

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 8 February 2024 at 09:30
at Sparsholt College

¹PRESENT J Milburn (P); N Moody (E); J Orłowski (St); H Perry (S); Michaela Wall (St);
C Wilson (E) (Chair)

In attendance: S Grant, Deputy Principal (from min 44)
E Jennings, Assistant Principal, English, Maths & Adult Skills (mins 18-22)
K Luck, Digital Innovation Lead (from min 44)
D Mernagh, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education
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

1. Apologies were received from R Palmer and A Rowley.
2. The Chair welcomed N Moody and M Wall to their first meeting of the committee.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

3. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

4. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.
5. There were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

6. The committee had received and reviewed the progress report of the Vice Principals Curriculum, Head of Learning & Quality, and Apprenticeships Manager on FE performance and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).
7. The committee discussed the management of learner retention and attendance for FE on each campus, noting the latest data and the actions being taken.
8. It was noted that the legacy withdrawals on FE courses at Sparsholt which were studied over a two-year period highlighted the challenges to retention of the introduction of two-year T Level programmes and the defunding of other qualifications.
9. The committee also noted the risk to provision for 19+ students due to T Levels only being funded for 16-18 year olds and new technical qualifications for adults not due to launch until 2026 at the earliest. The Principal noted that the changes would have an

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

- impact on enrolments and skills provision for adult learners and that the college was seeking to offer apprenticeship as an alternative pathway where feasible.
10. Asked about punctuality of learners, which had been a previous area of scrutiny by the committee, the Director of Quality & Learning confirmed the processes implemented to encourage punctuality remained effective and there was a further 0.9% improvement compared to the same time last year.
 11. The Apprenticeship Manager reported updated retention, attendance and achievement data for apprenticeships, and gave examples of actions being taken by management, working with employers, to encourage attendance by apprenticeships at college.
 12. The committee noted the assurance that, in the small number of areas where apprenticeship performance had been identified by management as requiring improvement, this continued to be robustly monitored. There followed a discussion about some challenges related to the requirement for apprenticeship learners to achieve Level 2 or above in English and Maths, and the impact this had due to their inability to undertake the End-point assessments until they have achieved these qualifications
 13. The committee welcomed the improvement in pass rates reported for GCSE English and Maths resits in November and noted that a detailed review of English and Maths teaching and learning followed under a separate agenda item.
 14. The Director of Learning & Quality highlighted some specific updates in the QIP, including further improvement in learner participation in the Pulse survey and positive feedback in key areas underpinning learner achievement.
 15. The committee welcomed the addition to the QIP of a new section summarising actions arising from external quality audits and reviews in order that these could be monitored.
 16. The Committee Chair reported on his attendance, along with two other external governors, at the mid-year curriculum SAR review meetings and commended the overall quality of reporting from the curriculum areas.
 17. In conclusion, the Committee Chair noted that members were assured by the evidence of continuing good progress towards fulfilling the targets identified in the QIP, although recognising challenges in some curriculum areas.

Maths and English

18. The committee had received for review and assurance the report of the Assistant Principal English, Maths & Adult Education and the Vice Principals Curriculum on the performance action plan for English and Maths. The report included the operational action plan, analysis of November resits data, the TALO outcome report for English and Maths, and detailed data on attendance by main curriculum area.
19. The committee was pleased to see the positive impact on results from the new approach introduced to November GCSE re-sits and of the rollout of the new fast-track functional skills programme.
20. The discussion covered management actions to improve learner attendance, which was recognised as a significant barrier to achievement, and to support the quality of delivery particularly in relation to agency staff. The Assistant Principal highlighted the aim to increase the use of new generative AI technology for lesson planning, preparation, delivery and assessment which would support teachers to personalise learning.

21. The committee also noted the specific challenges in relation to retention of adult learners due to the social and economic context and the actions being taken to mitigate these issues.
22. Overall, the committee was assured by the report and discussion of the continued focus on improving the outcomes and progression for learners on English and Maths qualifications and particularly welcomed the focus on innovating and working in partnership with the curriculum teams.

Quality Activities

23. The committee had received the report of the Head of Learning & Quality on the outcome of areas of quality monitoring, assurance and improvement activities: the Ofsted inspection in October 2023; Landex and EQR reviews; the TALO (Teaching and Learning Observations) programme; feedback from the Autumn learner 'Pulse' survey; and learner progress reviews.
24. The committee commended college teams for the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of the college on 10 to 13 October 2023 and noted the continuing commitment of management to support and enable outstanding teaching in all areas:
 - Overall effectiveness Good
 - The quality of education Good
 - Behaviour and attitudes Outstanding
 - Personal development Outstanding
 - Leadership and management Outstanding
 - Education programmes for young people Good
 - Adult learning programmes Good
 - Apprenticeships Good
 - Provision for learners with high needs Outstanding
 - Contribution to meeting skills needs Strong
25. The committee noted the Landex review which had been completed in November 2023 on cross-college teaching and learning, personal development and the student experience and provided specific examples of positive performance in a range of areas. The Director of Learning & Quality provided additional information in relation to a reference to health and safety in forestry and confirmed safe practices were in place.
26. It was noted that the first of the two EQR peer reviews, which had focused on feedback and assessment in Humanities on the Andover campus, had been completed and the report would follow to the next meeting. The Director of Learning & Quality reported that the review outcomes aligned with the results of the TALO process, with positive recognition of good practices and some recommendations to support further development.
27. Challenged by a member as to the quality of the external reviews, the Director of Learning & Quality confirmed that the reviews provided valuable external knowledge and performance indicators to inform quality actions and that college managers benefited from the peer review process, with a number of staff also qualified to undertake EQRs in other colleges.
28. The committee discussed the summary of TALO outcomes and further development of the TALO process, seeking additional context about the use of filming of lessons and noting the ambition for continuing to increase the proportion of 'highly confident'

teachers in all areas. The committee also further explored the difference between effective and outstanding teaching and how this was evidenced through the TALO process, such as through the behaviour of students.

29. The committee reviewed the learner Pulse survey outcomes which showed learners continuing to demonstrate a high level of satisfaction, and identified certain areas where the learners felt the experience was less positive. Together with learner focus groups, these helped to inform management actions which were then reviewed six-weekly. There were no causes for concern identified for highlighting to the Board.
30. The committee appreciated the additional information and evidence provided by the report of robust quality improvement and assessment processes.

Employability Skills

31. The committee had received the first of a new annual report from the Vice Principals (Andover and Sparsholt) on the assessment and progress of the employability and soft skills of learners.
32. It was noted that the acquisition of these wider skills by learners had been highlighted by employers, for example at Industry Curriculum Boards, and through challenge at the Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee as being vital for learners to be successful in their chosen careers. Building on the college's long-standing focus on skills development and engagement with employers, management had implemented a new measurement in termly learner progress reviews to enable monitoring of the development of soft skills.
33. The committee noted that data for 2022-23 indicated positive improvement from October to the end of the academic year. The report also gave examples of how curriculum areas had supported the development of soft skills against criteria informed by the Gatsby Benchmarks framework, and it was noted that Personal Development had been graded as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.
34. Questioned about the approach to improving conversational skills, the Vice Principals gave examples of how teachers could integrate practice of oral skills in the classroom, alongside use of technology. The FE Student Governor provided her observations of learners' experiences, noting that there were opportunities for speaking and debate in her classes but also that some learners were anxious or unconfident and that the teachers were conscious of this.
35. The FE Student Governor also provided feedback about the scheduling of Study+ activities, such as the debate club, and the Vice Principal (Andover) confirmed that management understood that there were some challenges with increasing engagement which it was intended to address through revising the timetable for the 2024-25 academic year.
36. The committee welcomed the systems devised by management to ensure that a focus on development of soft skills was integrated into course delivery, as well as through the Study+ programme and Gatsby-related activities.

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY & PERFORMANCE

37. 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.
38. The Vice Principal & Dean of HE highlighted key themes from the Excellence and Quality Improvement Plan (EQUIP) which had been reviewed at the Board of Studies held in

December, including feedback from students and attendance by the Committee Chair, and submitted to the University of Portsmouth.

39. The committee was assured that there were no significant quality concerns identified and that the areas for improvement were understood and related actions were underway. The Vice Principal & Dean also reported the further development of the quality oversight processes with new responsibilities for subject leads.
40. Asked by a member about references to widening participation from underrepresented groups and to what extent these were new approaches, the Vice Principal & Dean of HE explained this varied for different groups. The greatest challenge was attracting students from POLAR4 IMD 1&2² and there was an increased focus on reaching out to schools and colleges in relevant areas and on the older age group.
41. The committee reviewed the data from the survey of first year HE students in the Autumn term, noting that the response rate had been significantly lower than the previous year and that actions were being planned to improve this for the following year. The survey data was predominantly positive with some issues in specific faculty areas which had been identified and were being followed up with students and subject leads.
42. Responding to a member's question about TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework), the Vice Principal & Dean of HE reported that the Office for Students (OfS) had published case studies which provided relevant information to inform a submission in the next TEF round. Progress against the key quality measures for HE was reported at the previous meeting of the committee.
43. The committee was satisfied to report to the Board that there was sufficient evidence of planned actions to support the continuous improvement of both student academic experience and student outcomes and that this included listening to and responding to the student voice.

STRATEGIES, POLICIES & REPORTS

DigiEd Strategy

44. The committee had received the report of the Director of Learning & Quality and the Digital & Innovation Lead on the review of the DigiEd Strategy, together with the updated strategy.
45. The committee noted that the strategy had been developed to ensure that key stakeholders across the college community were aware of and reacted to the priorities and opportunities both within and outside the college to strengthen the digital skills and practices of learners and staff. The updates included a stronger focus on staff workload and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), together with the increased importance of formal accreditation in digital skills.
46. In discussion, the committee emphasised several points about the implementation of the strategy, including the need to maintain staff willingness and engagement and the resourcing requirements in relation to IT infrastructure and specialist staffing. The committee was assured by the examples given in response that these matters were understood by management and that necessary actions were underway or being considered.

² Participation of Local Areas and Index of Multiple Deprivation classifications

47. The HE Student Governor also raised a question about whether there were plans to change the IT platform used by HE students and the Digital & Innovation Lead explained that this had not yet been decided and she would be discussing future approaches with the HE team.
48. **Resolved** – that the updated DigiEd Strategy be endorsed as evidence that college management was:
 - a) putting strong focus on digital innovation to enhance teaching, learning and assessment practices;
 - b) ensuring the college remains up to date with external policy and legislation surrounding the use of technology in education; and
 - c) using investment in technology to drive key strategic aims to strengthen the learner experience and, ultimately, achievement.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

49. The committee had received from the Deputy Principal the new AI Strategy and Students AI Policy, noting that these followed consideration of the strategic opportunities and risks for AI at the Governors' Seminar.
50. It was noted that the AI Strategy was anticipated to be an evolving management strategy document, supporting delivery of the College Group Strategic Plan and with links to key College Group policies. It was proposed that, as a new strategy document, it was presented to the Board of Governors, alongside the Students AI Policy, to approve its introduction and that significant developments to the strategy were reported periodically to the committee.
51. Asked about how the Students AI Policy would be communicated to students, the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) confirmed that it was being embedded in the tutorial programme and would form part of the induction process for new students. It was also noted that the key points of the proposed policy had been included in staff CPD in January.
52. The HE Student Governor raised the promotion by YouTube and social media of AI sites for students and asked how inappropriate use would be detected. The Principal explained the college's online filtering and monitoring system could be used to block sites or alert management to their use.
53. Given that much of the focus of the AI Strategy document was on AI in teaching and learning, a member asked where the development of the use of AI in business support functions fitted in the management and governance framework. It was noted that this would be considered as part of the review of the Three-Year Strategic Plan, with specific elements of policy and resourcing likely to be under the remit of the Resources Committee.
54. **Resolved** – the AI Strategy and Student AI Policy be recommended to the Board for approval with the intention that the AI Strategy be evolved by management and reported periodically to the committee.

Policies

55. The committee had received from the Vice Principals Curriculum and Vice Principal & Dean of HE proposed updates to the FE Malpractice, Maladministration & Plagiarism Policy, FE Curriculum Delivery, Teaching & Learning & Quality Improvement Policy,

Complaints (and other Feedback) Management Policy – Further Education, FE Student Charter, and UCS HE Student Charter following review by the SLT leads.

56. The committee noted that the Malpractice, Maladministration & Plagiarism Policy had been updated to include reference to AI and to ensure compliance with the JCQ regulations. The policy now covered FE only, with the separate UCS Student Conduct Policy covering HE.
57. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve:
 - a) FE Malpractice, Maladministration & Plagiarism Policy
 - b) FE Curriculum Delivery, Teaching & Learning & Quality Improvement Policy
 - c) Complaints (and other Feedback) Management Policy – Further Education
 - d) FE Student Charter
 - e) UCS HE Student Charter

Healthcheck Report

58. The committee had received and reviewed the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2024-02).
59. The committee noted and endorsed the further development of the presentation of monitoring and reporting student attendance data as providing clarity for scrutiny and to inform management interventions where required.
60. The meeting concluded at 12:20.

Approved: Quality & Standards Committee Meeting 27 June 2024