

Curriculum & Quality Committee

Approved Minutes

Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee held on Monday 22 September 2014 at the New Thurrock Campus, Grays at 6.10 pm.

Present: Mr D O'Halloran (Chairman)
Mrs S Carr (from 6.35 pm)
Ms R HawkrIDGE
Mr R Hughes
Mr T Knight
Ms E Mead
Ms A O'Donoghue CBE
Mrs G Williams from 6.35 pm)

In Attendance: Ms C Anson-Higgs (Vice Principal, Business Development)
Mrs W Barnes (Assistant Principal, Student Support)
Ms D Brown (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality)
Mr R Davies (Head of College Information Services)
Mr R I Millea FCA (Clerk to the Corporation)

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Elyse Reeve.

2. Election of Chairman

Mr D O'Halloran was unanimously elected Chairman of the Committee for the 2014/15 academic year.

Mr O'Halloran then resumed the chair.

3. Welcome to new Committee Members

The Chairman welcomed Rebecca HawkrIDGE (Vice President, Students Union) and Elaine Mead (Board Member) to the Committee, together, in her absence, with Elyse Reeve (President, Students Union).

4. Urgent Business

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

There were no other items of Urgent Business.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 19 May 2014

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 19 May 2014 were **APPROVED and SIGNED** by the Chairman.

6. Matters Arising

The Clerk reported that the former Deputy Principal had met with the Sabbatical Officer regarding Student Union observations on the Compliments & Complaints Report which had been presented at the last Meeting. These matters are being actioned where necessary.

The Clerk informed the Committee that the full Board had approved at its July meeting the College Curriculum Plan 2014-15, including adult provision.

7. Teaching & Learning Strategy Annual Review (Paper CQC.14.15)

The Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality introduced this review, which reports on the application of the strategy throughout the year and the impact it has had on the quality of teaching and learning.

The review indicates that the learning cycle has been embedded into the College and is starting to impact on teaching and learning in departments that take full ownership of the strategy.

There is a consistent expectation for academic departments – structured training, cohesive learning approaches and a competency framework, linked to learner progress and experience – and managers understand what is required of them.

Individual Learning Plans still remain an area for development and the strategy did not significantly improve the engagement of learners or the monitoring from teachers. Maths and English outcomes for learners remain a priority area for development.

Members asked if the reviews in place will result in better practice this year and that access be encouraged and made available with parents and employers.

The strategy for 2014-15 builds on the learning observation by reflecting more measures which directly link to and impact on the learner. Teachers will be RAG rated and development targets linked to attendance, marking, feedback and classroom practice. The paper then explained the objectives of the further development of the Teaching & Learning Strategy.

Members agreed this approach but did question the tight time scale. They were assured that this was achievable.

The paper was supported by a schedule detailing the measurable outcomes for the College Teaching & Learning Strategy, achievements and progress during 2013-14 and further actions for the current year. The Committee thought it would help to rationalise this document in the future as it was confusing which year related to which objective or achievement.

Members were assured that the numbers of Advanced Learning Practitioners (8) should be sufficient to tackle supporting teacher improvement.

The Committee **REVIEWED** the progress and achievements for the Strategy in 2013-14 and **APPROVED** the revisions to the Strategy and impact measures for 2014-15.

8. Initial Learner Performance (including HE) 2013/14 (Paper CQC.14.16)

The Committee received a preliminary report on Learner Performance for 2013/14, from Ms Brown and Mr Davies, noting that most results will have been received and processed by the end of this week. The deadline for submission is the end of October. A final report on performance last year will come to the next meeting of the Committee.

The overall College success rate for the year was 83.2%, up 2 pp from last year.

Generally, the outcomes were improved over last year on most programmes and on Apprenticeships. However, the GCE A Level and AS Level were below the national average at 1.7 pp and 6.5 pp respectively below the national average. Both cohorts' success rates had declined over the previous year by 2.5 pp and 3.3 pp respectively.

The Results for A Level Maths and Science were unsatisfactory and has reduced the overall 'A' level scores even taking into account national trends, but some other subject areas were improved. The results for General Studies were poor and this subject area has now been deleted from the curriculum.

The Committee noted that progression from AS to A2 is weak (only about 50%) and that, in offering 20 A Levels to only around 250 students, maybe our provision is not sufficiently focused as there some small cohorts within this total. It was noted that AS levels will be abolished after this year and we will revert to two year A Levels.

Clear improvement is necessary across this cohort in order to meet the national averages. An Improvement Plan is being developed for this area and major improvement work has already started.

16-18 Long Level 3 Diploma programmes are up 7.6 pp notwithstanding a much larger cohort and final results might boost this higher – they are just 0.9 pp below the National Average.

Adults on Long Level 3 Diploma have seen a 0.4 pp improvement in success rates and are 4.3 pp below NA.

Apprenticeship success is currently 4.1 pp higher than last year pending all final results – improved on last year and above the NA.

HE programmes are currently achieving 1 pp above last year and the picture may get better once appeals are completed.

Some Level 1 provision has been poor and there were some low achievers within this area. At present it is 4.5 pp below last year and 13.5 pp below national averages.

The Committee **NOTED** the Report and that most aspects of the Learner Performance had been improved over the previous year, especially Apprenticeships, and that the paper should in future quote the cohort numbers so that the statistics can be viewed in context.

9. Learner Numbers 2014-15 (Paper CQC.14.17)

The Committee **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** a Report from the Head of CIS and Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality on enrolments for the current year.

Following discussion of the trends, the Committee **APPROVED** the actions identified to meet or exceed 2014-15 enrolment targets.

Overall, 16-18 enrolments are up by 2.4% across the College to 5883 at present, well on track to the target of 7068 set by the EFA, after allowing for provision that is to be delivered by College partners. It was noted that learner numbers at Basildon have declined by 12.1%, Southend numbers are fairly constant and Thurrock numbers have increased by 29.4%, reflecting the opening of the new campus facilities this month.

Total 19+ recruitment (2188 across all campuses) has risen 8.1% compared to the same date last year, with Thurrock seeing a 62% rise (200 students), Southend up 12.6% but, again, Basildon substantially down (by 29.2% or 200 students).

With the opening of the new Thurrock Campus, it is expected the numbers here will rise next year as word about the Thurrock experience gets around.

However, it was noted that a significant proportion of 19+ recruitment takes place throughout the year and the goal for the College is utilisation of the SFA allocation for these learners, not a target number of students.

Of these 2188 learners, 174 have applied for a 24+ Advanced Learning Loan.

The Committee considered the actions proposed to maximise enrolments. In particular, the curriculum and enrolment position at Basildon will be closely examined to try and boost numbers. The Committee were advised that measures were in place to address any significant student drop out during the first six week period of this year. It is felt that Basildon students are electing to go to Southend because of the poor conditions at Basildon.

10. College Quality Improvement Plan (Paper CQC.14.18)

The Board had approved the College Quality Improvement Plan for 2013-14 in October 2013 and this Committee have monitored progress throughout the year. This paper, presented by the Principal and Chief Executive, provides final feedback against the Plan and outlines proposals for 2014-15, with an invitation to approve those proposals.

In order to assist Governor scrutiny and challenge, a high level QIP is being provided henceforth for the Committee which outline key College themes and focus for the year, highlight curriculum areas that are significantly underperforming (e.g. Engineering and Construction, Maths and English) against a number of KPIs and will provide regular updates against those KPIs to enable Governors to be informed and to facilitate challenge.

A detailed QIP will still be produced as an outcome of the Self-Assessment Review process but will work as an operational document for College management and reference will be made to it as necessary to flesh out explanations to the Committee, without them having to receive all of the information, which it is recognised is onerous.

The high level QIP comprises a note of the Key College Themes for 2014/15 and an auditable set of KPIs for curriculum matters, coupled with a note of means to address the concerns noted in the next paragraph arising from this year just ended. Members felt that the KPIs should take into account actual results for the last three years in setting the current year's target.

The Committee reviewed the detailed 13-14 QIP with reference to the 'red' rated items to assess progress and what further action is necessary, to raise those ratings. All staff will have had appraisals by end of September in respect of the year just ended, ILPs will have to be brought in for all students and improvements in lesson observation grades will be a focus again this year. These were the red rated areas.

Looking at 2013/14, clear progress in improving the College and student experience occurred during 2013/14 and results generally validate that assertion, but A and AS levels were concerning, possibly affected by too much use of agency staff during the year, along with Engineering and Construction and Science. Some partner provision had significantly underperformed and had now been stopped.

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Plan be approved by the Board at their meeting on 6 October 2014.

11. Academic Performance Targets 2014/15 (Paper CQC.14.19)

The Principal & Chief Executive and the Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality submitted a paper outlining the proposed academic targets for the College for 2014-15, together with achievement against key targets set for 2013-14. Governors carefully reviewed the performance this year and the targets proposed for 2014-15 by the Senior Leadership Team, concentrating on those targets being realistic but with fair challenge.

The majority of the academic targets have been achieved in 2013/14, subject to all results being finalised, and all of the KPIs in place showed improvement with the key academic measures at or very close to national benchmarks. The target for 2014-15 High Grades is to be revisited when the results profile for the 2013-14 has been finalised, as well as Value Added Scores.

The Committee **NOTED** the performance against targets for 2013/14 and **RECOMMENDED** the targets proposed for 2014/15 be approved by the Board at their Meeting on 6 October 2014.

12. Committee Matters (Paper CQC.14.20)

The Committee reviewed its Terms of Reference and **RECOMMENDED** them for approval by the Board at its meeting on 6 October 2014, subject to some minor amendments to be made by the Clerk.

The Clerk **informed** the Committee of the Assurance Mapping process being undertaken by the Audit & Risk Committee and agreed to work with that Committee in order to provide them with assurances over curriculum & quality matters as part of the College's overall assurance for the Board to approve.

13. Forthcoming Events (Paper CQC.14.21)

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

14. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 1 December 2014 at the Basildon Campus at 6 pm.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 8.05 pm.

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