

**Minutes of the
Quality, Standards and Achievement Committee
Thursday 27 November 3.30pm
Video conference - Microsoft Teams**

Present: Richard Dimbleby (Chair)
Melissa Peacock (MP)
Ian Pryce (IP)
Allan Schofield (Asch)
Sheila Selwood (SS)
Luisa Vecchio (LV)

In attendance: Georgina Ager (Vice Principal)
John Guiney (Head of Quality)
Em Lowe (Vice Principal)
Rachel Nicol (Director of Governance & Clerk to the Corporation)
Petra Williams (Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching and Assessment)

QSA/33/20 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Sharon De Leonardis.

QSA/34/20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from those present relevant to the matters on the agenda.

QSA/35/20 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

The Committee was informed that Sulaman Sunny had resigned from the Corporation.

The Student Voice action plan had been circulated and was noted by the Committee. A full report will be received in the Spring term.

The Committee asked what “Planet e stream” is and it was confirmed that this is a microsoft app which can be linked to Teams, use You Tube or to a teaching tool called Edit.

QSA/36/20 TBCG SAR

The Committee thanked the Quality department for all the work that had been carried out in putting together a comprehensive review and noted that outstanding actions are set out in the Quality Improvement Plan.

The Committee questioned the nature and progress around the planned action to improve the productivity of staff. ***Information from the People Strategy and on student destinations are still to be added to the final document.***

The outdated reference to HEFCE funding will be removed and replaced with reference to the OfS

The reference to the Search & Governance working group will be amended to the Community Engagement working group.

The Committee raised concerns on a number of areas where a 3 year downward trend was indicated, particularly the dips on timely achievement. It was considered that current achievement cannot be compared on a consistent basis in the current year as a result of Covid, in particular completion of qualifications was noted to be a factor in vocational area achievement. The Director of Quality is supporting areas to improve overall achievement and manage the impact of Covid and further analysis will be carried out to ensure areas requiring improvement are highlighted.

It was agreed that further analysis of EDI data is required to establish whether Covid has impacted in different ways in relation to characteristics.

The Committee sought the views of management in making a qualitative assessment of the current position in relation to previous years. The relationship between the Ofsted assessment in September and the SAR was discussed. The challenges in moving from good to outstanding across a large group were recognised. Funding and political challenges for apprenticeships were noted. The Quality Improvement Plan “QIP” provides a high-level summary of the planned actions.

The Committee was pleased to note the strength of the current SAR process following significant work over the last few years. The allocation of actions at different levels and potential impact on success was questioned. It was noted that the actions will be led by directors but actions filtered into area and departmental QIPs. The SAR process itself is noted to start at the department level but full circulation and feedback will be looked at. ***The need to review the movement from “good” to “brilliant” in a separate exercise was highlighted.***

The Committee commended the staff for the recent external recognition as FE College of the Year at the TES awards.

The SAR and QIP were noted and will be recommended to the Corporation.

QSA/37/20 HE presentation

The Vice Principal responsible for HE gave a presentation to deal with the issues raised by the Committee in their meeting in October, in particular on context and more information on the variation in feedback between subjects.

The presentation included:

- Data overview and context in terms of numbers within the scope of the NSS survey in relation to the overall HE provision, 2 courses accounting for the

majority of responses. 107 HE students on degree courses were eligible to complete the NSS of whom 73 completed it. This NSS process does not apply to students on Higher National programmes.

- Split on satisfaction between mature and younger students.
- Highest participation rate in the areas with the lower scores.
- Illustrations of higher and lower performing areas and how the data is published where there are sufficient responses.
- Causes identified by an analysis of comments and discussions with area directors on the problems within those areas. Examples included staffing, expectations, assessment and learning resources, general environment and ability to resolve concerns once raised.

The QIP approach to manage the issues was outlined including the focus on priority areas, targeted quality intervention and actions to improve the visibility of student feedback.

The Committee sought to clarify the criteria of students covered by the NSS survey and proportion in relation to the overall HE numbers although it was acknowledged that the results are considered statistically valid. Feedback from HE students outside the survey was confirmed to come from focus groups and other student surveys which confirmed satisfaction. Future focus groups will be run by independent directors. The need for action and consistency at course level was noted to be key to resolving some issues but with other areas being outside the control of delivery teams.

The Head of Quality confirmed the internal survey is taking place to assess the current position and feedback will be available in the Spring term.

The Committee raised further questions on the potential for an external quality review. It was noted that the NSS results could trigger a Quality review with QAA but that the Group are working on resolving internal issues to ensure the student experience. The reputational impact was noted to be a risk for some subject areas on recruitment and could impact on potential for future partnerships.

The report was noted.

QSA/38/20 HE Partnerships

Confidential minute

QSA/39/20 HE SED and QIP

The Committee expressed disappointment in the quality of the HE SED document. This was accepted by the Vice Principal and in the absence of the Director of HE it was agreed that feedback will be provided and the document will be resubmitted in due course.

The Committee asked that trend data be included on achievement in the revised report.

Strengths in terms of academic standards were noted with the acknowledgement that improvements are required to the student experience.

Assurance was given that the Director of HE is managing issues on the ground well but support will be given to ensure the document is to a standard that enables reflection on the position. The Committee supported the intention to align the HE SED and QIP with the methodology used in the College SAR. It was agreed that gradings will be removed as not required and that the focus will move away from processes and onto outcomes.

The document will be redrafted.

The QIP was reviewed and the Committee sought clarification around the comments on staffing. ***The Committee explored how the need to adapt the HE culture needs to be reflected in the document and the Vice Principal will look to put this back in.***

The Audit Committee had received an internal audit report on OfS registration and had reflected on a recommendation around consumer protection law. At the time of registration condition C1 was satisfied. However, although low risk the team has agreed to review this area by June 2021 ***The Vice Principal agreed to update the risk register to reflect the NSS score and discussions.***

QSA/40/20 Quality Strategy

The document was highlighted with a noted emphasis on impact over compliance. 3i reviews were explained.

The heading after para 31 and 32 was questioned and it was agreed this will be removed. Progress in relation to the Strategy will be reported as part of the academic reviews.

The Quality Strategy is recommended to the Corporation for approval.

QSA/41/20 Academic Risk

An update was given on the impact of Covid on the student experience: measures are working well, case numbers are small and transmission has been confirmed by PHE as community related.

Regular updates are being circulated to staff and students and virtual events have been extremely successful with applications being up on same time last year.

Circa 900 students had sat GCSE re-sits which was twice the number in previous years. The exams had been managed on a socially distanced basis with external venues being used as required.

Due to the national security level increasing to severe response plans are being reviewed and training provided as appropriate.

Work is being done on the risk register to ensure the identification and articulation of new risks with the impact of Covid on apprenticeships being highlighted.

The Committee expressed the need for more cross referencing in the report to link the issues with comments. ***An extract of the risk register itself will be circulated.***

The Chair of the Committee will liaise with the Chair of Audit to ensure all relevant risks are reviewed.

The report was noted.

QSA/42/20 Quality dashboard

The Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching & Assessment provided highlights on the report including overall satisfaction.

Apprenticeship achievement was noted to be down on NART and the Committee had already discussed concerns about the impact of Covid and the national policies impacting apprenticeships. The move from frameworks to standards and how achievement is presented in this area was also highlighted.

It was agreed that EDI gaps need more analysis. There has been no decline in the position but the team are focused on closing the gaps.

FE achievement in relation to the national average was discussed and it was agreed that this will be reviewed when the MIDAS report is available.

QSA/43/20 Quality and Apprenticeships

The Director of Apprenticeships attended to present the report highlighting the internal changes, key actions taken and progress.

Actions highlighted as amber are relatively new or where Covid has had an impact.

Key areas included the percentage of apprentices accessing additional support. Software has been purchased which identifies a broad spectrum of learning needs in individuals. Implementation has been commenced this term but as day release has been delayed the number of apprentices assessed is currently small. The system will be monitored for effectiveness as it is rolled out more widely. Different measures have been put in place to enable apprentices to access the system remotely.

The risks to the College and disruption to apprentices caused by Covid were identified.

The planned changes to processes for enrolment and withdrawals have been established. A higher withdrawal rate is noted due to impact of Covid on the labour market.

The Committee questioned whether there is national policy or a fund to assist apprentices to continue in education when employment is lost. It was noted that the ESFA have modified funding rules to expand the length of time an apprentice can be out of a job. Internally all withdrawals have been referred to the Business development and employability teams to provide support.

95% apprentices during the second lockdown are actively engaging with the College.

The Committee appreciated the report and considered how the impact on apprenticeships of the current climate is best monitored through the Committee.

The Committee further discussed whether there is any market intelligence on the likely numbers of apprenticeships. The impact of unemployment generally and attitude of employers was highlighted. SEMLEP data is however showing an upward trend to 2022.

Changes from 2021 where every employer has to reserve funds from the levy fund were noted to be complicated with a risk of increasing barriers to employers claiming.

The report was noted.

QSA/44/20 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 13 October 2020 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

The Committee members were thanked for their attendance.

The annual report of the Committee was approved for presentation to the Corporation

QSA/45/20 Next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Thursday 11 March.