

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE
held on 26 May 2022 at 09:30
at Sparsholt College

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

In attendance: J Chapman, Marketing Manager (min 110-113)
S Grant, Deputy Principal Corporate
S Hermiston, Director of Information & Funding (min 88-94)
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover College)
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt College)
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES

63. Apologies were received from M Serridge.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

64. There were no new interests to be declared. It was noted that S Morgan's son is enrolled as an FE student at Sparsholt College.

MINUTES

65. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Curriculum Plan (min 31/22)

66. The Principal reported that, following discussions at the Governors' Seminar in May about the need for academic staff to understand the full curriculum offer across all levels and areas, Curriculum Profiles would be developed for each area and it was proposed to present these to CEMR as a 'deep dive' into the curriculum, as part of the committee's 2022-23 business plan.

Staff industry sabbaticals (min 55/22)

67. The Deputy Principal confirmed that there had been good progress with the programme of industry placements for academic staff and the funding requirements were due to be met.

Student work placements (min 17/22)

68. A member (who was an employer in the farming sector) reiterated the importance of students being equipped with the necessary skills to be able to undertake work placements successfully, giving the example of tractor handling skills for agriculture students, and asked for more information about the delivery of learning during the summer term.

69. The Principal, Deputy Principal and Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) explained the process by which work placements were discussed and agreed with employees to ensure that skills levels of students were understood and the necessary support given to

students. It was also noted that the College farm staff were working more closely with the Agriculture teaching team to identify core skills and help develop and update the teaching of these. It was confirmed that recruitment was progressing for academic teaching posts in Agriculture for FE and HE, although recruiting to instructor roles had been a challenge.

70. There were no other matters arising not covered by items on the agenda.

CURRICULUM INTENT & EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Strategic Development Fund & Local Skills Improvement Plan

71. The committee had received the report of the Deputy Principal on the latest round of the DfE Strategic Development Fund (SDF), together with a copy of the SDF application submitted by the College on behalf of partners in the Enterprise M3 extended region.
72. The Deputy Principal explained the change of geographic area for this round of the SDF, (which now covered Central and North Hampshire and the whole of Surrey) and the partnerships discussions which had concluded with the application covering 8 college groups (13 colleges) and being endorsed by the Surrey and Hampshire Chambers of Commerce, with the Surrey Chamber of Commerce agreed as the lead Employer Representative Body (ERB) for the EM3 and East Surrey Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). Sparsholt College Hampshire and NESCoT College had been confirmed as the nominated college representatives working with the chambers, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other ERBs.
73. The committee noted that the total £3.25m bid (£1.75m capital and £1.25m revenue) did not require match funding and focused on skills and digital technology for 'green jobs' and carbon literacy, together with sales and business development. This included development and digitising of learning materials which would be available to all colleges and accessible via the Innovation South Virtual Campus (ISVC).
74. The Deputy Principal responded to members' questions, giving more information about the background to the LSIPs, the role of ERBs, and how LSIPs would inform adult education funding. It was noted that one of the strategic aims of the College was that the LSIP for the new EM3 extended region should include relevant land-based skills.
75. The committee also discussed the skills priorities for 'green jobs' and how these related to labour market information presented by the LEP at a previous Governors' Seminar.
76. The Committee Chair commended the Deputy Principal on the significant amount of effort that was being dedicated to working collaboratively with neighbouring colleges.
77. The Committee Chair reflected on the range of employer engagement and skills needs information which informed the College's curriculum planning and partnerships and how the committee and the Board should best understand and scrutinise this.
78. The Deputy Principal noted that the employer engagement strategy received by the committee was informed by well-established feedback mechanisms and employer contacts.
79. The co-opted member concurred from her observations that engagement with employers was one of the strengths of the College and noted that there was additional value in being able to capture and present this success externally.
80. The Principal and Deputy Principal agreed that this was important and noted examples of recent communications with the EM3 LEP, local councils and MPs.

81. The Committee Chair was also interested in how the development of the delivery of softer employment skills would be monitored and the Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) explained that management was giving consideration as to how this would be assessed by teaching teams going forward. It was also noted that feedback would continue to be sought from the Industry Curriculum Boards and feed into curriculum delivery plans.

T Levels

82. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) on the implementation plan for delivering T Levels.
83. The committee noted that the DfE had announced the first set of courses to be defunded at level 3, including courses currently offered by the College in relation to Childcare and Health & Social Care. The removal of the latter would be partly compensated by the introduction of the Health T Level in Adult Nursing at Andover College, but the removal of the Social Care level 3 qualification would have an impact on students, as the alternative apprenticeships offer was not suitable for all, and colleges were appealing the decision.
84. The committee noted the application numbers for the first T levels at Andover College and that it was confirmed that Health (Adult Nursing), Onsite Construction (Brick and Carpentry), and Digital Design and Production would commence from September 2022 but that there were insufficient applications to start either Science (Laboratory Science) or Accountancy at this point.
85. The committee discussed progress of recruitment of specialist staff and of reaching agreements with employers for work placements. It was noted that the discussions with the North Hampshire Hospitals had been helpful in identifying skills levels for work placements and progression routes.
86. The committee also discussed the progress in training and upskilling staff in specialist skills, such as digital competencies.
87. 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

88. The committee had received the termly report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education and the Director of Information & Funding on progress with delivery of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-21 to 2024-25.
89. It was noted that the 2020-21 APP monitoring report had been accepted by the Office for Students (OfS) with no further action required.
90. The committee noted good progress with the 2021-22 APP milestone targets and positive indicators about the 2022-23 milestone targets.
91. The committee noted that HE providers were required to request variations to current APP plans for 2023-24 using four key priorities identified by the Office for Students (OfS) Director of Fair Access and Participation (DFAP). These variations must be delivered in addition to existing commitments. The revised plan was required to be submitted to the OfS by 31 July 2022. Explicit assurance of approval by the governing body was not required prior to submission of the variation request and the actions required by the OfS

would be led by the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education and overseen by the Deputy Principal and HE Strategy Group. The proposed approach was endorsed by the committee.

92. The Director of Information & Funding highlighted that the APP measures were required by the OfS to move from POLAR4 to TUNDRA from 2024-25 and explained that it was not anticipated that this change would worsen University Centre Sparsholt's performance.
93. Questioned by members as to how the action plan to improve POLAR4 Quintile 1 and 2 applications for 2022-23 was progressing, the Deputy Principal explained that there had been a general pattern this year of students accepting offers later. It was hoped that the bursary funding being promoted to support applicants from target groups to accept their offers would help. The small numbers of young people in Hampshire in the target groups made it a particular challenge but the College continued to develop relationships with schools, for example through HE staff undertaking lessons and development work in target schools.
94. The committee also discussed the recruitment of an HE Progress Coach to support the success of students from target groups.

CURRICULUM IMPACT & OUTCOMES

HE Student Outcomes

95. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education on the outcomes of the Graduate Survey for 2018/19 graduates conducted by HESA.
96. The committee reviewed the outcomes, noting that the completion rate for UCS graduates as 52%, broadly in line with the national rate (excluding international students), and the overall number of UCS graduates in employment or further study at the time of the survey was 88%.
97. Although the overall result was positive, the risk for the College was that the 'highly skilled employment' classification was determined by the Standards Occupational Classification coding which did not reflect all of the career pathways in the land-based sector. In particular, early career roles for Animal Science and Zoo Science graduates. As a result, 37% of UCS graduates had been classified by the survey as in highly skilled employment, a slight decline from the 2017/18 data. This was also likely to have been negatively impacted by the pandemic.
98. The committee also noted that the very small numbers of respondents in each cohort had a significant impact on the percentage outcomes and that the salary data used did not differentiate between full or part-time jobs or take into account free or subsidised accommodation.
99. To mitigate the risks associated with the current measurements of graduate outcomes UCS was seeking a review of the classifications used, in conjunction with the University of Portsmouth and lobbying by the HE sector generally, and to ensure that graduates in highly skilled employment were included in the survey results.
100. The committee requested that future reports include the numbers of responses / cohort size by subject area.
101. Discussing a member's query interrogating the results for the FdSc Animal Management degree, the committee noted that the Foundation degree offered by UCS provided a route to topping up to a BSc and a more affordable, accessible options for some students.

Careers Strategy

102. The committee had received the annual progress report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt), Marketing Manager and Head of Careers on the Careers Strategy 2021-25, including progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks.
103. The Vice Principal Curriculum highlighted key points in the progress report, noting the role of the careers programme in ensuring that learners could progress and succeed in their chosen career, demonstrating the implementation and impact of the curriculum under Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework.
104. The committee noted examples of how key elements of the programme, such as Futures Week and Choices Week, were continuing to be developed responding to lessons learnt during the pandemic and feedback from students. There was an ongoing emphasis on the provision of curriculum education being a responsibility of all staff members involved in the curriculum journey of a learner.
105. The committee welcomed the commitment to the provision of careers guidance and advice to learners.

Matrix Accreditation

106. The committee had received the Matrix Standard annual continuous improvement check (CIC) report for information and assurance. Achieving the Matrix Standard was an ESFA funding requirement and the next full review would be in Spring 2024.
107. The committee noted that the CIC had provided positive feedback on the College's provision of information, advance and guidance (IAG), and a recognition of actions for continuous improvement. This would include supporting all relevant staff to understand the full curriculum offer and to be able to offer up to date information to learners.

AEB Funding

108. The Deputy Principal reported that the College was able to use a small proportion of the adult education budget (AEB) funding available for community purposes and proposed to make £19,952 available via Job Centre Plus (Winchester and Andover branches) and charities in the district to offer free places on courses that improved employment chances or provided wider community benefit, where this was approved by the job centre or charity co-ordinator.
109. The committee endorsed this approach.

MARKETING

110. The committee had received the progress report of the Marketing Manager on progress with the marketing strategy and operational plan for 2021-22.
111. The Marketing Manager gave examples of a number of current priorities and developments to marketing activities.
112. The committee noted that conversion was still key to maximising recruitment in September 2022 but that the College was still seeking to attract new students, particularly in the adult market, and preparing for the 2023/24 recruitment cycle.
113. The committee sought additional information and discussed the approach to adult learner recruitment, noting the challenges presented by the buoyant labour market and the increase in living costs, and to Andover College recruitment, noting the activities taking place with schools and military families.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

114. The committee had received the most recent Healthcheck report (2022/04) and sought additional assurance in relation to the performance indicators for HE applications and FE and HE learner attendance rates.
115. The Principal confirmed the importance that management placed on learner attendance, and it was noted that the Quality & Standards Committee was reviewing the action plans to address the concerns, including in relation to learner induction and raising the attendance expectation to 100% next academic year. The co-opted member explained that attendance of HE students was an issue across the sector following changes to the behaviour and attitudes of students as a result of the pandemic and would require reinforcing and supportive actions for some time.

COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

116. The committee had received the report of the Head of Corporate Governance providing contextual information for the committee's annual performance self-evaluation and review of its terms of reference.
117. The committee noted the summary of key existing and new regulatory and external governance requirements relevant to the remit of the committee.
118. The Committee Chair sought feedback from the committee and SLT members present. The discussion highlighted the increasingly relevant role of CEMR over recent years in connection to curriculum intent and outcomes for both FE and HE, and the assurance and advice which the committee was able to provide to the Board through enhanced reporting from management. The development of more in-depth reporting and analysis of FE destinations was cited as an example.
119. In relation to future business planning, the committee endorsed the intention to continue to increase the visibility of employer feedback in relation to skills needs and to introduce 'deep dives' into the curriculum plan, and also noted the value of benchmarking data where this was available.
120. In terms of membership, the committee agreed that feedback from students was valuable and it was noted that a student governor member was expected to be appointed before the next meeting of the committee.
121. It was also questioned whether a member from an employer representative body might further enhance the skills/knowledge mix of the committee and the Head of Corporate Governance undertook to feed this back to the Governance & Search Committee.
122. The Committee Chair suggested that the next performance review include a pre-meeting action to seek feedback on the chairing of the committee.
123. The committee was satisfied to report to the Board that it had undertaken its activities in 2021-22 in line with its terms of reference and business plan. There were no updates to recommend to the committee's terms of reference.
124. The meeting ended at 12.00.