

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE**  
**held on 18 June 2020 at 9.30 am**  
**Via videoconference**

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

In attendance: C James, Assistant Principal HE (mins 41-48 & 98-108)  
J Milburn, Deputy Principal Curriculum & Principal Designate  
R Price, Head of Learning & Quality  
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

34. There were no interests to declare.

**MINUTES**

35. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Committee Chair.

FE Learner Performance (mins 3, 20, 22, 32/20)

36. The Principal provided a further update on discussion with City & Guilds about the set of Level 2 Animal Care synoptic assessment results in 2018 which had been the subject of a complaint by the College to Ofqual (not upheld). It was noted that City & Guilds understood that the College still felt strongly about the situation and had agreed to a final opportunity to present the College's concerns and any proposed remedies for review by a City & Guilds panel.
37. The Deputy Principal Curriculum reported that, in light of Covid-19 lockdown, the plans for sharing best practice teaching projects at the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) academic staff conference in June had been adapted to be delivered remotely via video and downloadable information, with around 45 project examples.
38. The Head of Learning & Quality provided an update on the recruitment of teaching and learning coaches from academic members of staff, noting that seven teaching coaches had been appointed across the College. This was particularly welcomed by the Staff Governor who had positive experiences of past use of teaching coaches.
39. In relation to a previous report about the process for TALO observations during the probationary period of new staff, the Deputy Principal Curriculum explained that, where it had not been possible to observe enough face-to-face teaching and to put in place the associated support prior to lockdown, it has been decided to extend probationary periods. This process had been explained to the ICE (Informing and Consulting Employees) group.
40. There were no other matters arising not covered by items on the agenda.

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

## HIGHER EDUCATION

41. The Committee had received the report of the Assistant Principal - Higher Education (HE) on current progress in the quality of HE provision and the HE student experience.
42. The Committee noted that the University of Portsmouth's (UoP's) Periodic Review had confirmed the quality and relevance of University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) programmes and confirmed the College as an Associate Partner for a further six years. The review had confirmed the continued validity and relevance of the curriculum for all programmes, together with effective annual monitoring and review processes, and had identified six areas of strength, including staff's passion for their subject area and general student support and responsiveness to student and external feedback. The panel had placed a condition to update a course handbook, which had been already rectified, and four recommendations for further development.
43. The Committee also noted continued positive feedback from internal student surveys, considerations of the Student Association, and that current levels of retention were at 90% or above, other than for the HNC programme, which was slightly lower than the previous year. There was also a correlation with a slight decline in retention which the Assistant Principal HE explained was being addressed with more pastoral support, identifying barriers and focused support.
44. The Assistant Principal HE confirmed that a full timetable had continued from lockdown until the start of the exam period, with good engagement, and that high levels of communication with students continued. Attendance had increased and the Assistant Principal HE paid tribute to the work of the HE staff in adapting to online provision. The Assistant Principal HE also reported activity for offer holders in light of Covid-19.
45. The Student Governor commended the response to the lockdown by USC, noting in particular the remote revision support and engagement with tutors and how students had extended this to develop shared revision sessions.
46. The Assistant Principal HE explained the framework for predicting grades, based on the UoP's 'no detriment' practices. There would also be the opportunity to retake individual artefacts over the summer if necessary. In relation to the remote exams taken, the Assistant Principal HE explained that UCS has listened to student's feedback when the exam process had first been communicated about their home-working conditions, and had adapted the process to seek to avoid students being disadvantaged by their individual home environments. The exception was the Vet Nursing exams which had followed the RCVS's specific requirements for the delivery of unseen examinations.
47. The Committee recognised the amount of effort and responsiveness which had been required by the HE teams and commended the College for its response to the lockdown and the delivery of exams remotely and with integrity.
48. The Assistant Principal HE reported that the UoP had validated the new FdSc Agriculture with two conditions, which would be met. The validation of the BSc Agriculture had been deferred to allow further work to develop the programme and would then be resubmitted for validation to be confirmed in July/August, ready for commencement in September.

## **FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE**

### FE In-Year Performance

49. The Committee had received the report of the Deputy Principal Curriculum and Head of Learning & Quality on FE and Apprenticeship in-year performance indicators, including progress against the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2019-20.
50. The Committee noted that initial predictions were for there to be an increase in overall achievement rates for main programmes and for the College's FE provision, and that the College was on target to self-assess the standard of education for learners on FE programmes as Good in 2019-20. Apprenticeship success across all three strands was expected to see improvement this year, with marked improvement at Andover College.
51. The Deputy Principal Curriculum reported updates relating to the Covid-19 situation, including in relation to the assessment and grading process and early thinking about delivery of the curriculum, potentially as a blend of practical face-to-face learning and remote learning depending on Government guidance, from September.
52. It was noted that, while retention indicators were very positive in a significant number of areas and internal quality processes had been more rigorous to support achievement, the changes to the assessment and awarding of grades processes and the external standardisation activities placed a much higher degree of uncertainty over expected achievement rates. The College would be seeking to support learners' progression based on expected achievement and to enrol home schooled learners who had been unable to sit GCSE examinations based on a piece of submitted work and diagnostic assessments prior to enrolment.
53. The Deputy Principal Curriculum also explained that completion of some technical courses had had to be delayed or rescheduled, bringing students in where possible or deferring, and that this would impact achievement rates. This was a particular risk for apprenticeships and craft-based subjects.
54. The Committee acknowledged the level of uncertainty and the complexity of the situation in relation to achievement rates for 2019-20 and commended the focus on supporting learners to progress where appropriate.
55. Responding to a question about the risk of challenges to the grades awarded, the Head of Learning & Quality explained the detailed criteria which were being used to predict grades, confirming the College was following the guidelines of awarding bodies. Management were confident about the rigour of the process being used internally but could not predict the outcome of the external verification and standardisation activities.
56. The Committee was assured by the rigorous and careful way in which College management were undertaking the grade assessments. However, it was noted that investment in English and maths GCSEs meant improvements would not be in line with previous years and therefore could potentially not be recognised.
57. Asked whether the possible extension of remote provision of English and maths to the Autumn term would result in additional resource needs, the Deputy Principal Curriculum explained the range of processes planned. This included grouping learners according to learning needs, use of new online materials and possible partnership with other colleges to avoid additionally burdening members of staff.

58. In terms of retention across the year, the Deputy Principal Curriculum highlighted the lower retention rates for ‘Looked After Children’ (approx. 35 learners) and noted that, while there were some factors outside of the College’s control (such as relocation), the Equality & Diversity Working Group would be looking into this further.
59. The Deputy Principal Curriculum confirmed that, by the time of lockdown, the College had been able to conclude all but one of the external quality reviews and that this had been deferred until 2020-21. The Committee welcomed the use of in-depth quality reviews by external bodies and confirmation that areas which had been identified as needing improvement had been included in the new TALO (Teaching and Learning Observations) criteria for 2020-21.
60. The Committee agreed that the report evidenced that College management had a clear and effective plan of continuing improvement based upon detailed analysis of available information.

#### National Achievement Rate Tables

61. The Committee had received the new annual report of the Head of Quality & Learning on the National Achievement Rate Tables (NART) 2018-19 published by the DfE.
62. The Head of Quality & Learning gave an accompanying presentation with additional analysis of the data, mapping the DfE subject categories to the College’s curriculum offer and comparative achievement rates.
63. It was noted that, overall, the College performed below the national average achievement rates in 2018-19 and below the averages for GFE (General FE) and Specialist FE. While this was not satisfactory, the Committee recognised that the underlying issues had been identified by management in the previous two years’ Self-Assessment Reports and Quality Improvement Plans and that there was evidence of significant progress.
64. The Head of Quality & Learning reported that the College’s overall predicted achievement rate for 2019-20 exceeded the national averages in 2018-19 and, on that basis, the College would move into the top-ten of land-based colleges in the NART tables. However, it was also noted that there was uncertainty about how the national grading and moderation processes this year would impact on the College’s achievement and the national averages for 2019-20. Additionally, the DfE had indicated that NARTs tables would not be published in March 2021.
65. Asked by a member whether there were factors in relation to the College’s curriculum offer and student intake which could constrain further progress in improving achievement rates, the Deputy Principal Curriculum noted that the dip in performance at the College had been associated with transfer to the new technical qualifications, with the required adjustments to teaching and learning and the greater challenge of the exam based model, but confirmed that this had been addressed. It was also noted that there could be a later impact on those colleges, both specialist and GFE, which had not yet introduced the technical qualifications and continued to deliver legacy qualifications (most of which had been extended to 2020-21 in light of Covid-19).
66. The Committee noted the headline analysis of the NARTs in relation to the performance of male and female students and of achievement rates for BAME and LDD learners (those with learning difficulties and disabilities) in 2018-19 and sought additional information.
67. The Deputy Principal Curriculum explained that the outperformance of male students over female students in the areas covered by the NARTs during the period related to the

lower performance in Animal Management which was the largest FE student cohort and predominantly female. The actions in place to improve achievement in Animal Management would address this. There was a small number of BAME learners and, while there had not been any structural/cultural issues identified, the Equality & Diversity Working Group would examine this further once the 2019-20 results were known. Analysis of the 2018-19 LLD performance data considered by the Equality & Diversity Working Group last Autumn had identified under-performance by some students with dyslexia and additional support had been put in place, with resulting improvement in results.

68. The Committee commended the evident focus of College management and staff on continued improvement of achievement rates overall and noted other evidence of strong performance outside of the NARTs, such as the ALPS value-added scores for A' Levels at Andover College Sixth Form.
69. The Deputy Principal Curriculum reported that ALPS value-added tables for 2019-20 would not be published but that ALPS were providing a value-added process which could continue to be used by the College internally.

#### FE Curriculum Delivery and Quality Improvement Policy

70. The Committee had received from the Deputy Principal Curriculum the updated FE Curriculum Delivery and Quality Improvement Policy.
71. The Deputy Principal Curriculum summarised the key amendments to the policy, noting that these included reference to supporting remote learning and responding to the needs of specific groups of learners (with reference to Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) and SEND) and building skills for future employment. Additional commitments had also been included in relation to consultation with learners and participation of learners in delivery of the curriculum and mentoring/ambassadorial roles. The section on CPD had also been expanded and updated.
72. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the FE Curriculum Delivery and Quality Improvement Policy.

#### FE Curriculum Delivery and Quality Improvement Strategy

73. The Committee had received from the Deputy Principal Curriculum the FE Curriculum Delivery and Quality Improvement Strategy for 2020-21 which set out the annual programme of activity proposed to ensure that management continued to implement FE Curriculum Delivery and Quality Improvement Policy and secure further improvements to Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) practices.
74. The Deputy Principal Curriculum explained the 14 quality improvement areas of focus for 2020/21 included developing college systems to improve the effectiveness of monitoring and responding to 'at risk indicators', consistently across all teams, in order to improve overall retention.
75. The Head of Learning & Quality summarised key points of a detailed structure for maintaining the integrity and quality of curriculum delivery, including the introduction of a standardised programme of group tutorials (College Tutorial Programme (CTP) to support learners to understand their responsibilities as British citizens, members of the College community and aspiring entrants to higher education or employment, and further strengthening of the TALO process with reference to the ETF's (Education & Training Foundation's) Professional Standards and Values.

76. A Member commended the developments to the TALO process, noting the intended balance between judgement of the quality of teaching and input from the teaching staff through the new pre-observation self-assessment and reflection activities.
77. The Staff Governor reinforced the positive role which could be played by teaching and learning coaches and reflected on the need for clarity about the roles and suitable training to differentiate 'coaching' from 'mentoring'.
78. The Committee Chair noted that the selection of teaching observers was also key, with both coaches and observers needing to have the right personal qualities and communication styles to perform effectively in their roles.
79. The Head of Quality & Learning acknowledged these points and added that observers were selected carefully and TALOs were sometimes undertaken by two observers to help to ensure consistency.
80. The Committee Chair also observed that it would be of interest to monitor the success of the TALO process in relation to improved student achievement and whether this correlated to recruitment numbers.
81. Responding to a question about whether there were risks in relation to recruitment competition for some courses from the introduction of a new 'Peer Practice Exchange' programme between the College's two campuses and two other colleges, the Head of Quality & Learning explained that the programme would be targeted at specific subject areas and would be cognisant of the concerns raised.
82. **Resolved** – that the FE Curriculum Delivery and Quality Improvement Strategy 2020-21 be approved as representing a coherent and appropriate plan of action for the coming academic year.

#### Healthcheck Report

83. The Committee had received and noted the Quality section of the latest College Healthcheck report, including TALO data.

#### **COMPLAINTS MONITORING**

84. The Committee had received the annual report of the Deputy Principal Curriculum on Complaints, Comments and Compliments.
85. The Committee noted that 88 complaints had been received during the year, 10 less than the equivalent point the in 2019. Of these, the three main causes were responses to the actions taken in relating to poor behaviour on buses, responses to the introduction of the meal plan system which was intended to ensure spend was primarily on meals (rather than drinks/snacks), and feedback about one issue in one of the faculty areas which was being addressed. There had only been three complaints since lockdown.
86. The Deputy Principal Curriculum noted that the complaints numbers included complaints which were not upheld (for example, in relation to exclusion following theft) and that future annual reports would provide more analysis as context for the Committee.
87. The Committee noted that the College's zero tolerance approach to drug use in accommodation this year, coupled with the setting and expectation of high behavioural standards from the Autumn term induction onwards, had seen far fewer exclusions overall than in the previous year. The Deputy Principal Curriculum explained that the College sought to support learners and provide further opportunities where possible but also had to act to protect the safety of other learners.

88. Members recognised that the number of exclusions was small compared to the size of the overall student cohort and agreed with the policy of setting clear behavioural standards and enforcing these where necessary.
89. The Deputy Principal Curriculum also reported that compliments were received in many ways throughout the year but only a small number were formally logged. This would be reviewed again to see how positive feedback could be more comprehensively captured and reported.

#### **COLLEGE POLICIES**

90. The Committee had received from the Deputy Principal Curriculum proposing minor amendments to two policies to reflect changes in job titles - replacing 'Pastoral Tutor' with 'Progress Coach' and 'Deputy Principal' with 'Vice Principal/Deputy Principal'.
91. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approved the updated:
  - a) Promoting Effective Learner Performance (Further Education Programmes);
  - b) Policy and Procedures for Managing Learner/Student Conduct.

#### **COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

92. The Committee had received and noted the report of the Clerk to the Corporation which provided information to inform the committee's annual review of its performance and terms of reference.
93. The Committee was satisfied that, overall, it has performed effectively during the year. A Member noted that management had responded positively to requests from the committee for additional information and evidence in relation to quality and achievement matters.
94. The Clerk explained that, subject to considerations at the forthcoming Board meeting in relation to changes to the composition of the Board, the membership of the committee might be extended to include an additional student.
95. The Committee Chair noted that it was the last meeting of the Principal prior to his retirement and thanked him on behalf of the Board.
96. The Committee Chair thanked the Student Governor for his contribution to the committee during his term of office and wished him well in the future.
97. The meeting concluded at 1.15 pm. Confidential items were discussed and are recorded separately.