Meeting	**Student Panel**
Date	**Wednesday 12th June 2024, 18:00-20.00, Zoom**
Attendees	City Lit: Karin Kalfus (KK), Dragana Ramsden (DR), Wendy McKaig (WM)
	Student Panel Members: 11 panel members attended.
Notes	Melanie Headley (MH)

Summary of discussions:

1.0	KK	Welcome & Ground rules
2.0	WM	**Exec update** **Curriculum Planning/Budgets** The curriculum planning and budgeting cycle are coming to an end for the next academic year, which takes 3 months to complete. Question from the panel as to whether students can influence curriculum planning, particularly around scheduling. A: There are several factors influencing when classes can be scheduled, and the types of classes offered; tutor/room availability and the sequencing of courses across an academic year. Whilst ideas from students are welcome, to have a detailed influence around scheduling is not possible as approximately 5,000 courses need to be planned for the academic year. The final budget for the next academic year will be submitted to the governing body in July for sign off. **College Strategy** The executive team have been working closely with the governing body to draft the next strategy for the college. There have been preparatory meetings/activities, feedback sessions with various staff groups, a review of the existing strategy and in-depth discussions around the goals of the college. All agreed that bringing people together to enrich lives through learning is still valid and the goals will be broadly similar. One of the previous goals was to increase student numbers/fee income, but this was significantly impacted by the pandemic. The three goals will be broadly similar • Students at the heart of what we do • A commitment to excellence • Fulfilling our social contract

The finalised strategy will go to the governors is July for sign off and will be presented to staff and the start of term conference.

Financial Intervention
The college has been in formal financial intervention for the past 3 years because of the (financial) impact of the pandemic. The relationship the college has with the FE commissioner has been a positive one. The FE Commissioner is returning next week, the hope being that City Lit will no longer be subject to financial intervention.

Department for Education/The Treasury
The college has been negotiating with the Department for Education and the Treasury regarding the implications of the colleges reclassification as part of the Office for National Statistics recommendation that City Lit becomes a public sector body. There are discussions around the large loan (from the Treasury) that the college took on to clear the commercial debt with Barclays bank. This is ongoing and should conclude in the next two months.

New Funding Stream
City Lit has a limited number of ways to secure financing. Funding from the Mayor's Office has remained static. There are other funding opportunities such as Multiply (ends in March 2025) and Free Courses for Jobs. This provides free access to level 3 education to adults who are 24 or over, who don't have a full level 3 qualification, or if they do, have earnings below the London living wage or are in receipt of specified benefits.

When Free Courses for Jobs was launched, there was only one eligible qualification available at City Lit; we are now offering 13. This has required negotiation with the GLA. When the funding stream was first launched, there was a national list of courses that City Lit did not offer (construction, agriculture, plumbing, hair and beauty). A case was presented with evidence that the qualification routes offered by the college that students who complete their courses go on to earn an income from the sector they have chosen. Courses on offer range across several departments:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Business and Technology
- Psychology and Psychology
- Visual Arts – Art Foundation
- Access to Higher Education Humanities and Social Science
- BSL level 3
- Teacher Education and Training
- Universal Skills

		There will be a dedicated landing page on the City Lit website as well as a marketing campaign to ensure that students are aware that if they meet the eligibility criteria, they can access training for free. **College Events** This point of the academic year is busy time for the college in terms of exams. There have also been several events: Deaf Day (April), Classics Day (upcoming), Visual Arts open day, gallery exhibitions, end of year theatre performances and the Learning Disabilities students end of year showcase. **College Self-Assessment** The College self-assessment process with begin at the end of July. The panel will be updated in the term 1 (24/25) meeting. The departments have been asked as part of their quality improvement plan, how they ensure that they are engaging with their students and creating opportunities to gather feedback from students.
3.0	KK	**Student Feedback** Part 2 of the destination survey was sent out in April. Students who completed a long course last year, were asked how their studies have helped them reach their goals. A group of tutors are making follow up calls to students to gather stories about the impact on their lives, having taken an accredited course. Panel member question: If City Lit were to become a public sector body, what would that mean? WM: In November 2022, The Office for National Statistics reclassified FE colleges as public sector. Following the reclassification, the college could no longer access commercial borrowing. The pandemic and cyber attack had a huge impact on the college finances. The college receives government funding and generates fee income from students. The (bank) overdraft facility can no longer be used; a loan was taken from the Treasury to pay off the overdraft. Income fluctuates; spiking before the start of term and then dropping/levelling out. When there was access to an overdraft facility (used as needed) the college paid an average of £30,000 - £35,000 a year interest. The repayment of the Treasury loan/interest is £160,000. The college is making a case to the Treasury and the Department for Education that this is not the best use of public funds. The reclassification does not affect the way the college is run, just the financing.
4.0	KK	**Past projects update** Last panel meeting, the Terms of Reference were updated and are now on the website. The Student Charter is yet to be finalised. Panel member question: Is it possible to have a rolling record of discussions that take place in meetings and "you said, we did" follow up. KK has notes of discussions to report back to the governors regarding panel discussions. In the past, there was a student panel Google Classroom to post notes, a record of discussions and actions.

		ACTION: • KK to set up a student panel Google Classroom and invite panel members to join • Set up a record of keep track of meeting discussions, actions, project updates

5.0	LTM	Intro - **centralised communications**
		
		LTM works in the Dev Ops team, looking at the different computer systems used in the college. LTM is looking at the ways in which the college communicates with students, specifically automated communication (emails):
		
		• Confirmation of enrolment
		• Course reminder
		• Course evaluation
		
		Emails are sent from different systems and have grown organically over time. LTM is mapping all automated comms sent to students and reviewing each (what is sent, how it is sent and when it's sent) with a view to moving all to one place/system/email address.
		
		The panel previously looked at student comms, the notes for which have been shared with LTM and suggestions gathered from staff. Information that could/should be communicated to students has been identified.
		
		Panel exercise using Miro (digital whiteboard)
		• Review and rate in order of importance, the automated comms related to the following:
		   o Browsing for a course
		   o Applying for a course
		   o Before the course starts
		   o On the course start date
		   o During the course
		   o After the course
		• How should students be communicated with? SMS? Student accounts? Via the tutor in class
		
		KK – It would be helpful to have a list of email addresses from which students can expect to be contacted (City Lit emails come to you from…). This will help to reassure students. LTM - The goal for automated comms is to have them sent from one address. A back up would be a list in the Help Centre.

6.0		**Exercise/General Feedback** KK's group identified that there was some information sent between the start of a course and the end of a course which was unnecessary, particularly during the course. Any key comments – any centralised communications that you think we have missed or should consider? - Courses are cancelled due to low enrolments – is there a way of tracking enrolments/likelihood of a course going ahead a bit sooner? WM – It has been noted that in recent years, that students enrol onto courses at the last minute. Curriculum teams monitor enrolments daily. There is an awareness that cancellations have an impact on students and leads to disappointment. The departments try to strike a balance between giving a course time to fill or cancelling with long notice. - Events are hidden within the website. It would be helpful for students to know where they are. It is not a requirement for a person to be a current student to attend such events as open days. It would not be immediately obvious that events are taking place when simply browsing the website, a missed opportunity. - The amount of communication is dependent upon the course. For the short courses, it isn't necessary to send courses between the start and end of the course. For accredited courses, the expectation would be that there would be regular comms. - Would it be worth offering a discount to encourage early enrolment? WM – The marketing team run several campaigns through the year to encourage students to enrol. - New courses - Where financial viability is an issue, is it possible to look at cross subsidisation of courses which may run at a loss? WM – The college does that for courses which have potential, are a unique/specialist subject area or onward/lateral progression. Courses are often run courses on less that financially viable number when trying to embed a particular discipline or area of study. KK – Departments are constantly monitoring and make great efforts not to cancel courses. - Can the minimum number required for a course to run be published on the website, along with a live count of enrolments? Students can see for themselves whether a course is unlikely to run or is filling rapidly. There would be no need to contact the college for this information. KK – This is something that we can take away to discuss with colleagues. LTM – a traffic light system may work to indicate enrolment numbers. - Students marking courses as favorites may indicate the level of interest in a course. LTM – Currently developing wish lists which may help to indicate (to students) how popular a course is, based upon how many times it appears in other wish lists. - KK will set up a Google Classroom panel group to keep all updated on projects
7.0		**AOB** Next meeting in November. KK will reach out to panel members at the end of September to find out who will continue with the panel.