the recent HESA return, so we are hoping for 400-500 students next year.</p>			
	<p><b>Annual Monitoring of Management and Governance:</b>  <b>TR:</b> This is the exercise we do annually. We did this on January 23 and we will do this in January 24. Once done, I will circulate the report and we can give feedback in the next meeting.</p>	TR		
	<p><b>Recruiting a new Chair and members to the committee:</b>  <b>UC:</b> We are still looking to recruit for new members?  <b>TR:</b> We have applications from two student members, and we have the paperwork. Have you had a look at this?  <b>NR:</b> I may have a couple of members going forward, who may want to come on board, and I will forward their CV's and send them over to you once I get them and you can consider their suitability.  <b>TR:</b> Both Amanda and Mattias had to step down for personal reasons. This is not a paid position and a lot of people who replied to the advert wanted to be paid. They need to be independent and not on the payroll.  <b>IW:</b> This is a problem with Board's at the moment. I am the governor of a small primary school in Brent, and it has been almost impossible to get a consistent board across three terms as it requires a commitment. It is a problem across the education</p>			

	<p>sector.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> It would be nice to have continuity. Then members get to know how the College works.</p>			
	<p><b>Paperwork for new student members for approval:</b> Two new members paperwork provided. UC, TR and IW to look at this.</p>			
	<p><b>Assessment Board Minutes:</b> <b>TR:</b> We sent these minutes out to everyone. Again, there are no real problems for HND, HNC or acupuncture, but we had issues with the DET students due to work placements. They cannot finish their course without their placement and observations. That has been an issue and we have reduced our numbers on the DET course, only taking a few students that had their placements in place and if we were sure that the centre could be checked and was suitable.</p> <p><b>UC:</b> As to the DET going forward, will we discontinue the course?</p> <p><b>TR:</b> It has been on the radar of the OfS, and we also had an email from Ofsted, and we are in scope for inspection, so we need to expect a visit. We have provided them with the details, but Ofsted is something we have not dealt with before as normally they deal with schools. There have been proposed changes from Pearson, the course provider, meaning students need to be actively working in the industry going forward.</p> <p><b>IW:</b> You have not been subject to Ofsted visits before? <b>TR:</b> Yes, that is correct. From September 24 the criteria will</p>			

	<p>change, and we can only recruit teachers already working in the industry. Not working in schools but with 16+ students, so we may stop offering the course. We cannot be limited to 8-10 students, who have the right criteria, with a lot of admin work involved as it is not really worthwhile.</p> <p><b>UC:</b> Any other questions? There were no questions.</p>			
	<p><b>Academic Board Minutes:</b></p> <p><b>TR:</b> We had the academic board in September. Again, acupuncture is only one intake, so this happens once a year, whereas for other courses, with three intakes, there are meetings at the end of each term. That involves the HNC, HND and DET courses.</p> <p><b>UC:</b> There was nothing there of concern that I noted.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> we have started the external examiners visits for the DET. That went well and we will have another next year.</p> <p><b>UC:</b> Is that three visits in a year?</p> <p><b>TR:</b> We had three visits, one standard verification and one spot check, so five visits for just DET. A lot of colleges were blocked from offering the DET, but the admin is so heavy at the moment so we will probably stop that. NR, can you update us on prevent?</p> <p><b>NR:</b> Nothing to report on the Prevent return. We are monitoring this for risks. We do have regular emails from the Prevent team.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> Can we send the link out for members to do the training?</p> <p><b>UC:</b> Any issues from events in the Middle East?</p>			

	<p><b>NR:</b> We have made staff aware but no issues so far. We try to avoid politics and, so far, nothing on that front.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> We have been lucky so far.</p> <p><b>NR:</b> Not luck really, we just monitor carefully and so far, everything has been fine, but I will send out the link for the training. We did have a letter from the OfS about events in the Middle East and we have made staff aware of this and to be vigilant.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> All teaching staff do Prevent training.</p> <p><b>UC:</b> Is it free, online training? It might be useful for new governors.</p> <p><b>IW:</b> Yes, in the public sector it is more or less mandatory. Every governor does a Prevent course and governor role course.</p>			
<b>5) Access and Participation Plan</b>	<p><b>TR:</b> SR and other members of staff are working on this. The Access and Participation Plan needs to be submitted to OfS in order for us to increase our fees. There is a lot of data, and we could not do this previously as we needed data for five years and we need to submit this early 2024. We hope that we can submit, and it will not be effective until 2025/26 onwards if it is approved. Also, we could get VAT exemption, so we have to pay 20% VAT on all fees received, whereas universities do not have to, as we are in the private sector. We might send it to UC and IW to check and we need to look at all the data. It is not easy to do and takes a lot of work.</p>			
<b>6) Finance</b>	<p><b>TR:</b> I am currently working with the auditors. My deadline for the</p>			

	<p>OfS for the financial return and forecast for three years previous, the current year and for three years in advance. It is not easy to make a forecast but I have been busy with this over the last couple of weeks. We should be able to report back on feedback at the next meeting.</p>			
<p><b>7) Audit of use of public monies</b></p>	<p><b>UC:</b> I assume this is the same then. Finance and the Audit?</p> <p><b>TR:</b> Yes, lots of expenses and no profits. We will make a loss this year, but not as much as last year and hopefully next year will be better.</p>			
<p><b>8) Staffing Levels and Training</b></p>	<p><b>UC:</b> How are our staff levels?</p> <p><b>NR:</b> We have taken on a couple of new full-time admin people as student numbers rise. We need staff to monitor and so we have also recruited a number of part-time teachers who are self-employed. In the New Year we may need two more teachers, not full-time, but going forward may need more full-time teachers. In terms of HND and DET we have three full-time teaching staff but might need more going forward. Staff levels are fine at the moment and all in hand, but we will need to look in January. We are hoping to recruit at least 80-100 students for January.</p>			
<p><b>9) Calendar of Significant College Events</b></p>	<p><b>UC:</b> Any major events forthcoming?</p> <p><b>TR:</b> We start the calendar from September onwards. For April we may have something for DET and then external examiners for other courses and acupuncture. Everything has gone well so far. No certifications were blocked. We work with Pearson and BAAB and we have to submit an AMAF (Annual Monitoring Audit Form) to BAAB which is coming up in February 2024. We also need to work</p>			

	on the Accreditation which comes up every four years.			
<b>10) Key Performance Indicators and Benchmarking</b>	<p><b>UC:</b> KPI's, are they amongst that?</p> <p><b>TR:</b> We just did HESA and signed that off last week. That will be looked at and they will be looking at the key performance indicators and benchmarking and then we will receive an email about how we are doing compared to the sector as a whole. Completion is important that is a large concern of the OfS.</p>			
<b>11) Transparency and Publication of Information</b>	<p><b>TR:</b> This is the HESA return. We publish this – ethnicity, gender, etc. Our numbers are not that high, but hopefully next year the numbers will increase, and we will have more data.</p> <p><b>UC:</b> So, the numbers should reflect differently?</p>			
<b>12) Student Matters – External Examiners Report</b>	<p><b>TR:</b> We had some visits prior to June but we will be starting the cycle again. We had one visit for the DET but, as far as the student matters, does Kate want to bring anything to our attention?</p> <p><b>KD:</b> Nothing from me.</p> <p><b>UC:</b> Quite positive then?</p> <p><b>KD:</b> People do find something always to comment on, but nothing urgent.</p>			
<b>13) Collaboration with the Universities</b>	<p><b>NR:</b> We had an ex-lecturer who no longer teaches with us and he has been putting together the paperwork. We are looking at a collaboration with few universities We are hoping for a visit from the Vice Chancellor before the end of the year. We had a meeting with one of the people on the Board of Committee at X University and he was impressed and has advised we be considered as a</p>			



	<p>partner going forwards. It will be an informal visit at first, but he has created paperwork about the college and the time frame we are working with is fairly slow, so probably September 24 or January 25 in order to have a collaboration up and running. It is an important step for the college and will change the way we run things and increase the number of students.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> If we do have a collaboration then acupuncture students may be able to get funding. We had correspondence with a university last year, but they came under scrutiny from OfS and had to stop the process. They visited the College, and they visited the class.</p> <p><b>KD:</b> Yes, I remember that.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> That was the University of X, and they were keen, but they are under scrutiny at the moment, so they have had to hold off and they did visit us and speak to students.</p> <p><b>KD:</b> BAAB have just sent out a student email and survey today about access and barriers to learning acupuncture. I have learnt that so many students pay different fees, so I am unsure when the results from this questionnaire will be visible, but student perception might be helpful. Some people pay nine or ten thousand and we pay six.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> We did speak to BAAB about this, but they mainly get funding at universities where the fees are much higher. That does make it easier, but we have to be competitive, although prices are rising – rates, electricity, utilities, etc., and that has affected us. I am not sure whether you are aware that there are ambiguous institutions where you can do a six month course and be an acupuncturist. At the college, you study for three years in-depth and are qualified to</p>			
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	<p>treat patients. We do run a degree level course, and I would be interested to see that feedback.</p> <p><b>KD:</b> I will keep you posted and will lobby for transparency.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> Not many places do the acupuncture course, but being self-funded is the challenge.</p> <p><b>KD:</b> College X is closing. Are you aware of that?</p> <p><b>MP:</b> Yes, college X is closing, that's correct.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> We heard something, but I was not sure. Colleges and universities are struggling and if we did not have the funded courses, we could not sustain the Acupuncture course. We could not just run acupuncture, it is too top heavy. All the universities have given up this course.</p> <p><b>MP:</b> We graduated our last acupuncture courses in July. We do have the remnants of a herbs course, which I still work on.</p>			
<p><b>14) Action Plan Update</b></p>	<p><b>TR:</b> Our action plan is to provide the best service we can, be transparent and honest. I have been with the college since 1987 and I need to take things easy and perhaps semi-retire. Are you semi-retired Mike or Ian?</p> <p><b>IW:</b> I am unsure what that means. People who retire die quickly. That is a serious point.</p> <p><b>MP:</b> I am not retiring either. I'm just getting good at what I do.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> I need to follow your examples then. I will be involved but</p>			

	reduce my workload.			
15) Any Other Business	<p><b>UC:</b> Is there any other business?</p> <p><b>NR:</b> Did you bring up TEF? Are they aware of this?</p> <p><b>TR:</b> We got the Bronze Award and of course we need to provide more data next year. Our student submission needs to be more extensive, and our student members need to drive this.</p> <p><b>NR:</b> We need to congratulate ourselves and this was our first submission, and it was an achievement.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> Other places say pending under their TEF.</p> <p><b>NR:</b> They may be appealing the decision or award they were given.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> A silver would be nice. Mike, do you know Paul Johnson has stepped down as programme leader and Ilze has taken over. She was an ex-student and graduated during Covid. Paul is still in the background. Is there anything you want to feedback, Kate?</p> <p><b>KD:</b> Ilze is fantastic. It's nice for Paul and good to have a succession plan. She is very approachable, and most people are happy. It's good to have a change.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> Paul and I are the same age. He is not stepping down as a teacher, only as programme leader. I am impressed with Ilze, and we are in contact regularly. She is very resilient, and she has stood her ground. She is quite matter of fact, but she is handling it will.</p>			

	<p><b>KD:</b> She will be good at getting people on board and she has had the student experience. This will work in the favour of the College. And we are being taught by Paul so that is a real honour.</p> <p><b>TR:</b> Ilze was thrown in the deep end as we wanted to do online booking and there was no easy transition. It is working well but it has had teething issues. We have sorted the issues, and some students found it difficult, but the system needs to be live and it is difficult to test otherwise. Yamin implemented this and she is helping the students.</p>			
<p><b>16) Date for Next Meeting</b></p>	<p><b>TR:</b> We should try to have this on site in March/April. I hope we can do this on-site. We can have lunch and spend some time getting to know each other better. In March we will have compliance as a big issue, working with BAAB and we will have a lot of things happening.</p> <p>TR invited Board Members to the Christmas drinks on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> between six and eight.</p>			