

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 22 June 2023 at 09:30
at Sparsholt College

¹PRESENT J Milburn (P); 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 73-88)
R Price, Director of Learning & Quality
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt)
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES & MEMBERSHIP

- 55. Apologies were received from G Davies.
- 56. It was noted that the FE student governor had completed his term of office and that a new student governor would be sought to join the committee next year.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- 57. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

- 58. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.
- 59. FE performance (minutes 9, 10, 17/23): It was noted that progress in relation to quality interventions highlighted in the previous minutes would be reviewed under the FE performance report agenda item.
- 60. Annual Accountability Statement (minute 49/23): The Accountability Statement had been approved by the Board and submitted to the DfE by the deadline of 31 May 2023.
- 61. There were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

HIGHER EDUCATION

HE Quality & Performance

- 62. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (HE) on the current progress in the quality of HE provision, including the outcomes of the HE Board of Studies which had been attended by the Committee Chair. A correction to the report was noted at section 4.1 (12 in place of xx).
- 63. The Vice Principal & Dean of HE highlighted key actions which had emerged from the self-evaluation document (EQUIP) and Board of Studies review process. The actions covered procedures to support students failing to make good progress, the marking of work,

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

exposure to industry activities, and training in industry relevant practical skills, as well as actions related to outreach to schools and progression from FE.

64. The Vice Principal & Dean of HE also highlighted that student association meetings had provided student voice feedback to the Board of Studies. No major issues had been identified in relation to academic standards but a number of issues had been raised in relation to non-academic matters, such as technology/WiFi and differentiation of the University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) experience at the college, and the report outlined the actions being taken. It was also noted that actions were being taken to increase the visibility and accessibility of HE student support available.
65. The Principal reported the ongoing investment in enhancing WiFi capacity across the campus as part of the proposed capital expenditure budget for 2023-24.
66. Asked for further information and assurance about a reference to HE residential students, the Vice Principal & Dean of HE explained that communication and understanding was being strengthened between HE residents and the wardening team by the residential manager attending student association meetings and a warden designated with an HE focus.
67. The committee reviewed the summary of changes to practice which were being introduced to enable for more effective delivery of the HE offer and raised a number of points for clarity and assurance.
68. In relation to the removal of the option to join classes online, the HE student governor asked if recordings would still be made available as these were valuable for revision. It was confirmed that classes would still be recorded (and edited if necessary to maintain standards) before being made available to students for use for revision or to catch up if they had been unable to attend, for example through illness.
69. Members reflected on the reported update of online assessments to reflect the opportunities and challenges posed by AI and discussed the impact of AI in general. The Vice Principal & Dean of HE advised that UCS were looking to embrace the benefits of AI in areas such as research but also to ensure that assessments remained effective, for example through more use of analytical questions.
70. The committee noted updates on the introduction of new courses, on student recruitment, and on the progress of design and planning for the new HE centre.
71. Responding to a member's questions as to whether there had been any developments in relations to the RCVS, the Vice Principal & Dean of HE reported that there were no matters of concern. A meeting was planned with the RCVS in July to discuss planning for the reaccreditation exercise in two years.
72. The committee was assured by the report and discussion of the management commitment to HE academic standards and the quality of the student experience.

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

FE Performance

73. The committee had received the progress report of the Vice Principals Curriculum, Director of Learning & Quality and Apprenticeships Manager on FE performance and the

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), together with additional information on awarding body quality review of study programmes, retention and attendance data, and learner surveys data. A correction was noted at section 3.6 ('declined' in place of 'improved' in the first sentence).

74. The committee noted that at 90.5%, overall retention was 1.0% down on this point last year with both Sparsholt (90.1%) and Andover (90.9%) down on the same time last year, however +1.3% on the 2021/22 final outcome (89.2%). At Andover, attendance was 83.3% and at Sparsholt attendance currently stood at 81.9%. Punctuality, which was a key focus of the QIP, had improved compared to this point last year to 98.1% overall, with punctuality to English and maths sessions improved to 96.4%.
75. The Vice Principals Curriculum (Andover) drew the committee's attention to headlines in relation to specific curriculum areas on the Andover campus, noting the overall projected achievement of 87% would be an increase on the previous year, and the analysis of the underlying factors for increases and declines and the related actions.
76. It was noted that staffing levels at Andover were relatively stable, although there had been some complex challenges in two curriculum areas which were being addressed.
77. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) summarised areas of focus on the Sparsholt campus, explaining that the main areas of retention concerns were the two-year enrolment programmes where withdrawals previously reported in 2021-22 would impact achievement data for 2022-23. The overall predicted achievement for the Sparsholt campus was 87.2%, with a range from 97% to 72%, depending on the outcome of external assessments.
78. The committee discussed the attendance data, which showed a decline from the previous year, seeking further information about attendance levels prior to the pandemic and assurance about the actions being taken. It was recognised that attendance in education was a challenge nationally, but the college was committed to setting clear standards and expectations for attendance and supporting this with effective use of timetabling and registers. This would be reinforced through the student induction programme at the start of the autumn term.
79. The committee also discussed the actions being taken to work with core subject areas to improve English and Maths attendance, supported by the new English and Maths staffing structure and a new timetable model, and raised questions about the predictions for GCSE and Functional Skills English and Maths. It was noted that this continued to be a priority area of focus, recognising the importance of achievement in English and Maths to progression, and that support would continue to be offered to students over the summer with exams up to October being included in the 2022-23 data. The committee also noted the updated English & Maths operational plan appended to the report.
80. The Principal proposed that English and Maths be introduced as a standing agenda item for the committee in 2023-24 to enable continued close scrutiny of progress and committee members endorsed this.
81. The committee noted the staffing challenges which had been experienced on the Sparsholt campus as a result of a mixture of vacancies and performance and were assured that the issues had been recognised and addressed by management.
82. The committee reviewed the progress reported in relation to apprenticeship retention and attendance and the predicted achievement rate. The Apprenticeships Manager

highlighted the explanation of specific challenges for individual apprenticeship standards in relation to the overall achievement rates. Action was being taken to seek to further improve achievement for 2022-23 where learners were ready and able to undertake their End Point Assessments (EPAs).

83. The Apprenticeship Manager also reported interventions during the year, with the introduction of internal quality reviews (IQRs) involving the Vice Principals and Assistant Principals and additional clarity about attendance policy and procedures and reinforcement.
84. It was noted that the issues in relation to the Arborist apprenticeship standard EPA had been resolved, with a new EPA now in place and the option to resit for apprenticeships who had failed the EPA based on the holistic project element which had now been removed. Support was in place for those apprentices who wished to re-sit.
85. The committee reviewed the progress update of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), noting and discussing in particular the rolling forward of retention strategies to next year, the results of the student Pulse survey with a good level of engagement and positive outcomes, support for progress coaches (as well as teachers) in managing student behaviour, the impact of the TALO and CPD processes in improving teaching and learning overall, the teaching and learning CPD conference in June, the continued focus on behaviour and punctuality and the positive engagement with the Sparsholt/Andover certificate.
86. Asked about the management actions in relation to findings of the EQR on personal development (February 2023) about Study+, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) explained that students had perceived Study+ activities to be part of their main programme, which was a positive in some ways but also meant the activities had not been recognised as supporting personal development.
87. The committee also noted the results of the professional learner survey and the positive distance travelled during the year and sought and received additional information in relation to the report of awarding body quality review of study programmes.
88. The committee was satisfied that college management continued to have a clear, and effective plan of continuing improvement based upon detailed analysis of available information to support progress to being an Outstanding provider.

Curriculum Delivery & Quality Improvement

89. The committee had received from the Vice Principals and Director of Learning & Quality the FE Curriculum Delivery, Teaching & Learning, and Quality Improvement Strategy for 2023-24.
90. The Committee Chair congratulated the Director of Learning & Quality for his recent qualification as an Ofsted inspector.
91. The Director of Learning & Quality introduced the proposed strategy which had been updated to include the college's development priorities for 2023-24 and would align with the actions to be confirmed in the new QIP following confirmation of results and completion of the SAR process. The strategy includes new developments to the TALO process and new half termly Curriculum Assessment Boards (CABs) to target improvements.
92. It was noted that the new Assistant Principal for English, Maths & Adults and the new Digi and Innovation Lead had been appointed and would drive forward strategies in those

areas. A revised DigiEd Strategy would be presented to the committee in November and a policy in relation to AI developed.

93. Responding to a challenge from the HE Student Governor that AI could impact departments differently, the Director of Learning & Quality agreed that it would be important to discuss AI with departments to understand staff and students' views.
94. It was also noted that the 'Ready, Respectful, Safe' initiative (RRS) would continue with an increased focus on attendance, note taking and mobile phone use and provide a consistent framework for modelling behaviours and attitudes across the college community, supporting the Conduct and Performance process.
95. The progress review portal was being updated to enable students to contribute to their own performance reports, with support and time allocated, to encourage ownership of progress and to rebalance elements of staff workload from producing three reports a year.
96. Responding to a member's comment, the Director of Learning & Quality recognised that the further developments for 2023-24 did increase the number of meetings and noted that this was to deliver targeted improvements and could be reviewed for the future.
97. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the FE Curriculum Delivery, Teaching & Learning and Quality Improvement Strategy 2023/24 and that the strategy represents a clear, and effective, plan of continuing improvement based upon detailed analysis of what has occurred and a vision of where the College needs to focus in the future.

COMPLAINTS MONITORING

98. The committee had received the annual report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) on Complaints, Comments and Compliments covering the whole College Group.
99. The committee discussed a range of points arising from the report of the numbers and types of complaints and the analysis of any underlying factors and actions arising.
100. In relation to 4 complaints which related to safety concerns from students on the Sparsholt campus about driving of vehicles, it was confirmed that the Vice Principal had followed these up and that actions had been implemented. The Director of Learning & Quality provided further assurance that a learner survey focused on safety had been undertaken and was reported in the Healthcheck report, with any results which might indicate concerns followed up individually. A further survey would be conducted in early 2023/24.
101. The committee noted that, of the complaints that required a full investigation, 16 complaints were concluded to be unfounded and these largely related to course issues at the start of term (9) regarding matters such as allocated tutor groups, justification of touch point assessments, and feedback relating to exam outcomes. 13 complaints were agreed to be wholly founded and 32 partially founded with resolutions agreed. At the Principal's suggestion, it was agreed that the annual report would be developed next year to include an assessment of reports which had been wholly founded.
102. The committee noted that analysis of complaints demonstrated that no one significant area of the business has been subject to a number of complaints that would cause concern, however general behaviour and conduct continues to be a challenge this year.

It was noted that benchmarking data for the sector was not available and would be difficult to measure consistently.

103. The committee noted the report of the implementation of conduct and performance policies and the analysis of exclusions, serious conduct reviews and performance reviews during the last year.
104. There followed a discussion about the challenges presented by the increase in vaping in the student community and the actions being taken by the SLT to seek to support staff to manage behaviour and to discourage vaping by students.
105. The committee went on to review complaints specifically received in relation to HE, noting that of the seven complaints received since the last report, one was upheld, one was partially upheld and the remainder were unfounded. The majority of the complaints related to grade appeals.
106. The committee noted the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) published an annual summary of complaints and this confirmed that, in 2021-22, one case was raised with the OIA. This feedback from the OIA informed the review of policies presented under a separate agenda item and the committee welcomed the evidence of the college seeking to comply with the OIA guidance.
107. The committee was content to report to the Board that management continued to effectively monitor, investigate, and address complaints.

COLLEGE POLICIES

108. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principals Curriculum and Vice Principal & Dean of HE on the review of student related policies.
109. It was noted that HE policies were being relabelled as University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) policies in line with the 'university' level of study.
110. The committee noted that the main changes to HE policies were the separation of Appeals from the Complaints & Feedback Policy to the new Academic Appeals policy to reflect guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), the new Student Conduct Policy separated poor behaviour from academic misconduct, and the former Academic Performance Policy had been updated with a greater focus on supporting students and been retitled the Academic Support Policy. There were minor updates to the other policies.
111. Members emphasised that the policies needed to be clear and unambiguous in order to be effectively implemented when required.
112. Responding to feedback, the Vice Principal & Dean of HE undertook to review some drafting points in the Withdrawal & Suspension of Studies Policy and the Student Conduct Policy.
113. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the following University Centre Sparsholt:
 - a) Complaints and Feedback Policy
 - b) Quality Enhancement Policy
 - c) Scholarly Activity Policy
 - d) Withdrawal and Suspension of Studies Policy (with drafting points corrected)
 - e) Fees, Refund and Compensation Policy

- f) Academic Appeals Policy
- g) Student Conduct Policy (with drafting points corrected)
- h) Academic Support Policy

114. The proposed updates to the FE policies were reviewed, noting that clarification about the process with the school for 14-16 learners had been added and that changes had also been made to the appeals process informed by the HE best practice guidance. A number of other updates were proposed and it was noticed the terminology would switch to 'learners' in relation to FE learner only policies.
115. Responding to a point about the clarity of the wording of an addition to the examples which could trigger a Stage 3 conduct review of possession of guns and knives that were not provided by the college, the Vice Principal Curriculum undertook to reconsider the wording.
116. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the updated FE Policy and Procedures for Promoting Effective Learner Performance and Policies and Procedures for Managing Learner Conduct.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

117. The committee had received and noted the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2023-04). There were no matters identified for discussion which had not already been covered on the agenda.

COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

118. The committee had received the report of the Head of Corporate Governance which provided information to inform the committee's annual review of its performance and terms of reference.
119. The Chair invited reflections on a series of considerations about the work of the committee. Points covered included:
- the impact of the committee in contributing to the outcome for learners, with examples cited about areas where the committee had challenged and supported enhanced scrutiny and quality improvement;
 - the development of the reporting from management to the committee, with a good balance achieved between clear and concise analysis and the provision of detailed evidence;
 - effective preparation for meetings by committee members, reflected in specific questions raised at the meeting on the reports;
 - positive responses from management to challenges raised during meetings and a willingness to provide additional data when required;
 - valuable additional expertise and contributions provided by the co-opted member;
 - positive feedback about their ability to contribute provided by the HE student governor and staff governor;
 - effective reporting from the committee to the Board;
 - confirmation that the terms of reference remained fit for purpose.

120. It was noted that, in addition to the vacancy for a FE student governor, there was a vacancy for an external governor on the committee and that recruitment was being overseen by the Governance & Search Committee.
121. The committee was content to report to the Board that it continued to undertake its activities effectively and in line with its terms of reference.
122. It was noted that the committee's annual business plan would be reviewed in consultation with the SLT and Committee Chair and presented at the next meeting. As agreed earlier in the meeting, this would include the introduction of a standing agenda item on English and Maths quality and performance.
123. The meeting concluded at 12:15.

Approved: Quality & Standards Committee meeting 21 November 2023