

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 27 June 2024 at 09:30
at Sparsholt College

¹PRESENT J Milburn (P); N Moody (E) (until min 123); R Palmer (C); A Rowley (E); Michaela Wall (St); C Wilson (E) (Chair)

In attendance: E Jennings, Assistant Principal, English, Maths & Adult Education (mins 90 to 95)
J Loretto, Governor (until min 123)
D Mernagh, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education
H Mitchell, Apprenticeship Manager (mins 71 to 89)
R Price, Director of Learning & Quality
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)
S Taylor, Learning & Standards Lead (to min 102)
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES & MEMBERSHIP

61. Apologies were received from H Perry.
62. The Chair welcomed J Loretto who was joining the committee from 11 July 2024 and recorded thanks to J Orłowski who had stepped down as HE Student Governor.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

63. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

64. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2024 be confirmed as a correct record with the addition of R Palmer to the apologies recorded as received.
65. FE quality (min 12/24) – the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) provided an update for assurance on the number of apprenticeship learners sitting English & Maths Functional Skills exams in June.
66. FE quality (min 24/24) – the Principal highlighted the planned focus on exceptional and innovative teaching in the new Strategic Plan to be presented to the Board in July.
67. HE quality (min 42/24) – the Principal reported the strategic aim to submit a TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) entry in the next round (2026/27), with work to be overseen by the HE Strategy Group and which would seek to engage with governors as part of the process.
68. HE delivery (min 47/24) – the Vice Principal & Dean of HE confirmed that there were no plans to change the IT platform used by HE Students.
69. AI strategy (53/24) – the Principal reported that the new Strategic Plan would introduce new AI related objectives related to use of AI in teaching and learning and in business support, as well as in relation to cybersecurity.

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

70. The committee noted that the resolutions of the committee had been implemented and that there were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

71. 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), including a report on the use of conduct and performance procedures during the year. The report also included external assurance in the form of outcomes of awarding body quality reviews of student programmes and the EQR (External Quality Review) report on assessment and feedback.
72. Retention and attendance: The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) highlighted the latest data for in-year retention and attendance at both campuses, explaining the data for different curriculum areas and responding to members' questions. It was noted that attendance was up year on year but not to the extent of the ambitious 95% target which the college had set itself for 2023/24. This was in the context of attendance being a challenge across the education sector.
73. There continued to be management focus on curriculum areas where attendance was lower, and examples were discussed of providing additional training support for academic staff with regard to behaviour management and communicating to students the standards which would be expected by employers. The Vice Principal Curriculum also set out the actions which were planned for the start of new academic year.
74. The Student Governor endorsed as effective the action she had seen in practice at Andover College of emphasising to students the need to attend in order to progress and achieve.
75. Learner surveys: The committee noted the latest learner survey outcomes for both campuses and that the outcomes were used to further explore and implement actions where relevant. In relation to feedback about careers provision, the trial of a new AI 'careers bot' was reported and the Student Governor gave the example of her positive experience being supported by the bot to structure a personal statement.
76. The Director of Quality & Learning responding to a member's question about the impact of the surveys on academic staff to explain how staff were engaged in the process, including receiving an analysis of the results, the opportunity to celebrate 'shout outs' from the students, and the use of survey results in CoSAR review meetings. The Student Governor gave an illustration of how positive feedback from the surveys was celebrated in the classroom.
77. The committee welcomed the evidence that learner surveys were used constructively to further develop and improve teaching and learning and to recognise success.
78. NART: Members raised a number of questions about the underlying factors informing the latest available NART (National Achievement Rate Tables) data (2022/23) benchmarked in relation to land-based providers for Sparsholt College and Hampshire colleges for Andover College. It was noted that the relatively low comparative rankings were as a result of various historical issues which had been acted upon by management and that the uplift in performance indicators since suggested that both campuses would improve their positions once the 2023/24 tables were published.
79. Conduct: The committee discussed the analysis of conduct and performance reviews undertaken during the year on each campus, seeking additional information about the

reasons for changes year on year and noting that, where numbers had increased, this reflected the enforcing of performance standards robustly at the start of the year. This included the ongoing use of technology to enable reporting of concerns through QR codes on staff ID cards and student posters.

80. The committee was satisfied to advise the Board that management continued to effectively address and monitor student conduct and performance.
81. Apprenticeships: the committee welcomed the positive progress reported in both retention and achievement for apprenticeships and the intervention actions which were in place in areas identified internally for improvement. It was noted that there were no indicators requiring improvement under the DfE apprenticeship accountability framework.
82. The Apprenticeship Manager reported the results of apprenticeship interim survey results for 2023/24, with an overall average 98% satisfaction rate (based on 40 questions). The response rates in relation to understanding the importance of safeguarding and how to report any concerns and to feeling safe in the workplace were both 100%.
83. Responding to a members' questions as to whether the availability of end point assessments (EPAs) had improved since the previous year and whether staff could train to deliver EPAs, the Apprenticeship Manager confirmed that there was now a quicker turnaround from the point the apprentice was ready and that staff training had been explored but staff tended not to have availability at the point of the year that assessors were required.
84. Quality activities: The committee noted good progress with delivering the QIP for 2023/24 and that, where relevant, the QIP actions would be taken forward and built on in the coming year.
85. The committee noted the positive outcome of the EQR report on assessment and feedback (across both campuses), with a number of areas of strength identified and two areas identified for improvement and discussed the related quality actions with the Director of Quality & Learning.
86. The committee also commended the positive outcomes of the awarding body quality reviews of study programmes and sought and received additional information from the Director of Quality & Learning about the internal monitoring and assurance processes.
87. A member suggested that it could be a valuable exercise to assess the impact of TALO actions over a number of years, providing there was a sufficient data set, and the Director of Quality & Learning undertook to look into this for TALO reporting in 2024/25.
88. In conclusion, the Committee Chair noted that members were assured by the evidence of continuing overall progress, although recognising that not all strategic targets for 2023/24 would be met.
89. The committee also noted examples of technology and digital innovation which were being used to support teaching, learning and assessment and that this would continue to be a developing area.

Maths and English

90. 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 of English and Maths and the operational action plan, including an analysis of NART data.

91. The committee reviewed the performance data, the TALO outcomes and the learner feedback, noting that all had seen some improvement during the year and that areas for additional improvement, particularly attendance and functional skills, were understood and being addressed.
92. The committee discussed the implementation of AI personalised student support tool CenturyTech and looked forward to an update at the next committee meeting on the impact on student progress of engaging with the tool to assess the value of the investment.
93. The committee welcomed the reported positive recruitment of new staff (removing the need for agency staff) and the support and training for staff, including the use of maths mastery pedagogy, which were anticipated to support further improvements in 2024/25. It was noted that this followed the strategic decision to invest in the new English and Maths staffing structure and the more competitive salaries.
94. Responding to a member's question about the redesign of delivery of level 1 and level 2 provision across both campuses to improve outcomes, the Assistant Principal explained this included addressing behavioural problems linked to mobile phone use where the introduction of mobile phone charging lockers on the Andover campus had been seen to improve engagement. It has therefore been decided to invest in lockers in an area of the Sparsholt campus. The committee was assured that exceptions were made for legitimate reasons for phone use, such as for young carers.
95. The committee welcomed the indications that strategies implemented were having a positive effect and was assured by the evident continued focus on improving the outcomes and progression for learners on English and Maths qualifications.

Quality Strategy

96. The committee had received and reviewed the report of the Head of Learning & Quality on the annual review of the FE Curriculum Delivery, Teaching & Learning, and Quality Improvement Strategy.
97. The Director of Quality & Learning highlighted the updates to the strategy for 2024/25 to support the college's journey to outstanding through actions to support sustained improvements to move to consistently excellent teaching, learning and assessment and to support specific curriculum areas to move from good to outstanding. This included further developments to the TALO and quality review processes to enhance performance and continuing to use the 'Ready, Respectful, Safe' initiative to improve behaviours and attitudes of learners. This would be supported by further external Quality reviews by Landex and EQR to externally validate the progress of the strategy, as well as the overall QIP.
98. The committee discussed and endorsed a number of areas of the strategy, including the culture of developmental support for teaching staff, the expansion over a longer period of the new staff onboarding process, work with the DigiEd team to embed use of AI to reduce staff workload and to heighten learner engagement, and the embedment of value-added reviews for A Levels and BTechs.
99. The Principal also highlighted the SLT's strategic decision to increase the Curriculum Leaders's (CLs) remission hours in recognition of the value of the CLs role in the quality processes.
100. The Director of Quality & Learning assured the committee that Ofsted's published statement of expectations in relation to the use of AI had been considered and related actions were set out in the strategy. This included further training for staff on the appropriate use of AI.

101. The committee was satisfied to recommend the strategy to the Board on the basis that it represented 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.
102. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the FE Curriculum Delivery, Teaching & Learning, and Quality Improvement Strategy 2024-25.

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY & PERFORMANCE

103. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (HE) on HE academic and quality performance, including progress in relation to the outcomes of the HE Board of Studies.
104. The Vice Principal & Dean of HE confirmed the University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) had presented to the University of Portsmouth at the Board of Studies in March a progress report on actions arising from the self-evaluation (EQUIP) and no concerns had been raised by the university. The progress report had consolidated overall actions which were common across the UCS provision and also provided subject specific information where relevant. The committee had been represented at the second Board of Studies by R Palmer.
105. The committee reviewed the update on actions, noting that these sought to embrace the full student experience from application through to outcomes. Areas covered in discussion included redesign of assessment and exam processes in light of the use of AI and in a way which is inclusive for a diverse student body, actions to support employability, allocating a tutor for the period of the student's enrolment, progression from FE to HE at Sparsholt, and enhancement of the HE community, including through social spaces provided in the new HE building.
106. The committee also discussed the continued increase in support needs and noted that actions to support students with mental health considerations and neurodiversity were being developed as part of the new Access & Participation Plan to be presented to the Board in July.
107. The committee also noted the planned changes to the HE quality assurance system in 2024/25, including a new module and course evaluation process in the summer to inform the Board of Studies in the Autumn.
108. The committee was satisfied to report to the Board that there was sufficient evidence of 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.

COMPLAINTS MONITORING

109. The committee received and reviewed a report from the Vice Principals Curriculum (Sparsholt) and Vice Principal & Dean of HE on Complaints, Comments and Compliments covering the College Group.
110. In the absence of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt), the Principal highlighted the analysis of the causes of complaint, providing additional information and assurance in relation to each category of complaint and the underlying investigations.
111. The committee noted that, although there had been a slight increase in complaints for FE and business support functions from the previous year, the number of complaints which had been upheld or partially upheld had declined. It was also noted that the reasons for the complaints were understood, and action had been taken where complaints were upheld or partially upheld. For example, this year's Curriculum Delivery, Teaching and Learning Strategy sought to

ensure that the way teaching and learning was planned enabled departments to be better prepared to cover lessons when the need arises.

112. The committee noted that there was a low level of complaints in relation to HE, and the reasons for the two which had been partially upheld. There were no complaints dealt with by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator.
113. The committee was content to advise the Board of management's continued commitment to effectively monitor, investigate, and address complaints.
114. The Principal highlighted that the number of formally registered compliments was substantially lower than the level of positive feedback received by departments across the College Group and that it was intended to capture this wider 'good news' through the next year.

POLICIES

115. The committee had received from the Vice Principals Curriculum and Vice Principal & Dean of HE proposed updates to a number of student related policies, following review by the SLT leads and, where relevant, the Wellbeing Committee.
116. The committee noted that the updated Freedom of Speech Code of Practice (which merged the existing FE and HE codes) responded to the requirements of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech Act) 2023 Regulations 2024, the main provisions of which became law on 01 August 2024. The anticipated related guidance from the Office of Students (OfS) had been put on hold due to the General Election and would be reviewed when published to identify if any further changes were needed to the code.
117. The committee also noted that the UCS Student Conduct Policy had been updated to include specific behavioural expectations, enabling the separate HE Student Code of Conduct to be withdrawn.
118. In relation to fitness to study policies, the committee questioned and received additional information about the process for assessing fitness to study.
119. The committee noted that the Stop and Search a Learner Policy was being further reviewed to ensure it was fit for purpose for both under and over 18 year olds and an update would be provided to the Board.
120. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the following updated policies:
 - a. Freedom of Speech Code of Practice (subsuming the FE and HE Freedom of Speech Codes of Practice)
 - b. FE Student Code of Conduct
 - c. UCS Student Conduct Policy (subsuming the HE Student Code of Conduct)
 - d. FE Fitness to Study Policy
 - e. UCS Academic Support Policy
 - f. Fitness to Practise Policy for Veterinary Nurse Students
 - g. UCS Accreditation and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
 - h. Ethical Review Policy
 - i. Bullying & Harassment Policy – Learners
 - j. Missing from Education Policy
 - k. Stop and Search a Learner Policy (subject to further clarifications, if required, in relation to the legal position for over 18 year olds)

I. Sexual Misconduct Policy

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

121. The committee had received and reviewed the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2024-Issue 05).
122. In relation to student voice, the Student Governor provided some informal feedback from some students as to whether further measures could be considered on the Andover College campus to help with any concerns about safety, given that some of the outside areas at the campus were immediately adjacent to public areas of the town and there were access routes through the campus.
123. The Principal and Vice Principal (Andover) explained the actions which were being planned to redesign some of the outside student areas so that they were further zoned off/demarked from public areas, as an additional means of supporting feelings of safety alongside existing security patrols and the security barriers in the college buildings. These measures would be discussed with and communicated to students.

COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE

124. The committee had received and reviewed the report of the Head of Corporate Governance providing information for the committee's annual performance self-evaluation and review of its terms of reference.
125. The committee noted the relationship between the work of the committee and aspects of the AOC Code of Good Governance in relation to quality of teaching and learning.
126. The Committee Chair welcomed the improvement over a number of years to the relevance and clarity of content of the management reports, with the most recent new development being the introduction of a report on the monitoring and evaluation of soft/employability skills.
127. The committee discussed the introduction of the enabling role of the 'key considerations' section in papers and endorsed these as supporting the committee chair to reflect on and sum up discussions.
128. The Principal thanked C Wilson for his leadership of the committee as chair and the committee looked forward to his engagement in the committee's work as a co-opted member from September and to welcoming the new chair.
129. The committee was satisfied to report to the Board that it had undertaken its activities in 2023-24 in line with its terms of reference and business plan. No required updates to the terms of reference were identified.
130. The meeting concluded at 12.45.

Approved: Quality & Standards Committee meeting 28 November 2024