

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 10 February 2021 at 9.30 am
Via videoconference

¹PRESENT J Milburn (P); A Owen (E); R Palmer (E) (Chair); H Perry (S); S Orme (St);
J Plenderleith (St); C Wilson (E).

In attendance: J Baker, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt)
C James, Dean of Higher Education (to min 27)
H Mitchell, Apprenticeship Manager (mins 28 to 42)
R Price, Head of Learning & Quality
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

MEMBERSHIP

1. The Committee Chair welcomed the new FE and HE student governors to their first meeting of the committee.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

3. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Committee Chair.

FE Self-Assessment Report (mins 149/20)

4. It was confirmed that the ‘virtual’ peer review by Capel Manor College had taken place, together with an external quality review by Landex. The outcomes were reported under the FE Performance item.
5. There were no other matters arising not covered by items on the agenda.

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

6. The committee had received the report of the Dean of Higher Education (HE) on current HE academic and quality performance indicators.
7. The Dean of HE summarised key performance data, noting that at the overall attendance rate was up on the same time in 2020. Current attendance (including remote attendance of live lessons) was in the range of 88-94%, apart from one subject area. Student attendance was being closely monitored and students supported if needed. Overall retention was at 96%, a slight reduction on the previous year but more withdrawals or selecting study breaks was a possibility given the impact of the lockdown, particularly in relation to practical elements HE programmes. The new Agriculture degree was

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

- performing well with both the highest attendance and retention across all subject areas (albeit smallest cohort).
8. The Dean of HE also highlighted an overall satisfaction rate from the autumn internal survey of new students at 96%, with no change year on year, and noted that the survey now included the National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction question in order that feedback could be monitored and any issues addressed as they arose. The report also summarised feedback from Student Association meetings and on the blended teaching approach at the HE Board of Studies.
 9. Invited to give feedback on her experience of remote learning, the HE Student Governor explained the challenge of long hours of screen use, although she recognised the efforts of teachers to keep students engaged with interactive teaching methods. The HE Student Governor had found access to recorded sessions positive and explained she would welcome that continuing after students returned to campus.
 10. In response to the reported feedback from a student about the speed of response to email queries, the Dean of HE explained that there was not a response target in place but that staff were expected to respond as promptly as practical within working hours and not to use automatic responses.
 11. The committee noted that the pandemic had limited opportunities for MSc students to collect data and therefore the submission date for final projects had been deferred and results would be available after the July exam board.
 12. The committee also noted the update on ASQER actions and confirmation that the action plan associated with Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) accreditation in 2020 had been signed off by the RCVS as complete. A full accreditation event was scheduled for 28/29 April.
 13. Members discussed the update on recruitment and progression and the factors which informed whether FE students chose to progress to HE at University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) or to select a different HE provider.
 14. The committee noted that work was underway to adjust teaching and assessment for the remainder of the year to ensure students received the best possible experience, and could demonstrate their learning and progress to the next stage. Students were being consulted on the plans and there was a possibility that some practical sessions might need to be run after the end of the academic year.
 15. The Dean of HE reported on the hardship funding allocated for students who were having particular difficulties in the pandemic, explaining that students had been invited to submit a description and cost of their hardship and that the College would seek to make a contribution.
 16. Asked by a member whether specific action had been taken to support Care Leavers, the Dean of HE confirmed that the Wellbeing HE lead was keeping in contact with these students.
 17. The Dean of HE highlighted the consultation launched by the OfS on quality and standards, noting that the College had submitted a response (overseen by the HE Strategy Group) and also contribute to responses from Landex and GuildHE to raise

concerns about linking graduate income with judging the quality of degree programmes, given that the land-based sector offered valuable career paths which did not necessarily provide high salaries at the start of a graduate's career.

Consumer Law Compliance Review

18. The Board of Governors had delegated to the committee (due to the timeframe stipulated by the OfS) consideration of the review of compliance and consumer law to provide assurance of ongoing compliance with Condition C1 of the OfS regulatory framework. The committee had received a report of the communications with students and the validating partner (University of Portsmouth) and how Consumer Marketing Authority (CMA) obligations had been met. The Dean of HE confirmed that management was confident that communication and plans for the remainder of the year would meet consumer law requirements and not breach OfS Condition C1.
19. The committee was satisfied that the College had met its obligations to the student population, with frequent and extensive communication about the delivery of teaching and assessment. It was noted that the adjustments to teaching and assessment would enable students to complete and progress to the next year of their programme.

COLLEGE GROUP POLICIES

20. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principals and Dean of Higher Education on updates the SEND Policy and FE and HE Student Charters.
21. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) summarised key proposed changes to the SEND Policy, explaining that it had been reviewed by the Assistant Principal Student Experience and updated to better reflect the structure in place across the area and the updated offer at the College. The policy has also been refined to integrate other key elements of the SEND Code of Practice (2015). There had been no changes to statutory requirements.
22. The committee noted that the detailed SEND guidelines had been appended to the policy to provide greater clarity for students and their parents/carers about the SEND curriculum offer. The local offer was also published on the Hampshire County Council (HCC) website. Members agreed that this was appropriate, especially given the increased number of students with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and in receipt of high needs funding.
23. The Vice Principal explained that there was a careful review process in place for EHCPs at the point of application to check that the College could meet the needs of the student applying and, if not, to be able to explain.
24. The Principal reported that the College had expressed an interest to HCC to establish a SEND Employability Hub on the Andover College campus.
25. Introducing the updated FE Student Charter, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) explained that management had reviewed the need for student charters and agreed that the charters were beneficial in setting out the mutual expectations of the College and its students. The FE Charter had been updated to reflect current study programmes, roles within the College and new approaches, including initiative such as British Values and PREVENT.

26. The Dean of Higher Education highlighted the updates to the HE Student Charter, noting that it was in line with the HE regulatory framework, including the Access & Participation Plan and consumer law requirements.
27. **Resolved** – that the following updated policies and charters be recommended to the Board of Governors for approval:
 - a) SEND Policy
 - b) FE Student Charter
 - c) HE Student Charter

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

Performance and Quality Improvement

28. The committee had received from the Vice Principals Curriculum and the Head of Learning & Quality the progress report on FE and Apprenticeships in-year performance indicators, including progress against the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), online learning and quality assurance, updates on external/peer quality reviews, and progress with the English and maths operational plan.
29. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) highlighted key performance measures, noting the overall retention was up year-on-year at Sparsholt College and marginally down at Andover College. Attendance was holding up well despite the impact of the pandemic. The College had been able to support students with the provision of devices and data cards where necessary and there had been positive feedback from students about the accessibility of online learning. The Head of Learning & Quality also reported positive survey results from FE students in January about online learning.
30. Invited to give her feedback, the FE Student Governor noted that teachers sought to engage students and confirmed she found it valuable to have the ability to re-watch lessons to help with studying.
31. The Head of Learning & Quality reported that the Teaching and Learning Observations (TALO) process had been further developed prior to lockdown to include a pre-observation learning activity for staff and explained the Online Learning Review (OLR) process which had been introduced. A member suggested that references to student 'behaviour' could be revised to 'behaviour for learning' to provide additional focus on the impact.
32. Members welcomed the continuing rigorous focus on quality of teaching and discussed whether some form of accreditations could be made available for staff to recognise certain skills in addition to teaching qualifications and the ETF professional standards.
33. The Head of Learning & Quality noted that the Landex Peer Review written report had not yet been received and gave an oral report of the feedback given by Landex during the review of Equine and some of the overarching processes teaching and quality on the Sparsholt College campus. The overall feedback from observing lessons and a practical session and meeting with students was positive and a number of specific examples were given. There were some actions identified to support further improvement.

34. The Vice Principals and Apprenticeship Manager highlighted key points in the report in relation to FE at Andover and Sparsholt colleges and apprenticeships. Overall, despite the restrictions of the pandemic, progress was good and overall achievement rates were not considered to be at risk. There were, however, concerns identified for English and maths due to the challenge of engaging learners in remote learning and actions had been taken to support students and explain the importance of engagement to students and their parents.
35. It was noted that retention of apprenticeships was slightly down from the previous year, but employers had continued to be supportive and only a small number of apprentices had been furloughed. The ESFA had implemented new apprenticeship redundancy rules which provided some flexibility to support apprentices so that they could study and complete end point assessments (EPAs), if necessary returning later to complete certificates of competence. There was a risk that apprentices who had been able to complete certificates would elect not to complete the EPA and the College was working with employers to encourage apprentices to understand the value of completing all components of their apprenticeship.
36. In terms of apprenticeship numbers going forward, it is noted that the land-based apprenticeships had been less affected by the pandemic than other sectors and the national focus on the environment provided a growth employment area.
37. The Head of Learning & Quality summarised progress against the actions set out in the QIP, noting that the majority External Quality Reviews (EQRs) had been postponed because of the lockdown and might not be rescheduled before the end of the academic year.
38. The Vice Principals reported Landex's review of the 2019/20 SAR which had confirmed its accuracy but suggested that the College could give more emphasis to progress on its journey from 'Good' to 'Outstanding' and include quantifiable measures to drive this forward. The QIP would be reviewed in the future with this in mind.
39. The committee commended the continuing progress made by the College towards fulfilling the targets identified within the 2021/21 QIP and the continuing positive response to managing the impact of the pandemic. The committee noted that the report evidenced that the College was delivering a 'Good' standard of education, with an increased number of areas moving towards 'Outstanding', and was on track to achieve improved overall success rates.

Apprenticeship Standards

40. The committee had received for information and assurance the progress report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) and Apprenticeship Manager on an ESFA minimum standard review and the improvement plan supplied to the ESFA in relation to Game & Wildlife.
41. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) and Apprenticeships Manager highlighted key actions in place and noted that current retention was 97.5%. The update on the action plan had been submitted to the ESFA.
42. The committee noted the progress achieved in addressing the matters previously reported to the committee.

T LEVELS

43. The committee had received the monitoring report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) on necessary actions to support the College in delivering T-level routes from September 2022 at the Andover College campus. This followed a session on T Levels at the Governors' Seminar in January.
44. The Vice Principal explained that the actions had been mapped against the ETF framework of T Levels readiness to provide a clearing monitoring format for the Board and its committees.
45. Asked whether any actions were assessed as 'red', the Vice Principal explained that the most significant challenge was creating additional building/facilities capacity for the Construction T Level given the increasing numbers of Construction students at Andover College. Other actions were work in progress ('amber').
46. The Principal summarised the plans for an application to the T Levels Capital Fund to expand the Andover Technology & Skills Centre, noting that the Deputy Principal had held discussions with Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) to ensure the plans fitted with the Andover Town Centre development masterplan. The challenge for the College could be providing an affordable match-funding element at a level acceptable to the Department for Education (DfE).
47. The Principal also noted that it was expected that there would be a further capital funding opportunity for providers launching the new 2023 T Levels. This included land-based T Levels and management were developing plans for the required facilities.
48. The committee noted that the actions required to prepare for delivery of T Levels were understood by management and being addressed as a priority.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

49. The committee had received the latest College Healthcheck report (2021-01) and noted the positive quality indicators.
50. The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm.