

1. Provider context

The UK government is encouraging alternative providers of higher education (HE) in the belief that new and specialist providers will result in greater choice and value for students. University Centre Quayside (UCQ) is a market disrupting challenger to traditional HE. Established in 1993 and incorporated in 1997, UCQ is a privately owned, financially robust, independent, boutique provider of further and higher education with over 30 staff and many years' experience in delivering work-based learning provision. It is increasingly establishing a strong reputation for a variety of high-quality programmes within the local community. UCQ is a registered Higher Education Provider (HEP) with the Office for Students (OfS), an Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) contract holder, a Combined Authority devolved adult skills budget holder and a registered provider of apprenticeship training. UCQ has held a contract with the ESFA to deliver degree apprenticeships since 1st August 2016 and has delivered this provision via a validation arrangement with The Open University (OU) since 1st December 2016. This arrangement was revalidated in December 2021 for a further five years due to the excellent student experience and positive impact across the sector.

UCQ's vision is to be a leading provider of further and higher education in England. Its mission is to enable all students, staff and organisations with whom we work to achieve their potential. UCQ's 5-year Strategic Planⁱ was reviewed in 2018 and collectively updated to more suitably reflect the changes that were occurring as a result of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and further alignment to the needs of its growing body of staff and students. The Plan has been extended to seven years (to 2025) following the impact of COVID-19. UCQ is committed to achieving five strategic goals to fulfil its vision:

- Excellence in teaching learning and assessment
- Excellence in partnership and community engagement
- Sustainable financial independence
- Achieve DAP and full university title and be regarded as a leading provider of work-based higher education in England
- Be recognised as an excellent place to work

UCQ's organisational structureⁱⁱ has been designed as an enabler to achieving the aims of the Strategic Plan. The structure is designed in a way that will allow for future company growth whilst still ensuring the key functions (teaching, learning, assessment, research, quality assurance, management and administration) can operate in the most effective and efficient way, with an embedded culture of continuous improvement and enhancement of the student experience. The organisation is governed by the Academic Council to deliver two primary functions: high quality further (FE) and higher education (HE) provision. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) take operational responsibility for organising, managing and delivering both functions of UCQ, including delivering its Strategic Plan in adherence with the organisation's Core Valuesⁱⁱⁱ. Supported by a cross-functional Operational Team, the FE and HE Programme Teams include subject specialists and dedicated delivery staff. Quality assurance and standardisation activities occur separately, but within the administrative oversight of the SLT.

As part of its higher education provision, UCQ specialises in, and presently only delivers the BA (Hons) Professional Management as part of the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA). This is an undergraduate apprenticeship and as such is considered an optional course under the TEF regulatory advice.

Of the 34 permanent staff at UCQ, eleven are dedicated HE staff, and a further six divide their time between FE and HE. UCQ also has two visiting professors working in HE and employs ten associates across the provision to ensure external expertise. There are currently 163 degree apprenticeship students at UCQ and, as such, participation in TEF is voluntary.

Working with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), employers and educators, UCQ was a participant on the management Trailblazer standards development groups and one of the first organisations to deliver the CMDA Trailblazer. When the CMI and Serco started Trailblazer apprenticeship standard development groups, including the CMDA Trailblazer, UCQ (formerly Nimis, trading as Quayside School of Higher Education), was asked to join the provider group. This provided UCQ the opportunity to make an active contribution to strategic decisions within the Trailblazers. UCQ have maintained working links with the CMI and with several of the Trailblazer deliverers and share examples of what works well, including block delivery, the importance of Professional Development Assessors (PDAs), creative ways to undertake work-based assessment and using assessment to support learning, which has been a useful approach to sharing good practice and improving the overall quality of delivery nationally. UCQ's involvement has been to advise and influence as an Independent Training Provider (ITP) delivering both FE and HE, and it was clear the CMI took on board suggestions, updating the Standards accordingly.

UCQ delivers the Level 6 CMDA to levy and non-levy paying employers across England. The revalidation in December 2021 was for the BA (Hons) in Professional Management, both as part of the CMDA, and as a standalone degree programme. However, UCQ do not yet have any students on programme studying outside of the apprenticeship. UCQ's BA (Hons) in Professional Management has been specifically designed to facilitate flexible, contextualised delivery with experiential learning. UCQ is employer and learner responsive, showing flexibility in delivery scheduling, location and course start dates. UCQ's commitment to flexible delivery has grown over the previous 5 years with further investment in the remote delivery model, initially in response to COVID-19 restrictions. Prior to the COVID-19 disruptions, UCQ's taught sessions were held either at a UCQ location in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds or Newcastle, or at a site to suit a particular cohort or employer, for example, Cornwall or Bradford. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital solutions, and student and staff surveys overwhelmingly support an ongoing digital or hybrid solution to delivery. Hence UCQ has listened to the needs of its stakeholders and adapted accordingly.

UCQ has never sub-contracted any of its HE or FE provision and has no intention to do so; maintaining UCQ's reputation and the high quality of provision is of utmost importance. Since 2011, UCQ has successfully operated as a sub-contractor on FE provision via several North East based colleges, local authorities and private training providers. UCQ's head office is in Newcastle and FE provision is solely delivered in-region.

UCQ do not exercise programme admissions based on UCAS points, and instead considers the job role and experience of the applicant, in conjunction with their employer. The organisation does not use recruitment agencies to recruit students and believes recruitment efforts should encompass all types of learners from all types of backgrounds; recruitment should not be restricted to those who have chosen a traditional academic route into HE. UCQ believe giving equal consideration to knowledge, skills and behaviours is the most effective and inclusive way of assessing students, and of the importance of reflective practice in the development of HE work-based learning students. The organisation works collaboratively with employers to develop and implement effective engagement

campaigns as part of the CMDA recruitment process. Ultimately, the purpose of these campaigns is to raise the profile of the CMDA programme and generate applications from prospective students. In addition to prospective students, engagement campaigns also address other key stakeholders within the employer organisation, including the leadership team, training and development and line managers, to ensure they have a clear understanding of the benefits the CMDA programme offers the organisation. UCQ use a collection of information to form a detailed and coherent assessment of an individual's experience and abilities. Applicants undertake initial assessments in both English and maths and other evidence of suitability is collected through professional discussion of career aspirations, potential barriers to learning, personal behaviours and effectiveness, previous qualifications and achievements, job role and assessment of recognition of prior learning (RPL). Only students who meet the entry requirements of the programme are admitted.

UCQ has not received any student or staff complaints to date. Students are working, professional adults, existing and developing managers; as such they tend to be quick to provide feedback and to raise any concerns which enables UCQ to take swift action before concerns escalate.

Students at UCQ have chosen to contribute their views on the quality of their experience and outcomes via a separate student submission. third-year students, and second year student, led on this submission, in collaboration with the wider student body.

2. Student experience

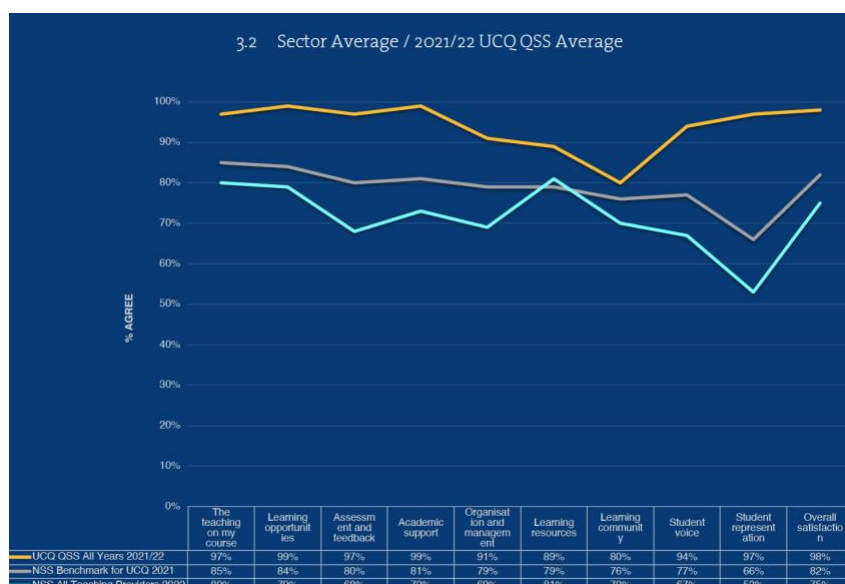
UCQ encourages positive and inclusive opportunities for students and employers to provide feedback during their time on programme. This feedback is used to assess the effectiveness of the learning and teaching provision and inform quality assurance processes. UCQ's annual student satisfaction survey, the QSS, mirrors the National Student Survey (NSS) and is circulated to all students across all stages of the programme.

In 2021, third year UCQ students took part in the NSS for the first time. This first NSS collection^{iv} for UCQ gathered 10 out of 13 responses (77%). Due to small cohort numbers, the second collection in 2022 did not achieve enough responses for results to be published internally or externally, or for a 2022 benchmark to be provided. In comparison, the 2021/22 QSS^v collected a response rate of 52% (64/124 live students) across all levels of the programme. As such, the QSS results have been used as a comparison against the NSS 2021 benchmark and overall NSS 2022 English teaching provider sector average.

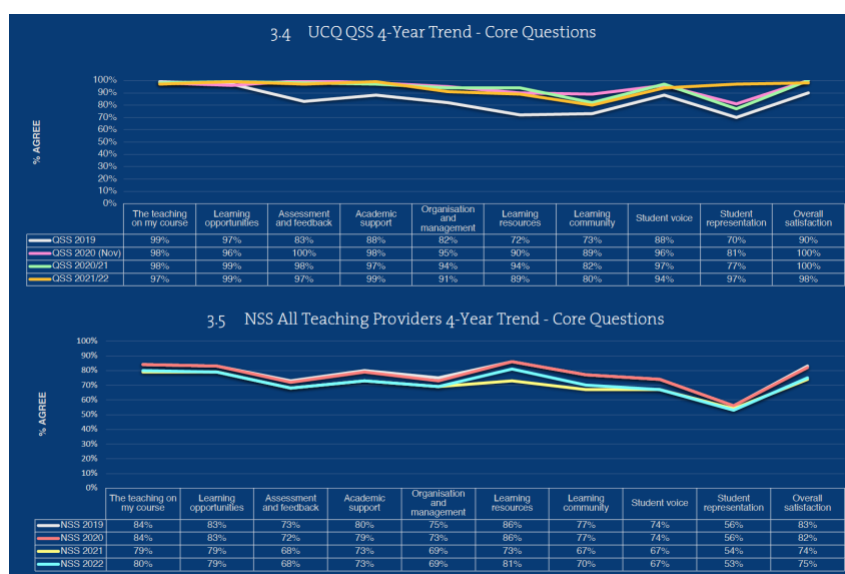
Feedback on the student experience is also collected through induction surveys, individual module questionnaires and progress reviews. Regular progress reviews undertaken between the Employer Mentor, student and their PDA provide an individualised opportunity for reflection and feedback on all aspects of the programme. Engagement with the student body is also undertaken through UCQ's committee structure; the Staff/Student Liaison Committee and Academic Council provide regular opportunity for this. Valuable insights are sourced from students, employers and other stakeholders to help strengthen course content and design.

Academic experience and assessment

The 2021/22 QSS collected exceptionally positive results, clearly showing UCQ continue to add value to delivery. This year, 25/26 core questions and all 10 sections on average have exceeded both the 2021 OfS/NSS organisational benchmark and 2022 NSS English teaching provider sector average (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.7). As the QSS is open to students in all stages of study, some students felt unable to answer some questions given their short time on the programme. Where this has occurred only those who felt able to respond were included in the data calculations.



The QSS 4-year trend shows a consistent and dedicated approach to improvement from 2018 to 2020 where satisfaction from 2020/21 to 2021/22 has remained high, with little deterioration, particularly given the impact of Covid. This same approach to improvement is not evident across the NSS sector average 4-year trend, with little to no improvement from 2018 to 2022 (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.15).



The 2021/22 QSS overall satisfaction with the quality of the course (Q27) remains consistently high at 98%. This is 16 percentage points above the 2021 NSS benchmark and 23 points above the 2022 average for all English teaching providers.

Student satisfaction across levels 4, 5 and 6 on the teaching quality of the BA (Hons) Professional Management was exceptionally high at 97%. This is 12 percentage points higher than the 2021 benchmark (85%) and 17 points higher than the sector average (80%). Satisfaction has remained stable since 2020/21, dropping by only 1 percentage point in 2021/22. Throughout 2021/22, UCQ continued to deliver remotely through an online hybrid learning model. All question statements within the teaching section of the QSS achieved 95% or higher satisfaction.

The learning opportunities section of the QSS scored an average satisfaction rating of 99%, exceeding the 2021 benchmark (84%) by 15 percentage points and overall sector average (79%) by 20. There has been no change since the 2020/21 QSS. UCQ are very pleased with this result and will continue to deliver a programme that enables students to apply what they have learnt, explore concepts in depth and bring information together.

The assessment and feedback section scored an average satisfaction of 97%; 17 points higher than the 2021 benchmark (80%) and 29 points higher than the overall sector average (68%). Satisfaction has remained stable since 2020/21, dropping by only 1 percentage point in 2021/22. This continues to be a significant achievement for the HE Programme Team, for which they are commended on their standardised, transparent and timely approach to assessment and feedback throughout 2021/22. Notably, 100% of students agreed or strongly agreed with Q9 *“Marking and assessment has been fair”*.

Academic and professional staff are highly skilled and supported in meeting the learning and support needs of students, with sufficient academic, professional and pedagogic knowledge and skills^{vi}. This is ensured through ongoing CPD, appraisal activities^{vii} and an effective committee structure that allows for thoughtful discussion, peer and managerial support and expertise from a diverse range of external and independent expertise. During the October 2019 Quality and Standards Review^{viii}, QAA found *“The review team formed the view that academic staff are suitably qualified and experienced to perform their roles effectively in the delivery of UCQ’s programme”* and *“UCQ has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because its approach to supporting staff is credible, robust and evidence based. The OU, as the awarding body, has positive views about the sufficiency, qualifications and skills of UCQ’s staff, and students consider staff to be sufficiently skilled and qualified to deliver a high-quality academic experience. Academic staff are suitably qualified and experienced to perform their roles effectively and observations of teaching and learning show that academic staff deliver a high-quality learning experience”* (QAA Quality and Standards Review Report, pp. 39-40).

Observations of Learning, Teaching, and Assessment (OLTA) were introduced in October 2019. Based on the OFSTED Education and Inspector Framework (EIF) they incorporated a clearer focus on learner work scrutiny and feedback. The quality assurance of delivery was a key driver for OLTA and to identify improvements and share of good practice. To date, in 2022/23, 100% of lessons observed have been graded Good or Outstanding. These observations also allow the observer to gather feedback from students. The table below shows a summary of grades, as January 2023.

Academic Year	Grade			
	1	2	3	4
2022-23	50%	50%	0%	0%
2021-22	50%	50%	0%	0%
2020-21*				
2019-20	0%	100%	0%	0%
Total	40%	60%	0%	0%

* During this year developmental ungraded observations were undertaken to support the move to hybrid learning model

UCQ provide an inclusive and engaging professional learning environment to develop subject specific and transferable skills. The development of professional practice is embedded throughout the curriculum; practical work-based learning assessment is included in all modules. Twelve-weekly tripartite reviews are undertaken between the UCQ PDA, student and Employer Mentor to facilitate the informing of student learning through professional practice activities. The requirements of the CMI are also considered. These professional reviews are uploaded to e-portfolio platform Ecordia for the student to refer to, as needed. During the December 2021 full inspection^{ix}, Ofsted found *“learners and apprentices benefit from a high standard of careers advice that broadens their horizons and develops their confidence. This helps a large proportion to secure new jobs, promotions or increased responsibilities at work”, “careful curriculum planning ensures that most learners and apprentices make good progress on their course and are well prepared for work” and “assessors help apprentices to reflect on what they have learned so that they can apply useful new approaches and techniques to their own workplaces”* (Ofsted Full Inspection Report, pp. 2-3). Module Leads and PDAs have a sound understanding and current knowledge of their subject area, with excellent vocational experience that is used to support students to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours. During the UCQ 2021/22 Employer/Employer Mentor Survey where a 45% response rate was achieved (69/153), 100% of respondents agreed that the training delivered was up to date and reflective of current practices in their industry. Furthermore, 100% of Employers/Employer Mentors agreed that the training delivered has effectively assessed their employees’ skills, knowledge and behaviours, both at the start and throughout the programme (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.37).

Staff communicate with enthusiasm and draw upon scholarship, reflection and professional practice to facilitate their delivery and strengthen linking theory to practice for students. By example, the Academic Programme Lead is an active researcher (Associate Editor of the Journal of Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning) and students benefit greatly from this insight as it provides a focus on work-based learning and development. Academic staff use a variety of techniques such as experiential learning, scaffolding, Socratic questioning, co-operative and peer assisted learning and group activities to support opportunities for learning, recognising the value of interpretation, analysis and synthesis underpinned by reflective practice. UCQ’s annual HE development day, allows discussion, sharing of good practice and scholarly activity and implementation of curriculum improvements.

During the full inspection in December 2021, Ofsted found that *“Leaders and managers provide very effective support for UCQ’s well-qualified and experienced teachers and assessors” and “learners benefit from staff’s expertise and contagious enthusiasm, which motivates them to do their best”* (Ofsted Full Inspection Report, p. 3). During the Quality and Standards Review in October 2019, QAA found *“Observations of teaching and learning seen by the review team had clear objectives,*

were well planned and organised, well delivered with appropriate content, and showed effective use of resources and that students were engaged” (QAA Quality and Standards Review Report, p.40).

Social interactions between students and staff are premised on a foundation of mutual respect, openness and information sharing. Ofsted found *“teachers ensure a respectful atmosphere in classes. Apprentices learn about appropriate professional conventions such as the Chatham House Rule. They feel valued and safe in expressing a range of well-informed opinions. For example, they discuss sensitive topics such as conflict management, in depth and learn from the experience of their peers”* (Ofsted Full Inspection Report, p.4).

One student commented *“Lecturers are knowledgeable in their subjects, but also show a passion for the course and UCQ as an institution. It is very clear they want students to succeed, and they go beyond what I’ve seen from other institutions in supporting students. They are intelligent, approachable and understanding. I’ll be disappointed if future qualifications through my employer are not from UCQ (which sadly wasn’t chosen by my employer for the level 7. I’ll be asking our apprenticeship team to reconsider this based on the positive experience I have had with UCQ).”* (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.26)

Staff play a vital role in enhancing student academic, personal and professional development through an effective dialogue of formal and informal feedback. Students are empowered to reflect on feedback they have received from staff, and their colleagues, to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours through regular personal development planning opportunities. Students also undertake a Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours Skill Scan^x at induction and at periodic points throughout the programme, including at the end of year one, year two, year three and as part of their End Point Assessment (EPA) gateway review. This tool allows the student to conduct a self-assessment against their own knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to meet the requirements of the programme. UCQ continue to strengthen the admissions process and have introduced an additional competence diagnostic assessment to further drill into student starting points, assisting in the development of an increasingly robust Individual Curriculum Plan^{xi}.

Every student receives relevant, constructive and timely feedback^{xii} to enable reflection on learning and provide feedforward and developmental recommendations. The HE Programme Team have worked hard to improve the transparency of feedback over recent years, with the layout of the reports regularly reviewed for opportunities to improve functionality and effectiveness for both staff and students. Following the recent implementation of Turnitin, feedback is now provided to students through this platform. Students can monitor their own progress via the Ecordia ePortfolio platform. Within Ecordia, students map their own progress against the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the CMDA Standard and can see percentage progress against planned for their CMDA programme and each year of their degree. They are supported in this task by their PDA.

During the 2021/22 QSS, 97% of students agreed the feedback on their work had been timely, 97% agreed the criteria used in marking had been clear in advance, 100% agreed marking and assessment has been fair and 95% agreed the feedback they have received about their work has been helpful (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.7).

Teaching and assessment in the classroom is good with currently 60% of sessions observed by the UCQ Learning Reviews Team^{xiii} graded as ‘good’ and 40% graded as ‘outstanding’. The learning reviews grading metric mirrors the Education Inspection Framework used by Ofsted. It was observed

that Module Leads are passionate about the subjects they teach and work hard to build very good rapport with students. This coupled with effective delivery and assessment strategies and a good balance of Module Lead input with student-led activities, ensures students are actively engaged, interested and motivated to learn. There is effective targeted questioning to stretch students in most sessions and good use of peer support, enabling students to learn from the experiences of their peers. During the 2021/22 QSS, 98% of students agreed staff were good at explaining things, 95% agreed staff have made the subject interesting, 98% agreed the course is intellectually stimulating and 98% agreed their course has challenged them to achieve their best work (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.7). Students continue to be challenged to achieve beyond the threshold, which is evident in module grade profiles and feedback from QAA during the Quality and Standards Review in 2019.

Following learning reviews, staff receive a report identifying strengths and areas for development, and a one-to-one feedback session encourages dialogue evaluating the learning, teaching and assessment practices observed. All learning reviews feed into an individual staff improvement plan which encourages reflection on areas for development highlighted (even within good learning sessions) and identify how they are evaluating and improving their practices over time.

Quality enhancement and standardisation exercises, covering both content and pedagogy, are embedded within: Programme Team meetings; Marking, Grading and Moderation and Curriculum Review Board meetings; and annual development days. These activities enable staff to reflect on their practice and consider further improvements. These opportunities for reflection are informed by student and employer feedback, both at modular and programme level, recommendations from the Board of Examiners where received, as well as feedback from the Learning Reviews Team.

Resources, support and student engagement

UCQ believe that student learning is best supported through the recruitment, progression and development of appropriately skilled and experienced staff, whom have an understanding and appreciation of the work-based learning paradigm. During the October 2019 Quality and Standards Review, QAA found *“UCQ has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because its approach to supporting staff is credible, robust and evidence-based”* (QAA Quality and Standards Review Report, p. 40). Staff are empowered through CPD, scholarly activity and through the curriculum itself, to explore the value of individual and collaborative learning where learning is carved from interpretation, analysis and synthesis. UCQ invests strongly in its staff. Reflective practice, particularly for work-based learning provision, forms an essential tool in which the efficacy of teaching and support can be changed and improved whilst retaining a practical focus. This process is informed by various data sources and performed at all levels within the organisation, from teaching staff to senior leaders. Reflective practice forms an innate instrument for inspiring change within UCQ and will continue to do so in the years to come.

Academic staff are supported through scholarly activity with a sufficient allocation of resources to cover the needs of both research and learning and teaching development. Professional development needs and activities are considered as part of workload planning exercises by the Senior Leadership Team. The Learning Reviews Team work closely with staff to support their development and sufficient administrative support enables teaching staff to effectively manage their workload along with their professional development arrangements. During the December 2021 full inspection, Ofsted found *“Leaders and managers provide very effective support for UCQ’s well-*

qualified and experienced teachers and assessors. They ensure that all staff have ample time and resources to develop their subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Staff are engaged in research, committed to their work and invested in their own professional development as a result of a supportive culture. Learners benefit from staff's expertise and contagious enthusiasm, which motivates them to do their best" (Ofsted Full Inspection Report, p.3).

Academic staff are encouraged and supported (financially and via coaching) to apply for professional accreditation through Advance HE which is aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education. UCQ aim to increase current accreditation by the academic team during 2022/23. As of December 2022, 53% of HE staff have achieved professional accreditation: 26% Fellow; 16% Senior Fellow; 11% Principal Fellow; and 32% currently working towards. The Programme Team undertake various activities to ensure compliance with regulatory bodies and to retain occupational and pedagogic competence. The programme delivery is directly impacted through the imparting of best practice knowledge, skills and behaviours from teaching staff. Staff are developed through regular CPD activities, team meetings, standardisation activities and learning reviews of learning, teaching, assessment and progress. The Academic Programme Lead and Vice Principal work to support and mentor the Module Leads and PDAs, enabling improvement skills and competency to the expected levels, including digital literacy as required. In addition, mentoring and coaching opportunities are available including teaching and assessment. The Programme Team are supported to engage with communities of practice, i.e. AUA, CMI, ILM, CIM, CIPD and provided time and resource to undertake qualifications and research. UCQ have supported members of operational staff to undertake UCQ's own BA (Hons) Professional Management programme which has seen staff benefitting from the same new knowledge, skills and behaviours as all other students, and feed into programme design using first-hand experience.

Following the 2021/22 UCQ Staff Survey^{xiv}, 100% of staff agreed they felt happy about the opportunities for personal growth and development offered to them by UCQ, 100% of staff felt UCQ offers a fair deal to its employees in terms of working conditions, 96% agreed the workload assigned to them by UCQ is reasonable and 100% agreed they are happy with the reward and recognition given to them at work (2021/22 Annual Staff Report, pp. 12-13). In October 2020, UCQ achieved Gold accreditation with Investors in People (IIP)^{xv}. Significantly, UCQ scored 852/900 for its overall benchmark. This result is well above the average industry benchmark for higher education of 704 and above the average IIP benchmark of 725. UCQ has been placed 79 out of 1888 organisations in the 0-49 bracket. Feedback received specifically from the HE department scored extremely well across all nine indicators of performance. UCQ received a Top 10 nomination by IIP for Employer of the Year 0-49 in 2021 (Investors in People Gold Report, 2020).

UCQ has effective academic support in place to enable students to achieve positive academic outcomes and pursue a rewarding career. Initial assessment is carried out prior to programme start to determine individual support needs. Additional support arrangements are recorded in the student's Individual Training Plan (ITPB) which incorporates their individualised curriculum plan. The Student and Mentor Handbooks support students to understand the learning and support resources available to them. One student commented "*It has been a great experience to be able to study for a degree at my age. The support and guidance offered by UCQ is outstanding and has made me want to do well in my course. Thanks everyone especially [PDA name].*" (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.26).

The Programme Team support an effective understanding of the individual and collective needs of the student body and use this information to signpost students to support mechanisms where required. Ongoing information, advice, guidance and pastoral care activities are provided to students through the PDAs and Employer Mentors. In October 2022, UCQ successfully completed a triennial revalidation to maintain Matrix accreditation^{xvi}. The Matrix Standard is a quality framework for organisations to assess and measure information, advice and guidance services which ultimately support individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals.

UCQ are focused on maximising student retention through key student processes, supported by the monitoring of key performance indicators. Pastoral support, as well as work-based portfolio development, is led by the PDA, ensuring students have one key point of contact and support throughout their entire apprenticeship programme, and supported by the HE Academic Support Tutor. In-depth progress reviews are undertaken every 8-12 weeks between the Employer Mentor, student and the PDA. These reviews provide an opportunity for reflection, action planning and feedback to ensure the student is getting the most out of their learning journey and can make as much progress as possible from their starting points. During Programme Revalidation^{xvii} in July 2021, The Open University found *“the Panel particularly admired UCQ’s inclusion of the Professional Development Assessors as integral members of the Programme Team. This was highlighted as a strength by the Senior Management Team and the team’s cohesiveness was clearly evidenced in the Programme Team meeting. The Panel commented that this was something they struggled with within their own institutions and commended this positive and effective academic collaboration”* (The Open University Programme Revalidation Report, p.15).

As a result of monitoring the effectiveness of advisory and support services, particularly for first year students, UCQ continue investing in the HE team and introduced the new role of HE Academic Support Tutor to provide support on academic writing, literature reviews, referencing, critical thinking, and effective presentation skills, as well as pastoral support for students aged 19-24 undertaking the programme as part of a management trainee programme. Students are ‘referred’ to this Tutor where they are signposted by Module Leads as requiring additional support with their academic skills. This role has been very well received by students receiving support. One student stated the tutor is *“invaluable, she makes things easy and simple to understand”* while another stated *“the workshops are really beneficial to learning and [the tutor] is very supportive and helpful”* (UCQ Compliments Spreadsheet^{xviii}, ref 58 and 47).

Counselling and welfare support is available to all students and these services are monitored by the Senior Leadership Team. Support arrangements are advertised on the Student Space website^{xix}. The support provided to students has been commended by the External Examiner in their reports^{xx} (10/01/2022 and 09/03/2022), particularly those dealing with personal circumstances and how they are supported to overcome challenges they face, allowing students to fully engage in their studies.

The learning community section of the QSS scored an average satisfaction of 80%; 4 percentage points higher than the 2021 NSS benchmark (76%) and 10 points higher than the 2022 NSS overall sector average (70%). Ensuring students continue to feel supported and an important part of the UCQ community remains a key priority. UCQ understand the value of collaborative learning amongst students and has reintroduced face-to-face inductions to support cohort identity and building connections amongst students from the start of their programme. A face-to-face learning fair is also planned for March 2023 for all existing students and alumni.

During the full inspection, Ofsted found *“Senior leaders and governors have developed a culture of high expectations. This is underpinned by effective oversight, systems and curriculum planning that ensure that rigorous academic standards are combined with frequent and effective application of knowledge and skills in the workplace. Staff and leaders support learners and apprentices to develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours that stand them in good stead for their next steps”* (Ofsted Full Inspection Report – December 2021, p.2).

The CMDA programme is delivered online through a hybrid delivery model. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital solutions, and student and staff surveys overwhelmingly support an ongoing digital or hybrid solution to delivery. UCQ is solely responsible for funding all online resources and infrastructure and have worked tirelessly since 2016 to improve the availability of online learning resources to students. These facilities are routinely evaluated and additional resources commissioned throughout the academic year to meet student need. UCQ continue to develop the virtual learning environment (VLE) and undertake systematic consultation with students and staff about the accessibility of these facilities and their effectiveness in catering for a wide range of students. In 2019, UCQ invested in the e-portfolio system Ecordia to support students throughout their work-based learning programme, allowing real-time capture and recording of evidence against their qualification. A transition from the previous virtual learning environment to Ecordia was undertaken following feedback from staff and students. Programme learning resources are available through Ecordia. In 2021/22, 97% of students agreed that the use of Ecordia supported their learning well (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.17).

As part of the CMDA programme, each student is granted membership with the CMI and the use of supplementary learning resources through the Management Direct portal. Management Direct enables students to learn through access to EBSCO eBooks and journals, briefings, problem solving tools, checklists and interactive scenarios to aid self-directed learning, self-assessment templates and best practice guides, relating to their professional practice.

In 2021/22 UCQ subscribed to eBook library Perlego. Initially the Senior Leadership Team planned this subscription for students in year two and three only, to encourage research initiative amongst first year students. However, following staff feedback, this resource has now been extended to all students. The Programme Team have advised Perlego effectively complements resources available via Management Direct. UCQ have also become an affiliate with Jisc with additional subscriptions being purchased and available to staff and students. During the full inspection, Ofsted found *“learners and apprentices are given the tools and techniques that they need to succeed in their learning. They benefit from the ready availability of high-quality resources at UCQ”* (Ofsted Full Inspection Report, p.2).

Overall, 89% of students were satisfied with the efficacy of student learning resources for 2021/22. This has dropped slightly from 2020/21 (94%), however remains above the 2021 NSS benchmark (79%) and 2022 NSS sector average (81%). Q18 *‘The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well’* has been removed from the QSS following the permanent move to online hybrid learning. Q19 *‘The online library resources (e.g. eBooks/Perlego) have supported my learning well’* achieved 86% satisfaction in 2021/22 and Q20 *‘I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. Teams/Ecordia) when I needed to’* achieved 92% (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.10).

During the October 2019 Quality and Standards Review, QAA found *“Students whom the team met confirmed that they consider that the resources are sufficient and appropriate to support their needs and provide them with a high-quality academic experience. Students highlighted the tools that allow UCQ to track and support their progress and to communicate with them. They also acknowledged the response of UCQ to resolve issues that they had raised, such as that of e-library resourcing. The review team concluded that students have generally positive views about facilities and learning resources”* (QAA Quality and Standards Review Report, p.43).

UCQ view student engagement as a critical aspect of the collegiate experience. Approaches to student engagement and partnership working are inclusive and remove barriers to participation. Student engagement is used to assess the effectiveness of the learning and teaching provision and inform quality assurance processes. This is done through feedback collected at induction, after each module, through regular progress reviews and annually via the QSS.

In 2021/22, ‘student voice’ achieved 94% satisfaction: 17 percentage points higher than the 2021 NSS benchmark (77%) and 27 points higher than the 2022 NSS overall sector average (67%). UCQ have always taken a robust approach to collecting and using student feedback, with this feedback used to strengthen course content and design. Q23 *‘I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course’* achieved 100% satisfaction amongst students, Q4 *‘Staff value students’ views and opinions about the course’* achieved 95% and Q25 *‘It is clear how students’ feedback on the course has been acted on’* achieved 88% (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.8).

The feedback gathered from students, staff and employers is collected, collated and analysed to feed into strategic planning exercises and course design as appropriate. Annual feedback reports are developed as part of Annual Monitoring and provide stakeholders with transparent information related to feedback and any resulting actions. During Programme Revalidation in July 2021, The Open University Panel noted in their report^{xxi} *“Students described UCQ as being very efficient in responding to queries and providing support. They confirmed that UCQ is very open to feedback through formal and informal routes and this was further reinforced by the employer representative (during the meeting with Academic Council) who commented on UCQ’s agility to respond to both the student and employer. The relationship between UCQ and the employer was articulated as a partnership with strong communication between stakeholders. It was also apparent during the discussions with the Senior Management Team and the Programme Team that UCQ is collegiate and works together to find solutions. The Panel was very impressed with the opinions of the different stakeholders and was pleased to commend UCQ for the open and collaborative culture between staff, students and employers which enables the institution to respond quickly and supportively to individual needs”* (The Open University Institutional Reapproval Report – June 2021, p.20).

UCQ regularly engages employers throughout the programme, pre-induction to progress reviews, to ensure employer, line managers and mentors, are fully consulted, informed and updated of employee progress. Line manager inductions are held to ensure line managers can fully support their employees with the required development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours, which form part of an apprenticeship programme, developing a culture of high expectation, support and nurture. During Programme Revalidation in July 2021, The Open University Panel noted in their report *“the Panel was satisfied with how UCQ manages feedback from employers and students, it was evident in meetings with both stakeholder groups that this works effectively. The Panel was pleased to*

commend UCQ for its close and continuous engagement with employers and apprentices” (The Open University Institutional Reapproval Report – June 2021, p.17).

UCQ continue to develop and maintain strong, collaborative and effective stakeholder relationships which feed into design and development activities, promoting a shared understanding of the organisation’s innovative approach to design and contextualised delivery. The Business Development Team work closely with industry professionals and employers to genuinely understand business and training needs. Information may be obtained informally through ongoing discussions with employers, and/or more formally through structured ‘Requests for Information’, in order to create a ‘research pack’ which is used by Module Leads to inform the context of their teaching. UCQ is focused on supporting employees and their employers to drive improvements in the performance of their organisations and the wider business sector. The UCQ approach to helping improve business results is centred around developing the leadership and management capabilities of both current and future managers. During the full inspection, Ofsted found *“Leaders and managers work very effectively with regional stakeholders, including the Tees Valley and North of Tyne combined authorities, to ensure that adult provision is aligned well with regional skills needs. They also work well with major employers, such as Santander and the NHS, to provide an apprenticeship curriculum that is tailored to employers’ management needs. Commissioners and employers comment very positively on the contribution that UCQ makes to the region and individual businesses” and “Learners and apprentices benefit from UCQ’s strong relationships with regional and national employers. These relationships expand learners’ understanding of current working practices and the range of jobs available to them. Apprentices are well prepared for high-level careers in management in a wide variety of sectors” (Ofsted Full Inspection Report – December 2021, p.2).*

The UCQ Employer/Employer Mentor Survey continues to demonstrate exceptionally high satisfaction amongst UCQ’s employer body. An exceptional 99% average satisfaction was achieved across the entire survey for 2021/22. Notably, 100% Employer/Employer Mentor satisfaction was achieved for: Q5 *‘The training delivered by UCQ meets the needs of our organisation’*, Q6 *‘Employees are happy with the training provided’*, Q7 *‘The training delivered was up to date and reflective of current practices in our industry’*, Q8 *‘Employees have made good progress since starting their training and this is reflected in their behaviours and practices’*, Q9 *‘The training delivered has effectively assessed employees’ skills, knowledge and behaviours, both at the start and throughout the programme’*, Q10 *‘The training our employees have received has had a positive impact on the organisation’*, Q11 *‘The training provided is having a positive impact on employee performance in their job roles’*, Q14 *‘UCQ is responsive to any concerns raised’*, Q15 *‘The course is well organised’*, Q18 *‘UCQ is innovative in its approach to course development and delivery’* and Q19 *‘I am satisfied with the training my organisation receives and would recommend UCQ to other organisations’* (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.37).

3. Student outcomes

Positive outcomes

The CMDA Standard^{xxii} was developed by national employers, including Boots UK Ltd, Barclays Bank, Co-op and the CMI among others. UCQ's BA (Hons) Professional Management has been designed and created for the delivery of the CMDA Standard assessment plan as well as a standalone degree for employed students. The PDAs utilise the progress review cycle to work closely with Employer Mentors to support students as much as possible in their professional competence. Achievement of the programme may lead to workplace promotion (high rates of progression for UCQ graduates is detailed below); during the 2021/22 QSS Extended Questions, 98% of students agree that undertaking the CMDA helps them to achieve their career aspirations. Furthermore, 95% agreed that the academic assessment improves their performance within their role, and 100% agreed their knowledge, skills and behaviours of the subject areas are improving (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.17). Students completing the CMDA programme also have the opportunity to achieve Chartered Manager Status. During the December 2021 full inspection, Ofsted found *"Apprentices are well prepared for high-level careers in management in a wide variety of sectors"* (Ofsted Full Inspection Report, p. 2).

UCQ deliver to students based across several different locations and work collaboratively with employers to ensure students are provided with the right learning opportunities to reach high quality outcomes. The 2021/22 Employer/Employer Mentor Survey achieved a 45% response rate (69/153) with the vast majority (95%) of questions having stayed the same or improved in satisfaction for 2021/22. An exceptional 99% average satisfaction was achieved across the entire survey for 2021/22. Notably, 100% of employers agreed the training delivered by UCQ meets the needs of their organisation, 100% agreed the training was up to date and reflective of current practices in their industry (up from 90% in 2020), 100% agreed the training their employees have received has had a positive impact on their organisation (up from 95% in 2020), 100% agreed the training provided is having a positive impact on employee performance in their job roles and 100% agreed employees have made good progress since starting their training and this is reflected in their behaviours and practices (2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.37).

The design, development and implementation of the BA (Hons) Professional Management has the intention of developing individuals and encouraging knowledge, skills and behaviours in keeping with both the typical expectations of a higher education student and that of a professional employee in practice within their job role. Upon graduating with the BA (Hons) Professional Management award, and wider CMDA on successful completion of EPA, UCQ students will have demonstrated they exceed the threshold benchmark standards for Business and Management. The use of a robust modular assessment framework measures student performance against the programme academic standards by providing an opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. Students are assessed against module learning outcomes for the award of credit, and programme learning outcomes for the award of a qualification.

UCQ have an inclusive and engaging learning environment to support developing subject specific and transferable skills. For students, regular assessment and self-assessment is undertaken to evaluate a student's knowledge, skills and behaviours in line with the requirements of the programme. Personal development plans are embedded throughout the programme and three modules dedicated to professional practice and development provide students ample opportunity to

develop their professional skills. Regular feedback is also gathered and used to support effective learning and teaching activities. During the December 2021 full inspection, Ofsted found *“Teachers and assessors use effective activities and resources to help learners and apprentices to make good progress. For example, apprentices extend their knowledge about different approaches to people management through discussions with managers in other organisations. Apprentices’ new approaches to people management have resulted in increased productivity and staff retention at work. Assessors help apprentices to reflect on what they have learned so that they can apply useful new approaches and techniques to their own workplaces. Employers ensure that apprentices have many opportunities at work to practice and develop the skills and knowledge that they have learned”* (Ofsted Full Inspection Report, p.3).

The learning outcomes for the programme and individual modules are clearly specified in the Programme Specification and individual Module Specifications. The achievement of and beyond the threshold level is determined through thorough assessment practices. All students receive excellent resources and support from their Module Lead and PDA which provides suitable breadth, depth, pace and challenge to achieve the learning outcomes and develop the individual’s knowledge, skills and behaviours in the subject area. During the October 2019 Quality and Standards Review, QAA found *“UCQ supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. This is because its approach to student support focuses on such outcomes and its plans to support students to achieve are evidence-based, robust and credible. The team noted that students were consistent in agreeing that they are adequately supported to achieve, and the assessed student work seen by the team demonstrates that students are given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback. It was clear to the team that staff (both academic and professional support) understand their role in supporting student achievement”* (Quality and Standards Review Report, p.57).

Each Assessment Guide provides clear and transparent marking criteria for marked and graded work. Every student receives a robust feedback report which clearly demonstrates areas for development and details of how the marker/s have reached the agreed mark. Regular standardisation sessions and review of the assessment criteria are undertaken by the Programme Team to ensure that students continue to have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level and these opportunities are comparable to other UK providers.

To further support students to achieve beyond threshold levels, UCQ only conduct small lectures and tutorials for a supportive and learner-centric experience. Cohort numbers do not exceed 20 students. Module Leads are contactable and provide ongoing formal and informal support throughout the programme. The PDAs work closely with employers and Employer Mentors to coach students in their professional competence. Following the 2021/22 annual QSS, ‘academic support’ achieved an average satisfaction score of 99% amongst UCQ students. This exceeded the 2021 NSS benchmark (81%) by 18 percentage points and 2022 NSS overall sector average (73%) by 26. Academic support has improved by 2 percentage points since 2020/21 (97%). Exceptionally, 100% of students agreed they have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to their course and good advice was available when they needed to make study choices on their course (Q13 and Q14).

The Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Progress Policy sets out UCQ’s approach to learning and teaching through inter-related principles where the student is at the core of teaching and assessment. Staff feedback received during the Investors in People assessment confirmed this: *“In HE, I’ve not worked anywhere, where the student experience is at the heart of what we do. I’m back with authenticity and integrity”* (IIP Report, pg.23). Through these principles, UCQ aim to maximise

the student's potential, taking cognisance of national benchmarks where appropriate and promoting lifelong interest and commitment of learning.

The Board of Examiners confirm students have achieved the threshold academic standards and can achieve standards beyond the threshold level. Feedback from the Programme Team, which includes staff who work at other higher education institutions, continues to ensure the programme is comparable with similar qualifications. UCQ regularly collect and analyse comparison data and make appropriate use of sector guidance. Achievement and retention data is used to compare against similar providers and results from the QSS are benchmarked against annual NSS results.

Statistical data^{xxiii} including achievement, retention, progression, destination, equality and diversity, student appeals and complaints is used to facilitate the monitoring of the effectiveness and enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practices. UCQ continuation outcome is 78.3% – this represents a proportion of students continuing which is above the B3 indicator threshold, however this is below the benchmark currently. Due to the nature of the CMDA programme, apprentices complete their studies alongside their job roles which can have significant levels of responsibility. For those students impacting on the continuation outcome, 83% of students cited employment as the reason for withdrawal from studies; 61% indicated work commitments meant they could no longer devote sufficient time to their programme; and 22% changed job role and were unable to continue the work-based programme^{xxiv}.

Students who take a planned Break in Learning (BiL) impact on programme retention; UCQ are focused on maximising return from BiL and have recently made improvements to these processes, developing an Apprenticeship Retention Strategy. Recently implemented strategies to improve retention have included:

- Pastoral support, as well as work-based portfolio development, led by the Professional Development Assessor (PDA) role ensures that students have one key point of contact and support throughout their programme.
- Identification of students at risk with specific actions taken to provide support.
- Recruitment of the HE Academic Support Tutor to support student academic development and skills, educational support needs and Functional Skills.
- Implementation of a referral process to the HE Academic Support Tutor if students have a grade between 40-50%.
- Improvement to the year one student experience to reduce early leavers, including:
 - Tutorials to be a compulsory element of the CMDA
 - All students submit a draft assignment, allowing module leads to provide supportive, formative and developmental feed-forward to enable student academic development and continuous improvement throughout modules in year one; this, in turn, builds confidence and resilience, aiding retention.
- Improved strategy for keeping in touch with students on a break in learning to improve the number of students re-engaging with their programme:
 - Alternative email address collected for students going on a break in learning, with consent to keep in touch with them.
 - Updated communications to provide a more supportive tone about returning to studies, to be sent 6 weeks before planned return date
 - PDA to contact 2 weeks prior to planned return date - contact to provide support, update Curriculum Plan and re-orientation of VLE Ecordia, student portal and key policies and procedures.

- Additional support in place with HE Academic Support Tutor for students aged 18-24.
- Re-introduction of face-to-face inductions from October 2022 to support cohort bonding, identity and the development of peer support mechanisms.
- Completion of a withdrawal survey to determine if there were any further actions that UCQ can take. The resulting feedback was that the reason for withdrawal was work or family pressures. There were no actionable suggestions on what UCQ could have done differently, indeed the majority of feedback was that students had been given lots of support to try to retain them on programme.

UCQ completion outcome is 47.1% representing a proportion of students achieving an HE qualification which is below the B3 indicator threshold and below the benchmark currently. This is, however, a very small cohort of 30 students. Employment in roles of significant responsibility again impacts completion. Of those students impacting this outcome, 89% of withdrawals related to their employment: 72% cited work commitments meant they could no longer devote sufficient time to studying and 17% changed job role and were unable to complete this work-based programme. It is worth highlighting that UCQ's next set of entrants to CMDA (2018/19) will impact positively on the completion indicator, which is expected to improve based on those students who have already achieved an HE qualification to date. The completion indicator is forecast to be 63.2% in 2024, which is above the B3 indicator threshold. It is notable, though the indicator currently falls below benchmark, the first graduating cohorts of the BA (Hons) Professional Management, completing their CMDA, achieved very strong results:

Honours Classification	1st	2.1	2.2	3rd	Total
2021-22	7	3	1	0	11
2020-21	5	4	1	0	10
2019-20	3	5	0	0	8

Apprentices also have achieved very strong results in their EPA (see page 23 below), demonstrating high levels of knowledge, skills and behaviours have been developed.

Though current responses to the Graduate Outcomes Survey have been too low to provide a progression indicator score, there are very high levels of progression for graduating students. As of December 2022, 100% of achieving students have sustained employment in managerial positions; 86% have taken on additional duties within these roles and 64% have progressed to a higher role since starting the CMDA. This demonstrates how successfully CMDA students are developing within their roles to help them progress into roles with greater responsibilities or seek career progression with an alternative employer: one student secured promotion from Assistant Manager to Manager; another advanced into a permanent team leader role; another was promoted from Service Manager to Head of Practice; one was promoted to the Board of Directors within her organisation. Several students are expressing interest in moving on to a Level 7 programme, which is informing UCQ's curriculum planning, however, in the meantime UCQ signpost graduates to other providers. CMDA students have increased confidence and opportunity to progress, feeling more valued as a result of undertaking the programme. One student noted that they had been rated as making an outstanding contribution to their employer, and that he had been able to apply his learning from the CMDA to improve his performance. One line manager highlighted their apprentice has matured as a manager and leader throughout the programme. Employers confirm the programme has resulted in increased staff retention/lower staff turnover. Other commendations from employers have included:

"The benefits I'm seeing in our colleague has had a positive affect [sic] on our relationship with our client."

"My staff member is enjoying it and it all seems very compatible to run alongside her current role and her home life."

"It is thorough, it makes [employee name] think outside the box. Not that she did not do this before, but even more so. [Employee name] is evolving into a superb manager, she will make a brilliant Operations Director."

"Very clear and well delivered. I am confident with the progress my team member has made on this course and the support he has received has been great"

"I have noticed a more mature approach to business coming from [employee name] as he goes through the course."

"A good blend of academic content and theory coupled with a pragmatic approach to real-life business problems. Great staff with real world experience mentoring the students helps our participating staff who are mature students with no previous academic experience to draw upon. [UCQ PDA name] in particular has been excellent in this area."

"The course material is relevant and up to date. Any issues or concerns that employees raise are dealt with promptly, and they have given good feedback about the course."

"[Employee name] has gained confidence through his training which has positively impacted the business."

"One [sic] employee has an increased learning of the subject matters included in their degree. As a result, their confidence has grown and they have successfully secured a promotion whilst completeing [sic] this course."

(2021/22 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report, p.40)

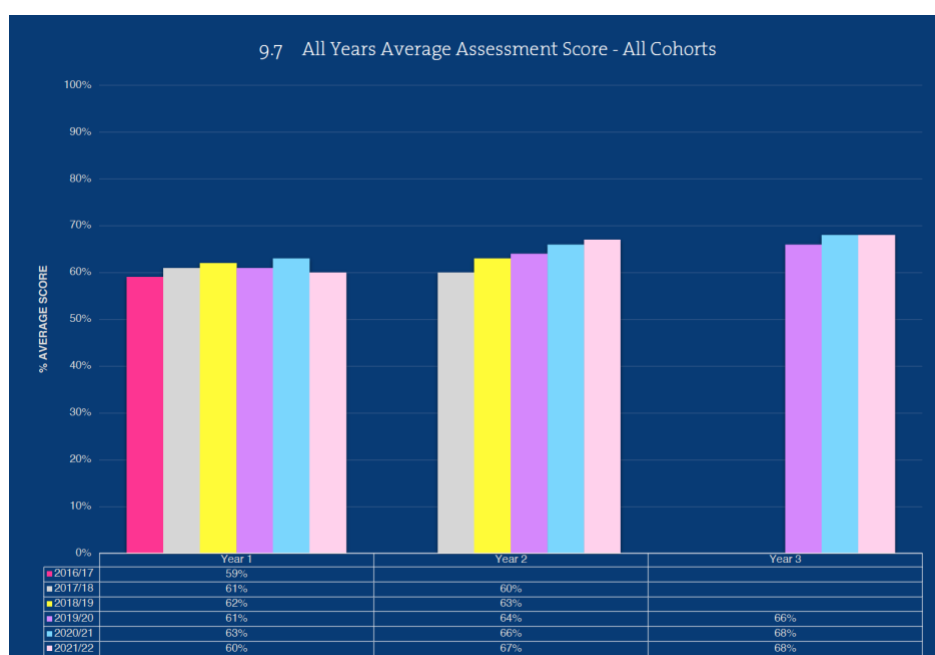
Impact of COVID-19

UCQ's prestigious quality marks remained a high priority during the transition to online hybrid delivery as a response to COVID-19. UCQ invested a significant amount in moving programmes to remote delivery since COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. This included investment in new servers, physical equipment for staff, increased IT security and new onboarding and ePortfolio software for FE provision. Due to the nature of the work-based HE model and location of UCQ's HE students, the transition to online interactive delivery was relatively straightforward. Remote lectures, group sessions and activities are scheduled for designated delivery days, supplemented with additional online resources. For students unable to attend online delivery sessions, all sessions are recorded and download links made available on the e-portfolio system, Ecordia. In-module remote interaction with Module Leads and PDAs follow the same process as previously, though there is flexible provision for additional support via email/Ecordia as required. Teaching and administrative staff receive ongoing training and support from the IT Manager and Senior Leadership Team.

Module Leads have further developed the use of the platform used for online learning (Microsoft Teams) with the recently introduced break-out room functionality to ensure effective student collaboration continued. During Institutional Reapproval, The Open University found *“[UCQ’s] main market is delivering education to groups for employers and their current organisational size and structure enables them to make change more easily and therefore quickly respond [to] market needs. UCQ’s response to the challenges presented by Covid-19 was a good example of this, as UCQ had been agile in moving all face-to-face teaching to online delivery. Significant investment in IT had been made by UCQ to support this learning (including online library resources) and the Programme Team provided context to how they had thought through the pedagogy underpinning the learning experience. The meetings with students and employers endorsed the smooth transition to online and the Panel was pleased to commend UCQ on this achievement”* (The Open University Institutional Reapproval Report – June 2021, p.16).

The COVID-19 Student Support Survey (2020/21 BA (Hons) Professional Management Programme Report^{xxv}, p. 27) was circulated in May 2020 and January 2021 as a result of the immediate disruption brought on by COVID-19 and swift shift to the interactive online delivery model. Pleasingly, exceptionally high satisfaction results were maintained in January 2021, with 69% of questions improving since May 2020. An average of 94% across all question statements was achieved (May 2020 average – 92%). Notably, Q1 *‘During the Covid-19 crisis, UCQ’s approach and flexibility to lectures has been good’*, Q2 *‘The additional support offered by the UCQ Lecturers has been good’*, Q3 *‘The additional support offered by my Professional Development Assessor has been good’*, Q6 *‘Staff at UCQ have been easily contactable during the current Covid-19 crisis’* and Q9 *‘UCQ has been responsive to any issues or concerns raised’* all achieved 100% satisfaction during the January 2021 survey.

For those who remained on programme, there was no significant impact on module assessment results following the COVID-19 changes in 2020. However, several students work for large public sector organisations, such as the NHS. Increased work pressures and stress throughout the pandemic has impacted continuation and completion rates amongst UCQ’s student body, as noted above.



Educational gains

As defined by the apprenticeship Standard, the CMDA is for professional managers who take lead responsibility for people, projects, operations and/or services to deliver long term organisational success. It is applicable to professional managers from all sectors - the private, public or third sector and all sizes of organisations. The assessment approach ensures that apprentices meet the skills, knowledge and behaviour outcomes as defined in the Standard:

➤ Knowledge

- Organisational performance – delivering a long-term purpose
- Interpersonal excellence – leading people and developing collaborative relationships
- Personal effectiveness – managing self

➤ Skills

- Organisational performance – delivering a long-term purpose
- Interpersonal excellence – leading people and developing collaborative relationships
- Personal effectiveness – managing self

➤ Behaviours

- Takes responsibility
- Inclusive
- Agile
- Professionalism

UCQ's BA (Hons) Professional Management programme has been designed to address current and future market needs. The programme design process was robust, starting with a market, sector and gap analysis, considering what is being offered elsewhere, and what UCQ can add that is different. It has been designed to enable students in their future ambitions as it is focused on supporting employees and their employers to drive improvements in the performance of their roles, organisations and the wider business sector. The UCQ approach to helping improve business results is centred around developing the leadership and management capabilities of both current and future managers. Employers and students are consulted individually and collectively to feed into course design and development. UCQ staff and external experts are engaged throughout, with both internal and external reviews informing ongoing programme development.

During the 2019 Quality and Standards Review the QAA Panel found *“Employers whom the team met expressed the view that the programme is of high quality and very relevant to their businesses, drawing attention, for instance, to their view that participation in the programme was empowering students by allowing them to take more advanced roles within the business, and to the view that learning is relevant and purposeful”* and *“The review team concluded that students consider staff to be sufficiently skilled and qualified to deliver a high-quality academic experience”* (QAA Quality and Standards Report, pp. 36, 39).

During programme design, UCQ take a pragmatic approach to workload, the volume and nature of assessment, progression and the necessary development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours to ensure there are no unnecessary barriers to students or their employer. UCQ's flexible approach to programme scheduling and delivery takes account of students with protected characteristics and ensures those studying are provided with the best possible chance of achieving the learning outcomes. Analysis across different groups of learners demonstrates no impact on retention on

programme for students with protected characteristics, such as ethnic minorities or students with learning difficulties or disabilities. The programme has been specifically designed to facilitate flexible, contextualised delivery with experiential learning. UCQ is employer and student responsive, showing flexibility in a hybrid learning model and course start dates; cohorts can commence their programme throughout the year.

Through a progressive approach and pedagogy, students engage in online interactive tutorials and one-to-one sessions, workplace mentoring and professional development activities, allowing the student to spend minimal time away from their place of work and maximum time contextualising their new knowledge and skills. Students are assessed using a range of methods: contextualised assignments, projects, case studies, group working, workbooks, presentations, actual working practice, peer reviews, reflective practice, workplace observations (where permitted) etc. Students undertake critical self-reflection throughout the programme; UCQ considers this an essential practice in the development of higher education work-based learning students.

All students completing the CMDA must undertake on-programme knowledge, skills and behavioural assessment to achieve their BA (Hons) Professional Management before entering the gateway to complete their EPA. The EPA is conducted by an independent assessment organisation to assess competencies against the apprenticeship Standard. UCQ work with the CMI as an End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), however the choice is up to the employer and agreed prior to programme delivery. The EPAO must follow strict guidance set out in the Standard's assessment plan. This process involves a range of assessment tools in order to effectively assess the knowledge, skills and behaviours the student has acquired over the duration of the programme and includes:

- Review of portfolio – marked against criteria to assess practiced competences
- Review of project – marked against criteria to assess practiced competences
- 15-minute presentation on the work-based project
- Panel interview – to further clarify and assess behavioural and skills competences

The EPA must assess whether threshold standards have been achieved in order to successfully complete the CMDA programme. In addition to completion of the CMDA, and whilst not a mandatory element, UCQ students are awarded Chartered Manager status, as UCQ's BA (Hons) Professional Management has also been mapped against criteria for achieving this professional accreditation. The CMDA Standard is currently a non-integrated degree Standard where EPA is conducted after the BA (Hons) Professional Management has been achieved. However, UCQ assessors work hard to prepare students for EPA from induction, building up a transferability of knowledge, skills and behaviours to ensure the transition through EPA is as seamless as possible. Regular skill scanning is undertaken with students whilst they build their portfolio of evidence throughout each module. Portfolio building is embedded within modular assessment; the apprenticeship Standard is in no way 'bolted on' to the BA (Hons) Professional Management.

Staff play a vital role in developing student knowledge, skills and behaviours through an effective dialogue of formal and informal feedback. Students are empowered to reflect on feedback they have received from staff, and their colleagues, and develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours through regular personal development planning opportunities. Students undertake a Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours Skill Scan at induction and at periodic points throughout the programme, including at the end of year one, year two, year three and as part of their EPA gateway review. This tool allows the

student to conduct a self-assessment against their own knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to meet the requirements of the programme. Progress against the knowledge, skills and behaviours are also discussed at progress reviews between the PDA, student and their employer. UCQ continue to strengthen the admissions process and have introduced an additional competence diagnostic assessment to further drill into student starting points, assisting in the development of an increasingly robust Individual Curriculum Plan.

UCQ provide guidance^{xxvi} to enable Employer Mentors to fully understand the importance of their role and how best to support their Mentee (apprentice) through active participation and engagement. Each Employer Mentor attends a remote induction^{xxvii}, ensuring they are fully aware of the commitments of their staff and how they can support their development and achievement. As Employer Mentors are often the student's Line Manager, obtaining Line Manager support for their staff undertaking the programme is critically important during student recruitment activities. Having this 'buy in' from Line Managers maximises the chance of student success. Key outcomes from recruitment activities include confirmation from Line Managers of their willingness to identify and select potential candidates and to generally support their staff through the progress review cycle.

Tutors engage in dialogue with students to aid understanding of CMDA assessment and develop assessment literacy. They do this through discussion and questioning of learning goals and marking and grading criteria, providing regular formative feedback, exploring best (and poor) practice examples and utilising self and peer review exercises. The UCQ Degree Outcome Statement^{xxviii} aids both staff and student understanding of how marking criteria is derived from the level 6 classification descriptors and how the qualification itself is aligned with the FHEQ qualification descriptor and Business and Management Subject Benchmark Statement. Transparently illustrating the way in which baseline standards are to be applied develops student understanding of professional judgements and how this process should be fair, consistent and inclusive.

The modules^{xxix} contain both academic and work-based assessment. This separation provides students the opportunity to develop and practice vocational skills and ensures the effective assessment of individual knowledge, skills and behaviours, all three of which are essential to the work-based learning paradigm. This design of assessment also helps minimise unacceptable academic practice such as plagiarism. Staff responsible for the management of the programme track student achievement against modular and stage outcomes. Modular assessment takes account of both marked and graded and threshold pass/fail elements.

The programme starts with a compulsory credit bearing module on Academic Writing and Study Skills which provides a thorough grounding in the core academic literacies required throughout the programme. This includes the skills required to support good academic practice, including professional and information literacy skills, research and referencing skills and skills for critical analysis. Professional and academic practice elements (for example, presentation skills, academic writing, constructing argument and narrative) are developed through formative and summative feedback throughout the programme. The course is structured over the three years to allow students to continually develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours; level four modules within year one, level five modules within year two and level six modules within year three. Students are developed throughout the programme to understand ethical considerations of professional practice, including subject confidentiality and the balance of boundaries between group and individual contributors. The use of reflective practice and expert and peer feedback also aid this development.

The vital role of the HE Academic Support Tutor supports students' academic development and skills, educational support needs and functional skills across the programme to drive improvements in academic performance and achievement. Students are 'referred' to this Tutor where they are signposted by Module Leads as requiring additional support with their academic skills. This additional support has been particularly important for first year students.

During Observations of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, the observer also speaks to students to gather feedback on the impact the programme is having within their workplace, and to their role. Student feedback is below^{xxx}: and echoes the feedback provided by employers.

"Everything I have done has impacted me at work. I try to use everything I have learned and studied and try to put into practice, even down to models."

"As [I've] gone through the modules, [I have] been able to apply models/theories in the workplace... naturally applied, [and with] more confidence."

"More confident in self, speaking to Directors, senior managers, delivering presentations. [I have] more [strategic] vision... Rather than sitting back and just doing, [I'm] now looking at future and how to shape it."

"The programme has] helped a lot to build confidence [and] resilience; dealing with different situations."

Module delivery is sequenced to flow effectively, providing scaffolding to students who may be new to HE, and module design utilises knowledge, skills and behaviours gained from previous modules in subsequent ones. Module 2.5 Stakeholder Relationship Development introduces stakeholder analysis which is then key to the evaluation of corporate strategy when students move on to Module 3.1 Strategy and Change. Following student feedback, sequencing has been amended to better support the learning journey, for example swapping the year one second and third modules to deliver Effective Communication first, followed by Leadership. The structure of the final year was also re-arranged to allow Module 3.4 Management Research Project to be delivered earlier to prepare students for their dissertation piece, linking more effectively to Module 3.2 Project Management and the EPA.

Modules were fully reviewed in 2021 by the Curriculum Review Board with several enhancements made. The theme of digital literacy competencies as part of the assessment strategy was discussed by the Programme Team. Meetings with employers have drawn the attention to the need for strong communication skills, for example presentation skills and constructing arguments. Combined with the shortage of digital literacy skills in graduates, there was opportunity within the programme to diversify assessment to be more inclusive and creative, with reference to digital literacy skills. Another theme explored was the scope for how the programme should respond to a post-Covid economy. The need to be flexible and agile for both students and business sector needs has been recognised by UCQ and meetings with employers flagged multiple themes: managing teams and people remotely; innovation and intrapreneurship; business continuity management; disaster recovery programming and conflict management. The Programme Team have reviewed and updated the programme content to reflect contemporary employer challenges, particularly in relation to a post pandemic context and not just limited to the apprenticeship Standard.

Statistical data including achievement, retention, progression, destination, equality and diversity, student appeals and complaints is used to facilitate the monitoring of the effectiveness and enhancement of learning opportunities and educational gains. The first cohorts of CMDA apprentices completing EPA have achieved very strong results:

End Point Assessment Classifications	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Fail	Total
2022-23	2	0	0	0	2
2021-22	4	2	0	0	6
2020-21	4	5	1	0	10
2019-20	7	3	0	0	10
Total	17	10	1	0	28

As of December 2022, 100% of achieving students have sustained employment; 86% have taken on additional duties and 64% have progressed to a higher role since starting the CMDA.

Ofsted found, during their inspection in December 2021, “*Staff and leaders support apprentices to develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours that stand them in good stead for their next steps. Learners and apprentices benefit from a high standard of careers advice that broadens their horizons and develops their confidence*” (Ofsted Full Inspection Report, p.3).

4. References

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