

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE
held on 25 February 2021
via videoconference

PRESENT S Duckering (C); T Floyd (E) (Chair); J Milburn (P); N Moody (E); S Morgan (E);
O Wilson (St)

In attendance: J Baker, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt)
J Chapman, Marketing Manager (from minute 53)
S Grant, Deputy Principal Corporate
S Hermiston, Director of Information & Funding (minutes 23 to 37)
C James, Assistant Principal HE (minutes 23 to 47)
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were received from M Serridge.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. There were no interests to be declared in matters to be discussed at this meeting.

MINUTES

3. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Curriculum plan – industry work placements (minute 99-100)

4. The Deputy Principal reported that the College had received confirmation that a sufficient number of work placements had been arranged to demonstrate that the College would have complied with the funding requirements if the pandemic restrictions had not in place and therefore funding would not be withdrawn.
5. There were no other matters arising not covered by items on the agenda.

FURTHER EDUCATION DESTINATIONS

6. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principals Curriculum on the review of FE student destinations for 2019/20, together with some case studies of individual students.
7. The committee noted that, at a headline level, 98.9% of destinations for full-time FE 16-19 year olds leavers in July 2020 were 'known', the vast majority of which were positive (94.4%). These were positive findings given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the wider national job market, although there appeared to have been growth in opportunities in some sectors.

8. Members discussed the data for all learner groups, noting that positive outcomes included progressing to further education, higher education or employment. Of the 2,427 full-time 16-19 year old learners: 58% progressed in FE; 10% progressed to HE; 22% progress into employment. 2.6% were categorised as 'unemployed' at the time of the survey.
9. The Vice Principals Curriculum undertook to review how the data breakdown was presented in future reports to increase the level of clarity for committee members.
10. It was noted that the DfE had not published accountability data for FE college leavers for the 2017/18 academic year due to the pandemic.
11. Members reviewed the case studies and the Vice Principals highlighted examples of progression and success by individual students on both campuses, noting how students had overcome challenges and provided positive role models in their behaviour as well as their results.
12. A member highlighted the value in sharing case studies with prospective students, giving the example of demonstrating the progress route for Level 3 students to the FdSc Agriculture degree.
13. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) reported work to develop curriculum area intent and impact reports which would help to provide more information to the committee next year about destinations of students.
14. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) noted that industry curriculum boards were being set for every curriculum area and would input into curriculum planning, self-assessment and provider employer insights, with the first meetings commencing this term.
15. Prompted by a question from the Committee Chair, the Student Governor explained his plans for higher education when he completed his FE qualification.
16. Asked if there were any areas of learning where it was more challenging to achieve positive destinations, the Vice Principals explained that management was reviewing the progression routes for a small number of Level 2 courses to make improvements under the Quality Improvement Plan.
17. The Principal emphasised the role of Level 2 courses in supporting students to develop skills and pass their English and maths qualifications, enabling them to access employment in a range of areas. The Principal also summarised the review of Foundation learning which was establishing pathways to help students to progress to a positive employment outcome.
18. Members also discussed the impact of the pandemic and the potential impact on the progression of students. The Principal explained that while retention had improved year-on-year and satisfaction rates were good, there remained some uncertainties about the qualification assessment processes and the challenge of catching up teaching of practical skills when students returned to campus. It was expected that Level 2 students would be able to progress, but the College would need to be prepared to support them. Current funding regulations did not allow for students to repeat the same course but there were sometimes possible alternative, related courses available.
19. The Deputy Principal reported that 'Choices Day' had been brought forward to help students plan their progression.

20. The Principal reported that she had raised with the local MP the need for funding of extra delivery hours in 2021/22 to support students and the longer-term challenges for students who had missed significant learning in schools.
21. The committee endorsed the impact of the College's curriculum offer in supporting its leavers to secure a positive destination through the attainment of relevant qualifications and employability skills despite the turbulence emanating from the pandemic.
22. The Committee Chair noted that a number of complex issues had been raised in discussion around the impact of pandemic and progression routes for students and that these would also be considered at other governors' meetings.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Graduate Outcomes

23. The committee had received the report of the Dean of Higher Education on HE graduate outcomes for the 2017/18 cohort.
24. It was noted that this was the first survey undertaken by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and replaced the previous Destination Leavers Higher Education (DLHE) survey. The completion rate for University Centre Sparsholt students (49%) was in line with the national rates but significantly lower than when the College had undertaken the DLHE survey.
25. The Dean of HE noted that the number of University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) graduates in employment or further study was encouraging and aligned with the College's perceptions. There was an anomaly between the analysis published by the Office for Students (OfS) in relation to the FdSc Animal Management graduates and management's analysis which required further investigation.
26. The survey used the Standards Occupational Classification (SOC) coding of 'highly skilled employment'. The percentage of highly skilled employment was judged to be 42% which management believed underrepresented the positive employment outcomes for UCS students. This was due to SOC broad classifications not recognising the graduate employment pathways in animal and zoo sectors as 'highly skilled' despite previous representations made by UCS and Landex. Veterinary Nursing had now been classified as 'highly skilled'.
27. The Dean of HE explained that the data was also affected by the small number of respondents in each cohort and a lack of robustness and relevance in the salary data benchmarking. It tended to be the case, for example, that the practical nature of the land and animal sectors meant graduates earned lower salaries in the early years after graduation while they gained additional industry experience before progressing to managerial positions.
28. The Deputy Principal confirmed the SLT's concerns about the classification system and that management intended to review the SOC classification of students with a view to challenging this if appropriate.
29. The committee noted the strategic risk to the College of the current approach to classifying occupations and to use of salary comparisons without taken into account the value of HE for land-based/animal management career pathways, particularly if this was used as measure of quality.

Access and Participation

30. The committee had received the termly report of the Dean of Higher Education and Director of Funding & Information on progress with delivery of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-21 to 2024-25, together with expenditure against the preceding 2019/20 plan. The Access data table for 2020/21 had been re-issued in advance of the meeting.
31. The committee review progress against the 2019/20 expenditure targets and associated activities. It was noted that a shortfall in expenditure in student financial support would be adjusted by an increase in 2020/21 and used as an additional bursary to support the increasing numbers of students enrolled from target groups. Members discussed with the Dean of HE the reasons for the underspend and noted the significant increase in eligible students this year.
32. The committee noted that College management would submit the monitoring return on the 2019/20 plan, approved by the Accountable Officer, to the OfS by the deadline of 16 April. The OfS would then prepare an impact report and the College was required to publish the information in the report on its website.
33. The committee reviewed progress against the 2020/21 access, success and progression targets and the 2021/22 access targets, noting the actions completed to date and the action plan to improve recruitment of POLAR4Q1 and Q2 males. An annual framework was also being developed to confirm timelines and responsibilities for all staff involved with delivering the APP activities, funding, data collection and evaluation.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum Contribution

34. The committee had received the report of the Director of Funding & Information Management on the FE and HE curriculum contribution model findings. The analysis was provided to the committee to inform its consideration of the curriculum plan and was also due to be presented to the Resources Committee in relation to evidencing the College's strategic approach to ensuring efficiency of curriculum delivery and value for money.
35. The Director of Funding & Information explained that the modelling in the report was based on the College budget set in July 2020 and that he had also reviewed the analysis based on the updated budget approved in December 2021. The impact was mainly to bring the performance of HE back to a similar level as in previous years. The revised 'gross margin and overall contribution AOL' summary graph would be issued to members after the meeting for information.
36. The committee discussed the outcomes of the curriculum contribution analysis, noting the areas of learnings which provided a positive contribution and the actions to be undertaken by management to further examine low performing areas and review their short, medium and longer-term viability. This would include work on staff utilisation.
37. Further information was sought on the context for the performance of Sport and it was noted that the pandemic had led to a significant decline in recruitment. The Vice Principals outlined the measures being taken to support recruitment and to develop the Sports offer and improve staff utilisation at the Sparsholt campus and for more efficient training arrangements for the Andover College programmes. Management were also looking at better differentiating the Sports offer from that at other colleges and potentially developing HNC Level 4 provision around fitness and coaching.

Curriculum Plan

38. The committee had received the 3 Year Curriculum plan, together with an overview of the landscape and rationale of the College offer and a summary of planned changes for each key sub-sector of provision (14-16, 16-19, adult, apprenticeships and higher education) from the Vice Principals Curriculum and Dean of Higher Education.
39. The committee had also received for information the internal audit report on curriculum planning presented to the Audit Committee in November.
40. The Vice Principals Curriculum drew the committee's attention to key developments in the FE curriculum plans on each campus.
41. Several points were considered in discussion, including the uncertainties around Level 2 provision and the relationship between Level 2 and T Levels and the links between the curriculum developments and growth in employment sectors and student demand. It was noted that some potential courses would require specialist facilities and might be supported by partnerships arrangements with other providers given the resources constraints. The co-opted member shared her experiences of student expectations for high level and costly services and facilities for subjects in the health sciences and forensics areas.
42. Responding to a question about the challenges in delivering of work placements for future T Levels, such as the T Level in Health, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) explained the existing links with health providers from delivering health and social care qualifications and the actions being taken to seek to establish a relationship with more local hospitals. It was recognised that health education was a growing area and there were competition demands for work placements from other FE/HE providers.
43. Discussion also covered the development of employer/business hubs in line with the FE white paper, including a SEND employability hub working with Hampshire County Council.
44. Asked about a reference to the creation of a Military Preparation study programme commencing in September 2021, supported by a Combined Cadet Force in collaboration with Winchester College, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) explained the reasons for seeking a partnership with an established cadet unit and the benefits to students. The Student Governors noted that he had taken part in cadets and would be happy to provide insights to management.
45. Alongside this route, it was noted that an 'Emergency Services' route would allow learners to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for a successful career in the Police, Fire Service or as a Paramedic and the College already had links to police training facilities.
46. The Dean of Higher Education highlighted to the committee the challenge for curriculum planning for HE because of the uncertainties around how the OfS would measure quality and standards, particular with regard to potential links to salary levels, and the impact this could have on perceptions of degree programmes. There were some new offers under consideration, and it was hoped that the experience of delivering blended learning would open up new opportunities for distance learning.
47. **Resolved** – that the scope and ambition of the 3 Year Curriculum Plan was fit for purpose as a work plan to deliver the College's strategic ambitions, particularly in relation to student progression, future employability, professional development of the employed and to meeting the needs of employees.

[Addendum: an update of the Curriculum Plan to be presented to the committee at its May meeting to further address points arising from the curriculum analysis.]

T Levels

48. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) on the implementation plan for delivering T Levels routes from September 2022 at Andover College. The report had also been presented to the Quality & Standards Committee for information.
49. It was noted that the T Levels being introduced at the College from 2022/23 were Accountancy, Health (Assisting Healthcare), Science (Laboratory Science), Onsite Construction (Brick and Carpentry) and Digital Design and Production. T Levels in land-based provisions were being developed ready for 2023/24 and the College would submit applications before the deadline of 30 July to deliver these at Sparsholt College and other T Level routes at Andover College. The Principal reported that the College was seeking agreement from the ESFA to reapply as an Education pathway provider following changes to the criteria.
50. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) noted that, after the report being issued, management had met with the ESFA who had been satisfied with the College's implementation plan for September 2022 and progress to date. The Vice Principal confirmed that most of the actions were at a 'work in progress' (amber) stage and that the capital funding bid was the highest current priority.
51. Asked whether the development of the land-based T Levels had taken into account feedback from colleges, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) confirmed that it appeared account was being taken of the feedback and that colleges were being supported by Landex. Management were building into the Property Strategy projects to support delivery of the land-based T Levels.
52. The committee noted the monitoring report and that the necessary preparations for delivery of T Levels were understood by management and being addressed as a priority.

CAREERS

53. The committee had received the annual report of the Marketing Manager, with support from the Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) (SLT Careers Lead), on implementation and review of the three year Careers Strategy, including a detailed analysis of the progress towards fully achieving the eight Gatsby Benchmarks.
54. It was noted that Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF) expected that colleges would support the personal development of learners through providing an effective careers programme and supporting readiness for the next face of education, training, or employment.
55. The Careers Strategy had been updated to support achieving the requirements of the Gatsby Benchmarks, which define the best careers provision in colleges, alongside meeting Matrix reaccreditation requirements for information, advice and guidance (IAG). The proposed updates had also taken into account key themes in the FE white paper 'Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth', including reference to employer focus groups.

56. The Marketing Manager explained that there had been increased demand from students for careers advice following the 2020 lockdown and that the team had sought to support students to understand their transferable skills.
57. Asked by the Committee Chair, the Student Governor provided feedback on his awareness of the UniFrog careers information database and the Marketing Manager confirmed that there was more to be done to help students understand the benefits to them of the system, including after their time at college.
58. The Vice Principal, Curriculum (Sparsholt) confirmed the aim for a whole College Group approach, with further training planned for staff.
59. The committee noted that there was good progress in implementing the actions required to deliver the Gatsby Benchmarks and Careers & Enterprise Company guidelines, with most actions complete.
60. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the Careers Strategy 2021-25.

MARKETING

61. The committee had received the report of the Marketing Manager on progress with the Marketing Strategy 2020/21.
62. The Marketing Manager highlighted the constant, ongoing adaption of marketing and communication methods to respond to the restrictions of the pandemic and the strong support of colleagues across the College Group to engage effectively with the College's audiences. The next step as restrictions were lifted would be to integrate current activities with some face-to-face activities. It was also the intention to retain the advantages of being able to offer remoted online interaction to support on-campus events, particularly for long-distance prospective students.
63. Committee and SLT members discussed the increased applications for 2021/22, with a note of caution as to whether the inability for students to visit campus in person would impact on conversions to enrolments.
64. The committee welcomed the good progress in delivering the marketing objectives, with a number achieved and most of the others underway. There were a small number of actions which had been paused or delayed.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

65. The committee noted the most recent Healthcheck report (2021/01), including the upward trend in FE and HE applications.
66. The meeting ended at 12.30 pm.