

MINUTES OF THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2011

Members Present:

Rob Beale (chair), Joe Backshell, James Cheriton, Anthony Ledger, Andrew Miller (Principal), Adrian Moore, Jenny Newlyn (co-opted member), Claire Purnell (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 1630hrs.

09/11 APOLOGIES

All members were present.

The committee chair welcomed Charlotte Corfield to her first meeting since her appointment as Teaching and Quality Manager.

10/11 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

11/11 GOVERNOR BRIEFING

No matters were brought to the committee's attention.

12/11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2010

Document No 11/07 refers. The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the committee chair.

13/11 MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS REQUESTED

- a) Career's Advice – Andrew Miller informed members that details of the new all-age careers' service were slow to emerge. However, the service would not operate until 2012. Improved internal publicity of jobs and apprenticeships would occur in the LRC, on the VLE and in the Student Enrichment Centre. The Principal was pleased to report that the services of Julian White, Connexions' Adviser, were being retained by Connexions but his role at this stage was unclear.
- b) Apprenticeship Action Plan – the committee chair welcomed Darren King to the meeting. Document No 11/08 refers, which was an extract from the Operational Plan for Apprenticeship Provision. John Evans explained that all curriculum areas had similar annual operational plans linked to College Strategic Objectives. Darren summarised a range of improvements which were being put in place in an attempt to improve timely success rates. These included closer liaison and monitoring of apprentices with their employers. He reported that redundancies remained a constant threat as an apprentice whose post was made redundant showed as a 'fail' in the College's records. Also, there was a noticeable increase in the pastoral support required for apprentices as a direct or indirect effect of difficult economic circumstances affecting individuals and families. Darren remained hopeful, however, that 2010/11 timely success rates for Apprenticeships would match the previous year's where the College was 11% above the national average.
- c) Education Maintenance Allowance – Andrew reminded the committee that he had reported his concerns to the Board in December about the intended withdrawal of EMA. A Working Group

had been set up to assess the impact and agree an action plan. It had been revealed that 84% of students eligible for EMA in the College drew down the highest level of allowance. (£30). Most of the allowance was spent on transport to and from College for many individuals. Free transport was not an entitlement post-16. 53-54% of students on EMA progressed within the College. New funding would be received through Learner Support Funds in 2011/12 but at a much lower level and David Corcoran was reviewing how this should be allocated. A holding statement would be issued to prospective students and their parents at the forthcoming Open Evening. In interviewing new students for 2011/12 intake, staff were trying to get a feel for their financial circumstances.

14/11 ADDITIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT

The committee chair welcomed Sara White, ALS Manager, to the meeting. Document No 11/09 refers. She reported on the present organisation, staffing and funding of the service. The budget for 2010/11 was £1.4m. 33% of the student population had some need for ALS. One of the challenges under planned funding was to predict future needs. Sara stressed the importance of liaising with the College's feeder schools and in improving the quality of information from them. There was, of course, a 'risk' in so doing that the numbers assessed as requiring ALS would increase. A Special Educational Needs Green Paper was awaited.

Sara explained the ALS learner cohort profile in the current academic year to the committee. She highlighted the importance of the team being very flexible, as learner needs changed year on year. There had been an increase in 2010/11 of students with mental health problems and complex needs. The use of assistive technology had increased.

Sara was asked about the future for those requiring ALS when leaving college. Whilst individual cases were all unique, moving learners towards more independent learning remained a guiding principle of the service. Sara's team sought to 'front-load' support in each academic year to accelerate the acquisition of independent learning skills. She did stress that a significant number of those using ALS had fairly mild dyslexia. Nearly all ALS learners at College were on 'mainstream' programmes.

The committee thanked Sara for a most informative report and agreed that the committee should continue to receive reports on the ALS service at regular intervals.

15/11 FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE

Document No 11/10 refers. The Principal reminded the committee of the original intention of the FfE to provide public information on colleges against a range of indicators. Expectations had modified considerably over time but information on a number of indicators were published recently, much to the College's satisfaction!

John Evans' guided members through the key findings of the report. He emphasised that the data was for 2008/9. However, the College's success rates for 3 of the 4 cohorts assessed were the highest in the area.

The committee expressed its delight at these outcomes, agreeing that it was a steady 'drip-feed' of such results which would eventually change significantly the College's reputation.

16/11 QUALIFICATION SUCCESS RATE REPORT

Document No 11/11 refers. John confirmed that this data was for 2009/10, as reported to the Board within the College SAR, but now published on the Provider Gateway and available to Ofsted. This data would be used by Ofsted to help risk assess a College before an inspection, along with the annual Self-Assessment Report. Members were familiar with the data but John highlighted briefly the success rates for 2009/10 against national benchmark and the trend improvement over 3 years. Level 3 long 2yr courses remained the key area for improvement.

The committee expressed its pleasure at reading this report but asked John to provide a similar report for the College's HE provision at the next meeting of the committee.

Action: JE

17/11 ACADEMIC PERFORMING MONITORING 2010/11

Document No 11/12 refers.

- a) Key Areas for Improvement in 2010/11- John confirmed that improving the retention of 16-18yr olds on long level 3 courses, and the retention and achievement of 19+ learners on two year, long level 3 courses, were key priorities as revealed in the College SAR 2009/10. He guided members through his report on predicted success rates for 2010/11 which showed that improvements were being made.

The other key areas were the unsatisfactory achievements in 4 curriculum areas, and the achievement levels in GCSE Maths. Improvement strategies were in place. The Underperforming Course Panel received periodic reports. Attendance levels were improving. John reported on sterling work by staff in the GCSE area where a really substantial improvement in success rates is predicted.

The committee asked John to thank staff who had contributed to the GCSE Maths improvement.

Action: JE

- b) Retention and Attendance 2010/11 – John reported that the traffic lights were almost uniformly green revealing that predicted achievement of targets set would represent another year of improvement. Train to Gain retention and timely success were at amber, albeit well above national average. Attendance on FE programmes at all levels was at amber following improvements in 2009/10 data and tough targets set.
- c) Lesson Observation Report (Window 2) – John and Charlotte summarised the Window 2 outturns. The emphasis was on new staff and those who had achieved a grade 4 in Window 1 but many other staff were observed too as each curriculum area had a target of 25% of all staff to be observed. 33% of observations were conducted by co-observers. 86% of all observations were grade 2 or better, bringing the cumulative position to 72%, against a target for the full year of 78%. Where the Window 2 outcomes showed an unacceptable level of grade 3s and 4s, these would be followed up.

The committee chair asked John Evans to confirm Ofsted's advice on the status of re-observations in the outturn statistics.

Action: JE

- d) Success Rate Target Setting 2010/11 – John reminded members of the process used for predicting Success Rates for the full year i.e. predicted end year retention, achievement and success by each course tutor. Aggregated results were shown in his report but examined them course by course with Curriculum Managers and, if necessary, student by student. The predicted overall outturns were most encouraging.
- e) Annual Operating Statement and Risk Monitoring – Andrew Miller reported on specific actions taken against Strategic Objective 2 which was 'To inspire and support all our learners to achieve their best and to raise their aspirations'. He informed the committee that the status of none of the risks in the Quality section of the Risk Management Register had changed since the last meeting. He was pleased to confirm that the College was successful in its application for the Total Quality Standard.

18/11 MEETING ASSESSMENT

Document No 11/13 refers. Members completed their assessment forms and returned them to the clerk. The rating score for the meeting was 1.33.

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

- Always explain acronyms
- The contribution of the student governors is most welcome

- We need a report on HE performance
- Once again there was difficulty in getting into the allocated room. This is not satisfactory and needs to be resolved.
- Good level of discussion and focus
- Very well chaired
- Awareness of ALS dimension good feature of meeting
- Good student contribution
- EMA is (rightly) getting a lot of attention
- Some of the tables a little complicated
- Staff responded clearly to challenges and acknowledged where actions were required

19/11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee will be held on 5 April 2011.

The meeting finished at 1825hrs.