

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE**  
**held on 22 November 2018 at 9.30 am**

**<sup>1</sup>PRESENT** T Jackson (P); A Owen (E); R Palmer (E); C Wilson (E).

In attendance: N Hopkins, Chair of Governors  
C James, Dean of Higher Education (mins 104 to 129)  
J Milburn, Deputy Principal - Curriculum  
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

**APOLOGIES**

104. Apologies were received from J Blaber and H Perry.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

105. There were no interests to declare.

**MINUTES**

106. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Committee Chair.

107. There were no matters arising not covered by other items on the agenda.

**HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE**

108. The Committee had received the progress report of the Assistant Principal - Higher Education (HE) on current trends in recruitment and performance for Higher Education provision at the College.

109. The Committee noted that University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) continued to provide a high quality HE academic and student experience, evidenced by both internal and external indicators, progression to employment and verified by the University of Portsmouth (validating collaborative partner) and Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) Gold award. The report provided detail about the main outcomes and evidence from the 2017-18 Annual Standards and Quality Evaluation Review (ASQER), covering standards and quality, although it was noted that the response from the University had not yet been received.

110. The Committee also noted, however, that the National Student Survey (NSS) results this year, which showed a reduction from 84% to 72%, did not reflect the internal survey results and that this disparity was being further investigated by management, including with the student population, to improve the aspects that had delivered lower levels of satisfaction. There had also been a specific underlying factor in Vet Nursing which had been identified and addressed a year ago but the NSS was carried out after graduation so there was likely to be time lag before the impact was seen in improved results.

---

<sup>1</sup> (C) = Co-opted; (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (S) = Staff; (St) = Student

111. Asked about the reasons behind the increase in new under-graduate enrolments from POLAR 3 Quintile 1 (deprived backgrounds) for both young and mature students and whether this was a trend, the Assistant Principal – HE reported that the enrolments followed the objectives of the Access and Participation Plan and that there had been upward trend year on year, with the challenge being supporting and retaining these students. Responding to questions about the implications for the College, the Assistant Principal – HE explained that there was a strong relationship between the HE and Wellbeing teams, with two dedicated staff providing funded support to students and sharing best practice techniques to the teaching teams. It was, however, incumbent on the College to be clear to students about the expectations on them and the abilities needed to achieve a successful outcome. A much larger proportion of students self-declared as needing mental health support than were entitled to funding.
112. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum reported that she and the Assistant Principal – HE were working together on a strategy to support mental health, including building resilience into Level 3 second years which would also help them when progressing to HE.
113. The Committee noted the report that the School of Biological Sciences at Portsmouth University supported the College on many levels and that an excellent working relationship was in place. This included staff starting to undertake research between the two institutions, the development of MRes collaboration and PhD, APEX and other CPD activities now embedded in the joint culture.
114. The Committee noted that enrolments in 2018 had been disappointing across all subject areas despite the aims of the HE Strategy to increase recruitment through targeted marketing focussed on progression from FE both internally, and from feeder institutions, and continuing to raise the research profile of the College in conjunction with industry sponsors. The Assistant Principal – HE reported that further work was required for this to be successful and it was noted that there had been a detailed discussion of HE recruitment and marketing at the recent Curriculum, Employers & Marketing Requirements Committee meeting.
115. Asked about the potential for increasing enrolments from students from Andover College and local Sixth Form Colleges, the Assistant Principal – HE reporting plans which were in place for awareness raising about the opportunities to progress in to life sciences at UCS, alongside other Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG).
116. The Assistant Principal – HE highlighted the impact of the Office for Students (OfS) on HE providers, with the emphasis on compliance and increased demands in relation to accurate and timely data reporting. The new and emerging demands of the OfS regulatory and reporting framework would require flexibility and teamwork across the College. Governors' oversight and involvement of HE had already increased over previous year with reporting to the Committee and the Board supplemented by representation by governors at Board of Studies meetings, Poster Day and ASQER course review plans, as well as Link visits and the work undertaken by the HE Governance Working Group. Governance processes would continue to be updated in line with the OfS requirements.
117. The Assistant Principal – HE set out the process by which the College was required to report to the OfS against delivery of the Access and Participation Plan 2017-18. The monitoring return had to be submitted via an online portal by 23 January 2019. The OfS

had also been consulting on monitoring arrangements for 2018-19 and was expected to publish the outcomes of the consultation in December.

118. The Committee noted that the Principal, as the accountable officer, would be required to assure the monitoring return and that, given the timescales, a report would follow to the next meeting of the Committee on compliance with the provisions of the access agreement. The current practice of reporting on matters related to access and participation across the year would be reviewed and enhanced compliance monitoring developed during 2018-19.
119. Under authority delegated by the Board, the Committee also considered the annual assurance statement which the Board was required to submit to the OfS by 3 December 2018, signed by the accountable officer:

“The governing body has received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. This included evidence from the provider’s own periodic review processes, which fully involve students and include embedded external peer or professional review.

The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.

As a provider without degree awarding powers, the standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately maintained.”

120. **Resolved** – that the assurance statement for the 2017-18 academic year be approved for signature by the Principal and submitted to the OfS.

## **PREVENT DUTY**

121. The Committee had received the College’s updated Prevent Duty Risk Assessment/Action Plan for information.
122. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained that the College was required to assess the risk of radicalisation and develop an action plan under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 in order to safeguard students and the wide community. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained where that had been a change in the level of risk assessment and confirmed the implementation of key actions. All RAG ratings were Green.
123. Members discussed the risk scoring methodology, concluding that basing the scoring on carefully considered internal judgements was reasonable providing there was a shared understanding of the levels of risk and reference to external benchmarks where relevant and available. It was noted that some of the individual scores required further review/correction and the Deputy Principal – Curriculum undertook to review the scoring and report any significant changes to the Safeguarding Lead Governor.
124. The Assistant Principal – HE reported that the OfS had issued guidance on annual accountability in relation to the Prevent Duty but had confirmed that FE colleges were exempt because Prevent was already covered by Ofsted’s Common Inspection

Framework. As the College was not required to submit an accountability return, it did not have access to the details of what was required. However, management would seek to find out more in order to prepare if the requirements were applied to FE colleges in the future.

125. The Committee noted the controls in place and was assured that College management continued to effectively manage requirements in relation to the Prevent Duty.

## **COLLEGE POLICIES**

126. The Committee has received the report of the Deputy Principal – Curriculum on proposed changes to a number of College policies and procedures.
127. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained that, following approval of an updated Safeguarding Learners Policy by the Board in October, the Prevent Duty risk assessment process had led to a further review of the External Speakers procedures and recommended changes to introduce a risk-based approach and support record keeping. There were also some additional updates to details in the policy document and appendices proposed, including to the contact information for the Safeguarding Team.
128. Members discussed the proposed changes to the External Speakers procedures, highlighting that the wording in the Prevent checklist “potential to cause offence” could be interpreted in a range of ways and potentially unreasonably limit freedom of speech. It was agreed that the Deputy Principal – Curriculum be asked to reflect on the wording with a view to using less ambiguous terminology such as “promote extremism or a public order event”.
129. A number of other drafting points in relation to the Safeguarding Policy were proposed and agreed to be followed up by the Deputy Principal – Curriculum.
130. Members discussed the proposed changes to the Substance Use and Misuse Policy and the Policy and Procedures for Managing Learner/Student Conduct, supporting the proposed changes in response to new legislation regarding the prescription of medical cannabis and the growth in availability of products containing cannabinoids. Asked whether the term “Expert Doctor” in relation to prescriptions was appropriate, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum confirmed that this was the legal term.
131. Members made a number of comments in relation to the wording of the updated Promoting Effective FE Learner Performance Policy and the Deputy Principal – Curriculum undertook to clarify these and review the policy again before submission to the Board.
132. **Resolved** – that the Board be recommended to approve the following updated policies:
- i. Safeguarding Learners Policies & Procedures, with revision to the wording highlighted during discussion;
  - ii. External Speaker procedures annexed to the HE Freedom of Speech and FE Freedom of Speech Policy;
  - iii. Substance Use and Misuse Policy;
  - iv. Student Code of Conduct;

- v. Promoting Effective Learner Performance for Students on FE Programmes, with minor changes.

## **FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE**

### Self-Assessment Report

133. The Committee had received the College's Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2017-18, including the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2018-19. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained that the SAR and QIP were near final and that updated versions would follow to the Board of Governors.
134. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum reported that, whilst there was much good practice in the College, the standard of education for learners overall had been assessed as Requires Improvement because there was too much inconsistency both within, and between, areas of the curriculum. Although the College had been assessed as Good by Ofsted in February and the SAR confirmed that there continued to be strong areas of performance, the SAR had recognised that outcomes for some learners in 2017-18 had been disappointing. Much Good delivery was now evident for learners on Employer Responsive programmes, but there were pockets of provision which required improvement. Safeguarding continued to be Effective and the experience and progress of learners in residential accommodation was Outstanding.
135. The Committee welcomed the rigour and transparency of the reporting and noted that clear priorities had been set for improvement in 2018/19 which the Deputy Principal – Curriculum believed would enable the College to quickly return to Good with Outstanding features. The QIP set out the specific actions plans, responsibilities, timescales and expected outcomes and success criteria. The majority of these actions were reported to either have been completed or demonstrating good progress at the point the QIP was issued to the Committee. The Principal confirmed that he concurred with the SAR and supported the QIP.
136. It was noted that the ratings in the Executive Summary could appear misleading without accompanying context about the relative numbers of learners and the Deputy Principal – Curriculum agreed to review this section.
137. A Member who had been present at some of the Faculty discussions during the self-assessment process, confirmed that the report in relation those areas was consistent with the discussions.
138. Members discussed key areas of the SAR, seeking clarifications and additional information in relation to performance of GCSE English and Maths and interrogating the value-added data. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained that the approach to delivering the English and Maths curriculums was being revised to provide a more personalised approach based on learners' individual abilities and improved teaching quality. Asked about the value-added measures for English and Maths, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum reported that the latest data had now been received for the Sparsholt campus and appeared to be positive. When this and the Andover campus data had been analysed, the rating for English and Maths might be upgraded in the final SAR report.
139. The Committee noted that the Alps grades for A levels and BTECs at the Andover College were good. For A levels, Andover College was in the top 10% of providers. The scores for

“add on” subjects, however, tended to be lower and that there was an action in the QIP to address this.

140. The Chair of Governors noted that sections of the curriculum were not covered by the Alps value-added data analysis tool and suggested that, in the absence of external benchmarks, the College could develop internal measures to assess and monitor annual trends.
141. The Principal reported that, from the following summer, City & Guilds was introducing more granular grading and it would then become possible to use the Alps system across the curriculum.
142. Members noted with concern that learners from families with low incomes (free school meals) and Looked After Children were less likely to achieve, despite being retained in line with the overall College cohort, and the Deputy Principal- Curriculum agreed that this was a challenge that the College needed to continue to address.
143. Responding to the Committee Chair’s concern about the reported reduction in student attendance, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum confirmed that it was recognised to be unacceptably low in a number of curriculum areas and noted the action which had been put in place to address this, as set out in the QIP.
144. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum highlighted for the Committee the top four areas of improvement in the QIP which were intended to deliver solidly Good performance across the College and outlined some of the specific actions, including in relation to changes made to improvement achievements in professions courses at Andover College. It was noted that challenges remained, particularly where there was only one tutor in each skills area, and that management was seeking to work with local employers to bring in part-time staff as back-up.
145. Members also discussed the actions being taken in relation to improved attainment for learners taking synoptic assessments as part of their technical level qualifications, including providing resilience training for learners.
146. The Committee noted that the SAR, including the QIP, would be submitted to the Department for Education in January and that Ofsted would expect to see that the underlying issues were understood by College leadership and management and appropriate actions were in place.
147. **Resolved** – that the Committee recommend to the Board the Self-Assessment Report for 2017-18 provided a satisfactory basis on which to judge the quality of the FE and apprenticeship performance and quality improvement targets and that the SAR and the associated Quality Improvement Plan for 2018-19 be approved by the Board.

#### In-Year Performance

148. The Committee had received the Quality section of the latest College Healthcheck report which was due to be circulated in full to the Board shortly.
149. It was noted that retention data was not yet available and would be added to future reports.
150. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum drew the Committee’s attention to key performance data, providing an explanation of the reasons for areas which had Amber rather than Green indicators and noting the actions being taken to improve performance. It was noted that the Foundation Andover figures, which had a Red indicator, included English

and Maths and that the intention was to separate the data so that managers could better assess and respond to any under-performance.

151. The Committee noted the report and that data monitoring was being used by College management to seek further improvements, although in statistical terms the trend data did not take into account measurements of standard error.

## **LANDEX**

152. The Committee had received for information Landex's Strategic Direction 2018-21 which set out strategic priorities for Landex and its members, including the College.
153. The Principal summarised the areas of strategic priorities, noting that the Quality, Staff Development and Student Experience section was of most relevant to the remit of the Committee. The Strategic Direction document would also be provided to the next meeting of the Board.
154. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum reported that the College's peer review by Landex was due to take place later in the month.
155. Asked about the cost of membership of Landex, the Principal reported that the annual fees were £5k, which included four peer review days and provided a discounted AOC membership fee, confirming that, in his view, this represented good value for money.
156. The Committee Chair commended the clear layout of the strategies, targets and evidence indicators.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLAN**

157. The Committee had received the report of the Clerk proposing the Committee's forward business plan for 2018-19.
158. The Committee Chair noted that the plan could be varied during the year, if required to respond to internal or external developments, such as OfS requirements.
159. The Committee Chair also reported that he had met with the Principal, Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Clerk to reflect and share views on the College's approach to quality and standards governance, at a time when there had been changes in post holders on the Board, Committee Members and the SLT. The conversation had focused on achieving great outcomes for students and how this could be supported using assessment, monitoring and reporting processes, including in relation to identifying and using key data.
160. The Principal reported that this had been a useful meeting and that the themes identified were in common with the work the Deputy Principal – Curriculum had been undertaking on the SAR and the QIP, including a renewed focus on teaching, attendance and impact.
161. Members concurred that the clarity of the SAR demonstrated effective use and interpretation of data, although it was questioned whether more information was available on teaching and learning observations (TALO). The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained plans in relation to monitoring the quality of the learner experience and reviewing TALO procedures at the Curriculum Leadership Group.

162. The Committee Chair thanked the Deputy Principal – Curriculum for her thorough work on the SAR and QIP.
163. **Resolved** – that the Committee’s forward business plan for 2018-19 be approved with the correction of the date of the SAR to 2017-18.
164. The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm.