

CITYLIT

INSPIRING PASSIONS · REALISING AMBITIONS

Meeting of the Student Panel
Date Tuesday 30 November 2021
Attendees City Lit: Karin Kalfus (KK), Wendy McKaig (WM), Ross Hammond (RH) Darren Jones (DJ)
Student Panel Members: 9 panel members attended.
Notes Melanie Headley (MH)

Summary of discussions

1.0	WM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exec are looking at how best to utilise the college “estate”<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The Wellbeing Centre: Project started last year (now completed and open), housing the counselling training provision and vocational /professional massage diplomas. The space has been specifically designed for the needs for the curriculum areas.○ Refurbishment/refresh of music classrooms - 2nd floor: Improved lighting and technology in the classrooms. Opened in the summer and fully programmed.○ Ground floor next to the café (formerly G01) has been converted into a small lecture theatre (Cultureplex). This is a fit for purpose space for lecture type courses, film studies and events. The space will be used primarily by the humanities team.○ City Lit was able to improve the college facilities as a result of receiving (full) funding from the Greater London Authority.• Development of online course delivery: During the pandemic, online learning was developed as an emergency measure for teaching and to ensure that students could continue to access courses. This was supported by Darren and Ross, who ensured that the systems and access for students continually improved. The Quality team ensured that there was a robust training programme in place for tutors and that they were well supported and felt comfortable
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with online/remote delivery.

- **Skills and employability:** Ensuring that the college responds appropriately to government priorities and policy, which is becoming more focussed on skills outcomes for students. City Lit has access to fee income and £8 million of funding from government. The college must ensure that there is a focus on the priorities that are part of the funding.
- **College finances:** Still challenging as the pandemic has had a significant impact on the college to earn fee income. Great efforts by staff have ensured that we have continued to deliver the curriculum. The financial challenges are likely to continue for the next 2-3 years. The college has positive and supportive relationship with the bank.
- **FE commissioner visit:** The first visit was in November 2020, a follow up in June 2021 and will be returning in January 2022. Visits are linked to the financial health of the college and to:
 - Check in on financial position/progress of the college
 - Review quality metrics around student achievement
 - Provide support and routinely return to check on progress against recommendations made.
- Both visits were supported by a student focus group. The student panel will be asked whether they wish to participate in the focus group for the January 2022 visit.
- **Ofsted inspection:** The college is back in scope for an Ofsted inspection as of w/c 13 December. Ofsted had to pause routine inspections throughout the pandemic, they have a backlog. Last inspection was in 2016 under the old framework. The guidance in the City Lit would not be left any longer than a year after coming back into scope and will be inspected by the end of 2022. Amanda Spellman – Chief Inspector of Ofsted has committed to all colleges and schools to having a full inspection by the end of 2025. WM will be the college nominee/lead for the upcoming inspection.
- **City Lit Awards:** The City Lit awards are upcoming. If interested in nominating tutors, students, projects, information can be found on the home page of website. Nominations close at end of December. People will be updated once the shortlisting and selection process has been completed.

2.0 KK **Self-assessment meetings:** KK thanked all who participated in the self-assessment meetings which take place yearly in

		<p>October/November. Meetings are held with each department to reflect on the past year, discuss strengths and areas for improvement, based on departments write their quality improvement plan (QIP) for the following year. Student perspective is a valuable part of the process.</p>
3.0	KK/ WM	<p>Panel members feedback/questions:</p> <p>Q: Is there an update regarding LBS research? Has the research concluded and did the findings feed into plans going forward?</p> <p>WM: The recommendations from the LBS research was not of the same quality as produced in previous years. There were no new insights provided. The college is seeking alternative help regarding widening /exploring opportunities for online learning. This term, there has been a dip in the number of students who wish to learn online, possibly due to Zoom fatigue. Other opportunities outside of learning have also had an impact (people can go on holiday, theatres etc). Looking to the future, now that students have had a positive experience with online learning, they wish to retain it as an option. In the short term, the focus remains on those courses where there is quality and traction and particularly on areas that have seen a dip in interest this term. Lots of competitive analysis is being undertaken and this will form part of the wider college strategy update. Once completed, WM will feed back to the panel.</p> <p>Feedback: Found the self-assessment meeting enjoyable and gave rise to a greater appreciation for the work that takes place behind the scenes. Gained a greater understanding of those who designed the programme and core activities. Gained an insight into the challenges faced by certain departments and the work undertaken to resolve them. Would encourage others to participate/contribute if given the opportunity to do so.</p> <p>Feedback: It would be useful to have student input earlier in the self-assessment process. The meeting was not a rubber stamping exercise as a lot was discussed and debated, but joining in at the end of the process was difficult.</p> <p>KK suggested sending the students who would be involved a document to help them prepare and contribute so that</p>

		<p>managers could take their comments on board earlier in the discussions.</p> <p>David Bowman to email thoughts on the process to KK.</p> <p>Q: Do the offers which are released from time to time help with students signing up to online courses? WM – Marketing are doing some analysis of the cyber weekend and comparing previous years to see if there is any difference in face to face and online enrolments and who is using the offer. It can prove difficult to make like for like comparisons due to repeated lockdown cycles. We had to be cautious about on site provision due to Covid.</p> <p>Q: Is there a new credit control team? A number of students received an aggressive demand 2 days after course fees were due and accounts were suspended from the college; it was unsettling WM will take away and look into it with the Finance team.</p>
4.0	DJ	<p>KK – Ross and Darren are looking at how the long term online provision will look going forward</p> <p>DJ – The move from in person teaching to online was rapid due to the pandemic. New forms of technology were adopted. There will be an element on online learning going forward. There is the possibility that students are getting Zoom fatigue. The college would like to gather the panels personal experiences over the past 2 years – the effectiveness of the learning, has it worked, frustrations, compare and contrast to in person learning? The focus is currently on the virtual learning environment (VLE) i.e. Zoom which is used for all online classes and Google Classroom.</p> <p>Panel exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise in 3 words your experience with the VLE and why • What has worked, what hasn't worked; frustrations, smooth process?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can be improved? • Is it a straightforward process to obtain information from the help centre? • What do you think the college should be focussing on to make the experience better? <p>Feedback collected via Google Docs</p>
5.0	DJ RH	<p>Online community</p> <p>How we can continue to support students and maintain the sense of community whilst learning online.</p> <p>DJ: When attending an in person course, students' conversations/community aspect is not limited to others on their course. Interactions with others take place in the corridors or café. There are limits to what can be done online. The goal is to give students the opportunity to create an online community, e.g. Student Zoom sessions. How do we bring students into the community spirit that City Lit has been built on?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could the online community be? • Is it possible to build a community online? • What would you hope for? • How can in person courses be enhanced by the online format? A digital as well as in person community. <p>Panel feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual marketplace for hobbies, students' interests. For 15 – 20 minutes, students could join rooms according to their interests and talk to (students) from other universities. This worked well <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Q: KK was this a one off event between universities? ○ A: It was a one off event but could be adapted in different ways (virtual lunch time). When you have a large

number of people on Zoom, difficult to interact. In different rooms, this is easier

- Interacting with other students studying similar courses at different levels – e.g. music. Could talk about concerts, events. Would be more likely to join if there is a link to what the student is studying.
- Building an online community could be difficult. Can feel transactional as the buzz and mixing with fellow student is missing. Liked the idea of meet ups if they are department led. It is isolating working through Zoom. Communicating via Teams is not the same. Meet ups based around interests would work well.
- Meeting in college spaces (the café, 4th floor garden, student lounges) could be replicated; a virtual online café 12 – 1.
 - DJ – There is technology that can deliver that (the Metaverse), however it could be costly.
- Don't have the time for the social aspect of an online community due to family and work commitments. Love City Lit online as it has allowed me to do courses that otherwise wouldn't have access to. The small amount of interaction online is enough – some tutors are better than others in encouraging that (break out rooms). Would not have a need for the online social side.
 - RH: An example from previous discussions was the use of Google Stream and how the homework/course content set by the tutor was being mixed with the social chat taking place between classes. It's to what extent technology can separate those two things so that they are both enhanced
 - KK There are plenty of students who are busy and others for whom coming in and having a coffee before/after is an important part of their social life. It is beneficial to be able to offer students options.
- Just before the tutor arrives in Zoom, students take the opportunity to chat. The Zoom could start 15 minutes earlier for social interaction.
 - KK to DJ: Is it possible for students to put themselves into their own breakout rooms if they join earlier? DJ – Currently not, but it is something that could be explored.
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KK: Any further thoughts, email KK. Would like to thank those for whom this is the last student panel: David, Katherine, Christopher and Regina.

6.0 KK AOB

Q: Is city lit marketing far and wide. Having people from different parts of the world is enriching.

KK: Marketing have expanded outside of the London area, not sure about internationally. The dip could be because of hybrid working and it is difficult to commit to a whole term course.

Suggestion: Lunchtime 1 hour courses for people who are working

Early bird courses attract a wide range of people

Uncertainty around work patterns meant that didn't book onto a course because of uncertainty around work situation (working from home or office).

Online Zoom concerts are attended by students from abroad without specific promotion in those countries. A change to the website to advertise that online courses are open to people all over the world may be helpful.

New student panel members

Currently advertising for new student panel members to start in the new calendar year. In the help centre get in touch/get involved section there is a student panel page with an application form. Informal interviews will be taking place at the end of January/beginning of February.
