

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 24 November 2022 at 09:30
at Sparsholt College

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

In attendance: D Mernagh, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education
H Mitchell, Apprenticeship Manager (minutes 149-174)
R Price, Head of Learning & Quality
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt)
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

MEMBERSHIP

126. The Committee Chair welcomed S Rai to his first meeting as FE Student Governor (Andover). A HE Student Governor was due to be appointed shortly and would join the committee.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

127. R Palmer noted his previous declared interest as having a contract for academic services with the University of Reading.

128. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

129. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

130. English & Maths (minute 65/22): the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) provided additional information about the revised timetabling and teaching delivery of English & maths for Level 2 and 3 students on creative programmes at Andover College which was intended to support engagement and achievement.

131. Student transport (minute 73/22): the Principal reported ‘decliners’ survey feedback which suggested that the increase in fuel and travel costs was a key factor in lower enrolments in some FE subject areas, with students opting to enrol at colleges which were geographically closer and offered the same provision. The bus companies had also faced challenges recruiting drivers and this had impacted on student transport reliability and attendance figures. The FE Student Governor confirmed that he had personal experience of this on his travel route to the Andover campus. Examples were given of transport issues for both campuses and the interventions made by the College.

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

132. The committee recognised that the reliability and cost of student travel presented a risk to the College in terms of recruitment, retention and attendance and noted that College management was seeking to mitigate the risks in so far as was possible.
133. Curriculum Delivery & Quality Improvement (minutes 61 & 86/22): the Head of Learning & Quality confirmed that the TALO (Teaching & Learning Observations) process now included all academic staff, technicians and LSAs and a report would follow at the next meeting. Members of Animal Management staff had provided positive feedback about the TALO process to the Landex external peer reviewers. The Head of Learning & Quality also confirmed that the Curriculum Delivery, Teaching & Learning, and Quality Improvement Strategy 2022-23 had also received positive feedback during the two recent external peer review activities.
134. Vet Nursing (minute 100/22): the Vice Principal & Dean of HE reported that the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)'s accreditation risk classification of 'low' had been reviewed as standard because of the change of post holder and had been reconfirmed as 'low' following his appointment. Written confirmation had not yet been received.
135. Complaint Reporting (minute 113/22): the committee noted that the Audit Committee had received a report on the progress of a complaint from a former HE student. The Head of Learning & Quality confirmed that the 'See It, Say It, Do It' initiative had been launched.
136. The committee noted that the resolutions of the committee had been implemented and that there were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLAN

137. The committee had received the report of the Head of Corporate Governance proposing the committee's forward business plan for 2022-23, following consultation with the Committee Chair and members of the SLT.
138. It was noted that University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) was now part of the pilot of a new quality assurance process at the University of Portsmouth (UoP), replacing the ASQER with EQUiP, which would result in the main HE quality assurance report being presented in the Spring term.
139. It was also noted that data from the MiDES (Market Intelligence Data Exchange Services) annual report on GCSE maths and English and functional skills produced for AOC member colleges would be provided to the committee when available.
140. The Principal confirmed that the committee's business plan fitted with the management business cycle in the relevant areas.
141. **Resolved** – that the committee's forward business plan for 2022-23 be approved.

HIGHER EDUCATION

HE Quality & Performance

142. The committee had received the reports of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (HE) on current progress in the quality of HE provision and the HE student experience, together with a report on the new Teaching Excellence Framework.

143. The Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education highlighted key points in the report, explaining the change to a new quality assurance process (EQuIP) which was focused on SMART targets and action plans. A report on the key outcomes from the December Board of Studies would follow to the committee's February meeting.
144. The committee reviewed the updates in relation to student progressions and outcomes and discussed the management actions to review course delivery and assessments and to counter the increase in withdrawal rates. This included balancing a diversity of assessment methods with sufficiently rigorous academic challenge, in a way which supported students who were experiencing mental health concerns and anxiety. There was an awareness of the challenges faced by students arising from their experiences during the pandemic and resources were in place to support students. Approximately 40% of new entrants had declared some sort of additional support need. It was also noted that the HE Strategy Group would be reviewing the steps in place in relation to suicide prevention.
145. The committee noted the analysis of feedback from the National Student Survey of student satisfaction and benchmarking with the sector as a whole, but specifically against other Landex colleges. Quality of teaching had continued to score highly but improvement would be targeted to respond to feedback about assessment and course organisation.
146. In relation to preparing students for the world of work and the graduate outcome data reported to the Curriculum, Employers & Market Requirements Committee, it was noted that the way in which graduate/highly skilled jobs were defined, and the thresholds set by the OfS, remained a risk to the College. Lobbying from Landex for a broader understanding of graduate careers in the land-based sector had not been successful to date and the College would continue to respond to relevant consultations. The committee noted the management actions set out in the report to mitigate the risk.
147. The committee expressed concern about the issues reported in relation to accuracy of data and administration of degrees by the UoP and received the assurance of the Vice Principal & Dean of HE that UCS now had access to UoP systems to check data accuracy.
148. The Principal reported to the committee that the bid to the Office for Students (OfS) capital fund for c£4m to build an HE facility had been successful. The OfS had requested that the outcome was kept confidential within the College until announced by the OfS. Management had submitted an application to the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for further funding for the project. The additional funding would enable an increase in the number of planned laboratories and classrooms and, potentially, some social space. *[Minute confidential until OfS announcement.]*

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

FE Self- Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

149. The committee had received the College's draft FE Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2021-22 and FE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2022-23, together with an accompanying report from the Head of Learning & Quality and the Vice Principals Curriculum.

150. The Head of Learning & Quality drew the committee's attention to the enhanced process which had been followed this year in developing the SAR, confirming that he was confident in the completeness of the review processes and from course up to faculty level and including attendance from Landex and Board members. Although no longer an Ofsted requirement to submit a SAR, the detailed review and reporting of quality was valuable in informing priorities for management, ensuring consistency of understanding across the curriculum areas and providing assurance to the Board. The College would continue to provide the report to Ofsted as evidence of good practice.
151. The committee noted that that comparison had been made to data from 2018/19 where external assessment last took place, but performance comparing 2020-21 and 2021-22 was also addressed in the SAR and the resulting QIP. Overall effectiveness was self-assessed as 'good' with 'outstanding' features. Grades for 'Quality of Education' and 'Leadership & Management' had been maintained as 'good' as they were in 2020/21, however 'Behaviours & Attitudes' and 'Personal Development' had been strengthened to 'outstanding'. Where areas had been identified for further improvement, these were addressed in the QIP.
152. The Head of Learning & Quality and the Vice Principals Curriculum highlighted key outcomes and priorities for teaching and learning, achievement at the Sparsholt campus and achievement at the Andover campus.
153. The committee reviewed each section of the SAR in detail, raising a number of points for discussion and noting a range of matters including the positive improvements from 2020-21 to 2021-22 in areas which had been identified as requiring robust scrutiny and actions. It was noted that the overall assessment of Leadership & Management recognised a number of areas of particular strength but took into account the outcome for areas requiring further improvement, particularly English and maths. The Principal reported that this section would be further expanded to include more context and examples as to how the College met skills needs.
154. Members were pleased to note the comparatively positive achievement rates of High Needs students with an EHCP and those with mental health issues, evidencing the success of the student support processes.
155. Members discussed the TALOs process and the introduction of EQIPP (Excellence and Quality Improvement Plan Priorities), seeking assurance that academic staff had sufficient time to respond to feedback and make progress between reviews. It was also noted that management was reviewing the way that CPD was planned and recorded, linking to an overarching skills development plan.
156. The committee also noted the intention to develop the written expression of learners through introducing the 'Marking Up' scheme, noting that this was a laudable but ambitious aim. The Head of Learning & Quality explained that it had launched in English and maths and would be rolled out in other areas if workload and training support was in place.
157. The Committee Chair sought the feedback of the FE Student Governor on his experiences of teaching and learning at Andover College and he commended his teachers and the range of qualifications available.
158. The Committee Chair suggested that it was unclear from his reading of the SAR what the College's view of outstanding teaching was and the Head of Learning & Quality undertook to clarify this in the next iteration of the report.

159. A number of other drafting points were also agreed to be addressed in the updated report and it was noted that comments from the 'outstanding' Ofsted inspection of residential provision would be added to the SAR.
160. The committee went on to review the QIP and the Head of Learning & Quality drew members attention to some of the actions, including areas under enhanced scrutiny to target improvements.
161. The committee was content that there was a clear relationship between the SAR and the QIP and that the actions set out were clear and deliverable.
162. **Resolved** – that the committee recommend to the Board of Governors that the Self-Assessment Report 2021-22 (SAR) provided a satisfactory basis on which to judge the quality of the FE and apprenticeship performance and quality improvement targets, and that the SAR and the associated Quality Improvement Plan for 2022-23 be approved by the Board.

Apprenticeships

163. The committee had received the reports of the Apprenticeships Manager on the apprenticeship accountability framework, introduced by the DfE from April 2022, and the apprenticeships operational action plan.
164. The committee noted the performance indicators which had been set by the DfE to consider intervention and to inform contract management decisions and the framework would be applied by using ILR data reported by the College, together with other evidence required under the funding rules.
165. The Apprenticeships Manager reported performance in 2021-22 when measured against the framework and outlined which areas required improvement. These informed the accompanying operational action plan.
166. The committee noted that issues relating to achievement and retention data had been recognised and assessed. It was noted that there was now greater alignment with other FE quality processes, including through the enhanced TALO process, and that an updated employer survey would be launched this year to identify further areas of improvement signalled by employers. There would be a need for robust monitoring and tracking processes to ensure that key performance indicators were met or exceeded.
167. The committee acknowledged the impact on achievement levels caused by the lack of available End Point Assessments (EPA) and that the delays meant some learners elected not to take their EPA and/or left for employment opportunities. The Principal reported that the NLBC (National Land Based College) had also recognised this and was seeking to address the issue caused by insufficient numbers of assessors available at EPA centres.
168. The committee reviewed the apprenticeships operational plan which set out the enhanced scrutiny and quality improvement processes agreed by management.
169. Responding to questions, the Head of Learning & Quality confirmed that the College was able to access workplaces for observation and assessment as part of the contract with the employer.
170. The committee was assured by the actions set out in the QIP and the operational action plan that the performance challenges were understood and being addressed.

Curriculum Area Operational Action Plans

171. The committee had received and reviewed for assurance the reports of the Vice Principal Curriculums on the operational performance action plans for English and maths (cross campuses) and specific priority curriculum areas on both campuses (Business et al and BTEC External Assessment at Andover and Advanced Technical (Level 3) and Technical Certificate (Level 2) at Sparsholt).
172. The Committee Chair noted that the performance of English and maths had been highlighted and scrutinised at previous Board and committee meetings and that the SAR reinforced the level of challenge faced to support students to achieve the qualifications. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) assured the committee that new approaches and actions were intended to improve achievement levels. These included changes to staffing, more tailored teaching based on specific learner groups, and enhanced tracking processes.
173. The committee welcomed the actions outlined in the operational action plans as demonstrating a commitment to improving outcomes and progression for learners and noted that the performance would continue to be monitored closely.
174. It was agreed that the English & maths operational plan and the apprenticeships operational plan be presented to the Board alongside the minutes of the committee to provide oversight and assurance about these key areas.

External Quality Review

175. The committee had received for information the External Quality Review (EQR) report of the review of 'Behaviours and Attitudes' at both campuses in October.
176. It was noted that the review provided positive evidence of an effective and proactive focus on high expectations of behaviour, excellent initiatives to support wellbeing and inclusivity and a clear expectation of success.
177. The Committee Chair invited the FE Student Governor to comment on his experiences of student behaviour and attitudes and, while he reported that he generally observed good behaviour, his feedback led to a discussion about the smoking rules on the Andover campus and the fact that students responded well when challenged about smoking or vaping (which was only permitted in smoking shelters). It was noted that there was a general increase in vaping among teenagers.
178. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) reported a new process using QR codes which was being introduced to enable staff members to report any student behavioural issues which required following up.

PREVENT DUTY

179. The committee had received the College's updated FE and HE Prevent Duty Risk Assessment/Action Plan for information and assurance in relation to the College's statutory duties.
180. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) summarised the key considerations during the review and the updates to the risk register. It was noted that use of the internet for the ESports and Digital Design curriculum had the potential to increase risk in relation to online safety but that control measures had been introduced.

181. The committee noted the risk register and that it would also be presented to the Board for information.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

182. The committee had received and noted the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2022-07). There were no matters identified for discussion which had not already been covered on the agenda.

183. The meeting concluded at 12.25. Confidential matters were recorded separately.