

**Minutes of the
Quality, Standards and Achievement Committee
Thursday 12 March 2019
Tower Board Room, Cauldwell Street, Bedford**

Present: Allan Schofield (ASch)
Noel Gray
Mark Lawson (ML)
Ian Pryce (IP)
Shaun Wilson (SW)

In attendance: Georgina Ager (Vice Principal)
Karen Campbell (Director of Adult & Community Learning)
Roy Currie (Director of Information and Learning Technologies)
Em Lowe (Vice Principal)
Rachel Nicol (Director of Governance & Clerk to the Corporation)
Petra Williams (Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching and Assessment)

Action

QSA/1/19 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Richard Dimbleby and Eva Harper

QSA/2/19 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations relevant to the matters on the agenda.

QSA/3/19 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

It was agreed to take agenda items in a different order due to the availability of attendees.

QSA/4/19 HE Teaching Excellence Framework (“TEF”)

The Vice Principal responsible for HE presented an update on the implementation of the HE TEF, including the current core metrics including;

- Feedback data from surveys
- ILR data
- Destination data, collected by IGraduate

It was explained that The Bedford College Group (“BCG”) will need to implement TEF arrangements in August 2019. It was therefore understood that the first fully comparative annual quality data will be received for the year 2019-2020 in 2021.

Attention was drawn to the table on core metrics. HE learners are split FT / PT. The metric is based on 3 years of data. The grading against the benchmark was explained. The merger of the Tresham and Bedford data has made monitoring and the identification of trends difficult. The NSS scores were noted to be better in the current year for full time teaching compared to part time teaching.

Intervention and action plans have been put into place;

- To address the narrow element of the part time provision impacting the results is in place.
- To review continuation in respect of 16-18 year old young learners.

The destinations data is positive with significant concerns for full time or part time learners. However, the impact of merger on the progression position is being closely monitored.

Clarification was sought and provided on the denominator column.

The Committee discussed;

- How the benchmarking data is made up (based on HE providers and the average position across the country). Whilst BCG has improved year on year it is considered that other institutions have improved more quickly. Caution was expressed in interpretation of the data against benchmark. It was agreed that the focus should be on areas flagged as a concern.
- The impact of one course on the metrics. The sample numbers were noted to be small and attention would be given to this.
- The decision not to submit an application in the current year. Modelled statistics will be available on subject level TEF in due course and the position will be monitored by the Executive in

advance of the anticipated launch in August 2019. The College has received presentations from other colleges who have achieved “gold” but based on small sample sizes.

- The need to monitor the planned actions.

Assurance was given that any actions to address issues raised in the current core metrics is included in the existing HE Quality Improvement Plan (“QIP”).

The report was noted.

The Committee thanked the Vice Principal for the update and she left the meeting.

QSA/5/19

Academic Risk

The Committee received an updated summary on the academic areas of the risk register and no significant changes in the risk profile were noted.

It was confirmed that the Risk Register had been reviewed by the Audit Committee.

The update was noted.

QSA/6/19

Quality Dashboard

The Committee received an updated quality dashboard which summarised academic performance against agreed KPIs.

The Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching and Assessment provided highlights including;

- Numbers at the Bedford Sixth Form (“BSF”) and publication of opportunities to schools.
- Apprenticeships and performance against the picture of national decline and the reduction in work with subcontractors.
- HE numbers and actions being taken to further develop the provision.
- The outcomes of the First Impressions Survey and the positive score on likelihood to recommend.

- The attendance target with action plans to address particular issues and the parameters for a red rating. The Committee discussed the potential to split the assessment on attendance by mode of delivery, for example adults, 16-18 etc.
- Retention

The Committee discussed;

- ***Need for further context on the figures presented, for example how the numbers relate to previous years.(PW)*** It was confirmed that the benchmarking is against the targets set out in the current strategic plan.
- Requirement for key reasons for trends and performance to be included in the reports.
- Impact of change in apprenticeships from frameworks to standards.
- Any potential reputational issues resulting from the activities of subcontractors. The recent ESFA audit activity on this area was explained.
- The educational evidence available to support the setting of the attendance target, ***the split between cohorts will be taken forward.***(PW)
- Patterns in retention. Work is being done to resolve anomalies, for example the delay in claiming short course achievement was explained as due to the delay in the external assessment.
- A level average and the work being done to improve the average grade.
- Timely achievement and work being done to resolve historic issues relating to apprenticeships. Assurance was given that training coordinators are now focussed on timely achievement and evidence requirements.
- Relationship between First Impressions Survey and achievement. It was highlighted that current feedback from employers is positive and there is

an upward trend in achievement. Issues on the duration of apprenticeships has resulted in legacy issues. Assurance was given that actions in place will have the required impact.

- Additional information from exam mock data for English and maths will be available at the next meeting.
- The rationale for grading the First Impressions results and the statistical validity of the results. Assurance was given at College level but a further review is being carried out to ensure confidence at department level.
- Student unemployment rate, the impact of combining Bedford and Tresham and relationship with the curriculum.
- The employer satisfaction results for 2017-2018 and comments. It was highlighted that the scores represent an improvement on the previous year. Anecdotal evidence was presented that employers are more likely to provide comments where the College is responsive to negative feedback and that the College is responsive. The 2018-2019 results will be out in March

It was recognised, following the recent development day, that the targets in the current strategic plan are recognised as requiring review.

In summary the Committee was satisfied that the data broadly confirmed their existing understanding of performance against current targets, including particular challenges in relation to HE recruitment and some areas of apprenticeship achievement. The Committee was content with proposed management action to address the issues raised.

The report was noted.

QSA/7/19

IT Strategy

The Director of Information and Learning Technologies attended and presented the draft IT Strategy. The Committee noted that the document was intended to be primarily an annual update on the current Strategy and 5 year plan to support the College's Strategic Plan. The Resources Committee had previously considered the document and implications for business systems.

The Director highlighted;

- The focus on technical infrastructure post-merger.
- The impact of merger on IT resources and the differences between campuses on merger. Provision has now been aligned and minimum standards established.

In particular in terms of teaching and learning the focus has been;

- Equivalent provision across sites for all students.
- Work with teaching teams to identify common suites of software
- Consultation with teaching staff on sustainable teaching resources that ensure functionality and quality of experience.
- Relationship between learning platforms and courses with the aim to achieve consistency in approach.
- Pilot activities on lesson capture and immersive learning.

The Committee discussed;

- The financial resources required to maintain the current position and the relationship with quality. It was explained that the MTFS has not yet been approved for 2019-2020 onwards but that provision is being made for an increased allocation. The focus on longevity of resources and management of finances was highlighted.

- The identification of key risks and role of Resources Committee in monitoring the risks and the relationship between the IT risk register and the overall risk register. Assurance was given that departmental registers are reviewed.
- Security was considered and assurance given that the IT department are working to standardise security and network protection. Steps are being taken to monitor cyber essentials and external monitoring will be considered in due course. Formal penetration testing of the system will take place in April. Encryption has also been rolled out to enhance data security.
- The requirement for measures of student and staff satisfaction. It was pointed out that the Spring survey seeks views on IT. Teaching staff are encouraged to log student issues to avoid delay in resolution. A working group has been established with teaching staff participation to review initiatives and provide input on the IT strategy.
- The Chair shared the feedback that had already been provided to the IT department.
- Communication across sites in relation to changes of equipment, upgrades and external service interruptions. Staff will be reminded to log issues with the IT Support so they can be properly monitored and tracked.

The Committee acknowledged the issues which need to be considered in relation to a longer term and more comprehensive strategy that will be needed post-2021.

These include; incorporating user feedback, developing output based performance indicators and identifying the resourcing required to meet future needs.

The update was noted.

The Director of Information and Learning Technologies was thanked and left the meeting.

Distance Learning, - scale, quality and opportunities

The Director of Adult and Community Learning attended to present the report on distance learning. The Committee noted that the review is currently limited to work book based AEB certificate programmes using Learning Curve materials, and some blended learning to support one element of the Access to HE Programme. The range of provision was outlined including;

- Distance learning NCFE (enrolments since 2017-2018 and impact on funding) positive achievement and retention.
- Relationship with online provision managed by the subcontractor.
- The content of the student pack.
- The relationship of distance learning students with BCG and assessment.
- Cost per learner and impact on staffing costs.
- Customer feedback based on staffing changes and how issues have been addressed.
- The potential for internal provision of BCG courses.
- Introduction of blended learning for access to HE and suitability for candidates.
- Provision of information advice and guidance.

The Committee discussed further;

- The relationship with the subcontractors and provision of materials.
- Development of an internal strategy on distance learning provision.
- The decision of directors to retain the provision within one department at the current time but to enhance the signposting to curriculum areas to enable greater access.

- The applicability of the provision and potential extension to other areas.
- The support available to students in terms of one to one tutorials, use of skype and potential for group tutorials.
- Offer of classroom based courses and ability to get social interaction with the blended learning model.

The Director is working closely with the Director of Sales and Marketing to develop products and branding across different regions.

It was acknowledged that distance learning provision may grow with consequent resourcing implications. The Committee concluded that there are currently no governance issues to address and that the robustness of the subcontractor was noted in terms of quality review.

The report was noted.

The Director was thanked for the report and left the meeting.

QSA/9/19

External assurance matrix and update on CIF

The Committee received and welcomed a revised compliance report against the new draft Ofsted Common Inspection Framework, and was assured that the new proposed Ofsted criteria were being met - including those in relation to governance.

The matrix also incorporates reference to other external assurance requirements relevant to BCG.

The Committee discussed the relevance of regulatory measures and criteria for awards and the ***context will be explained in future reports (RN)***.

The update was noted.

QSA/10/19

QIP progress report

The Committee received its regular update on progress in implementing the Quality Improvement Plan (“QIP”).

The Committee discussed in particular;

- Evidencing the understanding of British values, use of language by students
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- Embedding English and maths and promotion of E and D, sessions planned in golden hours

The Committee was assured that planned actions are being taken and that no major new issues have been identified.

The report was noted.

QSA/11/19

Academic progress review

The Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching and Assessment presented a report on academic performance in the current year, and noted that no new items of major concern have been identified.

Highlights of the report were provided and the Committee discussed;

- Predicted achievement and relationship with 19 plus students.
- Any patterns on achievement rates in particular departments. Assurance was given that there is no declining areas and that intervention plans are effective.
- The planned reliance of Ofsted on published data and work to get areas to focus on their results.
- Clarification on data and calculation based on actual student numbers.
- The relationship between types of provision, league tables, educational need and integrity in recruiting.

A further discussion will take place as and when the new Ofsted framework is formally approved.

The Committee further discussed;

- Aspirational target setting and progress monitoring.
- The requirement for direction of travel to be better articulated, the potential to rag rate against strategic aims and conformation to points picked up in action plans.
- The impact of merger on the overall profile of the College

The Committee observed that for future reports, the form of the report might be consistent with the tabular and RAG rated style of other reports, and also that integration with the regular quality dashboard report would be helpful to avoid duplication.

The report was noted.

QSA/12/19

Student Voice

The Committee received a report on the student first impressions survey, and was pleased that student satisfaction has generally improved. The form of tabular data presentation was welcomed.

The different methods of capturing student voice were outlined. The Student Union and representative forums have been established and student representatives have reported on Prevent and British Value and inductions.

The apprenticeship survey results were outlined. An action plan has been devised to tackle less positive areas.

The Committee sought clarification on;

- The perceived inconsistencies between satisfaction of students being positive and timely achievement scores and improvement.
- The role of the Student Union and apprenticeship officers.
- The need to prioritise areas for improvement and close the feedback loop.

- Departmental feedback
- Benchmarking through QDP against other colleges within that group and how it operates.
- The requirement for the Corporation to approve the Student Union Constitution.
- Clarification on criteria and how individuals identify with questions and confirmation that the survey is statistically valid.

The QSA noted that measures to enhance further student satisfaction were contained in the SAR and QIP.

QSA/13/19

Observations

The Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching & Assessment presented the report and highlighted the work being done in terms of observations and learning walks. The Committee noted that observations internally were measured against the criteria of effective or requires further development. It was however clarified that 93% of those completed were considered either 'good' or 'outstanding' in Ofsted terms.

The Committee discussed how observations are carried out and reliance on the data. Assurance was given that the process is moderated.

Only three subject areas appeared to raise significant concerns, and the Committee was assured that these are the subject of current management action. It was reiterated that observations are moderated.

The work of teams to develop teaching and learning was highlighted.

The Committee discussed;

- The correlation between “effective” and “good and outstanding” in past analysis.
- The change in the mode of observations to ungraded and impact on staff. Anecdotal evidence was received that there is a positive perception of development.

- The identification of areas for intervention on the table.
- The effectiveness of embedding Equality, diversity and inclusion and interpretation of observers. The Committee discussed the level of expectations, how opportunities to embed learning can be identified and how it can be monitored.

The report was noted.

QSA/14/19

Professional development and sharing good practice

The Committee received two reports;

- Firstly, a note on sharing good practice (which it had previously requested) The Committee welcomed that this is now taking place regularly across BCG.
- Secondly, it received for comment a draft Professional Development Policy, which was welcomed subject to minor proposed changes.

An update was given on the type of activity which has taken place to share good practice including peer on peer observing. Priorities have been identified as;

- CPD and sharing resources in golden hours to improve teaching and learning.
- Examples given in the report.
- Work with Moodle to increase virtual sharing.
- Development of the staff conference.

Members of the Committee were invited to attend learning lunches due to take place on 3 and 4 April **and the Director of Governance will email details to the Committee** (RN).

It was noted that the Professional Development Policy does not require board approval but is for information.

It was confirmed that there will be provision for research or vocational training days. Research is being done around the impact of vocational training.

The Committee sought clarification on the relationship between appraisal and development and future plans.

The report was noted.

QSA/15/19

Influence of Social Media on student wellbeing

The Chair of the Committee presented a paper summarising developing research literature and work of parliamentary committees on the subject.

The Committee receives an annual report from the student services team.

Following discussions the potential actions of the Committee were outlined;

- Support student support team to carry out research on the threat and guidance for students
- Wait until parliamentary reviews are published and review the issues again.

Current work being carried out by BCG was outlined including;

- Work in respect of on line safety and protection.
- Designated people from safeguarding team participating in online training and informing whether the current work is sufficient.
- Protection for staff in terms of professional boundaries policies.
- Potential for student union to carry out research

Further strands of work being considered include;

- Research on the impact of social media on academic attainment.
- Availability of resources and signposting and the potential to limit activity.

The Executive were invited to undertake a small research study into the addictive effects of some social media on students, and to report back to QSA in 9-12 months on any proposed actions depending on the evidence collected.

The Committee noted the work being carried out and the assurance given on the approach being taken by BCG.

QSA/16/19

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2018 were noted to be an accurate record of the meeting.

The action log was noted.

QSA/17/19

Next Meeting Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 5 June 2019 at 1pm