

**Minutes of the
Quality, Standards and Achievement Committee
Tuesday 15 October 2019
Tower Board Room, Bedford**

Present: Sheila Selwood (Chair)
Richard Dimbleby
Ian Pryce (IP)
Shaun Wilson (SW)

In attendance: Georgina Ager (Vice Principal)
Em Lowe (Vice Principal)
Rachel Nicol (Clerk to the Corporation)

Petra Williams (Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching and Assessment)

Action

QSA/33/19 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Noel Gray, Mark Lawson and Sulaman Sunny

QSA/34/19 Declarations of Interest

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

QSA/35/19 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

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

Academic Risk

The risk register annex to the report was tabled. The following was highlighted;

- Awareness of T levels and plans to brief governors further on 2 March 2020 development day.
- Move from 4 VP to 3 VP structure and interim appointments made to the management team.

The Committee discussed;

- The focus of the Committee on the academic risks.
- Need for additional analysis following review on C2 item 7.
- Need to review the narrative on the risk register, remove any out of date commentary and consider how the movement in risks scores is articulated. The Executive are responsible for adjusting the narrative and identifying mitigating actions.
- Monitoring and intervention guidance in HE and likely impact with narrative to be reviewed.

It was agreed that the Executive will be asked to review the risk register and update it to reflect the current position and enable monitoring.

The Committee further discussed;

- D2 and recruitment of staff and the actions taken to ensure positive recruitment. It was explained that a recruitment manager is in place and has reviewed the processes, means and scope of advertisement activity which has had a positive impact. Areas where there are known shortages of skills and actions taken were highlighted.
- Senior team, noted to be complete with recruitment of HE director and interim appointment in respect of adult provision.

The report was noted.

QSA/37/19

Quality Dashboard and narrative report by exception (PW)

The Committee commended the positive use of the report front sheets and the effectiveness of the summaries of planned actions.

The inclusion of targets was appreciated. It was explained that some elements of the dashboard will be presented at the full board meeting. Attendance and retention will be included on future reports further into the academic year.

The Committee was updated on the current position on enrolment and it was agreed that if numbers are considered to be indicators of underlying quality issues reports will be brought back to the Committee.

The Committee reviewed in particular apprenticeships achievement and GCSE Maths and English achievement. It was clarified that where GCSE Maths and English results were under national rates it related to the high grades. It was explained that performance in Maths had improved compared to the previous year. The English results were noted to be impacted by the grade boundaries. Planned actions will be reviewed in the Quality Improvement Plans presented with the SAR at the next meeting before the SAR is presented to the Board in December.

It was reiterated that the data is provisional.

The Committee further discussed;

- The vocational point score and the need to know and understand the national rates.

The report was noted.

Ofsted inspection implications for QSA

An overview of the Ofsted inspection had been presented to the full Board at their Development Day in October. The Vice Principal summarised the highlights for the Committee, including key actions. The key issues and actions are included in department action plans and in the overall QIP monitored by the Committee. It was agreed that the focus of the Committee will be to monitor the actions for completion and impact.

The overall focus and progress in provision areas post-merger is considered positive with no unexpected outcomes of inspection.

The potential impact of the inspection framework on future merger considerations was discussed. The focus on variability of provision and the challenges faced by a large Group was noted and will continue to be monitored.

The Committee recognised the strong performance of the College and the progress since merger, noting the different starting points at merger. The ability of the teams to respond and provide the required information was particularly commended.

The report was noted.

Stakeholder feedback

The Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching and Assessment presented the report focussed on the National Student Survey.

It was clarified that the report included Bedford, Tresham, Shuttleworth and only covers HE students.

Departments had analysed their own scores and actions have been planned, with further scrutiny and deep dive activities by the Quality team planned. It was explained that the results show an improvement on previous surveys and are also positive in relation to local competitors.

The Committee discussed in particular;

- Learning resources and the impact on the student experience. Journals and access to other e resources have received investment and quiet study areas have been created. Opening of Learning Resources centres.
- IT facilities; investment has been made and awareness of actions taken is increasing.
- Perception of HE students and expectations.
- Balance between provision of support and encouraging independence of learners.
- The overall response rate to the survey
Communication of changes to students; It was explained that there are policy restrictions on changes to minimise the impact on the students.
- The correlation between expected verses actual responses.
- The intelligence provided by student focus group meetings with student representatives 3 times a year to look at issues.
- Work done on teaching to ensure it is stimulating. The improving trend was noted but the College is looking at further actions in the Quality Improvement Plans to develop further.
- Whether there are significant differences between subjects and campuses.
- Further work being done to assess the impact of actions being taken.
- A further review by Executive on areas impacted by changes in courses and teachers and communication.

- Previous issues identified on social sciences and agriculture; actions taken on staff development and improving trajectory noted.

The Committee noted that an IT Strategy is being developed for board review later in the year and the Committee will continue to monitor teaching and learning IT and other resource provision.

The report was noted.

The Interim Director of Adult Provision joined the meeting

QSA/40/19 Devolution of Skills

The Vice Principal responsible for Adult provision explained the background to devolution and the relationship with subcontracting. The risks to College provision from local authorities devolving budgets was explained.

The following were highlighted;

- Potential for selective increase of subcontracting if required and assurance on the approach.
- Work being done with learning centres and in respect of distance learning.
- Decision not to continue with Greater London devolved contract in future years. The priority in that area was considered to be with London providers. Continuation with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. The financial implications and actions to mitigate impact of changes were discussed.
- Complexity of managing contracts and requirement for resource given the power of authorities to set own rules and the uncertainties around future devolvement.

The Committee endorsed the approach being taken and noted the report.

QSA/41/19

Review of the Adult Education Budget Strategy

The report was presented. It was noted that the Committee were being asked to discuss the Adult Education Budget Strategy as part of the Curriculum Strategy.

Changes were highlighted and the Committee discussed as follows;

- SEMLEP skills strategy and focus on the ageing population
- Partnership working on development of English and maths projects, designed around functional skills. It was noted that a large number of individuals have viewed the online resources but there has been limited conversion onto funded courses.
- Development of distance learning and leisure market.
- The national retraining scheme and government review of L4 and L5 courses.

Individual strategies and monitoring frameworks will be developed to enable the Committee to monitor the impact of the strategy going forwards.

The Committee was content to recommend the Strategy to the Board although noted that it forms part of the overall curriculum strategy.

Post meeting note: The Chair and Clerk will review the requirements for the review of individual strategies by the Board.

The Interim Director of Adult Provision left the meeting.

Indicative Achievement Data for 2018-2019

The report was presented.

The main impact on L3 was in respect of the A level achievement and relationship with AS levels. The move to 2 year programmes has impacted retention. Achievement was noted to relate to retention rather than pure grades.

It was explained that retention across the Group was lower than in 2017-2018. The results were also impacted by the number of qualifications offered.

It was agreed that the relationship between loss of learners in first 6 weeks and after the 6 weeks should be explored.

The Committee asked what an appropriate target for retention should be. It was recognised that moving targets are used relevant to the time of year (ie retention is expected to reduce as the academic year progresses) to ensure monitoring at regular intervals and early identification of issues. The planned impact is that interventions will be initiated sooner based on a higher initial target. The impact on data was outlined and being reviewed but the Committee supported the priority for the College being to identify the best programme for the students.

It was agreed that **targets will be included in future reports**. The monitoring is against the final output last year rather than at the same point in the last year. The ILR has not yet been finalised. The Committee was satisfied that management are taking appropriate actions.

The report was noted.

The Director of Apprenticeships joined the meeting

Professional Development

The Committee was reminded that they had received a detailed report on Professional Development in the previous year and the paper presented provided an update on development activity since 2018-2019.

The Committee discussed in particular;

- Positive feedback on the staff conference and the intention to follow a similar format going forward.
- Qualification on the reference to “most” managers going through 360 degree reviews.
- How the focus of the strategy is determined; the commitment to staff conferences, balance with College priorities, focus on HE and apprenticeship delivery, previous conversations around management training requirements and mandatory training. Current focus on mental health training and impact on students and staff.
- Common induction for all staff; explanation of big picture event and teacher toolkit training and how it is approached for experienced and new teachers.
- Further thought being given to future planning.
- Work on technical updating and release of teaching staff to spend time on technical updating.
- An explanation of golden hours, each curriculum department having a designated golden hour with a focus on the student experience and learning, teaching and assessment. How Group priorities filter through the levels.
- Planned bespoke training programme for directors.

The report was noted

Internal audit report on the quality of apprenticeships

The Chair introduced the report and explained the audit activity in the previous year with external consultants. It had been agreed not to circulate the detailed reports but the Director had been asked to provide a comprehensive summary under key headings.

The Board had received a briefing at their development day in October and the report to the Committee was noted to be an update.

The Director of Apprenticeships outlined the reports and progress made since the summer which had been evidenced during inspection.

It was noted that there was no plan to duplicate work and that the Audit Committee will be required to review the reports and the recommendations.

It was agreed that the committee should propose that areas of planned actions for monitoring will then be allocated to relevant committees.

It is anticipated that the Audit Committee will focus on actions surrounding systems, process and compliance and QSA on actions impacting teaching and learning.

The Committee commended the detail in the action plan and the work planned and discussed;

- Monitoring of relationships with employers.
- Lessons learnt from the audit and the plan for Executive to focus on a wider range of indicators
- Complexity of the processes and resource required.
- Need for clarity around roles and responsibilities internally.
- Audit focus based on meetings and questions rather than the student experience.
- Likely time line for actions to be implemented; issues already resolved were highlighted and impact seen.
- End point assessment and need for clarity of process. Further consideration needed in respect of how this will be resourced.

- A wider review is being carried out around the apprenticeship and exams team.
- Plans to carry out a further review at a future date. The current action plan is timed to complete by December.
- Skills scans and the relationship with funding rules and further actions generated as actions are completed.
- The continuation actions and amalgamation within the Quality Improvement Plan.
- The work done to update the internal apprenticeship KPIs.

The Committee proposed that they review top level outstanding actions at future meetings. An addendum of the key points will be added to the QIP.

The Committee further discussed;

- Potential structural reviews and the outcomes of visits to other institutions.
- The perception of Heads and management of priorities in relation to apprenticeships.

The Committee noted the proposed actions and endorsed the approach being taken.

The Committee noted the position on the risk register and assurance on progress in respect of the management actions.

The report was noted

The Director of Apprenticeships left the meeting.

Office for Students; Access and participation

The Vice Principal responsible for HE introduced the plan and explained the challenges encountered in achieving approval from the OfS.

The Access & Participation Plan (the Plan) was approved by written resolution on 24 June 2019 following circulation of a paper and the Plan on 17 June 2019. The written resolution was noted at the 11 July 2019 Corporation meeting as part of the governance update. The Committee noted and endorsed that any amendments required by the Office for Students as part of the approval process could be authorised by the Accounting Officer.

The plan does not now need to be submitted for another 5 years and there are no conditions attached.

Attention was drawn to Annex B and the expectations on updates required by the OfS. Assurance was given that action 1iii has been satisfied.

Monitoring reports will be based on the planned actions in Annex B. ***It was agreed that reporting should be included with the HE QIP report but with conditions highlighted.***

An annual assurance statement will be presented to the November meeting.

An update will be given at the Spring meeting.

The Committee further discussed;

- Information being collected for evaluation and to inform the curriculum strategy. In particular the College is focusing on why information is monitored and the evidence to show impact.

The report was noted.

QSA/46/19

Business planner and action log

The Business plan has been substantially reviewed by the Chair, the VP, the Director of Quality, teaching, learning and assessment and the Director of Governance & Clerk to the Corporation.

The Committee noted the work done and it was agreed that RN will amend and recirculate.

The action log will be updated to only include outstanding actions. The usefulness will continue to be monitored.

The Annual report was approved to be presented to the Board and the action plan will be checked to ensure all priorities are included.

Next meeting

28 November 2019 1.30pm Kettering Board Room