

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 17 February 2022 at 09:30
at Sparsholt College

¹PRESENT J Milburn (P); G Davies (E); R Palmer (E) (Chair); H Perry (S); C Wilson (E).

In attendance: K Bradshaw, DigiEd & Learning Resources Manager (minutes 39 to 49)
C James, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (from minute 19)
H Mitchell, Apprenticeship Manager (to minute 25)
R Price, Head of Quality & Learning
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt)
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were received from J Plenderleith.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

3. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

FE performance (minute 141)

4. The Committee Chair sought an update on actions to improve punctuality of attendance and the Head of Quality & Learning reported the 'Ready, Respectful, Safe' initiative planned for 2022-23 as part of the Professional Learner approach, which would be accompanied by consistent challenging of punctuality issues across the campuses based on learning from the approach already taken by Sport. This would be trialled towards the end of the academic year. In addition, management were planning timetable changes to give students more time to move between sessions.
5. The Committee Chair commented on the relationship between punctuality, attendance and achievement and welcomed the actions being taken.
6. There were no other matters arising not covered by items on the agenda.

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

FE In-Year Performance

7. The committee had received the progress report on FE and Apprenticeships performance indicators and the FE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2021-22 from the Vice Principals Curriculum, Apprenticeships Manager and Head of Quality & Learning. The

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

- reported included progress on the English and maths (cross campus) and the Brick, Electrical, 19+ and Value Added (Andover College) operational action plans.
8. The committee noted that progress with the QIP was good, with all the targets on track to be achieved. Quality monitoring processes evidenced a greater level of consistency across curriculum areas regarding good practice in teaching, learning and assessment, with few curriculum areas not yet good and an increased number of areas moving towards outstanding.
 9. The Vice Principals Curriculum highlighted key points in relation to the performance of FE at Andover and Sparsholt, commending the work of the staff to respond to challenges presented by students because of the impact of the pandemic and to shore up retention.
 10. Areas covered by the committee's scrutiny of the report included challenges in recruiting teaching staff, the extent to which absence due to Covid impacted attendance rates, the actions taken to support 19+ learners, preparations for mock assessments, small group tuition activities and student satisfaction rates.
 11. The committee was satisfied by the actions reported to support learners to develop the key characteristics required to succeed in their programme of study, including in relation to external assessment.
 12. Responding to a member's question about the results of the Autumn learners survey, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) explained that the lower score from learners in Foundation Andover about feeling safe at college was because of a specific situation where a young person had been coming on to campus without permission. The use of security cameras and barriers had identified the individual and actions had been taken to resolve the matter.
 13. The Principal reported the significant increase in learners with support needs, including High Needs, and gave examples of the actions in train to resource this support. The total number of learners across both campuses with a support need of some kind equated to c44% of the FE cohort. Sector data indicated that Land-Based colleges a greater proportion of learners with support needs, compared to General FE colleges.
 14. The Apprenticeships Manager highlighted the improved retention for Apprenticeships year on year and the actions being taken in conjunction with employers to support attendance by the learners. However, retention had declined in six out of the 17 apprenticeship standards and four of these were due to job losses and health concerns caused by Covid-19. It was noted that, although success indicators for this year were positive, overall achievement rates for this year and next would be limited by the number of learner withdrawals during 2020-21, mainly due to the pandemic, as learners had end dates over a three-year period.
 15. The committee also noted the enhanced quality monitoring actions in place for the Horticulture & Landscape Operator apprenticeship standard to mitigate the impact of historic withdrawals.
 16. The committee discussed the progress with the QIP, noting in particular the emphasis on giving quality feedback to students, the planned extension of TALOs (teaching and learning observations) next year to employer workplaces and to Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), and more joined up working between the curriculum areas and the English and maths teams.

17. Members noted the ongoing development of digital skills in teaching staff and the Staff Governor stressed that good teachers also had the ability to judge when learners had digital fatigue and would benefit from other forms of innovative teaching.
18. The Principal sought feedback on the introduction of a new section at the front of the committee reports which linked the contents to Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (or the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework for HE reports). Members confirmed that the information was helpful, although the header sheet had become lengthy as a result.

Quality Improvement Activities

19. The committee had received the report of the Head of Quality & Learning updating on key learning and quality activities for 2021-22, including External Quality Reviews (EQR) and Landex reviews, feedback from new Learner Voice focus groups, an update on the delivery of the TALO (teaching and learning observations) programme, and an example menu of support CPD workshops.
20. The committee noted the outcome report for the EQR of Science and Maths A Levels and BTEC qualifications, and the Head of Quality & Learning highlighted examples of the follow up actions, including BTEC teachers visiting another college to learn from its teaching practices.
21. A member commended a comment in the EQR report that 'Observed behaviour within the department and all around the college was impeccable' and it was noted that Landex had also commented on positive feedback from students.
22. The committee welcomed developments to the learner survey to embed good practice and the introduction of learner focus groups as a new feature of the FE quality cycle to explore the findings of learner surveys and identify what the College could do better. A member commented that focus groups could also be useful to explore areas where there were no current concerns as a way of identifying ways to maintain the quality of the student experience.
23. The committee noted the enhancements to the TALO processes and was assured by the report of the TALO outcomes for academic staff that the quality of teaching was being rigorously assessed at regular points in the academic year and that staff were being individually supported and that examples of good practice were being shared. It was noted that TALOS for instructors were undertaken over a longer period and would be reported at the next meeting.
24. The Head of Quality & Learning confirmed that, as previously challenged by the committee, the TALOs had covered a mix of practical and theory teaching sessions.
25. Asked about references in the report to 'The Bigger Picture', the Head of Quality & Learning clarified that lecturers had been asked to start sessions with this summary of the lesson intent and highlight key questions and links to past/future learning. This replaced the old format 'lesson aims and objectives'.

T- LEVELS

26. The committee had received the termly monitoring report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) on actions to prepare the College for delivering T-levels.

27. The Vice Principal provided an update on applications, noting that these would also be scrutinised by the Curriculum, Employers & Market Requirements Committee.
28. The committee noted the actions taken to liaise extensively with other providers and the ETF (Education Training Foundation) to identify teaching good practice and consider issues such as assessment methodology and the T Level transition programme, and the Staff Governor provided some feedback on the planning in her curriculum area.
29. Responding to the Committee Chair's challenge about whether health & safety and safeguarding checks would be routinely in place for work placements, the Vice Principal Curriculum confirmed that stringent checks would be overseen by the Industry Work Placements team. The Principal added that work was underway to review health & safety checks for work placements for all study programmes because of catch up needed after the pandemic and additional resource had been put in place to complete this.
30. The committee noted the confirmation of the ESFA Specialist Equipment Allocation for 2022-2023 which would support the implementation of the T Levels.
31. The committee noted the monitoring report and was satisfied that the necessary preparations for delivery of T Levels in relation to quality and standards were understood by management and continued to be addressed as a priority.

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

32. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (HE) on current progress in the quality of HE provision and the HE student experience.
33. The Vice Principal HE highlighted key points, noting that while evidence showed that students were positive about their experience and retention levels were good, attendance was a challenge (an average 3-4% lower than the previous year) and requiring high levels of staff intervention and support. Persistent non-attendance was being managed robustly through the academic performance policy, although with apparently limited effect. Where students elected to only attend teaching sessions remotely, this was being recorded to monitor the outcomes.
34. The committee noted the high levels of satisfaction from the Autumn survey of new students, with the lowest rating being in relation to their experience of the College prior to enrolment and further consideration was being given to addressing this for the 2022-23 intake. The committee also reviewed the summary of feedback from the Student Association meetings and the Student Resources & Facilities meeting.
35. The Vice Principal HE reported on the outcomes of HE teaching and learning observations (TALOs), confirming that all staff were found to be either confident or highly confident, with a few areas identified to focus improvements. A series of 'Breakfast Study Tips' had been introduced to provide guidance on teaching skills such as engaging reluctant students with questions.
36. The committee noted the update on actions from the 2020-21 Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review (ASQER) and there were no issues arising.
37. The committee noted the Office for Student's (OfS) consultation on Student Outcomes (Condition B) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The Vice Principal HE explained that modelling on current data suggested that University Centre Sparsholt

would be well placed to meet the new quality and standards thresholds and members discussed the anticipated changes to the TEF where HE providers would need to demonstrate ‘educational gain’. It was also noted that the reformed TEF was expected to include a student submission.

38. The committee discussed routes for responding to the consultations, noting that there had been some success from collective lobbying in the past, with the college usually feeding into Landex and/or AoC responses.

DIGI-ED STRATEGY

39. The committee had received the new Digi-Ed Strategy from the DigiEd & Learning Resources Manager and the Head of Quality & Learning explained the transition from the previous strategy reviewed by the committee in November 2020 to the new strategy.
40. The DigiEd & Learning Resources Manager introduced the strategy and noted that the plan was intended to be ambitious but achievable over a five-year period and would involve changes to culture and skillsets, as well as further development of the IT infrastructure.
41. The committee had a wide-ranging discussion about the points raised by the DigiEd & Learning Resources Manager and the strategy document.
42. In relation to resourcing the strategy, a member highlighted the actions which had been taken in recent years to invest in IT, responding to challenges which had emerged from the work of the Audit Committee to strengthen the IT infrastructure, as well as the further investment in IT systems which had supported teaching and learning in the pandemic.
43. Members noted that further investment in IT would be necessary to support the strategy and the Principal confirmed that this remained a priority for the SLT, giving examples of funding opportunities and specific actions to support this. Additional digital technology staff posts had also been advertised.
44. Discussing the core skills for development which were set out in the strategy, the Staff Governor cautioned against the use of the term ‘resilience’ in reference to people as it could be interpreted to mean an expectation of toughness and suggested that concepts such as being able to respond flexibly or to being emotionally agile were a more positive way of expressing a similar aim.
45. In relation to the strategy document, a member acknowledged that it presented an ambitious vision, with outline objectives and actions, but suggested that it would be useful to further develop the plans to define in more detail the people and infrastructure resources, and the corresponding costs, which would be required to successfully deliver the strategy.
46. Members also discussed the role of user feedback and monitoring to shape the delivery of the strategy, while also recognising that the College community would have a range of levels of knowledge about digital innovation and how new technologies could support educational gain.
47. Members noted that the operational delivery plan and how the team worked with the wider staff to build commitment and buy-in would be important and the Staff Governor

assured the committee of her experience of the skills and professionalism of the DigiEd team.

48. The DigiEd & Learning Resources Manager gave examples of potential risks to the delivery of the strategy from his experience elsewhere and ways in which he was engaging with the staff community to develop an innovative culture and investigate and trail new technologies in teaching and learning.
49. The committee endorsed the direction of the DigiEd Strategy and welcomed the commitment shown by management to ensuring the College was in a good position to respond to the evolving digital landscape to deliver its strategic objectives.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

50. The committee had received the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2022-01).
51. Responding to a member's challenge as to why the result of the parent autumn surveys appeared to be less positive than those of the learner surveys, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) explained that it tended to be the case that parents gave slightly lower ratings than learners. It was also noted that there had been a particular issue regarding travel at Andover College.
52. The committee asked that response rates be added to the survey data in future Healthcheck reports.

COLLEGE POLICIES

53. The committee had received the report providing a summary of the review and recommended updates to six College Group policies.
54. Members raised a range of points about the contents of the policies and the committee agreed a number of revisions to provide additional clarity and consistency about the policies and related procedures: clarifying the appeals process in the HE Fitness to Study policy; clarifications to the HE and HE Freedom of Speech Code of Practices to ensure clarity and consistency in the rare circumstances when interventions could be required; and revisions to the E-Safety & Digital Communications Policy (Learners) to correct a reference to copyright and to clarify the position about unintentionally causing offence when publishing.,
55. **Resolved** – that the following updated policies be recommended to the Board of Governors for approval, subject to the revisions agreed by the committee:
 - a) HE Fitness to Study Policy
 - b) HE Freedom of Speech Code of Practice
 - c) HE Student Transfer Policy
 - d) E-Safety & Digital Communications Policy (Learners)
 - e) FE SEND Policy
 - f) FE Freedom of Speech Code of Practice
56. The Principal noted that it was the last meeting for R Palmer in his capacity as Committee Chair before he completed his second term of office as a governor and expressed gratitude on behalf of the College for his valuable contribution to the work of the

committee, in particular his steering the work of the committee during his time as Committee Chair.

57. The meeting concluded at 12.30.