

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE
held on 27 February 2020

PRESENT S Duckering (C); T Floyd (E); T Jackson (P); S Morgan (E).

In attendance: J Chapman, Marketing Manager (mins 33 to 44)
S Grant, Deputy Principal – Corporate
S Hermiston, Director of Information & Funding (mins 10 to 13)
C James, Assistant Principal HE (mins 1 to 23)
J Milburn, Deputy Principal - Curriculum
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERSHIP

1. Apologies were received from J Porter.
2. The Committee Chair welcomed S Duckering to her first meeting.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

3. S Duckering provided a summary of her role at the University of Portsmouth and the Committee noted that, while her role did not include responsibilities in relation to academic governance and University Centre Sparsholt, S Duckering and the Clerk would alert the Committee should any potential conflicts of interest emerge in the future. S Duckering also confirmed that she had informed the University of Portsmouth of her membership of the Committee.
4. There were no interests to be declared in matters to be discussed at this meeting.

MINUTES

5. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record with the correction of a date at minute 115 to 2021-22.

MATTERS ARISING

Apprenticeship consultation (minute 117)

6. The Principal reported that the College was involved through the National Land Based College and Landex in a review of apprenticeship standards by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, with an event for employers to be held in March at Sparsholt College. This was one of a number of consultation events being held across the country and provided an opportunity for a range of employers to influence apprenticeship standards.

Curriculum Planning – T Levels (minute 115)

7. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum reported that the College had submitted an expression of interest for all the T Levels becoming available in 2022-23 (Digital, Construction, Education and Childcare, Health and Science, Legal Finance and Accounting, Business and Administration, and Engineering and Manufacturing) in order to have the flexibility to include all or some of these T Levels in the future curriculum plan should the bid be

successful. It was noted that there was no minimum number of learners criteria as part of the applications.

Innovation South Virtual Campus (minute 149)

8. The Deputy Principal – Corporate reported that there had been no response as yet from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to the project's bid for European Social Fund (ESF) funds. It appeared that there were insufficient resources at the DWP to process ESF applications. If a response was not received imminently, the project would go ahead with the EM3 LEP funding that was already in place and return to the original programme.
9. There were no other matters arising not covered by items on the agenda.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Access and Participation

10. The Committee had received the report of the Assistant Principal – HE on preparation for the access agreement monitoring return 2018-19 to the Office for Students (OfS).
11. The Assistant Principal – HE explained that the data return was based on targets set in the College's University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) OFFA (the former Office for Fair Access Agreement) 2018-19 which was approved by the Board before the OfS introduced the new Access and Participation Plan (APP) framework. The requirements of the 2018-19 agreement had been in relation to 'access', 'success' and 'progression' (to further HE or employment) and, in past years, UCS had directed a greater proportion of spend towards 'success' (retention and achievement) in order to support students from underrepresented groups to achieve successful outcomes, in line with the guidance at the time. Under the new APP framework, supporting 'success' was outside of the APP budget and HE providers had been encouraged to change the emphasis in the delivery of access agreements from 2018-19 onwards. In response, UCS had increased the proportion of spend in 2018-19 on 'access' with an emphasis on the targeted under-represented groups.
12. The Director of Information & Funding gave a summary of progress on reaching the target milestones for the underrepresented or financially/socially disadvantaged priority groups in 2020-21, noting there was an improving picture for Polar 4 Quintile 1 and also some progress in relation to the more challenging IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) Quintile 1. The numbers of BAME and disability applicants had not been measured but, currently, UCS had higher numbers of both groups of students than previously.
13. **Resolved** – that the access agreement monitoring return for 2018-19 be submitted to the Office for Students.

HE Strategy

14. The Committee had received the report of the Assistant Principal – HE on the review of the HE Strategy, together with the draft HE Strategy for 2020-2025.
15. The Assistant Principal – HE summarised the considerations taken into account in producing the draft strategy, including student feedback, and noted that it was being produced within the context of the HE regulatory framework. The draft strategy outlined a range of actions which resulted from the analysis, with further work to be undertaken to prioritise these prior to presenting the strategy to the Board of Governors for approval in July 2020.

16. The Deputy Principal – Corporate emphasised the importance of the knowledge and expertise of the HE staff to the UCS offer and the Committee discussed the need to support staff’s professional development and research. Staff turnover, retention and recruitment were areas of potential risk, although there was no one teaching area which was currently particularly vulnerable. It was recognised that salary constraints in the FE sector and the cost of living in the local area were issues but that UCS offered a positive environment to work with access to a range of specialist interests.
17. The Co-opted Member noted that many of the challenges reflected in the draft strategy were common across the HE sector, including in relation to student recruitment and the demographic dip, challenges related to access and participation plans and other policy and financial pressures.
18. Members discussed the relationship between FE and HE at the College/UCS, noting that while progression from FE to UCS had increased this year, there was still more potential.
19. Members also questioned the projected enrolments for vet nursing, given the drop in enrolments in 2019-20. The Assistant Principal – HE explained that the reduction this year had been a surprise and that no reason had been identified. Projections would be kept under review.
20. Asked about the new FdSC and BSc Agriculture predicted enrolments and whether further investment was needed in facilities/equipment, the Deputy Principal – Corporate reported that there were 11 applicants and some modest investment planned in this year’s capital budget. UCS were also advertising for a new HE staff member to lead the agriculture degree programme. There would also be a sharing of knowledge where relevant with the environmental team.
21. The Assistant Principal – HE invited S Morgan to share his experience from the agriculture sector about the course contents with the HE team outside the meeting, alongside feedback from an industry panel, prior to validation.
22. The Committee Chair expressed caution about the strategic value of future provision of HNCs at Andover College and the risk of UCS being distracted from its core areas of strength and College management concurred. Management also agreed the Committee Chair’s suggestion that the draft list of strategic actions be divided between longer-term broad strategic actions and specific, short-term actions linked to the marketing plan.
23. The Committee commended the work to date and the inclusion of data and evidence in the draft strategy and noted the next steps.

FURTHER EDUCATION DESTINATIONS

24. The Committee had received the report of the Deputy Principal – Curriculum on the review of FE student destinations for 2018-19, including some student case studies.
25. The Committee was pleased to note 98% of destinations were known, the vast majority of which were positive, and that the destination measures provided clear and comparable information on the success of the College in helping learners take qualifications that offered them the best opportunity to continue in education, employment or training.
26. The Committee also noted the DfE data for leavers July 2017, the latest available DfE data set, and that the College compared favourably with other land-based colleges and local

FE colleges. However, it was also noted that the data was of limited value as it did not include the majority of the land-based qualifications.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

27. The Committee had received the revised Employer Engagement Strategy and accompanying report of the Deputy Principal – Corporate, together with a draft EM3 LEP Skills and Labour Market analysis.
28. The Deputy Principal – Corporate highlighted some of the key areas of development in the College’s employer engagement strategy in recent years and the forthcoming changes to apprenticeships, and provided an analysis of potential risks in terms of future capital funding to support skills growth.
29. Members discussed how to mitigate the risks and the Committee Chair noted that the Board had also received a presentation on Skills and Labour Market data at the recent Governors’ Seminar and understood the tensions that were being explored between investing in high value sectors/roles and supporting the local economy.
30. The Committee noted that the strategy demonstrated that the College was listening to the needs of business and potential future employers and taking these into account in the development of the college’s curriculum offer. The Committee Chair emphasised the need to focus on the most significant of the strategic priorities.
31. The Committee noted the key risks assessed in the strategy, including in relation to future investment and to meeting the skills needs of local communities and employers.
32. **Resolved** – that the Employer Engagement Strategy be approved.

CAREERS STRATEGY

33. The Committee had received the report of the Deputy Principal - Curriculum and Marketing Manager on the review and delivery of the Careers Strategy, including a detailed analysis of the progress towards fully achieving the eight Gatsby Benchmarks, as well as the aim of meeting the Careers & Enterprise Company’s guidelines.
34. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum introduced the report, summarising some of the key developments in the College’s careers provision, including the appointment of a new Head of Careers. It was noted that, although the Head of Careers reported to the Marketing Manager and that there were some synergies with the work of the wider Marketing team, both the Head of Careers and Marketing Manager were committed to ensuring the continued independence of information, advice and guidance.
35. The Marketing Manager gave some examples of the increased focus on careers, including the Great Big Careers Day at Andover College.
36. The Committee noted Ofsted’s expectations in terms of the personal development of learners and that the assessment that the College’s careers service was now in a position to deliver successfully on those requirements. Asked about any further areas of development, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum highlighted the challenge of finding relevant work experience for A Level students as an example.
37. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve two minor revisions to the Careers Strategy and to note that the Careers Strategy would need be revised in 2022, with an annual progress report to the Curriculum, Employers & Market Requirements Committee:

- a. '3.2 Work Experience
Students will receive support from Subject Teachers and the Industry Work Placements team to find suitable work placements or work experience within their chosen area of employment.'
- b. '3.9 Contact details' – to update Carol Allen as Head of Careers

38. A Member provided some feedback about this experience as an employer being approached by FE students for work placements and management undertook to follow this up with the pastoral team.

MARKETING STRATEGY

39. The Committee had received the termly report of the Principal and Marketing Manager on the delivery of the Marketing Strategy for 2019-20.
40. The Marketing Manager highlighted some of the current priorities and gave examples of a number of specific activities responding to members' questions, including Sparsholt Futures day in June and this year's Chelsea Flower Show garden.
41. The Principal noted that the enrolment targets for 2020-21 had now been finalised and were explained in the report and set out under the relevant FE strategic priority/aim of the marketing strategy. Given the changes to apprenticeship funding, there was an overall earnings target in the budget rather than a target for numbers of apprenticeships. Asked about the lack of a stretch target for Sparsholt College FE, the Principal explained that the application numbers had already exceeded the 2020-21 financial target.
42. Asked about 2020-21 HE enrolments, the Deputy Principal – Corporate reported an estimated 116 new starters, including one HNC group at Andover College.
43. Noting the marketing activities in relation to the College's websites, Members discussed the role social media and popular trends for social media and influencers in the land-based sector.
44. The Committee noted the continued good progress in delivering the marketing strategy through cross-college support and engagement in the marketing activities.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

45. The Committee noted the most recent Healthcheck report (2020/01) and that matters arising had been considered under other agenda items.
46. The meeting ended at 12.25 pm.