



Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee

(Via Video Conference)

30 November 2021

Present:	John Egan (Chair) Nav Chohan (Principal) Joanne Beaumont Catherine O'Connor Kerry Robinson Steph Tinsley Phil Hunter Wendy Rowan
In attendance:	Jeremy Stott (Clerk) Diana Bird (Vice Principal Curriculum) Susanna Butler (Minutes Secretary)
Apologies:	James Parker Jonathan Curtis
Meeting commenced:	18:00
Meeting closed:	20:00

24/21 Disclosure of financial and/or personal interest

There was no disclosure of financial or personal interest.

25/21 To appoint:

i) a Chair of the Committee

S Tinsley was nominated, seconded and agreed to the position of Chair of the Committee

ii) a Vice Chair of the Committee

P Hunter was nominated, seconded and agreed to remain as Vice Chair of the Committee.

26/21 To agree the agenda and order of business as circulated

The Principal and Vice Principal Curriculum both highlighted they had another matter to add under AOB.

27/21 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021

The minutes were approved as a true record.

28/21 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

29/21) To consider a Human Resources Report

The HR Manager talked through her report highlighting different areas. To note are employment law updates around changes to immigration and settlement status due to Brexit and how, wherever possible, right to work checks with new members of staff are done in person rather than on-line.

On staff profile, she highlighted how a number of our staff have dual roles and if they leave part of the role, this does impact on our figures on staff turnover even though they haven't left. Overall staff turnover has gone down due to lots of internal moves over the last year resulting in fewer leavers. We have also started to record reasons for leaving. A member queried what the difference is between someone leaving for career progression and someone moving to other employment. The HR Manager explained we record as other employment where an employee does not specify the nature of their move whereas some are clear that the move is for progression. It was requested if the numbers of staff who progress through college could be recorded.

ACTION: Internal staff progression numbers to be added to the next report

It was commented that the best reason to hear for staff moving on is for career progression as at least we know they are moving forward with a good grounding

Last year we advertised 59 posts and some of the support roles attracted up to 70+ applications. This year however recruitment is looking much more challenging with far fewer applications since Covid with people not moving around in the same way. We have advertised some posts more than once due to the lack of interest and it appears to be a similar picture across the sector.

On Succession planning, we have many staff over 50, though numbers have declined slightly. Senior managers do tend to give more notice than is required which makes it easier to plan and recruit to those roles.

Sickness absence went down last year, even with Covid, particularly short term absences which we believe is due to people working from home. However, we need to be careful about people working from home whilst unwell as they may need time to recover properly. This academic year, we are seeing high numbers of absences, particularly with colds. There is also an increase in long term absences with top reasons of stress, anxiety and depression. Some absences are Covid related, though some felt well enough to continue working from home where possible. We have 14 employees on long term sickness: 3 are due to long Covid with others stress related due to personal circumstances. A member said he found the figures surprising as they have seen much higher absence figures at the Council from the impact of Covid with the hardships families have been through and he wondered if the College is doing anything differently. The HR Manager explained that wellbeing is very high on the College's agenda and that we have the use of a counsellor we can refer staff on to. The Vice Principal Curriculum added that she believes being in the education sector has helped in creating a sense of normalcy for staff as work has carried on through the pandemic giving a sense of routine and being able to see colleagues. Isolation can have many negative knock on effects.

The Chair thanked the HR Manager for her informative report.

30/21

To review the 'Theme for the Year' - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Vice Principal Curriculum (VPC) gave her presentation looking across 3 aspects. One area is looking at the Black FE Leadership Group's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Research Pilot which will be addressed further at the Corporation meeting next week.

Other work taking place is with an EDI working party consisting of students, staff and 1 governor. This is a new group to allow students and staff to have a part to play in moving things forward. In response to an open invitation, 7 students, 4 staff and 1 governor responded. The first meeting took place on 18 November. The first focus was on what they felt we already do well and the second on what we might focus on going forward. Feedback included that we are welcoming, listening, students feel empowered to make a difference, feel valued and that there is a sense of community which is all positive. On protected characteristics, they were keen to say we do not discriminate eg provision of a prayer room and halal meal options are appreciated. They also felt that our buildings are very accessible. Ideas for moving forward included having different voices and representations; more diverse staff; more news around EDI issues and developing the student voice further. Food always comes up and more vegetarian options and food from different cultures were requested. The canteen has responded to these requests very promptly. They also said they wanted to see more external speakers representative of the college community. The next meeting is planned for 15 December where others are welcome to attend and a rolling action plan will be developed.

A key area is from the Ofsted review around sexual violence around schools and colleges. We have already held a staff training session.

Members agreed they liked the idea that members of the group are empowered to drive forward some of the actions as allowing a broad ownership does help to move things forward. They were also interested to hear what students had raised about the diversity of staff and if the College feels it is something they should be monitoring or are already doing that. The VPC said we are aware and that the LSIP Research Project will be looking at staff diversity. The HR Manager confirmed that we do monitor ethnicity, disability, gender and age, but not sexuality. We are looking at recruitment issues and how we can attract more people and become an employee of choice via staff testimonials from diverse staff who have progressed through the ranks.

The VPC said the research project is looking at the BME community specifically but we might consider using their recommendations for a whole range of protected characteristics.

A member described a model being used at Bradford University which is working well and is a learning partnership approach. There is a feeling from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups that they are not reflected across the staff. The model allows them to come together as a pair to share perspectives and experiences.

The VPC thanked members for all the good points made.

31/21

To consider the QDP external Learner Survey Report

The VPC presented the report which is from 20/21 It reflects two full time

surveys and one set of part time returns. There are a number of issues on the survey that members may recognise from the SAR evidence which supersedes it. Positive feedback was that catering has been brought in house which is popular. Of note is the dip in feedback on enrichment which is an expected knock on effect from Covid, though we have provided evidence of what has managed to carry on. Return rates were not fantastic last year so we have set targets for this year for each sector. The plan next year is that this report be presented more timely at the June meeting if we are able to turn it around quickly enough.

32/21 To consider final progress on 2020/21 Plans:

The VPC presented the completed plans from last year.

a) Quality Improvement Plan

The first few actions are around increasing achievement on a minority of courses and the VPC highlighted where some actions were not achieved and the reasons for that. One action was not achieved due to exam pass rates - it was one of few courses where students were required to take an exam, but there were no opportunities for retakes. The positive is that where students needed a licence to practice, we managed to get them out into a successful placement.

On AAT provision we have seen improvements, but have not yet reached the national average. Level 1 is excellent but Levels 2 & 3 are below NA and Level 4, though improved, also below NA. There have been fewer opportunities to take exams than in a normal year and these were squashed into a tighter timeframe.

19+ Retention is below the national average due to the impact of Covid on adult learners' lives.

b) Development Plan

On supporting the regional economy, apprenticeship starts were impressive though there were lots of issues getting employers to work with us. For ReBoot, we were unable to meet our original targets for the unemployed, though we did better than all the other colleges in West Yorkshire. It was difficult to engage the unemployed in learning and we delivered 73% of our AEB funding. Due to the shortfall, the Principal put forward a case and received a reply last week to say we would receive an additional £250k in recognition that we were unable to furlough staff and were forced to deliver smaller groups due to Covid.

We had a successful ESOL project but sadly there is no follow on so we have put in a bid for National Lottery Funding. Although having been on hold, we are still committed to apply for the Colleges of Sanctuary Award.

c) Staff Development Plan

This shows we have evidence of lots of training that has taken place. The Principal asked members if we delivered the action on governor training. A newer governor confirmed that she had received all the training she had expected for the role. Members were asked to reflect on their training opportunities and that they could feedback at any time on this.

The update was received.

33/21 To consider the Curriculum Planning Report

The Principal explained that this is an unusual report in that it has been put together for the new Principal role to give a picture of where things are and which governors might find useful. The sector curriculum updates are new to provide a flavour. Of note is that Floristry is very popular, so much so that we are looking at delivering Level 4. The key though is having the right staff in place to deliver this.

At the start of the summer, Business Admin had our highest applications for 16-18, but by the time the course had actually started, numbers had dwindled. There is a lot of focus on the cross over to T Levels which has not been easy.

Mindful Education is an online resource to support learning for AAT. It is expensive, but has been of help with our accountancy courses. It could be the future of vocational education with expert masterclasses on paid for sites.

There was a query on the removal of Level 3 programmes as the transition takes place to T Levels. The Principal confirmed that any area that does not have a T Level will continue as it is, but that as T Levels come on stream, we will be carefully swapping them over.

34/21 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 presented the SAR and supporting paper. There has been a review of how we present the SAR which is shorter than before. The supporting paper provides a dashboard for governors and the tables within provide a headline with the key areas of data.

Overall achievement is around the National Average (NA). 16-18 shows an increase but 19+ is below NA though with an increase on the previous year.

Apprenticeship overall achievement is above NA with a significant improvement on the previous year. On Retention for all age groups we are consistently at 93%. Full time provision is 83.4% and part time is 87.4%. On full time courses, GCSE attendance is 10% below vocational attendance. Lots of Covid absences had an impact. Positive destinations for full time are similar to last year, but part time has dropped a little so we will keep an eye on that. High needs are achieving. In response to a question, the Chair said she would like to also see a report on predictive achievement which was noted.

The overall strengths and areas for improvement alongside the supporting evidence is cross-referenced through the SAR.

Highlighted was the use of wording in the areas for improvement which are only those areas which impact on quality and are in the QIP. This does not mean we cannot enhance other areas, but it is about quality improvements. Other areas for development will be included in the Development Plan.

Apprenticeships have seen an increase in achievement and we have continued to recruit well with fantastic performance in the care sector showing some real success stories.

Members agreed the format of the SAR is more concise and easier to follow than previously which is an improvement in itself.

The VPC read out each of the 6 statements on overall strengths which members agreed were reflective of what the College does really well.

The areas for improvement were then highlighted with the explanations as to why which members agreed were reflective of the text.

The Chair queried whether we should always have an area of improvement in teaching and learning as we are aiming for Outstanding. The VPC had considered this but as only one area is linked to teaching and learning, if this was added to the QIP, it would suggest there is a general issue which there is not as teaching and learning is not under performing across college. The Development plan is around the next steps up to get outstanding. The Chair took these points on board and members agreed to sign off the grades.

Members agreed to recommend to the Corporation the draft College Self Assessment Report

35/21 To consider the 2021/22 Plans:

a) Quality Improvement Plan

This Plan is linked to areas for improvement as opposed to specific underperforming courses as before. As all leadership and management has been graded as Good, we have looked at where time is best spent, rather than pick out particular courses. We have focussed on areas such as Functional Skills across the part time provision and part time apprenticeships within Business and IT where we are working with whole teams. If L&M is good, then we expect managers to monitor the odd underperforming course which in turn SMT will manage through performance reviews. Members were asked if they felt happy with this new approach and they agreed.

On increasing attendance across college, there has been a debate on targets which are aspirational. However, setting targets lower does not send out the right message so we would rather not achieve than lower the targets.

b) Development Plan

The Principal explained that this Plan flows from the Strategic Plan which is currently in draft and was circulated last week for comment. It will be presented to Corporation next week if anyone has any further comments to add.

Members agreed the actions clearly cross reference to the Strategic Plan.

Members agreed to recommend to the Corporation the 21/22 Quality Improvement and Development Plans

36/21 To consider a Listening Board Project Proposal

Ron Hill is the consultant that carried out the Stone King Review of Governance last summer. This report proposes that the College take part in an academic study that should support the formalisation of the staff, students and stakeholder feedback frameworks proposed and accepted after the Review.

Members agreed to the proposal to support and develop college accountability.

37/21 To consider a progress report on the Risk Register related to the Curriculum

The Principal highlighted the C&Q related risks on the Register.

He highlighted 8c. on the impact of new 14-19 and/or 19+ national and local level policy which is amber as there are very small groups for T Levels with not enough students with the right qualifications to be able to join them. There have been reductions in other student numbers as well so the finances next year may look very challenging which governors should be aware of. What we are offering is not attracting sufficient students but there is the unknown factor of the pandemic to consider - many could be staying at home or staying on at school, but we are waiting for official figures from the Council. P Hunter said there are many 'unknowns' for student destinations as yet, but that figures should come down rapidly so we will have a more accurate picture of where people are.

The Principal said key to note for the College is 16-18 enrolment for next September. P Hunter agreed to ask if governors can go on the Council's distribution list once figures start coming through and it was agreed emails can be circulated via the Clerk.

The update was received.

38/21 To consider the 2020/21 Annual Report on Complaints:

The Principal presented the report adding that we could take heart that they are not all building up in one area and show that there is nothing endemic in the way things are run. The number of complaints received is far fewer than 10 years ago which is positive to see.

A member queried if there was an outcome to No. 3 around the complaint on the level of BSL support provided to a student and the Principal confirmed that he had met with the parent to resolve the issues and the student had remained on course.

The report was received.

39/21 To consider the outcome from the 2020/21 C&Q Committee Performance Review Questionnaire

The Clerk highlighted the responses from the survey with just a slight reduction in scores to the previous year. He then asked members to consider the comments received. One was around training suggestions the committee may be interested in taking on board which can be considered at other

meetings. Another was on the engagement of governors in discussions being reduced. After a short discussion it was agreed this is due more to the format of meetings being online than anything else and that a blended approach to meetings going forward is the preferred option so at least 1 meeting per year will be scheduled in person. However, it was acknowledged that attendance had been exceptional during Covid with online meetings.

40/21 To consider any changes to the Terms of Reference

The Clerk confirmed that SMT had reviewed and made no changes and we are just asking that the Terms of Reference be maintained for a further 12 months which was agreed.

41/21 Any other business

i) Ofsted T Level Survey

The Principal informed members of a survey taking place on T Level provision next Wed - Fri by 3 Ofsted inspectors. They will be doing a deep dive but this is not an inspection and there is no indication that they will want to meet governors. We will not receive a report but there will be a meeting at the end of each day and this survey is being carried out at colleges across the country. They will return Jan to Mar 2023 with a 2nd report. There is nothing in the main body of the report that will identify participants, but we will be listed in the Appendix that they have visited us. If any governor would like a further conversation with this to learn more then to contact the Principal.

ii) Reports for C&Q

The VPC has been looking at the types of reports coming to C&Q and what would be most useful to see. She proposed that a Teaching, Learning & Assessment (TLA) report come to each meeting going forward which would cover areas such as learning walks, observations, quality visits and anything to do with teaching and learning bringing a more holistic approach.

Members agreed they were happy with the new format.

iii) To consider:

a) the Additional Learning Support Policy

Members agreed to recommend to the Corporation the Additional Learning Support Policy

b) the Assessment & Verification Policy

Members agreed to recommend to the Corporation the Assessment & Verification Policy

c) Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure

Members agreed to recommend to the Corporation the Absence Policy & Procedure

iv) Date of proposed meetings to December 2021

- 01 March 2022
- 21 June 2022
- 29 November 2022