

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE
held on 3 March 2022 at 09:30
at Sparsholt College

PRESENT S Duckering (C); T Floyd (E) (Chair); J Milburn (P); S Morgan (E)

In attendance: G Ayrton, Business Development Manager, Industry Placements (min 43 to 53)
S Grant, Deputy Principal Corporate
S Hermiston, Director of Information & Funding (min 21-53)
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover College)
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt College)
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were received from N Moody and M Serridge.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. There were no new interests to be declared. S Morgan had previously declared that his son was enrolled as an FE student at Sparsholt College.

MINUTES

3. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Employer/industry engagement (min 138 & 150)

4. The Deputy Principal confirmed that the new customer relationship management (CRM) system was now in use.
5. It was noted that the 'Brief Bite' session to brief all members of the Board on the role of the Industry Curriculum Boards had taken place in December and had been well received.

Committee business (min 132)

6. The Principal explained that a new section had been added to the report cover sheet to link the contents of the report to Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework and the Office for Student's Regulatory Framework and invited feedback from members after the meeting.
7. There were no other matters arising not covered by items on the agenda.

CURRICULUM IMPACT

FE Student Destinations

8. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principals Curriculum on the review of FE student destinations for 2020-21, together with some case studies of individual students.

9. The Committee Chair noted that the data table had been revised following feedback from the review of the previous year's report to ensure the data was clear and comparable for committee members.
10. The committee noted that, at a headline level, 99.3% of destinations for full-time FE 16–19-year-olds leavers in July 2021 were 'known' and the vast majority of which were positive (96.1%), which demonstrated the strength of the curriculum provision in preparing learners for their next steps.
11. Members commended the progress which had been made by management over recent years in capturing and reporting on this information, with data presented by area of learning.
12. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) explained that management were seeking to develop the analysis further, first comparing areas of study with the sectors of employment to see if that provided additional useful information to inform curriculum development and/or information, guidance and careers advice, and second, looking into carrying out a three-year study to assess whether and how progression was sustained.
13. Members noted there was a risk that longer term data could be more challenging to interpret because of the impact of sector developments on employment opportunities.
14. Responding to the Committee Chair's challenge about the 'unemployment' or 'other' outcomes in specific curriculum areas, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) explained that the 'other' data was mainly students taking gap years before enrolling at a higher education institution in September 2022 and the other 'unemployed' Andover College leavers related to individual circumstances rather than failings in the curriculum planning or delivery. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) explained that some parts of the animal management and equine sectors had been affected by the pandemic and that the availability of certain employment opportunities locally varied. It was noted, however, the sector was diversifying, with an increase in animal grooming/walking/kennelling, and that there were also potential opportunities in the horse racing industry locally. The aim was to support students with clear progression routes throughout the curriculum plan and destination data would continue to be kept under review.
15. The Deputy Principal also reported the actions being undertaken to support FE students to understand the opportunities of progressing to HE and to make applications to UCAS if this was their preferred progression route.
16. The committee discussed a number of points in relation to the potential impact of the rollout of T Levels at the College and the needs of employers to recruit students who are 'work ready', with the relevant skills. Members also noted that the impact T Levels would have on progression to HE in the sector in general was uncertain, including in relation to minimum standards and entry requirements and how this would relate to delivering wider access and participation.
17. A member highlighted the growth of students from non-farming backgrounds enrolling on agriculture qualifications and the challenge which this could present in supporting them to develop the appropriate practical skills for work placements. The Deputy Principal assured the committee that management was aware of this and had strategies in place to provide additional vocational hours for eligible students where needed.
18. The committee also noted that the College was working with employers through the local Farming Cluster and Industry Curriculum Boards to match employers' skills needs and

working with another land-based college to develop resources relevant to delivery of the land-based T Levels.

19. It was noted that the Department for Education (DfE) comparative data for colleges was not available after 2017 (due to the pandemic).
20. In conclusion, the committee welcomed the excellent evidence that the College's curriculum offer was supporting its leavers to secure a positive destination through the attainment of relevant qualifications and employability skills, despite the turbulence which had emanated from the pandemic.

CURRICULUM INTENT

Curriculum Contribution Analysis

21. 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.
22. The Director of Funding & Information set out the key adjustments to the model this year and summarised the headline outcomes for the curriculum areas. The Director of Funding & Information also explained the impact of modelling an additional £2m of funding (in line with the projected increase for 2022-23).
23. The committee discussed the analysis, including in relation to the significance of the contribution of three curriculum areas to the operation of the wider college, how the analysis informed capital investment prioritisation and curriculum planning, and optimising class sizes and staff utilisation.
24. It was noted that, while HE was an important contributor, the College would be unable to deliver a HE offer in the absence of a successful FE curriculum and that the College sought to invest in building and facilities in ways which supported both FE and HE delivery where possible.
25. The committee also discussed the challenges of staff retention and recruitment in some curriculum areas and the actions being taken by management to address these. It was noted that this risk was also due to be scrutinised in detail by the Audit Committee and the related HR initiatives reported to the Resources Committee.

Curriculum Plan

26. 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, full-cost, apprenticeships and higher education) from the Vice Principals Curriculum and Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education.
27. Members queried and sought additional information about a number of aspects of the rationale and plan, including in relation to the application numbers for T Levels and the difference in contents of existing programmes and T Levels in the same subject areas at Andover College, the transition to T Levels and strengthening of other subject offers at Sparsholt College, and developments in relation to apprenticeships.

28. Members also discussed the progression routes between qualification levels and to T Levels, as well as some concerns around some T Levels having a narrower specialist content that would not necessarily appeal to some potential applicants nor provide the widest progression options. It was noted that, where possible, the College was working with the awarding bodies to address these risks.
29. Members also discussed developments to the HE curriculum, including the move into Higher Apprenticeships from 2022-23, which management believed would be viable, although there were still some challenges in the HE apprenticeships market, and the planned introduction of some Distance Learning programmes. Progression to highly skilled employment and higher-level study would also remain a priority.
30. The Deputy Principal highlighted the plans to broaden the scope of adult education in line with local skills needs and using blended learning.
31. The committee noted that the process of developing the plan had included review and input from managers and staff to ensure that there was clarity about the curriculum intent and implementation plan for each programme, and about matters such as personal development, enrichment activities, employer engagement, work experience and progression pathways.
32. **Resolved** – that the scope and ambition of the 3 Year Curriculum Plan was fit for purpose 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.

T Levels

33. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) on the implementation plan for delivering T Levels. The report had also been presented to the Quality & Standards Committee for information and shared with the ESFA.
34. Responding to members’ questions about risks around recruiting specialist teaching staff and the challenge for staff to adapt to the delivery of T Levels, the Vice Principal Curriculum provided an update on the actions being taken, including through collaboration with other providers. Pressures on staff were recognised as a challenge, given that the transition to new qualifications came on top of the extra teaching demands caused by the need to fill the gaps in knowledge which students had because of the interruption to their education during the pandemic. Management was mindful of this and had strategies in place to support the wellbeing of staff, as well as having implemented CPD for planning and teaching T Levels.
35. The committee received an update on the latest application numbers for the 2022-23 T Levels and the Committee Chair proposed that these be added to the monthly Healthcheck (KPIs) report for governors’ information.
36. The committee noted the monitoring report and was satisfied that the necessary preparations for delivery of T Levels were understood by management and continued to be addressed as a priority.

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

37. The committee had received the termly report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education and the 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 2020-21 plan.

38. The committee welcomed the good progress made against the targets in the 2020-21 academic year and in 2021-22 to date, except for the recruitment of male students from underrepresented areas (POLAR4 Q1 and Q2) which remained a particular challenge because of very low numbers in this group living in Hampshire.
39. There had been an underspend in 2020-21 on predicted Access activities because of the pandemic. Both spend on bursaries and spend on disability support had increased since the previous year, with more students eligible.
40. The committee recognised positive progress against Success targets for 2021-22 and that additional bursary funding had been allocated to the target groups, together with increased wellbeing resource. The Deputy Principal confirmed that an additional progress coach had been recruited.
41. The committee noted that there had been a lower proportion of POLAR4 applicants for 2022-23 compared to the last year, at the time of writing. This was unlikely to prevent the 2022-23 targets being met but actions were being undertaken by management to address this. The co-opted member concurred that these were in line with actions taken elsewhere in the HE sector.
42. It was noted that the Office for Students (OfS) had announced that there would be no annual monitoring review submission for 2020-21 and that there would be a review of access and participation plans which was likely to require more of an emphasis on collaborative partnerships between HE providers and schools.

EMPLOYERS & SKILLS

Industry Curriculum Boards

43. The committee had received the termly report of the Vice Principals Curriculum on the Industry Curriculum Boards (ICBs) and their role in supporting the development of the curriculum to meet the local and national needs of employers. The report also provided an update on other recent employer partnership activity in apprenticeships and HE.
44. The committee welcomed the continued focus on developing the role of the ICBs and the evidence that the feedback from industry representative was informing curriculum intent, implementation and impact:
 - Intent: To continue to develop curriculum intent to take account of the wider industry data to evidence local and national skills demand.
 - Implementation: To ensure learners were clear on intended progression routes and could cite a range of high value careers and roles, including entrepreneurship in the sector. To ensure active employer/industry involvement in curriculum delivery, through mechanisms including Study+ activity and formative assessment, to support knowledge, skills, and behaviours development.
 - Impact: To gather feedback from employers on learners they employ to strengthen the overall impact of the curriculum and to enhance destination data.
45. The committee endorsed the feedback from previous meetings of the ICBs about the value of the soft skills needed during work placements/employment, such as holding a conversation and demonstrating a good work ethic, and how to support students to develop these after the impact of the pandemic on their lives.

46. The committee noted the theme for the ICBs in 2021-22 on the Education Inspection Framework and the report of decisions arising as result of the feedback, including for example, the front loading of health and safety units in land-based programmes and the switch to general sport qualifications at Andover College.
47. Members discussed with the Vice Principals ways of continuing to develop and engage with the membership of the ICBs and, more widely, how to add value for employers through work placements and involvement in curriculum delivery.
48. The Deputy Principal highlighted other areas of employer engagement, including the collaboration with employers and other colleges to deliver training, such as the Innovation South Virtual Campus offer, and actions in relation to apprenticeships and the development of HE employer forums to feed into HE teaching plans for 2022-23.
49. The committee welcomed the College's aim to build a community of employers, working and collaborating with the College in a variety of ways.

Industry Work Placements

50. The committee had received the report of the Business Development Manager (Industry Work Placements) on progress with achieving the ESFA's Capacity and Delivery Fund (CDF) industry work placement targets for 2021-22.
51. The committee noted the positive progress achieved by the employer engagement team and the pro-active approach being taken to prepare for next year's anticipated increased targets. These targets would be offset against proposed volumes of T Level delivery and associated industry placements.
52. Members sought further information about the challenges around achieving work placements and the Business Development Manager explained that, while most businesses were keen to engage with students to support future recruitment, it was important to set clear expectations. The main challenge in rural areas was transport for students and the College took a range of actions to seek to alleviate this, such as early engagement with parents/carers to plan transport and locating placements for residential students nearer home during the holidays. The Business Development Manager also noted the need to ensure adequate safeguarding measures were in place, particularly after a pause in some work placements during the pandemic.
53. The Deputy Principal commended the work of the Business Development Manager.

Skills Accelerator Project

54. The committee had received the report of the Deputy Principal on the collaborative project to provide employer sabbaticals for academic staff supported by the DfE Skills Accelerator fund.
55. The project involved seven colleges and aimed to have 166 staff complete a ten-day industry placement each by the end of this academic year, after which staff members would review how the curriculum content met the needs of industry and update their learning materials and schemes of work in response to their key learning points.
56. The committee welcomed progress with the project and noted that a report of the outcome would follow to the Board.

MARKETING

57. The committee had received the progress report of the Marketing Manager on progress with the marketing strategy for 2021-22.
58. The Deputy Principal highlighted the focus on the key marketing strategic themes and summarised key operational updates.
59. The committee noted the progress on applications and the specific actions being undertaken for subjects and areas which were not attracting applicants to the expected levels.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

60. The committee had received the most recent Healthcheck report (2022/02).
61. Responding to the Committee Chair's challenge as to why HE applications for 2022-23 had been allocated a 'red' RAG rating despite overall numbers being reported as up year on year, the Deputy Principal explained that analysis of the data suggested that there were some risks about conversion to enrolments due to the greater numbers of applicants from outside of Hampshire and lower levels of applicants from FE students at the College.
62. The meeting ended at 12.30.