

Date: 20 June 2016
Venue: Board Room, City Campus

**Clerk to the
Corporation**
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Present: Seb Schmoller - Vice Chair (Chair of the meeting)
Jay Bhayani
James Bangert
Paul Corcoran
Pete Norton
Anne Wilson

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In attendance: Peter Harrison, Assistant Principal Planning and Curriculum Enhancement, for agenda item 8
Graeme Hathaway, Assistant Principal Learning Improvement & Innovation
Matt Newbould, Head of Quality Audit and Standards
Heather Smith, Executive Director and College Principal
James Smythe - Deputy College Principal
Darren Tidmarsh - Executive Director HR and SRIS
Oliver Tindall - Enterprise Development Manager for agenda item 5
Val Struggles - Clerk to the Governing Body

Action

16/3/1 Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Edward Highfield, Chris Linacre and John Timms.

16/3/2 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April and updated action record

1) Minutes
The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2) Minute 16/2/5: Governors' Engagement Programme
It was reported that some visits had taken place since the last meeting and in a few cases, due to the difficulty in finding mutually convenient times, visits will be arranged now in the Autumn term, i.e. once classes restart. Governors who had participated in recent visits provided positive feedback.

3) Action Plan
It was reported that in relation to the action from 23 November 2015 the Assistant Principal, Student Support, Inclusion and Progression will provide

**AP S,SI&P
Clerk**

the Clerk with details of the types of Equality and Diversity training available so that Governors can indicate their preference.

The action plan was noted and an updated version will be circulated for the next meeting.

Clerk

16/3/3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Oliver Tindall attended for the following item

16/3/4 Presentation on Fair Train (work experience)

In addition to the report circulated with the agenda, the Committee received a presentation during which the following issues were highlighted:

- i) To meet Ofsted and EFA requirements, all 16-18 students on full time programmes are expected to undertake a work placement outside of College, which provides them with a meaningful experience of the workplace. For some vocational courses (e.g. Health and Social Care) this is a mandatory element.
- ii) Following an audit in July 2015 the management and administration of work experience provision has been reviewed and developed to ensure that processes are continuously improved and good practice is consistent across the College. Processes have been streamlined and now provide staff, student and employers access to on-line material and improved communication. A key element is the individual tailoring of placements to match the needs of students with those of employers. The changes have improved both the preparation of employers and students, whilst at the same time there has been an increase in the number of placements completed from approx. 1,000 in 2014/15 to at least 2,100 in the current year and with a target of over 4,000 in 2016/17. A key challenge is the securing work experience placements for students on Entry level programmes.
- iii) During inspection, Ofsted's comments were positive with particular recognition given to the College's ability to analyse feedback received from employers, a number of whom offer students further placements or apprenticeships.
- iv) Governors expressed the view that from the employers' perspective, the quality of the College's approach when seeking placements will be important, particularly for SMEs who have not previously been involved with work experience or who receive several requests. It was clarified that the changes which have been implemented are designed to ensure that employers are well prepared and supported by the College both prior to and during a placement.
- v) It was noted that to date no issues have been raised by students and that their views will be sought through the Course Representative system.

The Committee

- i) thanked the Enterprise Development Manager and his team for the progress which has been made, particularly over the last 18 months.
- ii) Congratulated the College on achieving Bronze level accreditation from Fair Train, noting the intention to work towards achieving the Gold level accreditation together with the letter of commendation recognising the high quality work experience provision.

16/3/5 Post Inspection Action Plan 2015/16 (PIAP)

1 Feedback from the meeting with Ofsted's 'Support Inspector' held on 14 April 2016

The formal letter from Andrea Machell, HMI following her visit approximately 7 weeks after Inspection had been circulated to all Governors. In addition the College Principal provided verbal feedback highlighting the following:

- i) The visit had been helpful, providing ongoing challenge in terms of measuring and evidencing the impact of the PIAP. In preparation for the HMI's follow up visit in October, greater focus is being given to ensuring that the impact of action taken is monitored and supported by robust evidence. This will be a monitoring visit, the outcome of which will be published on Ofsted's website.
- ii) The HMI considered that the post-inspection actions are appropriate and that good progress is being made.
- iii) In response to a query, it was clarified that the College can request to be re-inspected at a time it considers to be appropriate but that the timing of this would be dependent on the 2015/16 success rates.

2 Update on action to address areas for improvement post-Ofsted

As an alternative to the RAG rated action plan considered at previous meetings, the report provided a narrative on the actions implemented since Inspection, under each of the main themes in the Ofsted report. The impact of actions will be continually assessed and as necessary changes will be made if the desired outcomes are not achieved.

During the presentation and discussion the following points were highlighted:

- i) Effectiveness of Leadership and Management -

Work is continuing to make improvements to ensure data is robust and accessible, which will enable Governors to better monitor the impact of the action plan.

Members questioned how Governors can be assured that the actions are appropriate in terms of addressing the areas for improvement. In response it was reported that in supporting the College, the HMI will challenge whether the actions / interventions are having the required impact and that the next report to the Committee will include a commentary, supported by evidence and data, to indicate both the impact and how this is being measured.

College Principal

ii) Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment -

Departments have access to internal and external support to enable them to achieve improvements and share of good practice. The effectiveness of the 'Mini Learning Project' pilot is being assessed prior to extending this as part of the July Learning Festival. Also, extensive changes have been introduced to the induction process and mentoring arrangements for new staff.

For a future meeting the Committee requested a report clarifying how quality assurance is provided in relation to the engagement and deployment of Sparks Teaching staff taking account of the differing extents to which departments and areas therein rely on agency staff.

College Principal

iii) Personal development, behaviour and welfare -

To address the ongoing concern relating to student attendance there will be a strong emphasis at the start of next academic year on ensuring students recognise the importance of attendance as part of their preparation for the 'world of work'.

In collaboration with staff, students and recognised trade unions representatives, improvements have been made to the student positive engagement and behaviour management policy and procedures.

Although the focus of the development work relates to 16-18 year old students, much will be applicable also to improving the performance of 19+ students.

iv) Outcomes for learners -

A separate report was provided relating to the predicted success rates for 2015/16. In response to members' request for information regarding action taken to address the lack of an initial analysis of students' 'starting point' it was reported that there are five means of assessment (English and Maths attainment; prior attainment, i.e. incoming qualifications; vocational assessment; marked work in the first 4 weeks; motivation/ behaviours/ attitudes/ soft skills assessment). Working with curriculum teams, progress has been made to establish a system (BRAG) whereby students are assessed, a (value-added) target is set and their progression against this is measured with any 'cause for concern' identified and acted upon.

Following on from previous reports, work was continuing on the key aspects of the English and Maths strategy

Executive Team

Issues were raised by the academic staff Governor regarding the terminology relating to the developmental observation process; the introduction of a fourth performance rating and staff responsibility for student retention and achievement. These were noted as issues which the Committee expects the Executive team to clarify, reporting to a future meeting that the issues have been responded to.

Proposed report to Governors

Members were invited to comment on a tabled paper proposing the content and format for a termly quality report to Governors. Also tabled for comment was a sample framework for data which would be supplemented with a narrative including a trend analysis and position statement indicating

progress to date.

Members broadly welcomed the proposed reports commenting that the data report should align with the College dashboard recently circulated by the SFA to provide both historic and current data. However this should be extended to include HE provision, based on the bespoke information which is required by the QAA. A preference was expressed for the report to be closely related to the SFA dashboard, which clearly identifies trends and is easier to digest. Taken together our report and the SFA report should give Governors a high level overview of the college's performance.

Head of QA&S/
Chair

The Head of Quality Audit and Standards was advised to meet with Chris Linacre, Chair of the Committee, to obtain his views on the proposed content and format of the proposed termly quality report.

3 Revised Quality Improvement Strategy Proposals 2016/17

In presenting the strategy the following issues were highlighted:

- i) The strategy had been revised to take account of feedback from Ofsted and, following a year of transition, to reflect the single College structure.
- ii) Changes have been made to the IQA process in recognition that this needs to be supportive, more developmental and embedded within teams with less reliance on external support.

The revised cycle of, and approach to, developmental observations and walkthroughs is more closely aligned with the teaching, learning and assessment themes. Members expressed caution about adopting an approach which appears beneficial but the effectiveness of which could be constrained due to practicalities (such as timetabling constraints). The cycle needs to work "with the grain" of course provision and staff deployment, rather than imposing an extra burden.

16/3/6 Learner Outcomes

Quality Achievement Rates (national) and impact on Success Rates and Predicted Success Rates 2015/16

Following the later than anticipated publication of the Provider Group Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR) for 2014/15, the report gave a comparison with the national rates for 2013/14 and the College's actual achievement rates for 2014/15. During the presentation the following points were highlighted:

- i) The national QAR for 2014/15 shows an overall drop compared with those for 2013/14. The 2014/15 data was not available at the time of the Ofsted inspection consequently during the visit the College's 2014/15 achievement rates were compared with QAR 2013/14.
- ii) Comparing the College's 2014/15 achievement rates for various levels of qualifications (both 16-18 and 19+) with those of QAR 2014/15 illustrates where improvements are still required. The College's predicted increases in achievements will be checked against those which are quoted in the HMI's letter (minute reference 16/3/5.1 above refers).
- iii) The overall drop in national achievement rates was mainly attributed to the impact of the government's English and Maths policy and

condition of funding.

- iv) Work undertaken by curriculum teams predicts that this year's achievement rates will show a 3.1pp increase overall; a 4.2pp increase in 16-18 (including Functional Skills) and a 1.3pp increase in 19+ (including Functional Skills). A decline in achievement rate is predicted for 19+ Level 3 qualifications. The process of predicting success rates has involved reviewing students' individual progress rather than continuing with the previous formulaic approach. The aim will be to use an automated Blue/Red/Amber/Green (BRAG) process during the next academic to provide early indications of areas for concern and intervention. Monthly reports, which can provide data disaggregated in different ways to meet specific requirements in year, will also provide systematic and much more timely data about the performance of individual learners.
- v) Although the QAR provides data only in relation to EFA and SFA funded programmes, it was confirmed that HE achievement rates can and will be included in reports produced internally.

During discussion members sought and were given assurance that the College has the capacity to implement the changes outlined above, including that this is an area where there will be investment, for example in staff training.

It was questioned also whether approaches taken this year to improve the achievement of 16-18 year old students would be effective if applied to 19+ students. It was explained that where it is practical to do so (taking into account the length of adult programmes, many of which are short courses) action and intervention will be taken, particularly in relation to adult Level 3 which is a particular area of concern. Discussion and scrutiny of quality improvement approaches for 19+ learners will take place at the next meeting of the committee.

16/3/7 Curriculum Planning update

The Committee was informed that the curriculum planning process has aligned with the preparation of the 2016/17 budget and a number of changes will be made to the 2016/17 programme taking account of market information and forecast demand, particularly in respect of specialist provision. The report summarised programmes which will be closed or merged (e.g. due to declining demand or poor student retention, achievement, progression) together with new provision and areas of growth. Assurance was provided that where programmes are being phased out, current students will be permitted to complete and the quality of their learning experience will be maintained. Applicants affected by the changes will be provided with clear advice regarding other study options which may be more suitable in terms of their future employment opportunities. If appropriate, students will be advised about opportunities with providers other than the College, when it would be in a student's interests to do so.

The Committee welcomed the report, commenting on its usefulness in providing an understanding of the rationale underpinning the planning decisions taken at departmental level. It was acknowledged that, other than the confidential proposal reported to the Governing Body meeting on 16 May

2016, none of the other curriculum changes referred to in this report would impact on the College's educational character thereby requiring Governing Body approval.

16/3/8 Learning Together Review

It was reported that responses to an all staff email inviting staff to participate in one of the three Task Groups (Culture, Operations, Leadership and Governance) resulted in more volunteers than required. The College Principal met with the two staff Governors to randomly select volunteer members and a series of meetings for the Groups has been arranged.

During the whole College Learning Festival / Staff Development Days in July, the outcomes of the Employee Engagement Survey will be disseminated and staff will be invited to participate in a number Focus Groups, which will report back to the Task Groups.

16/3/9 Survey Outcomes - identifying trends

As previously requested, the Committee received a report which provided an overview of the outcomes of surveys undertaken in the current academic year. During discussion the following points were raised

- i) A more robust and consistent approach to obtaining stakeholder feedback has been taken, including the decision to use QDP Services Ltd as the survey provider. In addition the College is required to participate in FE Choices, an external survey, run by the Skills Funding Agency. The national benchmarks for the 2015/16 survey will be available in September 2016.
- ii) The introduction of a centralised cross College survey at three stages in the year resulted in an improvement in the response rate from 29.14% for the first survey to 55.24% for the second. The third survey closes in June. This approach has also enabled key themes (relating to feeling safe; recommending the College and the standard of teaching, learning and assessment) to be included in each survey to monitor in-year trends in the responses. Currently each of these three themes showed an in-year decline.
- iii) The overall responses to the survey outcomes show that there are a number of areas where further improvements are needed, including
 - Ensuring that students understand both the value of undertaking surveys and what happens as a consequence. This should also help to continue increasing the response rate.
 - Providing better induction and information to students
 - The level of student participation in, for example, student union and other engagement activities.
 - Increasing the number of students who would recommend the College
- iv) Survey outcomes are analysed at departmental and course level to ensure that the data is used as a performance measure. Negative comments in relation to students feeling safe at College are analysed in detail by the Head of Student Services & SEND.

The Committee welcomed the report requesting for a future meeting an analysis at department/course level to provide Governors with a better understanding of the extent to which there are variations in responses.

Head of QA&S

16/3/10 OU Accreditation - draft terms and conditions

At the Governing Body meeting on 16 May 2016, it was reported that Open University accreditation is being sought for new HE programmes. The due diligence process will involve two Governors (Chris Linacre and Neil Fletcher) meeting with the OU panel on 7 July. In addition to which, the process also requires the College to have in place terms and conditions in relation to students to be compliant with the Consumer Markets Authority legislation.

Queries were raised relating to the wording of section 9 - Student Discipline, which will be clarified prior to submission to the OU. In addition assurance will be obtained from the Head of HE&Access that the views of the Student Union and HE course representatives have been sought.

ED HR&SRIS to
liaise with
Head of HE &
Access

Subject to any necessary changes to address the comments raised, on recommendation of the Executive Team, the Committee approved the terms and conditions presented on behalf of the Governing Body.

16/3/11 Review of the meeting

Governors and officers in attendance commented that the meeting had been useful, with several areas identified where work is progressing and further monitoring and reporting will be provided at future meetings to ensure Governors provide appropriate checks and balances.

16/3/12 Any other business

There were no other items of business

16/3/13 Schedule of meetings for 2016/17

Monday 19 September 2016 at 8.00 am in the Boardroom, City Campus

Monday 21 November 2016 at 8.00 am in the Boardroom, City Campus

Monday 23 January 2017 at 8.00 am in the Boardroom, City Campus

Monday 27 March 2017 at 8.00 am in the Boardroom, City Campus

Monday 19 June 2017 at 8.00 am in the Boardroom, City Campus