

**Minutes of the Curriculum and Quality Committee held on  
16 June 2009**

Present: Mrs Lynne Kent  
Mr Chris Jones  
Mrs Margaret Damant  
Mrs J McAllister – Principal

Apologies: Dr G Upadhyaya

In attendance: Mr Steve Hooton – Assistant Principal, Learners and Learning  
Mrs Margaret Robson – Assistant Principal, Employer and  
Community Responsiveness  
Mrs Sheila Jones – Assistant Principal, Quality & Operations  
Mr J Stott – Clerk

Meeting started: 18.31pm

Meeting finished: 21.08pm

The Clerk opened the meeting.

**11/09 Disclosure of financial and/or personal interest**

There was no disclosure of financial and/or personal interest.

**12/09 To agree the Agenda and order of business as circulated**

The agenda and order of business was agreed.

**13/09 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2009**

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record.

**14/09 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising

**15/09 To consider the Annual Progress Report on the Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan**

The Principal introduced the item and provided background details to the Scheme.

The Assistant Principal (Learners & Learning) took members through the Annual Progress Report referring, in particular, to the following:

- 1 Marketing & Promotional Activities – He explained that the College regularly portrays images which combat stereotypical images in distributed promotional material and displays posters in College to underline this stance. Both male and female prospective students are encouraged to study in non traditional areas.
- 2 Student Data – He informed the meeting that Sector SARs require Heads of Sector to comment on the makeup of courses and the

relative performance of students according to diversity categories. This data is evaluated and actions drawn up to effect continuous improvement. Findings from this year indicate an overall gender balance in recruitment to major programme courses although there is some concentration of genders in predictable vocational areas such as Care and some areas of ICT.

- 3 Curriculum – He explained the Course Assessment Reports (CARs) had also helped to promote gender equality by requiring courses to make judgements about qualitative aspects of delivery and, in particular, what had been accomplished to promote equal opportunities and celebrate diversity. The Personal and Social Education Programme includes an Equality & Diversity week as well as covering a wide range of gender aspects such as health, relationships, employability etc.
- 4 Employment Issues – He reported that there did not appear to be any issues to address in respect of gender equality.

The Assistant Principal (Learners & Learning) then took members through the analysis of the data contained in appendix 1. He referred, in particular, to the following:

- Analysis of 3 year gender data – He reported in the current year that there were almost equal numbers of enrolments for males and females on full time full year courses but that in respect of part time enrolments females outnumbered males by more than 2 to 1. A discussion took place on the difference in part time enrolments and it was proposed that a report to a future meeting should cover a breakdown by gender and mode of attendance by sector subject areas.
- Retention by gender – He reported that at level 1 the College levels are equal or in excess of the national benchmarks for both males and females. He informed the meeting that at level 2 the figures begin to dip at level 2 in relation to the national benchmarks and at level 3 are below national benchmarks by a considerable amount. At level 2 (under 19) female rates are consistently poorer than males. He explained that the College needed to undertake more investigation into why both male and females are likely to leave and to discern any trends in reasons given.
- Gender, ethnicity & retention – He reported that, of the 40 White British leavers this year, 70% were female and 30% were male. For Pakistani students, of the 14 leavers, the position was reversed, with 71% male and 29% female leavers. He explained that the White Working Class Boys Project forms an effective intervention strategy for this group and suggested that it would be useful to devise personalised support mechanisms for other groups.

A discussion followed and the Principal emphasised the need to use and interrogate the data in a focused way.

The report was received.

**16/09**

### **To consider the first draft of the Single Equality Scheme (SES)**

The Principal introduced the first draft and asked for comments from the Committee before it went out for wider consultation. She explained the Single Equality Scheme had brought together the College's 3

separate schemes for Race, Disability and Gender. She took members through the SES and referred, in particular, to the following:

- the introduction which covers the background, mission and values and the diversity statement
- the current position regards staff and students
- consultation, including who and how
- data monitoring and analysis.

A full discussion took place on the first draft with all members contributing.

Following the discussion Members agreed for the College to seek external advice on the first draft to ensure it is being constructed in the right way in terms of language and content before it goes out for wider consultation with Staff, Students and Stakeholders.

**17/09 To consider progress on the College's 2009 Quality Improvement Plan arising from the 2007/08 Self Assessment Report.**

The Principal introduced the item and explained that the College's Quality Improvement Plan has 3 elements:

- Actions to address weaknesses
- Actions to address areas for improvement
- Actions to maintain strengths

She took members through the key aims and objectives of the plans and provided some examples of progress as follows:

- the actions to address weaknesses:
  - to improve retention: a weekly reporting routine has been introduced to improve the retention of 'at risk' 16-18 year old full time learners and a leaflet has been produced for distribution to all part time students advertising the Information, Advice and Guidance offer. The Assistant Principal (Quality and Operations) explained that the weekly reporting routine is new and helps identify those students who are considered at a high risk of leaving. The routine will also be used in future years to identify critical times in an academic year when students leave in order that more timely interventions can be made.
  - to improve low success rates on some Work Based Learning courses: standard reports outlining individual progress towards achievement in each element of the framework are produced.
  - the need for better student facilities in the Salt Building and the need to improve sports facilities: only limited progress has been made on these two objectives
- the actions to address areas for improvement:

The Principal referred the meeting to the comprehensive report and ask members to note the significant progress made.

The Principal explained that, in recent years, the College's Plan arising from the Self-Assessment Report had concentrated on the actions needed to address weaknesses in order to ensure a sharp focus on these areas. She informed the meeting that it was now timely to revert to an approach to the Quality Improvement Plan that also encompasses work on areas for improvement and building on strengths.

The Assistant Principal (Quality and Operations) informed the meeting that the College was looking to bring forward the completion of the SAR to earlier in the Autumn Term. Following a discussion, members volunteered accordingly to bring forward their scheduled December meeting to early November.

The report was received.

**18/09 To receive a report on the recently published Framework for Excellence scores**

The Principal introduced the summary and informed members that the College had scored either good or outstanding in all areas except, as expected, for success rates. She took members through the full summary as follows:

Area	Performance Indicator Grade
Learner Views	Good
Learner Destinations	Good
Employer Views	Outstanding
Training Quality Standard	Outstanding
Success Rates	Satisfactory
Inspection Grade	Good
Financial Health	Good
Financial Management & Control	Outstanding
Delivery as a % of funding allocation or contract value	Good
Resource efficiency	Good

Members welcomed the report

**19/09 To review the key curriculum & quality strategies as part of the updating of the Strategic Plan**

The Principal introduced the item and explained that this was an opportunity for members to participate in the review of the four new Strategies (Employer Responsive, Community Responsive, Personalisation and Quality) that had been incorporated into the Strategic Plan last year.

The Assistant Principal (Employer and Community Responsiveness) took members through the Employer Responsive and Community Responsive Strategies highlighting the changes to be made.

The Principal reported that further work is needed on the monitoring and evaluation of the Community Responsive Strategy and that the College needs to ensure that students are given the opportunity to comment on the Personalisation Strategy. She reported that the Quality Strategy would need some updating.

**20/09 To receive an update on the 2008/09 Staff Development Plan**

The Assistant Principal (Quality & Operations) introduced the item and provided an overview of the progress achieved in 2008/09. She highlighted, in particular, that:

- 1 the Professional Practice Team had worked well to support new staff and those given a lesson observation grade of 3.
- 2 full time and proportional Lecturers had been given the opportunity to undertake at least 1 day of industrial updating.
- 3 IT support is now targeted at a Sector level
- 4 The College had introduced a Learning & Development Portfolio for Support Staff

The report was received

**21/09 To consider proposed Benchmarking Targets for retention and achievement 2009/10.**

The Principal introduced the item and reminded members that at their March Meeting the Corporation had decided to set benchmarking targets for 2009/10 earlier than usual.

She took members through the targets for 16-18 and 19+ students and informed the meeting that the initially proposed target for 2009/10 had been set at a standard 2% more than the 2008/09 target. However, following the release of the General FE Colleges National Averages the College considered that some of proposed targets needed adjusting.

Members gave very careful consideration to the proposed targets. Members questioned Management on the 16-18 level 3 proposed target of 78% which was 2% higher than the 2008/09 target and 12% above the 2007/08 actual. Following a discussion, Members decided to keep the target at the 2008/09 level of 76%. Members then considered the 16-18 level 1 and level 2 proposed targets. Following a discussion, Members decided to reduce the level 1 proposed target to 79% and increase the level 2 proposed target to 78%.

Members went on to consider the 19+ proposed targets and, following a discussion, the level 2 target was increased to 76% with the remaining targets agreed as proposed.

**22/09 To receive an update on the planned programme of courses for 2008-09**

The Principal introduced the item and informed members of the planned new courses in 2009/10 and the small number of courses that were to be withdrawn, mainly due to poor retention.

A member asked the College to look at its Employer Offer for the Voluntary Sector. It was agreed to look at Third Sector needs in planning the College's offer and to include reference to this sector in the Employer Strategy.

The report was received

**23/09 To consider a progress report on:**

The Principal introduced the item and highlighted:

**i) Student attendance monitoring:**

It was noted that there had been 46 Major Programme courses during 2008/09. Overall attendance on these courses had been at 81.4% with 23 (50%) of the courses above this figure. 7 of the courses (15%) had registered over 90% attendance.

During the same period, 368 part-time courses had run. Overall attendance on these was 82%. 62% of the courses had over 80% attendance. 28% of the courses had registered over 90% attendance.

The Principal reported that she was not happy with the major programme figure of 81% and the fact that only 7 courses had over 90% attendance. She said that serious consideration would need to be given as to whether or not this needed to be recorded as a weakness in the SAR or just commented on. It was suggested that students should be consulted as to any underlying reasons for poor attendance and that the College's results should be compared against the General FE National Averages.

**ii) Destination Monitoring**

The Principal reported that it would be more timely to provide a report on destinations to the next meeting.

**iii) Analysis of the Reasons for Student Withdrawal**

The Principal introduced the report and asked Members to note that personal circumstances was the most popular reason given for both full time and part time students. She raised a concern that 10 major programme students had given inappropriate course as the reason for leaving.

Following a discussion, it was agreed to provide the outcome of the telephone survey on the reasons given for leaving College to the next

meeting of the Committee.

The report was received

**24/09 To review the College Charter for Students**

The Principal introduced the item and reported that the Charter was to be considered at the Academic Board meeting on Friday.

Members considered the Charter and suggested a new section on the Learner Voice/Involvement should be included to strengthen the document.

The meeting agreed for the Academic Board to take on board the Committee's comments and for a final version to be presented to the July Corporation meeting

**25/09 To consider how to implement the new term of reference: To undertake periodic focus groups of students to encourage the Learner Voice**

The Principal introduced the item and reminded members that the Committee had introduced the new term of reference to encourage the learner voice.

Members suggested topics that students could comment on and, following the earlier discussion, it was agreed that attendance would be the subject of the first focus group in the next academic year.

It was agreed that the Focus Group would be made up of a cross section of students and that any interested Governor would be invited to attend.

**26/09 To agree the format for the Committee's annual report to the Corporation**

The format used in previous years was agreed.

**27/09 Any Other Business**

a) Dates of proposed meetings to December 2009

i) Date to be confirmed