

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 9 February 2023 at 09:30
at Sparsholt College

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

In attendance: D Mernagh, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education
H Mitchell, Apprenticeship Manager (minutes 1-14)
R Price, Head of Learning & Quality
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt)
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were received from S Rai.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. R Palmer noted his previous declared interest as having a contract for academic services with the University of Reading.
3. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

4. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 Parts 1 and 2 be confirmed as a correct record.
5. 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.

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

FE Performance

6. The committee had received the progress report of the Vice Principals Curriculum, Head of Learning & Quality and Apprenticeships Manager on FE performance and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The AOC's MiDES report on GCSE English and Maths comparative results (summer 2022) had also been circulated for information.
7. The Apprenticeships Manager highlighted the latest performance data in relation to retention and attendance, including English and Maths, explaining the underlying causes behind a small number of areas of concerns and the actions being taken.
8. The committee reviewed the latest performance information in relation to two apprenticeship standards (Horticulture & Landscape Operative and Autocare (Motor

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

- Vehicle) which were under increased scrutiny due to poor achievement rates in 2021-22, noting that substantial improvement was being predicted based on progress this year.
9. The committee also examined the retention and achievement challenges with the Arborist apprenticeship standard and the measures which were being taken under Enhanced Quality monitoring. It was noted that the format of the End Point Assessment (EPA) was particularly demanding for the level and that this was an issue across the sector. This was under review in order to respond to the concerns of colleges and employers but the timeframe for changes (or whether changes would be applied retrospectively) was not known.
 10. The committee noted the warning of the Apprenticeship Manager that the handbook and EPA for the Underkeeper standard had not yet been confirmed and that this presented a retention/achievement risk for students who would be ready to complete in April.
 11. The committee was pleased to note the positive outcomes of the student satisfaction interim learner survey conducted with newly enrolled apprentices in December 2022, which confirmed students were positive about their courses and future career opportunities, felt safe, and knew how to report safeguarding concerns. It was noted that information about safeguarding, Prevent and British Values was included in student handbooks and reinforced by tutors.
 12. The Apprenticeship Manager confirmed that employers were also being asked to display College information about reporting concerns, including the QR code system, and the committee stressed the importance of ensuring safety in the employer workplace.
 13. The Principal reported that the College would also be undertaking research to build an understanding of safeguarding and Prevent risks in the local area in which each employer was based as these could vary from location to location.
 14. It was noted that the survey results did not yet include Vet Nursing apprenticeships because a different format was being used to enable returns.
 15. The committee went on to consider the analysis of the latest performance data for FE at the Andover and Sparsholt campuses and to discuss with the Vice Principals Curriculum the monitoring processes, the areas of risk identified, and the actions being taken in relation to pressures on retention and attendance in specific areas.
 16. The committee sought additional explanation about the monitoring of retention data in relation to one-year programmes and linear (two year) programmes, and assurance was given that management analysed the data to understand and take actions in relation to any issues that arose at any point of the programme.
 17. In relation to the Andover campus, the committee acknowledged the enhanced scrutiny processes now in place for Hairdressing and the actions to support delivery of Music. The committee also noted the improvements in learner progression across the Business (and related qualifications) provision, following intervention to support teaching and learning.
 18. The Committee Chair highlighted the positive impact that had been achieved as a result of previous scrutiny and the strategic decisions to restructure, resource and implement new approaches to teaching and learning quality enhancement and to student support and progression, including the roles of pastoral coaches.
 19. In relation to the Sparsholt campus, the committee sought further explanation of underlying causes for courses where retention had declined year on year, and discussed

actions being taken to provide additional support for new students beyond the 'Flying Start' and the planning of study programmes and enrichment activities to encourage engagement to the end of the course. It was recognised that there were challenges posed in land-based by the need to train students to an appropriate level for work placements (in the future as part of T Levels) balanced with the risk of students leaving once they had obtained skills-based certificates.

20. The committee also discussed the changes of attitude to education from students and families arising from the pandemic and the Vice Principals outlined actions being taken as a result, including the introduction of new parent information evenings from the autumn term to set expectations and provide guidance and work with year 11 pupils in secondary schools about progression.
21. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) responded to a question from the HE Student Governor about qualifications for habitat conservation.
22. Following consideration of the English and Maths operational action plan at the committee's previous meeting, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) reported to the committee a review of the management and staffing structure which had been undertaken to seek to address retention and recruitment challenges which had led to quality risks and to further support successful student outcomes. The new structure was intended to enhance the monitoring of student engagement in English and Maths, with related interventions where needed, and to work even more closely with curriculum areas.
23. The Principal reported that, as part of the changes, a new Assistant Principal for English, Maths and Adult Education (cross campuses) had been introduced. In addition to providing leadership in relation to English and Maths, the postholder would work strategically with external stakeholders to identify skills and community needs for adult provision and focus on achieving positive outcomes for adult learners.
24. The committee commended management's focus on the importance of English and Maths for student progression and recognised the challenge of recruiting teaching staff given the high levels of competition from other education providers. It was acknowledged that significant impact resulting from staff recruitment was unlikely before 2023-24, although other actions would continue in the meantime.
25. It was noted that the MiDES GCSE English and Maths results (summer 2022) demonstrated the College was not out of line with the sector and that Maths results compared better to other land-based colleges. It was agreed, however, that the College should maintain its ambitions to improve achievement levels. Outcomes of GCSE exams taken in 2022-23 were awaited.
26. The committee went on to review the progress report on actions set out in the QIP, noting in particular the actions introduced to improve retention across both campuses, including Risk of Withdrawal meetings, informed by data from the RONI tracker.
27. The committee noted in particular the positive increase in participation in learner ('pulse') surveys as a result of actions taken to encourage participation in the surveys and the focus of management to raise engagement even further. The results of the surveys detailed in the Healthcheck report confirmed positive trends and the committee welcomed this as evidence of interventions to strengthen teaching and learning and support the student experience being effective.

28. It was noted that managers also spoke to students as part of Progress Review walks to understand how they were experiencing being a student at the College. Understanding the student experience was important in relation to the core programmes but also the impact of the tutorial programme and Study+ enrichment activities.
29. The Head of Learning & Quality highlighted continued actions under enhanced Quality monitoring to raise achievement rates in areas which required improvement, such as a delivery of a small number of qualifications on the Andover campus. The QIP also recorded where interventions had led to improvements, such as the improvement in retention in Equine compared to the previous year.
30. Other updates noted included continuation of 'Ready, Respectful, Safe' initiative to challenge behaviour and ensure effective strategies for learning and to support staff with behaviour management techniques and the 'See It, Say It' initiative to allow learners to share concerns and feedback through a QR code.
31. The committee noted how the monitoring and analysis of punctuality data had enabled management to identify an issue with a student transport route and to address this through changing the bus times, recognising that the cost involved was necessary to support student engagement.
32. The Head of Learning & Quality reported a range of internal and external review activity, noting that one of the external governors had attended some of the Curriculum Area SAR mid-year meetings in January.
33. Members went on to discuss the role of teams in delivering outstanding teaching and learning, recognising that TALOs were focused on the individual's performance and development, and collective sharing of idea and information could support overall improvements in outcomes for students. The Vice Principal (Sparsholt) gave the example of feedback from the Landex review about the teaching of theory and practicals worked together in Animal Management, with the aim of increasing collaboration and cohesiveness.
34. The committee reviewed the summary of Awarding Body Quality Reviews of Study Programmes and the Head of Learning & Quality undertook to add RAG ratings to future reports.

Additional FE Quality Activities

35. The committee had received the report of the Head of Learning & Quality on the outcome of three areas of quality monitoring, assurance and improvement activities: the Landex review of Animal Management; feedback from Learner Voice Focus Group; an update on the TALO programme, including outcomes and CPD being delivered in early 2023 as a result of TALOs.
36. Members raised a number of points about the information presented, seeking more clarity about the year-on-year TALO data and commending the addition of the 'Learning Review' window from 2021/22 which ensured that staff were observed at least twice in the same academic year to inform their development plans and CPD.
37. The committee welcomed the clear definitions of teaching and learning value observations in the report.
38. In addition to the report, the Head of Learning & Quality shared with the committee a table which set out for staff key questions relevant to Ofsted's assessment of the quality of education and a reminder of the key activities which related to these.

HIGHER EDUCATION

HE Quality & Performance

39. 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.
40. The Vice Principal & Dean of HE highlighted issues and actions in the EQUIP arising from the Board of Studies held in December, which had been attended by the Committee Chair, and noted the introduction of quarterly review meetings to monitor progress. Actions highlighted included completing the roll out of 'learner at risk meetings' to improvement retention. Progression and retention were being closely monitored and the impact of actions in 2022-23 would be evaluated and reported to the committee in the autumn.
41. Asked about student feedback requesting a more traditional HE experience, the HE Student Governor explained that this related mainly to the social side of student life, such as events, clubs and the freshers' fair.
42. The HE Student Governor confirmed that she recognised and agreed with the issues and actions set out in the EQUIP plan from her experiences of University Centre Sparsholt.
43. The committee discussed the recording of lessons and the management decision that in person attendance be encouraged. Lessons would still be recorded for recall but there would only be live streaming for contingency situations. The HE Student Governor confirmed that students found the recordings useful for self-study, to prepare for exams, and to catch up if they had missed a class.
44. The Vice Principal & Dean of HE also highlighted actions arising from a HE staff CPD day in December and the good teaching practice identified through this year's TALO process. Some areas of improvement had been identified around preparation of resources for use when teaching cover was required.
45. The committee noted that a small number of working days had been lost due to industrial action from some HE Staff but that actions had been taken to ensure students did not miss out on learning.
46. The committee reviewed the outcomes of the student voice autumn survey of first year students. The results were very positive with the exception of three areas where actions were being put in place, including with input from the Student Association, to address issues identified.
47. The Vice Principal & Dean of HE confirmed that, further to discussions at previous meetings, the RCVS had written to confirm the 'low risk' rating for the Vet Nursing degree programme. It was also noted that the RCVS had publishing information about its risk matrix and auditing process.
48. The committee recognised that the HE Team had a well-defined work schedule for the spring and summer term to address a range of quality improvement priorities identified in this report and that there were actions in place to establish ownership of these priorities within the HE team.

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

49. The committee had received the report of the Principal on the DfE accountability reforms and preparations for the new accountability agreement and FE performance dashboard. It was noted that the report was being presented for information and endorsement at meetings of the Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee, the Resources Committee and the Audit Committee, ahead of the Board of Governors meeting on 30 March.
50. The Principal explained the relationship of the accountability statement (part two of the agreement) to the DfE's national skills priorities (issued in draft) and the Local Skills Improvement Plan priorities (due in draft at the end of March). The SLT were working on a first draft of the accountability statement, linked to the curriculum planning process.
51. The Principal also highlighted key points about the public facing performance dashboard which would sit alongside other types of FE performance data, noting the proposed measures.
52. Members discussed how the proposed priorities and measures would be evidenced and whether/how the measures would capture important areas such as the development of 'soft'/general employability skills.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

53. The committee had received and noted the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2023-02). There were no matters identified for discussion which had not already been covered on the agenda.
54. The meeting concluded at 12.10.

Approved: 22 June 2023 Quality & Standards Committee Meeting