

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE**  
**held on 25 November 2019 at 9.30 am**

**<sup>1</sup>PRESENT** J Blaber (St); T Jackson (P); A Owen (E); R Palmer (E); H Perry (S); C Wilson (E).

In attendance: Matthew Norris-Hill, Head of Faculty - HE (mins 104 to 131)  
J Milburn, Deputy Principal - Curriculum  
R Price, Quality Manager  
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

104. There were no interests to declare.

**MINUTES**

105. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Committee Chair.

FE Learner Performance (Min 51/19)

106. The Principal updated the Committee on the College's complaint to Ofqual about the results of City & Guilds Level 2 Animal Care assessments in 2018, noting that the complaint had not been upheld but that Ofqual had agreed to the College's request, with supporting evidence, of an internal review of this decision. The result was awaited. The Principal also explained that he had provided periodic updates to the parents of the students who the College considered should have passed the qualification at the time, although the complaints procedure had not provided the facility to remark the assessments.

107. The Committee noted that, if the appeal was unsuccessful and the appeals process had been exhausted, the College could consider whether there were grounds and benefits to take legal action and that there was a short timetable for filing claims for judicial review.

108. In relation to ongoing Animal Management qualification assessments, the Principal and Deputy Principal – Curriculum reported that the management was in positive dialogue with City & Guilds to address the potential disadvantages which had been identified by a number of colleges for larger cohorts of students.

College Policies (Min 93-94/19)

109. It was confirmed that the Stop and Search a Learner Policy had been amended as agreed and approved by the Board of Governors in July.

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

---

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

## HIGHER EDUCATION

### Quality and Performance

111. The Committee had received the annual quality review and progress report of the Assistant Principal - Higher Education (HE) on current trends in recruitment and performance for Higher Education provision at the College, including results from external review and feedback from student surveys and the Student Association. The report was presented by the Head of Faculty – HE in the absence of the Assistant Principal.
112. The Committee was assured by the evidence summarised in the report 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 verification by the University of Portsmouth (UoP). It was noted that the School of Biological Sciences at UoP supported the College on many levels and that an excellent and open working relationship was in place. It was also noted that development points had been identified and were being actioned.
113. Members welcomed the improved results from the National Student Survey (NSS) in relation to 'overall satisfaction', to 89% from the previous year's 72%, as well as positive indicators from the College's internal surveys and feedback about the expanded library hours.
114. Members also noted the student achievement and continuation data which confirmed that achievement remained in line with expectations and national levels, and that continuation performed above benchmark. The Committee Chair reported his assessment that the Committee could be assured that the grade distributions were consistent across programmes and in line with HE expectations.
115. In response to the Committee Chair's question about the c30% of students with declared mental health issues, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum confirmed that these were learners with diagnosed conditions and a new mental health support staff post was being introduced at each campus to assist the Wellbeing team to be able to intervene and support both FE and HE students before they reached crisis level. The Staff Governor reflected on the apparent shortened time between an individual being sectioned and returning to college, and the related challenges this raised. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum reported developments by the NHS to set up regional support hubs with qualified education mental health workers to work with schools and colleges in recognition of these issues. It was noted that there was no evidence to suggest the numbers with declared mental health issues were proportionately higher at the College than elsewhere or that there were any underlying contributing factors in relation to the College's/UCS's provision.
116. The Committee noted that enrolments in 2019 had improved but that there was a need to stay strongly focused on recruitment whilst addressing the targets set out in the Access and Participation Plan (APP), which would also require the need for support during the academic year of students from a range of under-represented groups.

117. The Committee Chair sought, and received, assurance that UCS did not give unconditional offers (prior to grades being known) as this had been identified as an issue in parts of the HE sector.
118. A Member sought feedback about the progression rates of the College's FE students to HE, particularly from the Animal Management faculty, and whether the choice to study at HE level elsewhere was balanced by recruitment from other FE colleges. The Principal named around six FE colleges from which students had enrolled with UCS and explained the outreach activities that UCS undertook with colleges which did not offer HE in the same subject areas in order to provide a progression route for their FE students. The Staff Member highlighted 'Christmas lecture' events offered by a range of universities to GCSE/A' Level students as a suggestion for HE marketing activities in future years.
119. In relation to governance, the Committee noted that the College had continued to comply with the ongoing conditions of registration of the Office for Students (OfS) and to ensure accurate and timely data reporting. It was highlighted by management that the ongoing priority of 'student as a consumer' and 'value for money' would require flexibility, adaptability and teamwork across all areas of the College.
120. It was noted that the RCVS (Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in relation to veterinary nurses) accreditation visit had been suspended before completion in recognition of developments underway and accreditation extended for another year (the next visit being May 2020).
121. Members discussed the strategic decision-making process for prioritising resourcing needs in relation to staffing and facilities and, in particular, whether the aspiration for a new HE teaching facility to further differentiate and enhance the UCS experience was more critical than other potential investments.
122. The Principal noted that the Property Strategy approved by the Board, with termly updates to the Resources Committee, assessed priorities for capital investment in the estate and summarised the most recent updates in relation to identifying potential funds for match funding for a new teaching building, the practical 'education building' linked to the Green Gas Mill project (should this proceed to full construction) and the current redevelopment of the Animal Health & Welfare Research Centre.
123. The Principal suggested that the Board might need to give consideration as to whether the c£600k of residue net proceeds from previous property sales be used to fund an HE building, if match-funding was not available. Any such consideration would need to be cognisant of possible changes to capital grants for FE as a result of changes to government policy, as well as the future stance of lending banks towards the FE sector.
124. The Student Member shared his view that students would like more HE-only recreational/dining space, particularly as current HE-only facilities were under pressure as student enrolments increased. The Staff Member also highlighted the introduction and potential growth in numbers of HE students at Andover College and the need to keep in mind investment in the Andover College estate.
125. The Committee agreed that careful consideration need to be given by the Board to the strategic aim and value for money of investments in the estate and staffing at both

campuses, taking into account HE recruitment and quality of teaching and student outcomes.

### HE Student Engagement Policy

126. The Committee has received the revised HE Student Engagement Policy which had been updated in line with the QAA UK Quality Code.
127. **Resolved** – that the revised HE Student Engagement Policy be recommended to the Board of Governors for approval.

### **PREVENT DUTY**

128. The Committee had received the College's updated Prevent Duty Risk Assessment/Action Plan for information.
129. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained, that as a result of previous discussion with the Committee, the risk assessment now included a likelihood score once controls had been applied. There was one risk which it was not possible to entirely control – the risk in relation to online safety and radicalisation where the online activity was off campus and outside of College's IT systems - although mitigations such as tutorial programmes and SMART badges sought to inform students' choices and provide routes to report concerns.
130. Responding to the Staff Governor's concern that the iboss security software also blocked sites which students used in art and media related courses, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum noted that Designated Safeguarding Leads/Wellbeing Co-ordinators had authority to approve access to blocked sites at the request of teaching staff for certain student cohorts but recognised that this required testing prior to the lesson by both the member of staff and a student.
131. The Committee noted the controls in place and was assured, on behalf of the Board, that College management continued to effectively manage requirements in relation to the Prevent Duty.

### **FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE**

#### Self-Assessment Report

132. The Committee had received the College's FE Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2018-19 and the FE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2019-20. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained that the SAR and QIP were near final and that updated versions would follow to the Board of Governors. An updated QIP 2019-20 with details of 'progress and outcomes' was also tabled in order that Members had early sight of the information to be provided to the Board.
133. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained the format of the report, including in relation to the QIP, and noted that the final report was required to be submitted to Ofsted by the end of January 2020.
134. The Committee welcomed the assessment of 'overall effectiveness' as 'Good' and accepted that, although the quality of education was assessed overall as 'Requires Improvement', the detailed analysis provided evidence that the under-performance had been in a small number of specific areas and the underlying reasons had been identified, with actions in place to address the issues, and performance was improving. Teaching

and learning in most curriculum areas was confirmed to be of good quality and safeguarding continued to be effective.

135. Members were pleased to see confirmation of the improvements that had been achieved in two areas at Andover College which had underperformed in the past and the continuing high performance of the Andover College Sixth Form.
136. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum highlighted the key changes to the report under the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF), noting that this included more specific questions about the leadership of the College and engagement with external stakeholders and that this was an area of strength.
137. Members welcomed the clarity of reasoning behind the judgements and the transparency of the assessments in the SAR, including in relation to areas requiring improvement, and were satisfied with the relevance of the actions planned in the new QIP. In particular, the continued emphasis on student attendance was welcomed.
138. Responding to a point raised by the Staff Governor about mitigating the risks of a downturn in performance as a result of future changes to assessments for some qualifications, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum agreed that these would require careful management, in addition to developments in T Levels and Apprenticeships.
139. **Resolved** – that the Committee recommend to the Board the Self-Assessment Report for 2018-19 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 2019-20 be approved by the Board.

#### Operational Action Plans

140. The Committee had received for information and assurance the quality operational action plans for maths and English and for the Animal Management curriculum area.
141. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum noted that the English and maths action plan was put in place for the previous Summer term and that there had been a marginal improvement in results which it was aimed to improve further on this academic year. A number of key actions were highlighted, including new staff appointments, support from the Quality Manager and other subject Curriculum Leaders, timetabling changes, differentiation of teaching groups for learners and communicating the importance of English and maths in tutorials.
142. Responding to a Member's question about whether good practice in Motor Vehicle which had been reported at the last meeting had been shared in other areas, the Quality Manager confirmed that it had and it was also noted that Landex peer reviewers would be asked to cover how successfully English and maths were being embedded in teaching of core subjects at Sparsholt.
143. Introducing the Animal Management action plan, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum emphasised that management understood the strategic importance of the curriculum area and was actively addressing issues which had arisen and impacted on student outcomes. The entire delivery model and the roles of students, teachers, technicians and pastoral tutors had been assessed and changes implemented, including a revised staffing structure to improve the clarity and accountability of the different roles. It was also explained that there was a revised animal management offer to deliver clearer pathways for learners and simplify the complexity which had developed over time. It

was noted this would also enhance information, advice and guidance (IAG) for students prior to enrolment and beyond.

144. Members underscored the priority of addressing the performance of the Animal Management curriculum area and welcomed the assurance provided by the clarity of the analysis and evidence of the implementation and monitoring of the action plan.
145. The Committee was confident that the comprehensive plan demonstrated past performance issues were being addressed and noted that this also supported the College's capital investment in redeveloping the animal management centre.
146. While recognising that Animal Management was unusual in terms of the large numbers of students and staff, Members also supported the intention of management to apply learning points from the curriculum area of Animal management for the implementation of changes to assessments for qualifications in other areas, as relevant.
147. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum concurred with a point made by the Staff Governor about challenges created by the approach of exam boards towards changes in qualifications, such as late issuing of information and exemplars.

#### In-Year Performance

148. The Committee had received the Quality section of the latest College Healthcheck report.
149. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum provided some context to the attendance rates data and explained the intention to provide more analysis and headlines in future reports, based on new systems which enabled management to scrutinise the reasons for non-attendance and withdrawals.
150. The Committee welcomed the attention being paid by management to attendance monitoring and to achieving high attendance rates to improve student outcomes.
151. The Quality Manager tabled a summary report of TALO activity (teaching and learning observations) and confirmed that the new processes which had been approved as part of the Curriculum Delivery and Improvement Strategy had been implemented. It was noted that there had been 58 completed observations to date this term (excluding ALS), an increase from 35 at the same point in the previous year, with 54 completed professional discussions and a number of re-observations scheduled. The report summarised the common areas of strength, together with some areas for further development and the programme of training scheduled, which included training from Landex in some areas.
152. Asked about the response of the Animal Management team to training on assessment strategies (also planned for the Land-Based faculty), the Quality Manager confirmed that there had been a mainly positive response from staff and that some one-to-one and other support was being provided to support changes in lesson planning and delivery. A particular challenge of the new assessments for teaching staff was recognised to be developing learners with more independence to be successful in practicals and to have the skills to recall information for exams.
153. More generally, the Quality Manager reported that teaching staff were accessing the new 'Create hubs' on both campuses for support from the Quality and ILT teams.
154. Members reflected that the TALO data could provide a lead indicator for student outcomes and welcomed the evidence of the support for both staff and students.

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLAN

155. The Committee had received the report of the Clerk proposing the Committee's forward business plan for 2019-20, following consultation with the Committee Chair, Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Assistant Principal – HE.
156. Members welcomed the addition to this year's business plan of more detailed reporting on specific FE faculty areas in turn.
157. In relation to HE, it was noted that the plan included regular reporting of HE academic quality and student experience, achievement and outcomes and that reporting would continue to respond to the requirements of the OfS.
158. As a result of discussions with management and the Curriculum, Employers & Marketing Requirements Committee (CEMR), it was proposed that CEMR have primary responsibility at governor committee level, for monitoring delivery of the HE Access & Participation Plan and that both committees' terms of reference be updated accordingly. This was also reflected in the business plan. The Student Governor noted that the membership of CEMR did not currently include a HE Student Governor. The Clerk undertook to follow this up with the Assistant Principal – HE to ensure that there continued to be HE student engagement in the governance processes relating to the APP, whether via invitation to the HE Student Governor to CEMR or through other means.
159. **Resolved** – that the Committee's forward business plan for 2019-20 be approved and that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve an update to the Committee's terms of reference to remove (the current) clause 8.
160. The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm.