



Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee

Dated 26 November 2019

Present: John Egan (Chair)
Phil Hunter (Vice Chair)
Joanne Beaumont
Nav Chohan
James Parker
Colin Forrest
Shoeb Desai

In attendance: Jeremy Stott (Clerk)
Julie Kitcheman (Vice Principal Curriculum)
Linda O'Donnell (Head of Business Development)
Jenifer Birtwistle (HR Manager)
Susanna Butler (Minutes Secretary)

Apologies: Stavroula Bibila

Meeting commenced: 18:00

Meeting closed: 20:05

28/19 Disclosure of financial and/or personal interest
18:00

There was no disclosure of financial or personal interest.

29/19 To agree the agenda and order of business as circulated
18:01

The agenda and order of business were agreed.

30/19 To appoint
18:02

a) A Chair of the Committee

John Egan was nominated, seconded and was re-appointed as Chair of the Committee.

b) A Vice Chair of the Committee

Phil Hunter was nominated, seconded and appointed as Vice Chair of the Committee.

31/19 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019
18:05

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

32/19 Matters arising
18:06

There were no matters arising.

33/19
18:07

To consider a Human Resources Report, including recommending to the Corporation the Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure

The Clerk introduced Jennifer Birtwistle, the new HR Manager, who presented her report. She highlighted staff turnover which has gone up slightly, but is still well within the national average. We have seen a lot of recruitment this year and, although we have more staff, an increased number of them are working flexibly. Also of note is the increased number of applications received for vacancies, but with a decrease in numbers shortlisted. This could be to do with the quality of candidates applying, and/or about the way we shortlist. However, the percentage appointed after interview is high, which indicates that shortlisting is working effectively.

It was queried what the spread of applicants is in terms of ethnicity and it was confirmed that we can present that through our equality monitoring data.

Looking at succession planning, we have an increase in staff over 65 through people staying with us and we feel it is good to be able to retain that talent ready for handovers. It is difficult to create a succession plan as we are a small college, but will be working on a HR Strategy which will incorporate succession planning.

Sickness absence has gone down in the number of sick days per employee. This could in part be due to the large number of new staff not wanting to be off sick during their probationary period. We have tightened up on the sickness reporting procedure and carry out more welfare meetings. Last year saw a decrease in long-term sickness and we hope numbers decrease further. For the sector, the college absence rate per employee is lower and slightly below the region as a whole. Reasons for absence are mainly due to stress and depression. Time off for medical appointments is recorded differently as staff generally make the time up for this. It was queried how much stress is related to work and confirmed that this is something we are starting to look into further. We are keeping notes of reasons why people are off so that, going forward, will have a better insight.

Employee wellbeing is high on the agenda this year and a draft policy is being produced for staff and students. A new Wellbeing page on the Staff Portal was recently launched and we are running a Wellbeing afternoon in March 2020.

The HR Manager was thanked for her well written report, which is very positive, and praised her for successfully meeting the challenges faced by the sector and working so well with colleagues.

Attention was then drawn to the Sickness Absence Policy and the amendments that have been made to make it more employee focussed and about assisting staff back to work. The first trigger meant there would be a formal meeting after 3 absences, which felt a bit harsh. Now it is suggested there be an informal meeting to maintain an open conversation with a focus on how to support staff back to work.

We are in the middle of sourcing a new occupational health provider and in the process of looking at quotes to compare pricing with the level of service provided. It was queried where the Stress Risk Assessment sits and confirmed it is under the Return to Work interview, but can be added to the policy, if necessary. It was also queried what the policy is on Fit Notes, and on returning to work before a fit note expires. It was confirmed that staff can return to work before the end of their fit note if they wish and do not have to be officially signed back to work.

ACTION: To add clarification on Fit Notes to Section 14 of the Absence Policy.

It was agreed to recommend to the Corporation the Sickness Absence Policy with the addition of the clarification on fit notes.

Jennifer Birtwistle (HR Manager) left the meeting at 18:39.

34/19
18:39

To review the Theme for the year – Work Experience & Industry Placements

The Head of Business Development attended to present her report. She explained how work experience comes in many forms - for full time students; those with difficulties or disabilities; and our T Level industry placements. Work Experience came into the Business Development department a year ago. Placements attended increased from 74% to 85% of FT learners and we achieved our target for the Capacity Development Fund (CDF). Improvements include getting parents to sign declarations, which is now included in the enrolment form; an on-line system for enrolments; and development of the student reflective log. Staff are all following the same Scheme of Work to ensure a standardised approach and all tutors have had training.

The aim is to promote to businesses better, to highlight the benefits, and to celebrate young people going out into placements. Our target numbers for our CDF have doubled so we now need to increase the number of employers, particularly for Computing.

Overall the CDF work is looking positive with lots to celebrate. Students are very positive about going on placements and we try to place them local to where they live, where possible.

An internal work experience audit took place. All FT students have taken the BESTest (online tool which measures employability skills) and will take the second one after completing work experience.

The Vice Principal Curriculum (VPC) then highlighted the outcome of the first Learning Walks, which is very positive with a few recommended actions to come out of it. Another audit is to take place to see if improvements are sustained but, overall, we are very pleased with progress and can see we are now moving towards excellence.

Linda O'Donnell (Head of Business Development) was thanked for her report and left the meeting at 18:58

35/19
18:58

To receive an update on Gatsby Benchmarks

The Head of Student Services provided an update highlighting that key for us is that learners have work experience, access to labour market information and learning from employers. One area a little harder to meet is contact with parents and carers and hope that parents can be encouraged to look at careers programmes and information via the College website. We have also developed a Student Portal.

It was commented that benchmarks are becoming increasingly important and that the report has skilfully signposted that it is part of the careers story. This narrative is very important and provides a wider perspective.

The Head of Student Services said it is a measure for us and we feel confident that what we are doing is meeting the Gatsby benchmarks. As what students are doing is being linked with employment, we are looking at the need for more access to careers actions for progression.

Known destinations for full time students is 93%. Looking at those who do not have positive destinations, they might be NEET, may have health issues, or some may have moved out of the area.

The Principal pointed out that we are lower than national averages for long term destinations but it should be noted that many (1 in 10) of our learners are high needs and when this is taken into account we are comparable to other providers.

The update was received.

36/19
19:13

To consider final progress on the 2018/19 Plans

The Vice Principal Curriculum (VPC) reported on the plans.

a) Quality Improvement Plan

There has been much achievement and success in moving forward underperforming courses, though a few are still hard to reach and we are working with the teams on this. Our measure is to at least meet the national average.

b) College Development Plan

Where it states partial achievement, there are many reasons for this and it does not mean we are failing; the English and maths journey is one that never ends. At 5.2 on staff feedback from non-graded formal observations it was queried if we will be doing this again this year and confirmed yes, as there have been some changes to it. Beyond that, we are considering running two parallel systems - a purely reflective practice system and a quality assurance/improvement system.

c) Staff Development Plan

This plan is an accumulation of what rolls out of the other plans and identifies the types of training in place to meet those priorities.

37/19
19:24

To consider the draft College Self Assessment Report, including relevant evidence sources which are available as electronic links to reports and data in the SAR

The VPC said the template has been amended to encompass the EIF criteria. The judgements have resulted in some overall Good grades and we have also recognised some excellent achievements within that. Four of our six sectors are Outstanding for Personal Development. Leadership & Management is Good with Outstanding features, but for Ofsted purposes we will report as Good.

Overall effectiveness is Good with strengths and areas for improvement similar to last year. It has been difficult to grade as the categories do not always allow you to recognise all of the outstanding features since the last short inspection. Members commented that the strengths do not reflect strongly enough the exemplary employer engagement and our local influence. Key is the strong position of the College in supporting students and its intent and purpose of curriculum. The VPC commented that we have tried to encompass all this in the second bullet point. Also of note is that the Principal is heavily involved in many different networks and the College's large strategic contributions for its size, adding value to policy direction and practice. Members felt we should reflect these in the Overall Strengths and make it explicit that we are the smallest college making a significant impact.

38/19
19:39

To consider the 2019/20 Plans

The VPC reported on the plans.

a) Quality Improvement Plan

From underperforming course team meetings, this plan sets out actions that will make a difference.

b) College Development Plan

This sets out new things for the year such as supporting the regional economy; personal growth; excellence in teaching and learning; service plans.

c) Staff Development Plan

Each of the areas were highlighted and there were no queries to address.

39/19
19:43

To consider a progress report on the Risk Register

The Principal presented the Risk Register in its usual format, which is extracted from the full register. The words are all about mitigating the risks down to green. The updates in the final column set out where we are at. He went through each risk for comment. The only red rating is at 8c on the impact of new 14-19 and/or 19+ national and local level policy, and it was queried what work we are doing with local schools. It was stated that the Marketing team are attending all the Options Evenings and chasing up every opportunity. Schools are now requesting groups to come to the College for

taster activities, though we are probably not getting those students already selected for 6th form. However, our introduction of T Levels might make a difference.

40/19
19:48

To consider and recommend to the Corporation

i) The Additional Learning Support Policy

The VPC confirmed that there are a number of procedures for staff behind the policy and as there were no queries the policy was agreed.

It was agreed to recommend to the Corporation the Additional Learning Support Policy.

ii) The Assessment & Verification Policy

This policy also has a large set of procedures behind it and was presented for governors' approval.

It was agreed to recommend to the Corporation the Assessment & Verification Policy.

41/19
19:51

To receive the 2018/19 Annual Report on Complaints

The Principal presented the report which consistently has entries on student behaviour with most of these types of complaints being received towards the start of term. However, thanks to staff and security patrolling the streets, many incidents are avoided. It is not always our students at fault - it could be students from local schools or friends of students. However, we appreciate how it might be difficult for local residents with so many young people around. One particular complaint was also raised with a local MP who contacted the Chair. This particular student had a number of issues and also wanted to progress to a L3 and was eventually allowed under strict conditions. In the end she achieved excellent results and was sent a congratulatory letter.

The report was received.

42/19
19:54

To consider the outcome from the 2018/19 C&Q Committee Performance Review Questionnaire

The Clerk reported that all questions scored 4.4 or above out of 5 which is really good. He then asked members to give consideration to the review and if there are any areas to improve performance. Highlighted in blue were a few comments, one being about the timings of meetings, with a suggestion that the minutes be circulated within 2 weeks for accuracy checks and to be approved at the next meeting. This was agreed to be introduced into our practice.

43/19
19:56

To consider any changes to the Terms of Reference

The Clerk highlighted a discussion where it was recommended that certain

reports might be better going to the Search Committee, such as certain HR reports, to remove some of the load from C&Q, as some of the HR policies around recruitment etc. are more appropriate for Search. Members confirmed that they were happy to look at re-directing some of the Policies to the Search Committee.

The Terms of Reference have been through SMT and the changes highlighted in the report. It was agreed that they all look common sense and were happy to adopt the revisions. The Clerk to therefore tidy them up and attach to these minutes.

44/19
20:00

Any other business

i) Date of proposed meetings to December 2019

- 3 March 2020
- 23 June 2020
- 1 December 2020

ii) To consider which recommendations/proposals are reported to the Corporation in more details

- **Minute 30/19** on the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair
- **Minute 33/19** on the HR Report, including recommending the Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure
- **Minute 40/19** on recommendation to the Corporation of the ALS Policy and Assessment & Verification Policy
- **Minute 43/19** on changes to the Terms of Reference