

Curriculum & Quality Committee

Approved Minutes

Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee held on Monday 19 May 2014 at the Basildon Campus, Nethermayne at 6.40 pm.

Present: Mr D O'Halloran (Chairman)
Mr T Knight
Ms A O'Donoghue CBE
Mrs G Williams

In Attendance: Mr J Hayles (Deputy Principal)
Ms D Brown (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality)
Ms C Anson-Higgs (Vice Principal, Business Development)
Mrs W Barnes (Vice Principal, Teaching, Learning & Student Support)
Ms E Reeve (Student Union President – Observer)
Mr S Williams (SU Sabbatical Officer – Observer)
M R Davies (Head of College Information Services)
Mr R I Millea FCA (Clerk to the Corporation)

Mr S Williams (Sabbatical Officer) and Ms E Reeve were welcomed to the Meeting as Observers.

Ms D Brown was welcomed to her first Meeting as the College's newly appointed interim Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality.

1. Presentation from Jane Frampton (Head of Department, SE6)

The Committee received a presentation from Jane Frampton, Head of SE6, which covers A and AS level provision within the College. She was accompanied by Diane Sossou, her deputy.

It was noted that Jane is now responsible for Business Services.

Members noted that A/AS levels are only offered at the Southend Campus but consideration is being given to widening the offer to the other Campuses.

General Studies are not being continued next year.

Members asked that data be consistent with that reported in the later part of this meeting. Jane informed the Committee that teachers of A/AS levels also teach within the vocational curriculum, as appropriate.

A copy of the slides used in Jane's presentation are attached to these minutes.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Lewis Wright, Sally Carr, Rhys Hughes and Elaine Mead (Observer).

3. Declarations of Interest

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

4. Urgent Business

The Chairman reported that Ms Denise Brown had been appointed interim Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality, with a brief to see through the required College improvements as agreed with Ofsted following the last inspection in November 2013 and to act as College nominee for the next Ofsted inspection, which is likely in Summer or Autumn 2015.

She was interviewed by two governors and the Principal recently. The Chairman welcomed her to the Meeting: she will attend meetings of this Committee on a regular basis.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 10 February 2014

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 10 February 2014 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

6. Matters Arising

The Clerk reported that the Board had approved the Equality & Diversity Annual Report (incorporating Action Plan) at its Meeting on 17 March 2014.

The Deputy Principal reported on the disproportionate number of complaints coming from students notifying a disability as requested at the last Meeting. Of the 44 complaints from students with a disability, 19 were upheld but, of these, only 5 actually related to issues regarding their disability. All were resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

The Sabbatical Officer provided feedback in written form from the Students' Union on the Compliments and Complaints Report, which the Committee had considered at its last Meeting. The Deputy Principal agreed to meet with the Sabbatical Officer to take forward the observations made and report back in due course to this Committee.

7. Bi-Annual Safeguarding Report (Paper CQC.14.07)

The Deputy Principal presented this Report on behalf of Jane Belcher (Student Services Manager) and answered questions from Members in connection with the College's Safeguarding procedures.

The Report reviews the work conducted by the Safeguarding Team and Learner Coaches within Student Services and the work undertaken by Human Resources. The Committee was reminded of its responsibility to ensure the College continues to meet its statutory duty to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults.

Learner Coaches are dealing with a lot of attendance issues in College.

John Hayles told the Committee that the continuing development of this area is high priority for Student Services and Human Resources and the paper summarised the areas identified for further development.

Gwynn Williams is the Nominated Governor for Safeguarding.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report. It contained an assurance to Governors that the College is meeting its statutory requirements as outlined above. Ultimately, the intention is always to improve retention and success for the most vulnerable students of the College.

8. Curriculum Plan 2014-15 (Paper CQC.14.08)

The Principal and Chief Executive presented this Report which informs the Committee of the College's Curriculum Plan for next academic year covering delivery of study programmes, new courses planned, courses being terminated and the change in proportion of level 1,2 and 3 programmes.

She also referred to the plans to increase the number of apprenticeship frameworks being offered to increase the numbers in this area. She also mentioned that new programmes are very much based around local employer needs (e.g. Logistics, Waste Management).

The Report was supplemented by an Appendix to the Paper outlining Guidelines for Staff for the delivery of 16-19 Study Programmes.

The Committee was alerted to the Government requirement to provide work experience/work related learning for all learners. This is a challenging requirement and the College recognises that it will not be possible to find suitable external work experience for the entire cohort in 2014/15 so is looking at other alternatives including voluntary work, work on 'live briefs' for employers and simulated work placements.

The Appendix outlines the priorities which will be applied in providing such experience (where possible) and also stresses the need for it to be effective for the learner's aspirations and of high quality.

The College will be withdrawing a number of programmes next year due to lack of demand and/or withdrawal of funding. At the same time, the College is proposing a 6.6% increase in level 1 provision for next year.

The Vice Principal, Business Development stated that there is hope of significant growth in Adult programmes for 2014/15 and onwards due to the increase of £500k in 24+ loan allocation to the College. A paper on Adult proposals will be sent to the Committee Members so they have a chance to see it before the Board Meeting on 7 July.

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** the Curriculum Plan 2014-15 to the Board for approval at its meeting on 7 July, supplemented by a paper outlining Adult provision for next year.

9. Current Learner Performance – Retention/Attendance/Learner Numbers (Paper CQC.14.09)

The Committee received a Report on the current position based on data to 28 April 2014, with comparative figures as at the same date last year.

The Committee noted that retention rates for this year for 16-18 learners so far stand at 93.1% (up 1.34 pp on last year) and a 6.1pp increase on the final outturn for last year. For 19+ learners, the retention stands at 91.9%, up 0.06pp on same time last year.

The Committee received both retention and attendance data by department.

Current attendance for 16-18 learners stands at 85.2%, an increase of 0.2pp over last year. For 19+, attendance stands at 82.4%, 0.7pp down on last year.

Attendance is expected to increase to the end of the year following amendments to the system to record incidence of examination sessions, study leave and authorised absences. However, it is acknowledged that attendance remains an issue for the College and this will have a higher focus still for next academic year.

At 7 May, the College has 6747 learners (16-18) enrolled against a target of 6773 learners for 2013/14 and there is confidence that the target will be met, since some partner enrolments have not yet been recorded. Some of these enrolments are not yet recorded at the College, but do qualify for Funding under the funding rules.

Members asked that the student numbers be added to the data reports so that attendance and retention percentages can be assessed accurately.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

10. Ofsted Improvement Visit (Paper CQC.14.10)

The Committee received a Report from the Deputy Principal on the above visit being conducted by two Ofsted Inspectors on 10 and 11 June, which is to evaluate the College's progress in implementing the Improvement Plan agreed by the Principal and Chief Executive with Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins, HMI, who is charged with monitoring this Plan.

She will be accompanied by Pippa Francis, HMI, who is the regional lead on Teaching, Learning and Assessment, who will concentrate on how the College is improving T,L&A.

The Committee were reminded of the areas which had been agreed with Ofsted as priorities to support improvement. They also noted the areas which the two inspectors will examine: improvements to T,L&A, staff understanding of students' progress, clear standards for the Virtual Learning Environment, rigorous monitoring via Individual Learning Plans and clear management of staff performance.

The Deputy Principal advised the Committee that the College has made some significant progress on all of the issues of concern raised by the Ofsted inspection in 2013 and that this monitoring visit will help to further focus on the areas for improvement.

The next Ofsted inspection is due in Summer or Autumn 2015, hopefully the latter, when two more years of data will be available.

Members asked about the Individual Learning Plans for students being up to date. ILPs are variable across the College but where they have been made available to parents (SE6 and Sport) there has been demonstrable further parental involvement in their children's learning and overall College experience, and increased attendance and retention.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

11. HE Matters (Paper CQC.14.11)

a. HE Update Report

This Report was presented by the Vice Principal, Teaching, Learning & Student Support.

It covered the three meetings between the College and the University of Essex this academic year of the Partnership Management Board and the two meetings of the Curriculum and Quality Group (HE). The Committee noted the matters discussed as outlined in the paper.

Periodic reviews of a number of programmes have recently taken place by the University of Essex and reapproved for five years and one (Journalism) for two years.

An update on the development of the Costume design and construction course with University of the Arts London was noted, in particular the fact that the validation is with a different University from Essex.

As regards applications for 2014-15, the College has a direct HEFCE contract for 137 students (FTE) and a target with University of Essex of 165 FTE plus 70+ more students that stand outside the student number control, due to their high grades profile.

At this stage, applications for 2014 are down 11pp on last year.

Internal Audit

The Committee received a Report from the Internal Audit Service, Scrutton Bland, on **HE Student Support and National Students Survey**. The aim of the audit was to ensure that the College's Higher Education Student Support Services operate within an efficient and effective framework that seeks to continuously improve in order to support students and therefore retain students on their courses.

The assurance level for **HE Student Support** was **significant (2 of 5)** where the IAS recognises that effective support is being given to HE students through a range of support services, including enhancements in recent years via an Undergraduate Support Adviser, HE Sabbatical Officer and the Learning Mentor. There are also Peer Mentors in place.

The assurance level for **National Students Survey** was **reasonable (3 of 5)** because this aspect of the review showed the College to be within the lower quartile of the student satisfaction league table. IAS noted that significant steps are being taken to enhance the satisfaction of HE Students, including the investment of resources. The satisfaction rate improved from 58% in 2011/12 to 72% for 2012/13.

Two low risk recommendations arose from these reports.

b. University of Essex Institutional Review

The Institutional Review was submitted to the University of Essex in January 2014 and provides a critical assessment of the College's HE provision, accompanied by an action plan, which is monitored on a regular basis through the Partnership Curriculum Quality Group. A progress report was provided – RAG rated. The Review is similar to a Self Assessment Review for FE.

The Dean of the University gave detailed feedback on all sections of the Report and also on all course level reports and this was very favourable. Members were given a copy of his comments within the Report.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

12. Feedback on FE & HE Learner Surveys (Paper CQC.14.12)

The Deputy Principal presented this Report which forms part of the monitoring of the quality of College provision by assessing the learner experience, as expressed by them. The FE Survey was conducted in January and February 2014 using the QDP survey system, which can facilitate benchmarking against other Colleges who use this system.

The HE Survey was completed by students via Moodle on-line in March and April 2014.

The response rate at 50% for HE was poor and it was not much better for FE at 57% overall. Neither compare well with other Colleges. A big effort is required to get these response rates improved to a target rate of 80%. This will involve departments being more proactive and energetic in getting students to complete the surveys.

Members noted that on the HE Survey, the improvement over the last three years was not maintained this year and the overall satisfaction declined.

There may be an issue as to the questions which are put to the students and this will be reviewed before the next Survey is done. The questions are selected from a bank provided by QDP so are still comparable to national benchmarks with other Colleges who have used that question in their Student Survey.

Both Reports outlined the findings and provided for the Committee a note of actions to be taken by the College to improve the student experience. Key messages were variable delivery and quality of teaching and learning and too many staff changes. Comment also made about student working zones (quiet and group) and quality of resource material, particularly it being kept up to date.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

13. Learner Applications 2014/15 (Paper CQC.14.13)

The Report details the number of applications for next year based on data up to 28 April 2014.

The number of applications of 16-18 students is up 30% over the same date last year, but offers to date so far have decreased by 10% compared to last year, partly due a process change requiring potential students to attend an interview or organised College event before receiving an offer. These figures do not yet include learners progressing within the College to a new course.

Applications for 19+ students show a 100% increase on last year with actual offers made up just 2%, but again those students progressing within the College are yet to be processed.

The 16-18 allocation target for next year has increased by 295 learners to 7068, resulting in additional funding of just over £2 million. There is some confidence that this figure of 7068 will be met.

The SFA Adult allocation (target numbers do not apply) has been cut by 16%, partly offset by an increase in the 24+ Advanced Loans Facility.

The Committee **NOTED** the Report.

14. Report on Curriculum Links

The Clerk reported on continuing activity by Governors in attending Governor Link events and discussions and that feedback on those activities has been passed to the Principal & Chief Executive and Deputy Principal for information and, where relevant, follow up.

Governors are to be reminded of the protocol approved by the Board regarding Link Visits to ensure that the delineation between strategy and management is not breached and in no way do Governors act or are seen to act as quasi-inspectors. The Clerk will arrange.

The Committee **NOTED** the Clerk's comments.

15. Forthcoming Events (Paper CQC.14.14)

The Clerk presented a Report on the Ofsted National Governors' seminar attended by him and Terry Knight in London on 10 April 2014.

The Report was **NOTED**.

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

16. Any Other Business

There were no items of AOB.

17. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 22 September 2014 at the Basildon Campus, Nethermayne at 6.00 pm.

There being no further business, the Meeting terminated at 8.35pm.

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