

Minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee Meeting

Held Wednesday 15 March 2023

Present Joanne Rouse (*Vice Chair, Chairing the meeting*), Aisha Benachour, Alexandra Fratila, Clair Graham, Joanne Williams

In attendance Craig Tucker (*Assistant Principal Quality and Standards*)
Julie Edwards (*Assistant Principal Faculty of Professional Services & Sciences*)
Julia Edmonds (*Interim Director of Learner Services*)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

1	Apologies
	Apologies were received on behalf of Gail Rothnie, Lee Clulow and Jonathan Priest.
2	Declarations of Interest
	Joanne Rouse declared her interest in agenda item 6, Higher Education Quality and Strategy.
3	Minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee Meeting held 16 November 2022 and Matters Arising
	<p>The minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee Meeting held 16 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.</p> <p>Under Matters Arising</p> <p>Actions from the meeting held 15 June 2022</p> <p>9b, Review of Committee Terms of Reference and Cycle of Business. The Clerk reported that in agenda setting the approach to inviting a wider group of staff to present reports was being implemented and that names of relevant staff would be indicated in the cycle of business being prepared for 2023/2024.</p> <p>Actions from the meeting held 16 November 2022</p> <p>12a, Update Report on Apprenticeships. This was addressed under the agenda.</p>
4	Pastoral Report
	<p>Julia Edmonds provided an update for members across the range of areas under pastoral support.</p> <p>Regarding Safeguarding, members commended staff and the College on the achievement of the Gold Award, Leaders in Safeguarding. Regarding reporting, there had been one serious safeguarding incident. Overall, in 2022/2023 there was a decline in behavioural safeguarding incidents.</p> <p>A range of other key points were highlighted. Members noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the number of Looked After children being supported by the College and through Local Authority social workers, - data on mental health and wellbeing as comparative to previous years, with an increase in wellbeing referrals being managed, - that SEND provision continued to be of high quality despite pressure on resources,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that over 1800 students had engaged with a variety of Ready Respect Safe Week talks, - that an audit had been undertaken on access for students with high needs, with resulting actions being addressed. <p>Julia Edmonds also outlined the number of students with Education and Health Care plans and the number of applicants whose needs the College was unable to meet.</p> <p>Members asked about withdrawal of vulnerable students and noted that there was a common theme around moving from a small class environment in schools to a busier College environment with larger class sizes. The College did highlight these changes to applicants and had special transition days in place. The update on pastoral support and data monitoring was received.</p>
5	Prevent Strategy
	The updated Prevent Strategy and Action Plan was noted as revised to address changes in personnel. The plan was regularly monitored through the College Leadership Team.
	The Students Curriculum and Quality Committee recommended to the Corporation the approval of the updated Prevent Strategy and Action Plan.
6	Higher Education Quality and Strategy
	<p>Julia Edmonds outlined that the College had its own Higher Education Strategy in place which addressed the aim, rationale and approach for provision provided by the College and in conjunction with partners. The College was subsequently registered with the Office for Students and was quality assured against QAA standards.</p> <p>The strategy also reviewed provision in relation to the area and the economic and labour market.</p> <p>Members raised two key questions on monitoring student outcomes and progression and the status of vocational, particularly Higher Technical qualifications and progression to Higher Education. Joanne Williams responded that the College did monitor progression and that the Committee would receive a report in the autumn term.</p> <p>Joanne Williams also noted, that while awaiting greater clarity on the continuation of courses, under current curriculum reforms, the College was taking a pragmatic approach, retaining courses, whilst appropriately providing new course offer as relevant and appropriate.</p>
	The Students Curriculum and Quality Committee approved the Higher Education Strategy.
7	Apprenticeships Update
	<p>Julie Edwards updated members on the progress made in the provision of Apprenticeships. The recent independent assessment provided an accurate position from which to focus on rebuilding capacity and provision.</p> <p>Two governors had visited Apprentice provision during the external review and feedback from this included, that it had been beneficial to see student engagement first hand, that students were able to speak about why their apprenticeship was right for them, how their learning related to their practice in the workplace and that the course had increased their confidence.</p> <p>A member asked how the College supported a sense of belonging for apprentices and how increasing this could support retention.</p> <p>Joanne Williams outlined current activities recognising that this could be further developed. Subsequent discussion led to suggestions around the use of a</p>

	Teams group for each Apprenticeship Standard, which could support communication and sharing of material.
Action 7a	Joanne Williams and Julie Edwards will consider use of Teams for support of each Apprentice Standard.
	<p>A member asked how the College was looking to increase the number of new apprentices. Joanne Williams reported that a new business development team was key, with an advertisement to employers. There was focus on two new strands of Early Years and Health at Level 2. Targets had been set, with focus on school leavers and the Pre-Apprenticeship scheme.</p> <p>A member asked about aligning offer to the Local Skills Improvement Priorities and noted that the College remained in contact with the relevant Chambers of Commerce and had been invited to the first summary report presentation.</p> <p>Julie Edwards further noted that the College was updating the Self-Assessment Report and associated Quality Improvement Plan across all standards and monitoring standards fortnightly.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the report was positive and recorded formal thanks to the team.</p>
8	Student Retention Update
	<p>Joanne Williams reported how the College continued to address challenges on student retention, which remained below that of the previous year. The higher level of expulsions reflected that of schools and retention monitoring was addressed through the Student Tracking and Monitoring Panel (STaMP). The largest area of low retention was around Level 1 courses and the College was therefore looking at the type of provision, particularly around how engaging courses were. An action plan was being put in place for the new academic year.</p> <p>Members noted that retention was a national problem which the DfE had reported on and that the traffic light rating of areas was a helpful tool.</p> <p>The meeting discussed the 'swap don't drop' approach and how this was easier to support if put in place/offered at an earlier stage. A full complement of progress coaches would further support this. The reality of some courses not reflecting student perceptions was considered, which had focused the need to discuss with students, within the first few weeks, if the right course has been chosen.</p> <p>The updated was received.</p>
9	Student Performance and Progress Report
	<p>Members considered the performance data and the relationship between attendance and achievement.</p> <p>Relentless pursuit of student attendance had continued, and this was improved by 1.28%.</p> <p>AS and A1 mock exam data was provided and students could see where focus was needed to strengthen their areas of weakness. The staff Curriculum Area Reviews indicated that the majority of courses were moving in a positive direction, with Heads of Department having clear focus on retention and attendance.</p> <p>All A Level mocks were undertaken with students who missed their December exams addressed in the new year. BTeC Vocational January exam results were due, AOQR Level 3 had 100% and Level 2 with 66%, which compared with the the national pass rate for 2021/2021 being 52%.</p> <p>The high risk relating to staffing was raised with Economics not having a new intake for 2023 as the College had been unable to recruit appropriate staff.</p>

	<p>Joanne Williams highlighted that the College needed to review exclusions given the diversity data provided. The Equality and Diversity Lead was looking at how the College could look at experiences and barriers and Leaders Unlocked were being approached.</p> <p>Members asked about the next steps for excluded students. Joanne Williams explained that the College tried to take an approach that did not further restrict life chances, provided an appeal process and followed up with the relevant local authority. An example of support in providing a student with online classes was noted.</p>
10	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Report
	<p>Craig Tucker outlined the quality assurance process, with the outcomes provided on what is being assessed. This highlighted both strengths and areas for development. While the craft of teaching was very positive, with some excellent practitioners supporting staff development, a key issue remained on the quality of questioning used in the classroom, with further work needed to differentiate where development was needed.</p> <p>Regarding staff feedback on the lesson observation process members asked about variability. It was noted that responses very much depended on the teacher.</p> <p>Regarding the improvement cycle members understood that faculty reviews led to action plans from the Assistant Principals leading into the Quality Improvement Plan with cross College themes and trends identified.</p> <p>Joanne Williams shared more specific examples with most areas providing a good level of assurance. Where areas were not working as required, actions were instigated.</p>
11	Staff Development Report
	<p>Craig Tucker reported that achievement of the Gold Standard Award for Safeguarding took account of College records and that the College continued to review and monitor the required three-year updates through the College Leadership Team.</p> <p>The content of staff development was drawn from divisional quality improvement plans, with focus on the craft of teaching. There was support for staff regarding the development of qualifications, upskilling, subject knowledge and pedagogy.</p> <p>External development opportunities were supported, particularly regarding T Levels and improving teaching and learning.</p> <p>There was greater emphasis on evidencing the impact of staff development on outcomes, which was challenging. However, one aspect of this was in the sharing of information to support colleagues.</p> <p>The continued focus for the next academic year remained the craft of teaching and improving outcomes for students.</p> <p>Members asked how the College monitored staff who were not engaging in development. Craig Tucker responded that during the January Staff Development Day there was no teaching and staff were expected to attend at least two development sessions. It was recognised that some staff did not like to do training where it took them from teaching commitments, however, there was a process in place through staff appraisals and reports to divisional heads to identify needs and monitor attendance and engagement.</p>
12	Review of Courses Under Notice of Improvement
	<p>Members noted that the courses placed under notice were there through measures around student retention.</p>

	<p>The data evidenced where significant progress had been made.</p> <p>There were some Level 1 and Level 2 courses which were not making evidenced progress, and these were being reviewed through the Curriculum Area Review meetings, seeking assurance from Heads of Division that appropriate actions to support improvement were in place.</p> <p>It was noted that a few courses would not be running in 2023/2024.</p>
13	Overview of Progress against the Quality Improvement Plan 2023
	<p>Members considered the update on progress of actions on the Quality Improvement Plan, noting that while achievement rates were improving, retention may impact the final outcomes. The College was doing everything within its ability to support retention, attendance and performance.</p> <p>It was positive to note that Apprenticeship retention had improved and that there was focus on A Level attendance and retention, and in supporting higher achieving students. A new programme was being launched for higher achieving AS Students to inject greater confidence and opportunities. This would include guest speakers, visits and competitions.</p> <p>Members asked if attendance awards had helped and it was noted that while these had helped a little, greater attention was needed on students with low attendance. Heads of Division were enthusiastic about redesigning the Level 1 curriculum to think differently about student engagement.</p> <p>The Personal Development Programme was also discussed, acknowledging that this was being reconsidered to support Personal Coaches in getting to know their tutor groups and how best to support them. Regarding skills and work readiness, the NAVIGATE toolkit was also supportive in evidencing what students had achieved, including work placements.</p> <p>Members noted that overall, there was a positive picture of development against actions and asked what the level of risk to not hitting targets would be. It was noted that risks were medium level and that the retention target remained key, and while close to target this may not be quite achieved, which would impact on the overall achievement outcomes. However, there remained a significant portion of the academic year, with continued focus on attendance and retention.</p>
14	Current Year 2022/2023 Annual Plan Actions/Targets
	<p>In considering the action plan Joanne Williams provided an update on the key headlines impacting on the College.</p> <p>National curriculum changes were informing any curriculum developments.</p> <p>Work Placements were a concern, as there were not enough industry placements to meet future proposals.</p> <p>Inspection remained a focus around teaching and learning outcomes.</p> <p>The timetable for 2023/2024 was under consideration to avoid large gaps between lessons, combined with understanding and action taken to improve access to student space.</p> <p>The delivery of the additional 40 hours was also under further consideration.</p> <p>Members noted the key areas of focus.</p>
15	Curriculum Update
	<p>Joanne Williams reported on the fast pace of change and uncertainty in guidance provided, regarding course and qualification changes, as mentioned throughout the meeting.</p> <p>Some new T levels had been deferred, such as Early Years, with others yet to be given a specification. The College was therefore taking a careful approach, particularly around the Health T Level.</p>

	<p>Phase three of reforms was stringent in its removal of courses, including some A Levels, with preference for students to take two A Levels combined with one alternative qualification. The removal of some large course pathways, such as the Criminal Justice pathway, and the change of some areas, such as Protected Services would have significant impact on students and the College. There would be some small academic qualifications and some larger new qualifications in areas where T Levels were not deemed appropriate.</p> <p>Staff were attending meetings, workshops and briefings with awarding bodies to gather as much information as possible.</p> <p>Members noted that there would be new employer boards which could improved employer engagement.</p> <p>Joanne Williams concluded that this was a very volatile period for Further Education and the College had welcomed the opportunity to talk with the FE Commissioner.</p>
	<i>Clair Graham gave her apologies and left the meeting.</i>
16	Learner Involvement Strategy
	<p>Members considered the Learner Involvement Strategy which outlined the rationale and approach to student engagement, however, it was noted that planned developments would see this strategy returned to the Committee later in the year.</p> <p>The College was keen to increase engagement and to engage a student shadow board.</p> <p>Members noted the role of the current student ambassadors.</p>
	The Students Curriculum and Quality Committee approved the updated Learner Involvement Strategy.
17	Meeting impact review
	<p>Members considered the impact of the meeting and concluded:</p> <p>That with regard to a clear picture of performance, information on retention and achievement had been provided across a range of formats, which addressed challenges and successes and key themes consistent across the meeting.</p> <p>The College was clearly taking action to address an identified issue with exclusion data and actions across plans had been monitored.</p> <p>Data and information across a range of reports was also triangulated with external reviews of Apprenticeships and High Needs and the achievement of the Safeguarding Gold Award. The impact of curriculum changes and reliance on information from the DfE and awarding bodies had been clearly highlighted.</p> <p>Members had made positive suggestions around Apprenticeship students' sense of belonging and the discussion led to management action.</p> <p>Members also felt that receiving reports delivered by their authors was also impactful. Members appreciated the passion demonstrated.</p>
18	Any Other Business
	There was none.
19	Date of Next Meeting
	The date of the next meeting was noted as Tuesday 21 June 2023.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

Actions from the meeting held 15 June 2022		
Action 5ca	Target Monitoring Review of providing high level aggregated data on student attainment would be instigated by the Principal, with Joanne Williams and Gail Rothnie to meet to consider data and reporting to the Committee for the 2022/2023 academic year (to allow for greater granularity of in year performance against target grades, trend comparison and sector benchmarking).	June 2023
Action 9b	Review of Committee Terms of Reference and Cycle of Business That Assistant Principals be invited to attend meetings where appropriate and that names of staff be included in the annual cycle of business.	JSu September 2022 March Ongoing
Actions from the meeting held 16 November 2022		
Action 12a	Update Report on Apprenticeships It was agreed that the Committee would continue to monitor Apprenticeships reports as appropriate through a standing item on the agenda.	JSu/JWi March Ongoing
Actions from the meeting held 15 March 2023		
Action 7a	Apprenticeships Update Joanne Williams and Julie Edwards will consider use of Teams for support of each Apprentice Standard.	June 2023