**UCET strategy, membership, governance and organisational structure review**

**Discussion paper for UCET forums and committees**

Background & introduction

This paper identifies options for the review of the UCET strategy, governance, financial and organisational structures. This is in the context of the outcome of the DfE review of the ITE market review which will lead to the de-accreditation of 13 HEI ITE providers from 2024/24, or some 15% of the UCET membership, excluding Scotland[[1]](#footnote-1). It should however be noted that many and in all likelihood most of the non-accredited HEIs will continue to be engaged with teacher education in some form.

Review process

The current review will cover:

* Governance and membership of UCET.
* The current UCET strategy and ways of working.
* UCET’s organisational structure and financial basis.

The intention would be for any new structures and strategy – should they be required – to be in place by September 2024, with proposals put to the membership and other stakeholders by Spring 2024. The intention of the proposals in this paper is to: reaffirm UCET’s commitment to teacher education and education research in the university sector; strengthen the influence of the wider membership by enhancing the role of the Management Forum by reconstituting it as the ‘UCET Assembly’; streamlining the decision making process by reducing slightly to size of the Executive Committee (to make it closer to the optimum size); and continuing to work in close collaboration with partner organisations.

UCET membership & governance

UCET membership is open to higher-education institutions across the UK who are engaged in teacher education and/or education research, and for the last decade to other organisations who work in partnership with HEIs in the delivery of award-bearing teacher education programmes. The extension of membership eligibility in 2012 was intended, in the context of the expansion of the SCITT and non-HE sector, as a way to encourage non-HEIs to deliver award-bearing ITE in partnership with universities rather than QTS only programmes without an HEI input. Membership of such groups is extremely limited, and has never exceeded 3-4[[2]](#footnote-2), although it does include Teach First. It could, under current rules, also give the scope to the NIOT to join UCET, if they either award their own PGCEs or work with an HEI that validates NIOT awards.

Organisations that work in partnership with HEIs could be argued to have representation on UCET through those HEIs. Added to this the potential sensitivities of the NIOT, it is recommended that membership of UCET be in future restricted to organisations with full university status only.

The supreme decision taking body for UCET is the Executive Committee, the membership of which is as follows:

* The Chair, Chair Elect[[3]](#footnote-3), Vice-Chair and Treasurer (3-4)
* The chairs of UCET forums and committees, who are elected by the members of those forums and committees, who in turn are selected by their member institutions (8). These are:
  + Management Forum (typically the heads of education departments or their representatives)
  + CPD
  + ITE secondary
  + ITE primary & early years
  + Post-16
  + Research & International
  + UCET Northern Ireland
  + USCET Cymru[[4]](#footnote-4)
* Up to three representatives of schools and colleges, selected by members of the School Reference Group. The SRG was established in 2014, in the context of the school-led policy agenda, to allow a school perspective to inform UCET discussions and to add legitimacy to UCET statements about the role of schools in teacher education (3).
* Up to four members directly elected by the UCET Council (4).
* Up to five members co-opted by other members of the Executive Committee (5).

Representatives of NASBTT and the Chartered College also attend Executive Committee meetings as observers, and JNR attends meetings of the NASBTT Board as part of a reciprocal arrangement. The intention is to make sure that UCET can take account of the perspective of these organisations when taking decisions. The working relationship with NASBTT has been particularly effective in presenting a common front to DfE and others. This however has not been dependent on cross-representation on governing bodies.

Members of the Executive Committee are trustees of UCET and as such are legally obliged to act in the interests of UCET as an organisation, over and above the interests of their employing institutions or any other groups or organisations they are part of. Decisions taken by the Executive should reflect the interests and priorities of the broad range of the membership and not any one type of provider. Factional interests have not been, and must not be, a feature of UCET governance.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NVCO) recommends the charity boards should comprise no fewer than 5 and no more than 12 members. With up to 24 members, the UCET Executive is on the large side, and we do need to ensure appropriate representation (including from different types of member institution, e.g. pre and post 1992s).

The UCET Constitution refers to a body called the ‘UCET Council’, which comprises one representative from each UCET member organisation. Its role is simply to elect the ‘elected members’ of the UCET Executive and be invited to approve the annual report & accounts each year. Its membership is the same as for Management Forum plus the Executive Committee.

The role of the Management Forum is technically the same as for other UCET fora and committees, namely to discuss policy and operational issues that fall within its remit. However, as it comprises the senior education department staff from within UCET member institutions, its remit is inevitably broader than other forums and committees. Its deliberations should, because of its membership, perhaps also feed more directly into Executive Committee discussions and its formal status should be enhanced.

Most UCET meetings have, since Covid, taken place via Zoom. This has worked well, with increased attendance and significant cost savings. When polled, most forums chose to continue to meet on-line, although NI committee meets face to face, and MF, R&I forum and USCET Cymru have all suggested having one face to face meeting each year. As a trustee board, the Executive might however benefit from at least some face to face meetings. To facilitate between-meeting discussions, it has also been suggested that email circulation lists (subject to GDPR compliance) be established to allow forum and committee members engage in discussions and ask questions outside the formal meeting structures.

**In the light of the above, it is recommended that:**

* **UCET’s members should be organisations with full university status involved in teacher education and education research.**
* **UCET will continue to support of its member institutions on an equal footing, regardless of type of institution (e.g. accredited or non-accredited) or geographical area.**
* **The number of directly elected places on the UCET Executive Committee be reduced from 4 to 2.**
* **The number of co-opted places on the UCET Executive be reduced from a maximum of 5 to a maximum of 3.**
* **The UCET Management Forum should be reconstituted as the ‘UCET Assembly’, and should, amongst other things, identify issues for discussion at the UCET Executive Committee.**
* **The UCET School Reference Group should have representatives on the UCET Assembly, rather than on the Executive Committee.**
* **UCET should continue to work closely with partner organisations such as the Chartered College and NASBTT, who should have observer status on the UCET Assembly rather than on the Executive Committee.**
* **Meetings of the Executive Committee will take place at least once each term, with additional meetings called when necessary. At least one face to face meeting will take place each year.**
* **E-mail circulation lists (subject to GDPR compliance) be established to allow forum and committee members to engage in discussions and ask questions outside the formal meeting structures.**

The above changes would result in the size of the Executive being reduced from 23/24 to 16/17, depending on whether a Chair Elect is in post.

UCET strategy

A copy of the existing UCET strategy for 2020-2025 has been included with meeting papers. Key aspects include:

* Vision statement: *‘All teachers are confident, competent and independent professionals able to draw upon and contextualise a shared base of professional knowledge built on high-quality research’*
* Mission statement: *‘To advocate for and support high quality teacher education by supporting our membership and working in professional collaborations with other organisations, drawing on relevant research and acting in accordance with the principles we believe should underpin effective teacher education’.*
* A strong focus on the characteristics that effective teacher education should develop in teachers as set out in the IBTE document.
* The importance of research-informed teacher education, and teacher education having a sound academic basis.
* UCET as an organisation working effectively and in collaboration with policy makers.

UCET’s broad functions are:

* Lobbying, campaigning, influencing and acting as the public face of the sector.
* Supporting and developing teacher education by providing members with forums to discuss and share ideas about effective teacher education and how to deal with practical and regulatory issues, including OfSTED/Estyn/ETI inspections.
* Giving advice on a one-to-one basis to member institutions.

Despite the upheavals the sector has experienced from both Covid and the Market Review, the current strategy appears to remain fit for purpose and flexible enough to encompass any changes in ways of working (e.g. with DfE and others) that we might consider appropriate. Specific references to the role of universities in teacher education were deliberately implied rather than stated explicitly in the strategy to make it clear that out focus is on the quality of teacher education rather than promoting the interests of a particular group. In the light of recent developments, and established practice in the international context, it might however be appropriate to now add something about the key role that universities have to make to teacher education, including that led by non-HEI organisations.

The way that UCET has operated during the last two years has been impacted by the Market Review, with a more aggressive stance being necessitated by the threat posed to our membership. Regular meetings do still take place with DfE, and UCET and NASBTT have both recently been asked for advice and support in relation to non-Market Review related activities. However, the relationship has changed and a degree of trust has been lost on both sides. Consideration must be given to our ongoing relationship. Collegiate working has in the past been effective, in regards for example the abolition of skills tests, the sector response to Covid and significant aspects of the Market Review itself. DfE has recently indicated that it wants to continue to use UCET and NASBTT as its main ways of communicating with the ITE sector.

It would not have been appropriate, or effective, to work hand in hand with DfE on a Market Review which was such a clear threat to our membership and a degree of misinformation on behalf of DfE. In regards OfSTED, relationships since the 2021 ‘research’ report into ITE and Covid and the adversarial approach they have taken to ITE inspections has led to the relationship breaking down entirely. These issues will have to be addressed. At present, the UCET approach might best be described as *‘peacefully if we may, forcibly if we must’.*

A key focus for UCET members in England in the lead-up to 2024/25 will be Stage 2 of the accreditation process. A group, currently chaired by Linda LaVelle, has been established to discuss how HEIs might be supported to continue to deliver ITE that is consistent with the findings of the IBTE report in the context of the new reality.

**It is recommended that:**

* **The IBTE report, subject to the outcome of the work of current work, should continue to underpin the UCET strategy and the current strategy remains in place until 2025 as previously planned.**
* **UCET should continue to engage constructively and collegiately with statutory bodies such as DfE, WG and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, while continuing also to speak out publicly and freely when deemed appropriate.**
* **The questions and issues submitted and raised by UCET with government departments and statutory bodies should be identified strategically and be focussed on key issues reflecting the interests of the membership as a whole. strategic way.**
* **UCET’s core activities should continue to include: lobbying, campaigning and influencing on behalf of the membership; facilitating networking and discussion between member institutions; and providing direct advice to individual member institutions.**

UCET organisation

Total staffing costs in 2021/22 were £276,000. The current staff have all been in post for between 5 -19 years and have provided good service. No immediate changes to staffing structures are proposed, although the roles of the Executive Director and the Policy Officer will be kept under review as the current situation develops.

All UCET staff have, since Covid, been home based, although in practice all other than the Executive Director worked at least partly from home. The UCET Office in Endsleigh Gardens, for which rent is no longer paid and a tenancy agreement does not exist, is currently in abeyance and other than JNR collecting post about once a month is not used.

Working from home has proved effective, and in respect of JNR saved considerable time and money in respect of travel and accommodation. No downsides have been identified, although this is part is likely to be because all UCET staff know each other well, can be trusted to fulfil their obligations and are committed to UCET as an organisation. We should however ensure that health & safety risk assessments are carried out (potentially through self-assessment) and that staff are provided with all of the equipment and materials they need. Consideration might also be given to making financial contributions towards a proportion of costs (broadband, mobile-phone, energy etc) staff incur as a result of their working from home for UCET.

**It is recommended that:**

* **No immediate changes to staffing are made. The future roles of the Executive Director and the Policy Officer will however be kept under review.**
* **That homeworking risk assessments be carried out for each member of staff, and that an audit be carried out to ensure that they are provided with the equipment and materials they require.**
* **That a review be carried out the identify the costs, if any, that UCET staff incur while working for UCET and how these might be reimbursed.**

JNR

March 2023

**Annex: Summary of recommendations**

Summary of recommendations

*(a): Governance*

* UCET’s members should be organisations with full university status involved in teacher education and education research.
* UCET will continue to support of its member institutions on an equal footing, regardless of type of institution (e.g. accredited or non-accredited) or geographical area.
* The number of directly elected places on the UCET Executive Committee be reduced from 4 to 2.
* The number of co-opted places on the UCET Executive be reduced from a maximum of 5 to a maximum of 3.
* The UCET Management Forum should be reconstituted as the ‘UCET Assembly’, and should, amongst other things, identify issues for discussion at the UCET Executive Committee.
* The UCET School Reference Group should have two representatives on the UCET Assembly, rather than on the Executive Committee.
* UCET should continue to work closely with partner organisations such as the Chartered College and NASBTT, who should have observer status on the UCET Assembly rather than on the Executive Committee.

*(b): UCET strategy*

* The IBTE report, subject to the outcome of the work of current work, should continue to underpin the UCET strategy and the current strategy remains in place until 2025 as previously planned.
* UCET should continue to engage constructively and collegiately with statutory bodies such as DfE, WG and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, while continuing also to speak out publicly and freely when deemed appropriate.
* The questions and issues submitted and raised by UCET with government departments and statutory bodies should be identified strategically and be focussed on key issues reflecting the interests of the membership as a whole. strategic way.
* UCET’s core activities should continue to include: lobbying, campaigning and influencing on behalf of the membership; facilitating networking and discussion between member institutions; and providing direct advice to individual member institutions.

*(c): Ways of working*

* No immediate changes to staffing are made. The future roles of the Executive Director and the Policy Officer will however be kept under review.
* That homeworking risk assessments be carried out for each member of staff, and that an audit be carried out to ensure that they are provided with the equipment and materials they require.
* That a review be carried out the identify the costs, if any, that UCET staff incur while working for UCET and how these might be reimbursed.

1. Scottish member institutions pay only a nominal fee and UCET is not active there, with UCET type functions carried out by the Scottish Deans of Education Group. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Other than Bradford College, which is a long standing UCET member and is considered for these purposes as being part of the HE sector. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. When relevant [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. USCET Cymru’s membership also includes schools through the inclusion of consortia representatives. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)