

MINUTES OF THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5 APRIL 2011

Members Present:

Rob Beale (chair), James Cheriton, Anthony Ledger, Andrew Miller (Principal), Jenny Newlyn (co-opted member), Claire Purnell (co-opted staff member).

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.

84/11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Adrian Moore, Mike Wadley and Peter Wells.

85/11 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

86/11 GOVERNOR BRIEFING

No matters were brought to the committee's attention.

87/11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2011

Document No 11/75 refers. The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the committee chair.

88/11 MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ACTIONS REPORT

Document No 11/76 refers. John Evans gave a verbal report on Ofsted's advice on the status of re-observations in the outturn statistics for Lesson Observations. Whilst there were no exact rules, it was advisable to include the results of the first observation only in the statistical data for the year with a note in the text about the results of any re-observation(s).

89/11 DISCUSSION ON QUALITY SYSTEMS AND TEACHING AND LEARNING IMPROVEMENTS

Document No 11/77 refers. The committee chair welcomed Rachel Elsley, Carole French, Rob Hand and Sian Vocking to the meeting. He explained that the committee had received increasingly good news on the College's success rates and lesson observations and members wished to triangulate these findings with the views of managers and course tutors who had been integrally involved in the improvement process.

John Evans gave a brief overview of each curriculum area represented, two of which had been graded as inadequate by Ofsted in November 2007. The upward trend in their subsequent success rates was shown in Document No 11/77. The committee chair invited members of staff in attendance to reflect on their experiences of the improvement process.

It was suggested that the following aspects of good practice accounted for much of the performance improvements:

- A new emphasis on the importance of the Course Tutor's role and the ownership of learners at that level, with a real focus on retention and achievement
- Getting the right structure in place and ensuring effective communications
- Team teaching; an open door policy with good support from learning coaches

- Improved planning with all curriculum areas having clear annual performance improvement plans linked to the annual self-assessment process, the outcomes of which were carefully monitored throughout the year with regular target-setting reviews
- A supportive culture with an absence of blame; encouragement to try new approaches without fear of failure
 - The infectious nature of good practice
 - The increasing use of ILT by lecturers
 - The positive impact of staff development days, learning fayres etc.

In summing up the testimony of colleagues, the Principal suggested that there had been a real culture change in the College with the majority of staff fully recognising and owning the need for change and buying into many of the new processes and procedures which were deemed necessary after the 2007 inspection.

Governors explored whether the present funding pressures would undermine these improvements. Andrew Miller responded that the management was clear that the quality of the learner experience should not be comprised. He agreed that some potential changes, such as reducing the number of taught hours on a course, would be a test for this policy and much care would be needed in their implementation. The witnesses agreed that the College was a different place to 2007 but the changes had been made in a sure and steady way with key initiatives undertaken sequentially rather than all together. There was an attempt to get one improvement right and fully embedded before moving to the next one.

The committee stressed the importance of ensuring that part-time staff shared these positive perceptions and were made to feel as much a part of the change process as full-time staff.

The committee chair thanked colleagues for attending the meeting and speaking so coherently about the changes that had been made and their impact. He believed that should this progress be maintained, the College would go into its next Ofsted inspection with confidence,

(Members of staff left the meeting at this point.)

90/11 ACADEMIC PERFORMING MONITORING 2010/11

Document No 11/78 refers.

- a) In-year retention and attendance KPI report (2010/11) – John Evans was pleased to report that the key performance indicators for quality improvement, with two exceptions only, were set at green, indicating in most cases a positive variance to target and potential success rates above national averages. Two areas were at amber, both for Train to Gain retention and timely success rates where the College was below its own targets but above national average.

John informed the committee that attendance rates were a little disappointing being below target in all cases and, on average, slightly below the previous year's actuals. He stressed that action was taken whenever a student did not attend a class with letters sent to their home address. Jenny Newlyn commented that whilst there were no national average figures shown in the KPI report for the College's HE courses for retention and achievement, nevertheless, the actual figures shown were, in her experience, above national average.

- b) Lesson Observation Report – Window 3 – John reported that the emphasis had been on the observation of new staff and the re-observation of those who received a grade 3 or 4 previously. Other staff members were observed as all curriculum areas attempted to observe at least 25% of their staff. The outturn results for Window 3 revealed 79% of those observed to be at grade 1 or 2. He reminded the committee that the overall target for the year was 78% and the present cumulative result was 74%. The focus for Window 4 would be on teachers' use of information and learning technology but this would not alter the observation process adopted. By the end of the year all staff should have been observed.

Andrew Miller stressed the importance of an increasing use of peer observation which was a feature of outstanding colleges and Charlotte Corfield confirmed that the use of peer observation in the College was gradually increasing. Charlotte emphasised that a learning

coach was attached to lecturers who remained at grade 4 after re-observation. It was important that such staff showed a real willingness to change.

- c) Level 3 Edexcel Quality Assurance Report – John informed the committee that the Edexcel quality review was applied to its BTEC and NVQ programmes and was carried out annually. The College received a glowing report with no actions being required although a number of useful recommendations were made. An action plan would result from this. John agreed with the committee that lots of good practice had been identified from this review which would be shared across the college. Charlotte confirmed that she was in agreement with the recommendations made. John also reported on an internal audit of internal verification procedures recently carried out by PwC and reported to the Audit Committee at its meeting of 29 March 2011. This report was also complimentary of College systems and procedures and there were no recommendations for action.
- d) Annual Operating Statement and Risk Management update (2010/11) – Andrew reminded the committee of the particular focus being given to improving the success rates of full-time level 3 students and the quality assurance report, minute 90/11c) above, as well as the in-year retention for this cohort, gave encouragement that improvement plans were having a positive impact. In response to a member's question about the impact of funding, Andrew emphasised that the ability of staff to raise the aspirations of learners should not be effected by any changes which would have to be made in response to reduced funding.

Finally, Andrew reported on the downgrading of two of the risks in the Quality section of the risk register where it was felt that the risk of not achieving the desired outcome in future inspections had reduced as had the College's inability to improve the performance of unsatisfactory courses. It was testimony to the improvements which had been achieved that there were now no risks graded as 'significant' within the Quality section of the risk register.

91/11 QUALIFICATION SUCCESS RATE REPORT: HIGHER EDUCATION COURSES

Document No 11/79 refers. The committee chair welcomed Adrian Pimley, Director of Learning, to the meeting. He guided members through his report highlighting:

- Approximately 80% of the College's higher education students lived locally and this was likely to increase to 90% by 2015
- 55% were in work and, therefore, part-time
- 21% were categorised as 'widening participation' students i.e. in receipt of free school meals
- A rigorous quality assurance process applied to HE courses, which met the requirements of the College's HE partners
- A number of new courses were being launched in September 2011
- Retention and achievement outturns were consistent over a 3yr period within a band of 83-86% for retention and 78-79% for achievement. Adrian explained that no benchmark data was used for HE courses. Outturn achievement rates were at the end of 2 or 3yr courses and so were harder to achieve than on 1yr programmes, although he recognised that the College should show an improving trend.

The committee asked about the College's likely tuition fee structure for 2011/12. Adrian replied that it had not yet been decided but there was every indication that the College's two main partners, the University of Bath and Oxford Brookes University would charge the maximum fee of £9000. However, he explained that universities doing that would need to achieve a 'widening participation' quota and their franchise relationships with local FE colleges were important in this regard – see bullet above. Adrian confirmed that the College still obtained direct funding from HEFCE but this was diminishing.

Adrian agreed to show the actual numbers of students per course in future performance reports.

92/11 MEETING ASSESSMENT

Document No 11/80 refers. Members completed their assessment forms and returned them to the clerk. The rating score for the meeting was 1.0. The average score given by managers in attendance was 1.0.

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

- Really useful hearing from the staff about how the College has changed
- Difficult to hear in Main Hall
- Positive meeting with staff on how improvement has been embedded
- Meeting room not fit for purpose
- Attendance a concern
- Good discussion with staff
- Good to hear about the quality systems in place
- Key governor members missing.

93/11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee will be held on 21 June 2011.

The meeting finished at 1750hrs.