

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 1700 HOURS IN THE RED CARPET RESTAURANT

Present: Mr J Course (Chair)
Mrs A Cross-Durrant
Mrs H Hills
Mrs V Hall
Mrs G Thomas

In Attendance: Dr J Edrich, Chief Executive and Principal
Mr K Quinn, Deputy Chief Executive (Director of Teaching and Learning)
Dr C Davis OBE, Clerk to the Board

SS.17.14 GOVERNORS' MEETING TIME WITHOUT SMT

SS.18.14 COMMITTEE MATTERS

i Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Sendell.

ii Declaration of Interests

There was no declaration of interests received from those present, financial or otherwise, in any item on the agenda.

iii Minutes of the Last Standards Committee meeting held on 12 June 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2014 were agreed as an accurate record and signed.

iv Matters Arising

- a) Re:SS.13.14 i English & Mathematics Strategy
In response to the relationship between the STEM Strategy and this, Dr Edrich stated that the College is looking at the Tech Bac and therefore this is still work in progress.
- b) Re:SS.15.14, v Minimum levels of performance – final report 2013/14
Dr Edrich said that the College will factor in a three year trend into its next set of reporting.
- c) Re:SS.15.14, vi Teaching & Learning Strategy
This action had been carried out and had been forwarded to the full Board.

a. Report from the Data Sub-group

Mrs Cross-Durant reported that the group had met quite recently and spent a great deal of the time on the run-up to 2013 rather than 2013/14 because the data had not been delivered. Responding to the 2013/14 data will be deferred. A wish was expressed that meetings should coincide with certain strategic points in the academic year to be advised by the SMT and the Board. Mrs Cross-Durrant pointed out that over the last three years there had not been much movement in the overall whole College High Level performance. She went on to add that there

needs to be more investigation by Governors into the 'peaks' and 'troughs' and work through SSA data which had now been provided.

Mrs Cross-Durrant reported that the group had discussed what the College might be doing in terms of monitoring high grades and value-added. Data will be available at the next meeting.

The group approved of the College's own minimum level of performance as the official one was felt to be too low.

ACTION: ChD

b. Terms of Reference Data Sub-Group

Mr Course drew Governors attention to the action required by the Committee and suggested that the action should be on the Standards Committee to approve the Terms of Reference, not the full Board. All members agreed.

The Committee agreed the Terms of Reference of the Data Sub-Group.

c. Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Data Group held on the 14 November 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2014 were agreed as an accurate record.

d. Link Visits report

Mrs Hall stated that there had been changes relating to the effectiveness and frequency of reviews to half termly reviews to ensure consistency across all areas of the College. Supporting this, the Head of Division is doing a lot of work with the staff that she is responsible for and the actions that are taken to address problematic areas are observation and support and appropriate intervention, making sure the core courses that are on offer are appropriate for the learners. Mrs Hall stressed that the emphasis is on Teaching and Learning and believes that the Head of Division is aware of the strengths and weaknesses across all of her subject areas and was taking appropriate intervention and remedial action where necessary.

Mrs Hall reported on the areas proposed areas for growth and stated that there is consistent growth in recruitment for courses but this highlights resourcing issues. She was pleased to report that the science laboratories had now been up-dated and were fit for purpose. IT facilities are also scheduled for the new building programme. There is an improvement now rooms have been zoned into common subject areas. It was reported that there are insufficient IT spaces and this does restrict teaching and learning.

The recruitment and calibre of staff does remain an issue especially with regards to the expansion of Computer Science. **(Annex C)**

e. Governor monitoring activity

Mr Course was concerned that the College was vulnerable given lack of staff available to cover when someone was absent. Mrs Hall suggested that perhaps the way ahead was for further staff development and building a framework within the teams whereby it becomes ingrained in the protocols and procedures for others to take on those responsibilities should it be necessary.

Mr Course described the areas of growth being considered. **(Annex A)**

Mr Course produced an informal terms of reference for the Link Governors Sub-group, which will meet informally prior to a Standards Committee meeting. **(Annex B)**

It was agreed that the Standards Committee would ask the Partnership Manager

to provide a written report on how quality is managed through the compliance team for the next meeting in February 2015.

ACTION: ChD

v Standards Committee Terms of Reference

The Clerk highlighted the fact that the Chief Executive's title had now been changed to Chief Executive and Principal and that the committee's terms of reference would now need to be altered to reflect this change.

The Clerk also queried the kite marks listed and whether these needed updating. Dr Edrich said that the list was accurate; however the College had delayed the Investors in People reassessment due to the change in leadership and will pursue Investors in Diversity accreditation in 2015. The award from Ofsted of Outstanding was achieved in 2012, not 2014 as listed and the Outstanding grade achieved by College House should also be included on the list.

ACTION: ChD

SS.19.14 GOVERNORS' MONTHLY REPORT, AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2014

i Quality Aspects

Dr Edrich explained that the October Monthly Report to be discussed at the full Board meeting in December has the full data set for 13/14.

ii Safeguarding Updates, including CRB Issues & Related Training

Dr Edrich reported that it had been a difficult start to the College year. The College had received several applications from adult learners who had declared criminal records. On further investigation it was decided for safeguarding reasons to turn down their applications. The College consulted the Probation Service who understood the decision.

Dr Edrich also stated that one provider in the FE sector had difficulties with inadequate procedures and policies for preventing radicalization. The College is waiting for advice and guidance from the AoC. There is potentially the bigger risk with the sub-contractors in high-risk areas of the country already affected. The SMT are working to clarify the issue and will report back to the Committee.

ACTION: JE

iii Equality & Diversity Updates

Dr Edrich reported that at the start of the year a tremendous emphasis had been placed on imbedding good classroom working practises, which included recognising diversity and establishing ground rules for learners.

SS.20.14 TO REVIEW

i Student Success Data & Proposed SAR Grades for Curriculum

Mrs Quinn presented a top-level report, which gave an overview of the College success rates for 2013/14. The report also provided the proposed divisional self-assessment grades. This was the first time the College had done its annual self-assessment report by subject sector area (tier 2) as well as curriculum management areas.

Mr Course compared the grades of Engineering and Professional Studies over the two-year period and queried why the grade had remained at a grade 3 and why the actions taken were not working. Dr Edrich explained that in fact Engineering had improved their success rate from 72% to 77% and that the actions taken were all structural and needed time to bed in. With regard to Professional Studies Dr Edrich explained that the grade reflected a longer term problem with accountancy. Actions have been taken but there is still an issue with employers recommending their staff miss out units. The funding has now changed allowing unit accreditation which should improve the situation.

With regard to the SAR proposed grades, Mrs Cross-Durrant thought that there was a need for the Board to see SSA and the contributory elements leading to these potential grades. This would also enable staff to understand the individual factors which had led to the division's grade as a whole. Mrs Quinn replied that she was happy to do this.

ACTION: KQ

Mrs Hall commented that results at 16-18 level two still appear to remain a problem. She also intimated that she could not see that trends were rising on the data provided. Mrs Cross-Durrant went on to say that she felt that high-level, whole college data was a useful starting point but there was still a need to 'drill down' further. She advised that being nearer to the national average would have implications at the next inspection. Dr Edrich went on to say there is also the shift to broader outcomes and that needs to be incorporated into College reporting.

An up-date on progress towards improvements was asked for at the next meeting.

ACTION: KQ

ii Quality Improvement Plan 2014-15

Mrs Quinn advised the committee that the Quality Improvement Plan 2014/15 now included six areas of top-level improvement, which linked back to topics discussed at previous meetings.

Mrs Hall asked for the measurable outcomes and success criteria to be added to the front-page in areas for improvement.

ACTION: KQ

Mrs Cross-Durrant enquired whether the next level down would have some means of measuring whether the lessons were outstanding. Mrs Quinn confirmed that the College would start to do this by gaining feedback immediately after each lesson observation week. This information would be part of a half termly review so that the College can report in-year on the key messages which are coming out of the strengths and areas that are being worked on to improve, along with graded observations.

Mrs Hall asked for a person specific to be named in the monitoring column so that a record of who was responsible was kept.

ACTION: KQ

Mrs Hall agreed with Mrs Cross-Durrant's observation that there was a column missing on the plan, which should include 'milestones' and reporting how the people responsible are going to monitor the valuation and outcome of the progress.

Mrs Hall felt that the wording on the 2nd area was a little vague and needed strengthening. Mrs Quinn agreed to look at this.

ACTION: KQ

Mrs Hills asked how staff training is to be delivered. Mrs Quinn assured the committee that strategies had been already put in place and fundamentally staff should be taking ownership of their own development with the support of their line managers, combined with various training activities, including sessions with external trainers.

Mr Course asked that the Success Improvement Plans (SIPs) is shared with all Link Governors.

ACTION: KQ

iii Current Progress against Enrolment Targets

Dr Edrich reported that with regard to 16-18 FT the College had recruited above the target number approximately at the same number as this time last year. Apprenticeship numbers are on target but need to continue to recruit. In terms of the Assessment Centre they still have some way to go before reaching target numbers. Overall the College is where it's expected to be in terms of enrolment numbers with the exception of part time adults

iv Minimum Levels of Performance – Final Report 2013-14

Mrs Quinn stated that the report highlighted the courses that were identified last year with minimum levels of performance and have now been updated with the actual 2013/14 outcomes. The trend identifies progress in most areas although Mrs Quinn went on to say that the College is proposing to raise the minimum level of success from 76% to 80% (national average) which will necessitate slightly more courses being closely monitored.

SS.21.14 TO RECEIVE

i Minutes of Quality Board

The Governors received the Quality Board minutes from 11 November 2014.

ii Employer Engagement Report (Full Time Learners) (Extract)

Mrs Cross-Durrant made the committee aware of a typographical error in paragraph five on page 40. This should read work experience.

ACTION: JE

Mrs Hall asked if the Governor's action should be strengthened to read, "To receive the full time extract from the Employer Engagement Report and an update on progress towards meeting this objective in each subject area". The committee agreed and Dr Edrich said that the College would provide this in the future.

ACTION: JE

The Governors received the full time extract from the Employer Engagement Report.

iii Teaching Observation Report 2013-14

Dr Edrich made the committee aware that a great deal of work had been carried in this area. Mrs Quinn went on to say that as part of this work the starting point had been the skills of the observers and the quality of their feedback. They have also been looking at the training and development of staff and working on a process, which involves staff being able to provide meaningful feedback on what they need to improve their teaching. An introduction of half termly reviews with staff, the aim being to help staff move forward in terms of key areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Mrs Cross-Durrant referred to the need to correlate the observation grades with the success rates of learners overall. She asked if this year a process could be introduced following a theme, tracking the subject/areas across teams. For example, was there a mechanism for following through the observation of science taught in each team?

Dr Edrich replied that at the moment there was not a process in place but it could be useful and it would be looked into.

Governors reviewed grades and detail from lesson observations in 2013-14.

SS.22.14 TO APPROVE

i Marketing

Dr Edrich reported that the Marketing manager had recently left the post. She explained that the strategic paper update to the full Board would concentrate on a new look at marketing, with a focus on a more career based prospectus rather than subject courses, social media rather than hard copy and a complete revamp of the website.

ii Annual Equality & Diversity report 2013-14 (for Board approval)

Dr Edrich hoped that the Equality & Diversity information provided to Governors could be rationalised as she felt it appears in many different guises in terms of reports and strategies that Governors receive.

ACTION: JE/ChD

Mrs Cross-Durrant was concerned that the overall FE sector was becoming overly concerned with ageing teachers and age groups at the expense of quality. She went on to say that some of the best teaching she had witnessed was by teachers of a more mature age group. Dr Edrich said an age analysis is on the SMT agenda, enabling the College to monitor its staff succession planning.

Mr Course referred to the top of page 57 and queried whether the sentence should read, "Complaints relating to protected characteristics are thoroughly investigated with disciplinary action taken if appropriate". The committee agreed with this action.

ACTION: JE

Governors approved the Equality & Diversity Report 2013-14 (subject to the above amendment).

iii Equality & Diversity Strategy (for full Board approval)

Mrs Cross-Durrant enquired which Governor was a member of the Equality and Diversity Board.

ACTION: ChD

Governors approved the Equality & Diversity Strategy.

iv HE Strategy

Dr Edrich said that the document is unusual as a strategy but it complies with the requirements of the IQER/ QAA / HER. She confirmed that it does align with the College Strategic plan.

Mrs Cross-Durrant referred to article 4.5 of the strategy and asked whether the 37 hours of continuous professional development for College staff within each academic year was attainable. Dr Edrich confirmed that it was and went on to say that this was a requirement across the College and was being achieved.

Mrs Cross-Durrant felt that because the paper was a strategy document, the wording should be stronger in terms of syntax.

ACTION: JE

Mrs Hall asked what assistive learning was in reference to article 4.6.1 of the strategy. Dr Edrich explained that the use of the term assistive technology is connected with adapted mechanisms for helping learning with regard to assistive technology. It was agreed to use the term "in support of assisted learning".

ACTION: JE

Mr Course asked for clarity on the Strategic targets listed on page 73 with reference to the first bullet point, which talked about targeted enrolments on directly HEFCE funded programmes. The figure of 200 learners by 2018 refers to a cumulative figure, which lines up to the Strategic plan.

Mr Course also referred to the 4th bullet point of the Strategic targets and asked which 3 years were being referred to. Mrs Quinn confirmed that it was 2014/15 until 2017/18.

Mr Course asked for this to be clarified in the strategy.

ACTION: JE

Governors approved the HE Strategy subject to the amendments and correction of typographical errors.

SS.23.14 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Standards Committee meeting will be Wednesday 25 February 2015 commencing at 1700. Agenda items to include:

- Governors' Monthly Report: Quality matters - Safeguarding updates (incl. DBS issues & related training),
- E&D updates
- In year student retention
- Standards Committee items on Risk Register, including changes in risk scores of risk items
- SAR process for autumn 2015
- Minutes of Quality Board
- SAR and final curriculum grades
- Sub-contracting provision success rates
- MLP monitoring/progress-actions to date 2014-15
- Equality & Diversity Policy – to approve
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There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1845 hrs.

Governors' action:

To note the minutes of the Standards Committee 26 November 2014.