

# United Colleges Group

Progress monitoring report

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<b>Address:</b>	25 Paddington Green London W2 1NB

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

United Colleges Group was last inspected in December 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. It was undertaken as outlined in the [operational note on visits carried out from January 2021](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

These visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, inspectors carried out this monitoring activity remotely. As a result, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would be the case during an on-site inspection. Therefore, this report provides a more limited level of assurance.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgement below. Inspectors did not evaluate leaders' response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer of 2020, when the provider was not open to all learners and there were no national expectations regarding remote education.

### Theme

**What progress are leaders and those responsible for governance making to ensure that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning?**

**Reasonable progress**

Governors and senior leaders have made a purposeful response to weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. They appropriately evaluate their performance against clear targets, which are shared with, and understood by, staff at all levels. As a result, staff have a good knowledge and understanding of their provision's strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders have improved their curriculum management processes.

Managers have an increased focus on providing specific support to staff with the planning and sequencing of the curriculum. They now have a secure overview of the

areas they manage and accurately give staff feedback through frequent quality assurance activities. Leaders and managers are taking action to implement consistently high-quality teaching practice across all sites. They share best practice and resources, including specialist staff across different campuses. Consequently, despite the challenges faced by the pandemic, learners, particularly those on education programmes for young people, make good progress.

Leaders have taken positive steps to ensure that learners on all provision types have appropriate resources to learn online. They were able to move quickly to remote learning during the lockdown that started in January 2021. They evaluate the quality of remote learning well and provide appropriate staff development so that teachers are competent in using relevant online platforms. Teachers prepare their sessions well and make good use of clearly presented visual information to explain technical information. For example, teachers in plumbing use easy-to-interpret diagrams when describing indirect double-feed components in open-vented hot water systems.

Teachers consider well how they sequence the curriculum. For example, in health and social care, teachers teach learners how and when to use qualitative and quantitative research methods before conducting their research projects. Teachers introduce topics that promote debate and understanding among learners on contemporary social themes. For example, learners explore the representation of gay relationships in media studies and confidently discuss colonialism and racism in performing arts.

The extent to which teachers are skilled at using online tools such as quizzes to check learning varies across different subjects. At times teachers do not make secure enough links between previous learning and the current session. At the start of the lessons, teachers struggle to use appropriate online tools to test the learners' knowledge without adequately explaining to learners the link to the topic being taught. Consequently, teachers' explanations are disjointed, and the lessons lack fluency.

Managers have suitably adapted the curriculum to respond to changing circumstances. For example, teachers in adult learning provision record practical sessions in refrigeration and air conditioning to demonstrate how to use industry-standard machinery. In on-site sessions, tutors and technicians prepared tools and made workspaces safe for apprentices in advance to enable them to focus on the practical work and apply the theory they previously learned in online lessons.

Learners' progress in some areas has fallen behind due to the challenges posed by the pandemic. For example, teachers cannot complete work-based assessments of apprentices, especially those who work in the health and social care sector, due to the restrictions. Apprentices' employers are also not fully aware of the arrangements for final assessments. They do not receive regular updates on the progress of their apprentices. Staff who carry out progress reviews do not have full information on different aspects of the apprenticeship programme. Therefore, most of the

employers who inspectors spoke with are unsure about what they can do to support their apprentices to complete their apprenticeships.

Staff work well with local authorities and various employers to provide a range of work experience and work placement opportunities for learners, including those with high needs. Some of these activities continued virtually during lockdowns. Learners on early years courses completed a work experience week online, hearing from employers about the different career paths they could follow. Learners studying applied science watched a live stream of a radiographer in action. Teachers use these online activities well to help learners understand different career pathways and motivate them to raise their aspirations. Teachers have high expectations of their learners and guide them towards understanding the requirements to achieve high grades. For example, media learners review distinction standard work from previous years' cohorts when preparing their final major projects.

In provision for learners with high needs, teachers and job coaches help learners to complete supported internship programmes online. Learning support staff join online learning lessons and communicate with the learners directly. A recently formed team of key workers also provides robust support and guidance to learners on how to deal with issues that affect their attendance and progress.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- share good practice on teaching online with fluency so that different parts of the lesson connect with each other and with previous learning, to enable learners to incrementally increase their knowledge and skills
- improve how they communicate with apprentices' employers and link on-the-job activities with off-the-job learning so apprentices can make progress.

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