

**Minutes of the
Quality, Standards and Achievement Committee
Thursday 8 June 2021
Video conference - Microsoft Teams**

Present: Richard Dimpleby (Chair)
Sharon De Leonardis (SDL)
Ian Pryce (IP)
Lauren Newman (LN)
Allan Schofield (Asch)
Luisa Vecchio (LV)

In attendance: Karen Campbell (Vice Principal)
John Guiney (Head of Quality)
Em Lowe (Vice Principal)
Alex Mortby (Director of HE)
Rachel Nicol (Director of Governance & Clerk to the Corporation)
Petra Williams (Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching and Assessment)
Faye Williams (Director of Adult & Community Learning)

QSA/15/21 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence have been received from Sheila Selwood and Melissa Peacock.

QSA/16/21 Declarations of Interest

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

QSA/17/21 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

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

The HE SED has now been completed and reviewed by the Chair. ***The document will be sent out after the meeting for information.***

QSA/18/21 Academic Risk Register

Vice Principal Em Lowe presented the report. The Committee congratulated Em Lowe for being shortlisted as FE leader of the year.

The launch of the Research College Group and educational leadership was highlighted and the Board had received a presentation prior to the meeting.

Academic progress is positive.

There has been some discussion in the sector around results publication which may include functional skills.

Covid numbers are low and Bedford Borough Council and Public Health England guidance continues to be followed.

It was explained that the upward movement in school starting salaries may impact on recruitment of staff at the Bedford Sixth Form in particular due to the candidate pool.

Assurance was given that the publicity around Covid in Bedford schools has not had a negative impact on the College.

The AoC survey on lost learning and the College's participation were discussed, including the scope of the review. The College's retention and achievement performance, with the exception of functional skills, is positive. The impact on high grades is not currently known. The potential for November resits was raised and numbers are being monitored. Additional support for extra tuition has been confirmed by the government and the Executive will consider the strategy relating to this funding. It is however anticipated that the main focus will be on maths and literacy skills. Additional induction and assessment is planned for students joining in September with study skills packs being provided via schools.

Recruitment on T levels progress was discussed including any anticipated diversion of L3 students to T levels. Students will be assessed to ensure they are on the most appropriate course for them. Work is being done with stakeholders to ensure the potential of T levels as a pathway is fully understood.

The report was noted

IIQSA/19/21 QIP monitoring report

The Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching and Assessment presented the report.

Progress was good. Maths and English attendance gap (compared to the main programme attendance) remains a concern. Timely achievement has been impacted by practical elements of courses but mitigating actions taken to ensure students are supported for completion in the current year. Activity in enhancement was outlined, including virtual events.

The Committee asked how plans for next year take into account the attendance gap for Maths and English. Initiatives were outlined, including students supporting campaigns. It is hoped that the return to face to face teaching will assist with this.

The Century Tech project outcomes and impact of work in small groups will be analysed in due course. The Disciplinary policy has also been reviewed to support the management of attendance.

The Committee raised the issue of management of withdrawals of apprenticeships as a result of Covid, where there is a change of employer or loss of job. Many withdrawals have been noted to have a positive destination and others directed to adult provision, distance learning and other career opportunities.

It was highlighted that the Apprenticeship Recruitment Team has linked with the Business Development Team and the process is being reviewed to ensure robust advice is provided to students.

The Committee asked how the compliance rate around recording of enhancement is being tackled. Assurance was given that activity has taken place and completion is being picked up in curriculum area meetings. Recording of activity is being followed by the Quality Team.

The report was noted.

QSA/20/21 HE QIP monitoring report

The Director of HE presented the report and confirmed a 62% response rate for the NSS survey. Example checks are being carried out and results will be published in early July. Internally, a number of actions remain under review but will be completed when the results are known.

The Committee raised the issue that a lot of the actions have been put in place but understood that the measures relate to NSS outcomes so it is considered prudent to wait for publication.

The terminology used on page 10 around BAME and the need to change it to refer to ethnic minority or diverse groups was raised. It was noted that BAME is used by OfS but this will be fed back.

The response rate and slight decrease on the previous year was questioned. Further work is being done to increase engagement next year with adherence to the controls that are in place to ensure the integrity of the NSS survey.

The report was noted

QSA/21/21 Quality assurance of apprenticeships

An audit has recently taken place on the quality of apprenticeships on the end to end process. The audit was carried out remotely and included email documents and interviews. The key scope areas and recommendations were outlined. It was confirmed that all actions have now been addressed. There was a focus on monitoring of completion and any resulting delays due to Covid. Aston

apprenticeships post recruitment and sign up were included within the scope. Recruitment and sign up will be picked up in more detail in the Mock Funding audit.

The Committee noted positive progress.

The Committee questioned whether there are any allowances around timely achievement in light of Covid. Where apprentices were able to remain in learning but not able to attend workplaces the College decided to support apprentices to continue learning rather than utilise breaks in learning to ensure apprentices remained supported and motivated.

Further work and priorities were raised. The focus is on the refinement and centralisation of delivery teams, inducting newer staff, training and harmonisation of process to ensure the curriculum delivery and apprenticeship teams operate well together.

The process for quality assurance around Aston, as a subsidiary company and delivery partner, was discussed.

The report was noted

QSA/22/21 Early leavers report (42 day leavers)

The Executive Director of Sales and Marketing presented the report.

The key findings were summarised including:

- Increase in conversion rates from applicants to enrolment, (believed to be an impact of Covid and lower numbers of available jobs). There is no central data on colleges and conversion is measured in different ways by different colleges.
- Growth in applications, apart from the Kettering campus where the position is being analysed in more detail in terms of subject areas and competition.
- Differentials between counties and work being carried out with directors.
- 42 day leaver trends.
- Inability to report on non-starters due to enrolment for 2020-2021. This will be reported on with the new system implemented for 2021-2022

The types of applicants, applications for more than one course and relationship with conversion rates continues to be explored. Peer review observations have been carried out on the whole journey from application to enrolment and starting, including work on the interview process to further support conversion. Comparisons are being made across counties by subject area to analyse differentials. The overall report was noted to be positive.

Further work is also being carried out on different demographics and neighborhoods. It is hoped this can be shared with the Board to support strategy planning days.

The report was noted

The Director of Sales and Marketing was thanked for the report and left the meeting.

The Director of Apprenticeships left the meeting.

QSA/23/21 Employer engagement plan

Vice Principal Karen Campbell presented the report. The plan is based around the Skills for Jobs White Paper and the work being done to ensure a more of a collaborative relationship with employers. It is considered that the amalgamation of Business Development and the Apprenticeships team will support the plan.

The Committee raised the local skills improvement plans and it was confirmed that the College is involved in the SEMLEP plans and consultations.

The need to articulate the local position, directly reference the white paper and relate risk to the issues in the plan was raised. The Committee further raised the issue as to whether and how SMEs can be supported and how the College plans to engage with SMEs in the future.

The reference to 10% with respect to achievement rates was discussed and it was confirmed this relates to the top 10% in the National Achievement Rate Tables (“NART”) for apprenticeships. The Executive will look in further detail on how to articulate this, looking at 2018-2019 NART and other colleges.

The Committee considered whether there is or should be a focus on particular employer types. Further work will be done to refine this.

Reports planned for impact measures and targets will come to QSA.

Community engagement and its relationship to employer engagement was raised. Employers and non-employers in the community and the potential for work experience was considered. It was however acknowledged that there is a need for distinction.

The Committee was happy to support the plan outlined, subject to review of the areas outlined.

The report was noted.

QSA/24/21 Quality Dashboard and academic performance

The Director of Quality, Learning, Teaching and Assessment presented the report.

Positive results were noted in the Academic Progress survey.

Attendance and engagement continue to be monitored with some areas just below attendance targets but with engagement looking strong. It is not considered that there will be an impact on achievement (with the exception of functional skills)

Destinations and progress scores were noted to be positive with students on track for higher grades where expected.

The report was noted.

QSA/25/21 Stakeholder feedback report

First impressions and spring survey results were extremely strong both in terms of experience and feeling safe. Likelihood to recommend has been benchmarked against grade 2 and Collab colleges. Areas for development are being managed by Heads with support from the Quality team.

The student governor concurred with the statistics and the sense amongst students around good management by the College through difficult circumstances. Students enjoyed additional contact with each other through Teams to support learning. The Quality team agreed that they are looking to support the continuation of online activity where the experience has been positive.

The Committee discussed the year on year comparisons and the changes to the survey to reflect current circumstances.

The report was noted.

QSA/26/21 Student destinations

The research behind the report had been provided by external company QDP. The number of responses had been disappointing and particularly low. Further work is being done with QDP.

Positive progress, those going into paid employment or education in line with benchmarks available and those not in work and looking for employment were noted.

More work is being done to ensure individuals are supported into destinations of their choice.

The split of employment destinations between different categories and impact on pay was outlined. Destinations into education were primarily into Higher Education. Of those going to another FE provider and apprenticeships the Committee questioned whether a further break down is available.

The increased focus on destinations by external agencies will be monitored.

It was explained that the survey applies to adult learners as well as 16 to 19 learners and therefore there is a reference to senior roles.

The data will be split in future to take account of different curriculum areas and age groups.

The College is procuring the UCAS data report to look at where learners are progressed to and review continuation rates.

The report was noted.

QSA/27/21 Professional Development

The report was presented and outlined the theme for the Staff Conference in July.

A working group has been established and marketing are developing material to promote the conference. Activities were outlined and will include sessions around the culture and purpose of the College.

The Committee commended to the plan.

QSA/28/21 Centre assessed grades

The Head of Quality provided a verbal update on progress.

All departments (except one planned for tomorrow) have now met with Quality.

A robust quality assurance process has been put in place and evidence triangulated across different platforms.

Validated spreadsheets are then shared with Exams for further sharing on the awarding body portals. The Exams team are working through all the different awarding body portals.

Assurance was given that submission of TAG grades is on target and grades will be evidenced. Other assessment is also continuing with robust internal validation to support the external verification.

The Committee noted appreciation for all the additional work.

A central appeals line is being established to coordinate any appeals.

The update was noted.

QSA/29/21 OfS update

The Director of HE attended to present the report. The regulatory framework remains in force but is reduced. Reporting requirements remain in existence. Consultation is

ongoing in the Quality and Standards Review. More work is taking place on the National NSS survey.

It is anticipated that updates from the OfS will be ongoing. The College is involved in consultation where they can be.

The Annual report from the OfS was noted to have generated positive discussion around activity in HE.

The update was noted

QSA/30/21 Completion of assurance matrix

Assurance provided was noted.

QSA/32/21 Minutes and actions

The minutes of the meeting on 11 March 2021 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Thanks were recorded to all staff and students in the College for their hard work during a difficult year

QSA/33/21 Next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on a date to be confirmed in the Autumn term.