

MINUTES OF THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2011

Members Present:

Rob Beale (chair), James Cheriton, Andrew Miller (Principal), Adrian Moore, Jenny Newlyn (co-opted member), Dean Parsons (co-opted staff member), Mike Wadley, Peter Wells

Also Present:

John Evans, Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality
Charlotte Corfield, Manager, Teaching and Quality
Alasdair MacDonald, Clerk to the Governing Body

The meeting commenced at 1600hrs.

201/11 APOLOGIES

All members of the committee were in attendance. The chair welcomed Dean Parsons to his first meeting as a co-opted staff member of the committee. It was noted that the two student governors had not yet been appointed but they would join the committee upon appointment.

202/11 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest in any specific items on the agenda.

203/11 GOVERNOR BRIEFING

No matters were brought to the committee's attention.

204/11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2011

Document No 11/185 refers. Subject to a typographical error in minute 142/11b) which should read '...due to maternity or sick leave', the minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the committee chair.

205/11 MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ACTIONS REPORT

Document No 11/186 refers. All actions requested had either been undertaken or were on the agenda for further discussion.

It was proposed by Adrian Moore, seconded by Andrew Miller, that Rob Beale should be re-appointed as chair of the Quality and Standards Committee, with Peter Wells as deputy chair. All members were in agreement.

206/11 THE COMMITTEE'S BUSINESS PLAN 2011/12

Document No 11/187 refers, introduced by the clerk. The committee agreed with the content of the plan as presented. The committee chair suggested that a report(s) should be brought to the committee on the 'refreshment' of the College's curriculum which was necessary if forecasts of student number growth approved in the College Strategic Plan 2011-14 were to be achieved. The committee approved this suggestion.

John Evans gave a short verbal report on how this process of refreshment would take place. There had been some initial 'blue skies' thinking and he reported that there was some interest in adding a small number of 'A' levels to existing vocational programmes. This possibility generated some discussion amongst committee members but it was agreed that John would bring a full report to the committee at its next meeting when the process was further advanced.

Action: JE

207/11 PROGRAMME AREA REVIEW: ART AND DESIGN

The committee chair welcomed Adrian Pimley and Greg Rendell to the meeting.

Document No 11/187 refers, introduced by Adrian. He guided members through its content which covered the key programmes offered by the School of Art and Design, some recent changes to the curriculum, a celebration of the many activities which the students were engaged in, teacher observation grades, and student success rates.

Adrian reported that this was the largest curriculum area in the College with a very strong higher education provision. Staff utilisation had improved significantly in 2010/11 and there was strong growth in student numbers, although some attention needed to be paid to the provision for 16-18yr olds where student enrolments were below target for 2011/12, perhaps affected by EMA reductions.

The committee was very pleased to note that, for all key course areas, success rates were above national average. Members were also impressed by the vibrant impression given of this curriculum area, which was reassuring as it was known that this area's performance had slipped in recent years. Adrian confirmed that quality improvements arising from recent annual self-assessments had been addressed with a particular emphasis on student tracking to improve retention. Teaching and learning observation grades had improved over a 3yr period but there was scope for further improvement.

The committee was impressed also by the actual and planned introduction of new higher education provision, with strong links now established with Oxford Brookes University, and also with the focus on employer links and the employability of students. The intention to develop a programme in Fashion and Textiles was supported. The committee advised that information and communication technologies impacted greatly on the development of new industries and the College should make every effort to provide programmes which were at the cutting edge and would enable students to be in demand by employers.

208/11 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2011/12

Document No 11/189 refers, introduced by John Evans.

- a) Areas for Improvement – SAR 2009/10 update. John tabled Document No 11/189A which showed the latest student success rates by age cohorts and by course level. For 16-18yr old and 19+ students, on long courses at levels 1-3, the results placed the College significantly above the national average, and at or above the 90th percentile for most cohorts/levels. A further table showed where each curriculum area's success rates stood against national benchmarks for all ages and levels. This table did depict the relatively small number of cohorts/levels where results were below national average and where the focus for improvement in 2011/12 would be placed. Andrew emphasised also highlighted that the gap between the highest and lowest performing areas had closed significantly. The committee agreed that it would expect to receive reports on the lower performing areas during the academic year.

Action: AM/JE

The committee expressed great pleasure at these results and congratulated John and all members of staff who had contributed to such an outstanding performance. The college had been able to promote itself as the 'top performing' college in Wiltshire in 2010/11 based on 'Framework for Excellence' data and this claim could continue. The committee asked once again for attention to be paid to effectively marketing the College's success. It was recognised that the validation of an Ofsted inspection had the greatest weight in raising the College's reputation still further.

It was agreed that a report should be brought to the Board on the College's outturn success rates for 2010/11 and on the effective promotion of the College's reputation. It was also agreed that more attention should be paid to gathering data on student destinations.

Action: AM/JE

The committee did express some concern about whether undue pressure was placed on staff to achieve these results and also whether they were sustainable – but without wishing to dilute the enormous satisfaction in this achievement.

In returning to Document No 11/ 189, John highlighted the improvement in success rates for level 3 programmes but there was still some way to go for 2yr level 3 courses for 16-18yr olds and 19+ and such programmes would continue to receive attention in 2011/12. Student retention remained a real challenge. John agreed that displaying the results separately for full and part students might be informative.

John reported also on those curriculum areas which had unsatisfactory success rates in 2009/10 and table 4 in his report revealed very significant improvements with a 26% positive variance in Health and Social Care. Finally, in this part of his report, John turned to the outturn success rates in GCSE Maths, which had improved above national average but not yet to a level at which the College could be satisfied. However, the committee was pleased to note that the curriculum area within which this work was placed, 'Skills for Life', had moved from 'inadequate' (Ofsted 2007) to an overall success rate on 86% in 2010/11.

- b) Update on 2010/11 SAR process. The committee noted the revised timeline which included a draft report coming to the Quality and Standards Committee on 1 December 2011.
- c) Operating Statement 2011/12. Andrew Miller presented the Swindon College Operating Statement 2011/12 which contained the key actions, developments and associated targets in support of the College's agreed Strategic Aims and Objectives. Andrew confirmed that those actions associated with Strategic Aims 1 and 2 were the ones which were covered by the committee's remit and progress would be reported at each meeting of the committee.
- d) Revised KPIs and targets. Andrew explained that a new style of presentation had been adopted for 2011/12 with progress against each KPI being shown in a bar chart, which should increase their visual impact. In response to the chair's question, Andrew confirmed that action was being taken in advance of the first census date to ensure that students were placed on the right course to give them every chance of success. There was some discussion about the likely impact on future 14-16yr old enrolments of local schools moving to Academy status and, perhaps, being less supportive of their students taking vocational courses at college.
- e) Risk Management Plan 2011/12. Andrew presented a short holding statement in lieu of the proposals for a revised risk policy, risk register and risk management plan being discussed by the Audit Committee on 11 October and approved by the Board on 18 October 2011.
- f) Revised Lesson Observation Policy. John guided the committee through the revisions made as set out in Document No 11/189. He stated that staff would be graded on their use of ILT in the current academic year. In response to a member's question, he confirmed that there was a clear distinction in the criteria used between a grade 1 and 2 in teacher observation.

Charlotte Corfield asked for the committee's views on whether staff should be given some warning of when they would be observed. She explained the arguments for and against. The committee discussed the matter and, whilst being sympathetic to the arguments for giving warning, agreed with John Evans' view that the present policy should remain unchanged.

209/11 OFSTED INSPECTION

Document No 11/190 refers, introduced by John Evans. He explained the intended streamlining and simplification of the Common Inspection Framework from 2012/13. A stronger focus would be placed on student progression. Curriculum areas would no longer receive individual grades.

The committee discussed the merits of the College being inspected in 2011/12 and it was agreed that the Governing Body should discuss this matter at its next meeting.

Action: AM/JE

210/11 LEARNER INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

The committee chair welcomed David Corcoran to the meeting.

Document No 11/191 refers which contained a summary of the key strategies used by the College to give the students a voice, as well as an updated Learner Involvement Strategy Policy. David guided the committee through its content. He highlighted the importance of the Performance Impact Group which enabled a deeper assessment to be conducted of issues raised by students. The Course Representation arrangements were very positive although student energy did wane towards the end of the academic year.

The committee discussed the merits of reintroducing a Student Union. It was agreed that this should be pursued if the Student Council was overwhelmingly in favour but the present arrangements were satisfactory. The representation of part-time students should be improved. The committee agreed that governor attendance at the Student Representatives meetings was a positive occurrence and governors should be made aware of the forthcoming meeting dates.

Action: DC/JAM

211/11 MEETING ASSESSMENT

Document No 10/192 refers. Committee members completed their meeting assessments and returned them to the clerk. The rating score for the meeting was 1.4. The rating score by managers present was 1.5.

The following comments were made by members on their assessment forms:

- Improvement in understanding of subject matters
- Knowledge of improved results
- Room too hot
- Excellent progression in success rates
- Destinations to be included in future reports for improvement monitoring
- Idea of stimulating an early inspection by Ofsted
- Observation discussion was positive
- An opportunity to celebrate performance
- Clear data

212/11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee was scheduled for Thursday 1 December 2011 at 1600 hours.

The meeting finished at 1825hrs.