

MINUTES OF THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 21 JUNE 2011

Members Present:

Rob Beale (chair), James Cheriton, 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
Alasdair MacDonald, Clerk to the Governing Body

The meeting commenced at 1600hrs.

136/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Charlotte Corfield and for late attendance from Andrew Miller.

137/11 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

138/11 GOVERNOR BRIEFING

No matters were brought to the committee's attention.

139/11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 APRIL 2011

Document No 11/126 refers. The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the committee chair.

140/11 MATTERS ARISING

Minute 91/11 Qualification Success Rate Report: Higher Education Courses – members discussed briefly the classification of free school meals as a proxy-indicator for 'widening participation'.

Note: the next item was taken out of sequence.

146/11 INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE: PLANS FOR 2011/12

The committee chair welcomed Amanda Burnside, Director of Marketing and Services to Students, to the meeting for this item.

Document No 11/133 refers. Amanda explained that the key issues addressed in her paper were a) the proposed arrangements to cover the loss of the on-site Connexions service and b) plans to cope with the loss of 'AimHigher' funding, and in both cases without impacting negatively on learners. Document No 11/143 set out in some detail the plans for the internal provision of both the services previously provided by Connexions and those provided by the dedicated AimHigher service. Amanda stressed the importance of the Student Experience Managers and the Additional Learning Support staff in the provision of these services but it had to be recognised that undertaking the work in both these key areas with existing staff would add a burden to their existing extensive roles.

Amanda expressed some concern that the advice and guidance to students in the local schools might be less impartial in the absence of the independent Connexions service. She emphasised the importance of the College providing support to staff in schools to ensure that the vocational offer in the College was understood and effectively promoted. Amanda was pleased to report that an information sharing protocol had already been signed with Swindon Borough Council.

The committee, in discussing Amanda's report, noted the concerns about a lack of impartiality in offering advice on careers and progression. It was noted that the schools had adopted very different approaches to try to compensate for the loss of service to themselves, and it was likely that for some time there would be a variation in the quality of advice and guidance provided.

The committee agreed that this was an area for careful monitoring during 2011/12 to ensure that the actions taken to fill the gaps left by the withdrawal of the Connexions service and of AimHigher funding did not impact negatively upon services to students.

Action: AB

147/11 COLLEGE FUNDING 2011/12

Document No 11/128 refers, introduced by John Evans. He sought to assure the committee that, in rationalising the curriculum to develop a more efficient delivery model necessitated by the cuts to the college's budget in 2011/12 and beyond, great care had been taken to assess the risk to the quality of the student experience. John outlined briefly the key measures which had been taken, namely:

- a reduction in taught hours on both FE and HE courses. In the case of the former, the objective was to teach 90% of the funded guided learning hours (GLH) and for the latter to reduce GLH from 450 to 350.
- to reduce the remission time provided for course tutors from 36 to 30 hours per annum but not to increase teacher contact time in 2011/12
- in response to the funding cuts to entitlement programmes for 16-18yr olds, to reduce by 50% the time allocated for student tutorials with a significant restructuring of the programme placing more emphasis on activities delivered within the Student Enrichment Centre
- a reduction in remission time for internal verifiers (IVs) whilst still ensuring that each curriculum area had one lead IV.

In response to John's report, members asked that some attention be paid to the time that staff would need to develop learning resources if students were to be more independent in their learning. In the case of HE students, members understood that even after the proposed reductions, the taught hours would still be higher than typically found in HE institutions but, equally, members recognised that those studying HE in FE colleges usually required more support. John assured the committee that the savings would be made predominantly in non-contact time albeit recognising that some of this time had previously been categorised, wrongly, as contact time. The College's partner HEIs were aware of the changes being made and the intention that there should not be a reduction in taught time.

Members expressed particular interest in the intended new approach to the delivery of tutorials and the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Mike Wadley reported that the response from students to the trials held to date had been very positive. The approach was more learner-centred following the interests of students and responding to their feedback. His staff would be closely supported by the Student Experience Managers. Mike did not feel that the independence with which his staff were viewed and their ability to engage with students on confidential matters would be compromised by this new approach. He explained the way the programme would be delivered over a 2yr period.

The committee sought assurance that repetition of the issues which arose previously in Sports and Public Services would not be made more likely by a reduction in the amount of internal verification. John believed that the structure which would operate under the 14 lead IVs would ensure that this was not the case.

The committee agreed that the KPIs for 2011/12 should reflect the changes made to curriculum delivery in response to the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Action: AM

142/11 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2010/11

Document No 11/129 refers, introduced by John Evans.

- a) In-year attendance, retention and predicted success rates. John's report highlighted changes in attendance and retention rates since his last report to the committee, and also gave a visual indication using 'traffic lights' of those which were below target for the current year. He

highlighted the retention rates of 16-18yr old students studying at level 1 which had dropped by 4% since the last report and which were being monitored very closely.

John directed the committee's attention to a new style of presentation of predicted success rates for 2010/11. These were shown separately by age and level and then as a combined all-College report. Predicted success rates for 16-18yr old cohorts at levels 1-3 were all in the 90th percentile for all FE colleges. It was particularly pleasing to note the turnaround in the fortunes of Level 3 students where there had been a decline in the 09/10 performance in comparison to 08/09, but the predicted success rates were now in the top decile nationally.

The picture was more varied for 19+ learners with Levels 2 and 3 in the 90th percentile, Level H in the 75th percentile and Level 1 in the upper quartile. In all cases, improvements were predicted on the previous academic year.

John also directed members' attention to predicted success rates by curriculum area for both age cohorts and for the College as a whole which revealed that the variation between the highest and lowest for all ages had been reduced from 41% to 14% in 2010/11, albeit recognising that the variation for 16-18yr olds was 15% and for 19+ it was 25%. The committee welcomed this overall reduction and hoped to see an improvement in success rates for Engineering 16-18 cohort and in Plumbing and Electrical in the 19+ cohort. This would produce a further reduction in the overall variance. The radical improvement in predicted success rates for 16-18yr olds on long level 3 courses was applauded.

- b) Lesson Observation Report – Window 4. John reported that the cumulative outturn for 2010/11 based on 207 observations revealed that 77% of observations had been graded as good or better, against a target of 78% and the previous year's outturn of 76%. He confirmed that the original grades were used, not re-observation grades. He also confirmed that the number of observations in 2010/11 was much higher than in the previous year.

John was very pleased to report that all staff had been observed during the year with just 5 exceptions due to maternity of long term sick leave. Window 4 had focussed on the use being made of ILT in the delivery of lessons and a number of themes had been identified for further development. The committee discussed the differences in the grades for full and part-time staff which had emerged from the observations. Part-time staff on average received fewer grades 1 and 2 and more grades 3 and 4. The committee suggested that there might be systemic reasons for this. John agreed with this assessment and confirmed that this would be a major improvement theme for 21011/12. The committee would be able to check on the impact of actions taken in reports received next year.

- c) Annual Operating Statement and Risk Management Update 2010/11

Andrew Miller joined the meeting at this point. He highlighted the gradings for tutorials which had been a targeted area for improvement. Andrew agreed with members that a comparative figure for next year would be difficult due to the intended change in the delivery of tutorials in 2011/12 but, equally, he reported that Ofsted, whilst observing tutorials, did not grade them. Further improvements had been noted in the delivery of ALS. Further progress was required in the development of eILPs and, indeed, this was linked to the development of the College's ILT strategy which was also keenly awaited.

Turning to Risk Management, Andrew reported that the risks relating to IV and EV processes had been downgraded as had the risk of recruitment to the Early Years HE programme being effected by a reduction in Sure Start Partnership funding. He confirmed, as previously reported, that the development of e-learning opportunities and the slow development of the College's ILT strategy were now seen as 'significant' risks and were recorded in the register as such.

143/11 QUALITY POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY 2011/12

Document No 11/130 refers, introduced by John Evans. Further to the issue of this document in hard copy, an electronic version had been sent to committee members which highlighted the changes made from the previous issue of this policy and implementation strategy in 09/10. John guided members through the key changes.

The committee asked for a final review of the policy before submission to the Board to ensure an adequate reflection of quality policy and strategy for higher education provision. Whilst the policy was required to cover both FE and HE provision, it was recognised that some degree of differentiation existed in the HE quality regime which reflected the requirements placed upon the College by its HE partners. Members were also assured that the policy did not require further modification in light of the College's response to the CSR.

The committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Quality Policy and Implementation Strategy to the Governing Body on 12 July subject to the minor amendments discussed.

Action: JE

144/11 COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2010/11

Document No 11/131 refers, introduced by John Evans. He reminded the committee briefly of the broad process of gathering the key information for the annual SAR which was similar to the previous year but with one important additional event. This was the introduction of a Review and Improvement Day (RAID) to be held on 4 July. In addition, John informed members that the paperwork had been modified to align itself with the most recent version of Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework.

In response, the committee asked John to ensure that the reporting process to the Quality and Standards Committee, before going to the full Governing Body, was shown within the timeline. The clerk agreed to liaise with the Vice Principal on the date of this meeting as it was to be changed from the scheduled date of 22 November 2011.

Action: JE/JAM

145/11 OFSTED SePI REPORT

Document No 11/132 refers, introduced by John Evans. He explained that this was the first report of its nature to be received by the College. Based on a socio-economic analysis of the College's student intake, an index of multiple deprivation (IMD) was calculated against which each college's success rates could be benchmarked. Interestingly, the analysis highlighted differences between the level of deprivation of different cohorts within the College.

Whilst the report did nothing to undermine the College's confidence in its recent improvement in success rates, against both national success rates and the IMD position, it did reveal that the College was not disadvantaged in its socio-economic intake which was, indeed, at the least deprived end of the continuum.

The committee agreed that this was a useful measure and noted that, for the College's 16-18yr old cohort in total, the success rates shown within the analysis for 2009/10 was 78% against a national success rate also of 78% but against an average within the IMD cohort of 80%. The College's overall success rate of 81% was 4% above the national success rate and 3% above equivalent providers measured on the IMD scale.

147/11 COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

Document No 11/134 refers, introduced by the clerk. The committee adopted the following process of review:

a) Meeting its terms of reference:

- ToR 2.1 to be amended to read 'To agree and recommend for approval by the Governing Body, the College's Quality Policy and Implementation Strategy'
- ToR 2.4 - the committee noted that it had not received a report recently on student complaints and agreed that it should be in its plan for the coming academic year.
- ToR 2.11 - the committee asked that it be re-written to ensure a far greater focus on the monitoring of the learner voice by the committee.

- Members did note that governors had attended the Student Representatives' meetings during the academic year and this was an important means of engaging with the 'learner voice'.
- The committee agreed that a term of reference should be introduced which would enable it to monitor the service provided to students by College support areas. It would be appropriate for such service areas to agree service standards and targets which could be monitored by the committee utilising a traffic light system as appropriate.

Action: JAM/AM

- b) Meeting ratings – the committee reviewed its self-assessed performance ratings for 2010/11. These had ranged from 1.33 to 1.75. Members were pleased to note that senior managers present had scored the meetings at 1.0.
- c) Membership of the committee – in reviewing its membership, the chair of the committee reminded members that when his term of office ended in 2011/12, a new chair of this committee would need to be appointed. He hoped that an existing member would step forward. The committee asked the clerk to seek a replacement for Claire Purnell, co-opted staff member as she was standing down.

Action: JAM

- d) Business plan 2011/12 - the committee agreed that its review of curriculum areas was good practice and should continue. Candidate areas for review were Plumbing, Mechanical Engineering and HE Art and Design. It was also agreed that the committee should conduct an overarching review of academic performance in 11/12 if no Ofsted inspection was received in the early part of 11/12.

Action: JE

148/11 MEETING ASSESSMENT

Document No 10/135 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 1.0.

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

- Positive outcome: generally useful update on several subjects in light of the economic background
- The discussion was somewhat rambling and could have been more focused. This difficulty may be due to few, if any, concrete decisions had to be taken
- Enjoyed being a member of this committee!
- Positive outcome: good meeting and input from members
- Positive outcome: movement forward on committee remit
- Further discussion/training on the SePI data would be useful
- Positive outcome: year on year improvement and clear actions for 2011/12
- Positive outcome: understanding of SePI report information.

149/11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee was scheduled for 27 September 2011 at 1600 hours.

The meeting finished at 1810hrs.