

Curriculum & Quality Committee

Approved Minutes

Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee held on Monday 9 November 2015 at the Thurrock Campus at 6.00pm.

Present: Mr D O'Halloran (Chairman)
Ms S Bridle
Mr B Brooks
Mrs S Carr
Ms A Clarke
Mr T Knight
Mrs A O'Donoghue CBE
Mrs G Williams

In Attendance: Mrs W Barnes (Vice Principal, Student Support)
Mr R Davies (Head of College Information Services)
Ms D Brown (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality)
Ms K Mulvey (Director of Teaching & Learning)
Mr R I Millea FCA (Clerk to the Corporation)

In the light of the full Agenda for this Meeting, the Committee did not receive a presentation from a Curriculum Area.

The Clerk took the Chair for the first two items on the agenda.

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Election of Chairman 2015/16

The Clerk called for nominations for Chairman of the Committee for the academic year 2015/16. David O'Halloran was the only nomination received and he was re-elected nem con.

Mr O'Halloran resumed the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members confirmed that they had no declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda.

4. Welcome to New Committee Members

The Chairman welcomed Angelina Clarke (HE Student Governor) and Skye Bridle (FE Student Governor) to their first Meeting as Members of this Committee, having attended the previous Meeting as Observers.

5. Urgent Business

There were no specific items of Urgent Business, but the Principal & Chief Executive reported on two items noted in the previous Minutes, then marked confidential but not now considered necessary to be so designated.

a. Ofsted complaint

The College had made a formal complaint to Ofsted following the Inspection in May. The response was unhelpful with Ofsted effectively contending the result of the inspection was sound. It was decided not to pursue the complaint to, for example, the Ombudsman in the light of the Ofsted response and the 2014/15 learner results.

b. Initial Teacher Education

The results of the Ofsted Inspection of this area in May 2015 (Grade 3 – requires improvement) have been discussed with the University of Essex. It has been agreed with the University that the College will pursue this area of work with another Higher Education Institution with greater expertise in this curriculum provision.

ACTION: Denise Brown

6. Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 1 June 2015

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 1 June 2015 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

7. Matters Arising

The Clerk reported that the Board has approved the Curriculum Plan 2015-16 as recommended by this Committee at its last Meeting.

The Safeguarding follow-up requested at the last Meeting will be given at the next Meeting of this Committee.

ACTION: Clerk

8. Teaching & Learning Strategy Annual Review (Paper CQC.15.18)

The Director of Teaching & Learning presented this review through a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

Members noted their duty to monitor improvements in the quality of teaching and learning which is driven by the Strategy.

It reports on the application of the strategy throughout the year just ended and the impact of the measures planned on the quality of teaching and learning.

Fundamentally, the Strategy has not worked as, although it is concise and focussed on Teaching, Learning & Assessment and it is clearly linked to the strategic vision and aims, it is not a live document. This was borne out during the recent Ofsted inspection, when it was clear that many staff were not aware of its existence.

In order to improve the document and its use and understanding in College, discussions have been held with Colleges which are graded outstanding to see how their experience can help us to embed and improve our existing Strategy.

Members were concerned that there was a lack of accountability in the Strategy and that teachers were not really working to its concepts and principles.

In response to a question, the Committee were told that the revised strategy will be rolled out to staff by the end of this month.

The Committee asked to be informed of progress with the roll out at its next Meeting in February and its success or otherwise.

The key changes to the strategy, which the Committee endorsed, are

- Document to be accessible and a summary to go to all staff
- Managers to disseminate and discuss strategy with teachers
- Academic managers to use it as a basis for CPD for individuals
- Q&S team to adopt it in Learner Progress Audits
- Heads of Departments to have their targets linked to the strategy and these be regularly reviewed as to progress

The Committee **NOTED** the Report and **AGREED** the thrust of the revised Strategy. A documented summary of the revised Strategy will be presented to the Board on 7 December for approval, in order for the Board to demonstrate its ownership of the Teaching & Learning Strategy in the College.

ACTION: Kathy Mulvey

9. Final Learner Performance 2014/15 (Paper CQC.15.19)

The Committee received the final Report on Learner Performance for the 2014/15 academic year, presented by the Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality, assisted by the Head of College Information Services. An interim Report had been considered by the Board in October.

The overall headline rate of outcomes for learners for the College for 2014/15 showed a decline compared to last year from 79.9% to 75.3% (12,545 achievements) but it is noted that the Qualification Success Rate methodology was changed in December 2014 and the headline figures now include Functional Skills for Maths & English, which previously had been reported separately.

There is no doubt that including the Maths & English success rates have depressed the overall headline figure.

It was noted that there are a further 1,356 Maths and English enrolments with a status of continuing into the 2015/16 academic year and these are not included as 2014/15 outcomes.

National Averages presently available are last year's figures and not directly comparable. The headline average last year, nevertheless, was 77.8%. Within this, 16-18 success for the College this year is 4.7% below NA and 19+ is 2.1% above NA. The Committee noted that the NAs for 2014/15 will not be available until February 2016 and it is more than likely that these will reduce from last year's NAs because of poor performance in English & Maths nationally. However there is still significant concern about the overall outturn this year, as it has reduced from last year, regardless of National Averages.

The paper provided for Members includes full analysis of results for the year from the College data records.

The main findings of the outcomes for the year can be summarised as follows:

- Overall Success Rate is down by 3.6 percentage points from last year
- A and AS level success rates well below NA (AS 12pp and A 4pp)
- 16-18 Long Level 3 up by 1.2pp over last year, still slightly below NA
- Apprenticeships 2.7pp above NA
- HE success rates up 2.3pp over last year, with some appeals outstanding
- Significant dip in Level 1 and Level 2 due to English & Maths being included.

Clearly, the Study Programmes for Levels 1 and 2 require improvement, not only because of the inclusion of Maths and English but because aspects of management and curriculum design are not yet satisfactory and the same view (requires improvement) applies to AS levels.

Actions being taken to achieve rapid improvement:

- Reviewing and changing awarding bodies to ensure relevancy of curriculum
- Changing assessment tools to ensure assessment is at right pace and right quantity
- Changing the delivery and support structure for English & Maths

Members challenged the notion that changing awarding bodies would help. The explanation was that changing from an academic awarding body to a more vocationally based awarding body particularly at the lower end of the education continuum may help in success of students as the relationship between the testing and the actual course is more coherent.

The Committee were further concerned that too many awarding bodies creates extra management, e.g. in validation, the necessary delivery and support structure and general time commitment required from management. The Committee therefore asked to be updated about such changes and their success.

ACTION: Denise Brown

Members wanted to know how the College would be able to achieve improvements in achievement for English & Maths, noting that this is a considerable challenge not only for us but for all Colleges.

It is proposed henceforth that English & Maths teaching will be embedded into departments to enhance its relevance to the Study Programme being undertaken by the student and it would be monitored by the E&M Department carrying out a Cross College liaison and management role.

In response to a question from a Member, it was confirmed that the College has sufficient dedicated teachers of English & Maths and they are located in each Department, under the overall direction of the E&M Department.

It was noted that other providers are not taking students who need to pass GCSE E&M, i.e. they are being selective, with the consequence that we are taking more of these students which is a significant challenge for the College. We have approx 3,000 GCSE students this year.

The Report contained full details of results in all key framework areas and the Committee **NOTED** the Report. The Report will be presented to the full Board as part of the College Self-Assessment Review at its December Meeting.

ACTION: Denise Brown

10. Current Learner Performance – Retention/Attendance/Learner Numbers 2015/16 (Paper CQC.15.20)

The Head of College Information Services presented a detailed dataset on College KPIs (16-18) for the year to date (to 2 November 2015), which showed retention, starts and attendance so far this year.

Key points:

- Total 16-18 learners stand at 5352 – 920 enrolments are planned from subcontracting, which will therefore represent 6272 learners, 95.5% of the 2015/16 EFA target, 293 short
- 16-18 retention is 96.2% against target last year of 91% and 16-18 attendance is 89.6% against target last year of 90%
- 19+ retention is 95.2% against target last year of 91% and 19+ attendance is 87.6% against target last year of 90%

19+ learner numbers stand at 2291, 13% less than at the same time last year. The reduction in adult classroom delivery is in line with the 12% reduction in funding from last year's classroom allocation. Further recruitment will take place during the year and it is hoped the SFA allocation will be met. So far, 365 learners have applied for a new 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Facility amounting to over £800,000.

The Committee requested that the changes in the Qualification Success Rate methodology (QSR) be summarised and distributed to the whole Board at the December Meeting.

ACTION: Richard Davies

Members **NOTED** the Report, in particular that the retention rates quoted are for learners who started a programme of study as a percentage of the number of learners who are still on course on 2 November 2015. This is not the same as the Ofsted funding rules which only include retention for learners who have passed the 'census point', usually 42 days after the commencement of the course.

In this regard, the Committee noted that the College is improving in keeping students following initial enrolments and therefore early withdrawals have reduced.

The Committee requested that monthly reporting of in-year targets begin as soon as possible – this applies to relevant items in item 12.

11. College Quality Improvement Plan – 2015/16 (Paper CQC.15.21)

The Board had approved the College QIP for 2014-15 in October 2014 and this Committee has monitored progress throughout the year. This paper provided outline draft proposals for 2015-16, reflecting on the experiences and outcomes of 2014/15, and the Committee was asked to consider and review the proposals for the current year.

The final version of the Plan will reflect outcomes of the Self-Assessment Review process for the College for 2014/15 and will come to the Board for approval once the SAR process is completed.

The draft Plan identified the following key themes for this year:

- Improve the quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Improve Retention, Punctuality and Attendance in all areas
- Significantly improve achievement in English & Maths
- Improve assessment for learning and feedback to students
- Improve outcomes at Levels 1 and 2
- Improve student engagement throughout their College experience
- Increase numbers of students undertaking valid Work Experience/Placements and generally improve engagement with employers at all levels on all programmes

The draft Plan provided the operational detail of actions required, the expected outcomes, the responsibility for each target area and dates of completion. The Committee will review progress through the year.

The Committee reviewed the detailed 2015/16 draft Plan and challenged Management as to the areas still requiring improvement, observing that the achievement outturn for 2014/15 was disappointing. The Committee wished to see improvement in the number of students undertaking valid Work Experience/Placements – the target last year was 95% but actual achievement only 80%.

They asked how the QIP will synchronise with the Teaching & Learning Strategy to ensure there is joined up thinking between what are our strategic aspirations for delivery and whether our processes will achieve those aspirations. Members did not want it to sit on the shelf. This QIP fits below the TLS.

The Committee asked for milestones to be inserted in the QIP and achievement/progress against these milestones will be reviewed by the Committee at its Meetings in February and May 2016.

The Committee **NOTED** the development of the Plan to date and that it will be approved by the Board at its Meeting on 7 December 2015, incorporating the results of the Self Assessment Report.

ACTION: Denise Brown/Clerk

12. Academic Performance Targets for 2015-16 (Paper CQC.15.22)

The Principal & Chief Executive and the Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality submitted a paper outlining the proposed academic targets for the College for 2015-16, together with achievement against key targets set for 2014-15. Members carefully reviewed the performance this year and the targets proposed for the current year by the Senior Leadership Team, concentrating on whether those targets are realistic but contain sufficient challenge.

Minute 9 above summarises the outcomes for 2014/15 against targets. These were summarised in this paper as part of setting the scene for 2015/16 Targets. Members noted the poor outcomes for Levels 1 and 2 and for English and Maths (both GCSE and Functional Skills) and A/AS levels, last year.

Members were informed that the new Qualification Success Rate methodology was introduced in December 2014, after KPIs for 2014/15 had been set and approved by the Board.

This new methodology is focused on achievement of 'study programmes' including Maths and English and the results are reported by key age groups of 16-18 and 19+. It means that previous targets of Overall FE Success Rate, FE 16-18 Long Success Rate and FE 19+ Long Success Rate are now calculated differently, principally the inclusion of Maths & English and Functional Skills.

Targets proposed as KPIs for 2015/16 are based on the new QSR methodology. It is noted that National Averages for 2014/15 are not yet available. They are likely to reduce from last year because of including Maths & English.

Following difficulties in the Ofsted inspection, it is decided not to set a target for Attendance or Retention for the whole College but targets will be set at department level and reviewed by management. This is to help remove the risk that students are retained (which makes the retention target look good) but don't actually achieve.

Some targets are proposed to be set below NA as it is not feasible in some areas to improve to NA in one year as it is too big a jump.

In response to questions and challenge from Members, the following points were noted:

- The best students are not only retained but they are achievers and teachers need to focus on both elements
- Targets will be wholly set on success methodology (success outturn)
- Poor performance on Science & Maths at AS level – well short of target and NA. Noted that 2015/16 is the last year of offering of AS level before the move to linear A levels.

Members requested that a target be established for LDD learners across all levels of provision.

The Committee **NOTED** the performance against targets for 2014/15, where measurable, and **RECOMMENDED** the targets proposed for 2015/16 be approved by the Board at its Meeting on 7 December 2015, subject to adding an SLDD learner target.

ACTION: Denise Brown

13. Sixth Form - Basildon (Paper CQC.15.23)

This is deemed to be a Confidential Item under the Instrument & Articles and a separate minute has been prepared and is attached to these Minutes.

14. Adult Curriculum Plan 2016/17 (Paper CQC.15.24)

The Principal & Chief Executive and the Vice Principal, Curriculum presented a paper setting out the proposed strategy for developing the adult curriculum at the College, having regard to the challenges posed by further drastic funding reductions which are expected.

The Committee were reminded of the Board's responsibilities in regard to the determination of the overall educational character of the College and this proposal is ultimately for Board approval.

The Strategy was set out in a detailed paper for consideration by Members. Members were informed that the capital and revenue costs for the proposal are affordable within the existing budget for this year and anything further will feature in the 2016/17 budget setting process.

Members were informed that the risk of not approving the proposal would be to reduce our ability to serve our adult communities in the future, given the continually reducing adult funding allocation being provided by Government.

It is not intended that any of this provision would be offered at Basildon but would be offered at both Southend and Thurrock. The staffing structure would be flexible to meet the needs of the professional learners and contracts would be offered to individual consultants on a per module basis.

In response to questions, the Committee was informed that such provision is likely to have relatively modest funding requirements at the outset and these can be financed out of existing budgets. It was agreed that Construction and Engineering would not feature initially in the provision, given that it is not a strong area of provision in the College.

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** the proposed strategy for developing the adult curriculum at the College for approval by the Board at its Meeting on 7 December 2015.

ACTION: Clerk

15. Area Reviews (Paper CQC.15.25)

This is deemed to be a Confidential Item under the Instrument & Articles and a separate minute has been prepared and is attached to these Minutes.

16. Committee Matters (Paper CQC.15.26)

The Clerk presented a paper for the information of the Committee covering:

- The revised schedule of Business for this year
- The results of the Self-Assessment process by Members of the Committee
- The annual review of the Committee's Terms of Reference
- Compliance by the Committee with its own Terms of Reference
- The Internal Audit Strategy for 2015-16 noting curriculum related matters proposed for review and that the Chairman of the Committee will discuss these with the Audit & Risk Committee on Wednesday to ensure consistency
- Revised Governor Links.

The Board **RECEIVED** the Report from the Clerk and **RECOMMENDED** that its Terms of Reference be approved by the Board at its Meeting on 7 December 2015.

ACTION: Clerk

17. Forthcoming Events (Paper CQC.15.27)

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided by the Clerk relating to forthcoming events.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 8 February 2016 at the Thurrock Campus, Grays at 6.00 pm.

There being no further business, the Meeting terminated at 8.10 pm.

Signed..... Dated.....