

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 28 November 2024 at 09:30
at Sparsholt Campus

¹PRESENT G Baker (C); X Ferreira-Pike (St) (to minute 183); J Milburn (P); N Moody (E); H Perry (S) (to minute 183); R Palmer (C); A Rowley (E) (Chair); M Wall (St) (to minute 183); C Wilson (C)

In attendance: D Mernagh, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education
R Price, Director of Learning & Quality (to minute 183)
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) (to minute 183)
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) (to minute 183)
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES & MEMBERSHIP

131. Apologies were received from J Loretto.
132. The Chair welcomed G Baker and X Ferreira-Pike to their first meeting of the committee since their appointments and C Wilson who was returning to the committee as a co-opted member.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

133. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

134. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.
135. Higher Education (minute 106/24): the new University Centre Sparsholt Access & Participation Plan from 2025-26 had been approved by the Office for Students and included actions to support students' continuation and completion.
136. There were no other 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 2024-25, following the outcomes of the committee's performance review in June and discussions with the Committee Chair and SLT. The plan included continued enhanced scrutiny of English & Maths and introduced enhanced reporting on SEND (as part of FE performance reports) and a new report on the use of AI in FE and HE.
138. The committee noted that the proposed Q&S business plan aligns with the AoC Code of Good Governance recommended practices and sources of assurance as relevant to the committee's remit.

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

139. **Resolved** – that the committee’s forward business plan for 2024-25 be approved.

HIGHER EDUCATION

140. The committee had received for scrutiny and assurance the report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (HE) on the performance of University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) provision in 2023-24 and year to date 2024-25, including results of the National Students Survey (NSS) and with reference to the Office for Students (OfS) quality related (B3) conditions of registration.
141. The report also provided a summary of student enrolment data for information, recruitment trends having been scrutinised by the Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee in October.
142. Members raised a number of queries about the underlying recruitment factors and the actions being taken by management, including in relation to comparisons with other HE land-based providers and a review of Equine HE provision being conducted through Landex (also covering FE). The Dean of HE highlighted work with the Marketing team to reposition communication activities and the Student Governors offered their input if helpful in relation to their generation’s engagement with social media.
143. The committee reviewed the analysis of continuation, completion and progression data and the four-year trend data analysis for Condition B3, noting in particular:
- The addition of two new HE student support posts to support continuation and completion, recognising that 45% of students had identified a support need;
 - Assurance that the increase of the proportion of ‘good degrees’ achieved, while slightly under the sector average, represented a positive result when considering UCS’s entry tariff;
 - Assurance that while the progression data (as defined by the OfS) was below the OfS thresholds, the reasons for this were understood and justifiable. Additionally, new progression metrics were being developed as part of the new Access and Participation Plan.
144. The Dean of HE undertook to review the format of future trend data reporting to provide additional clarity to the committee.
145. The committee reviewed the analysis of NSS outcomes, noting that participation of eligible students was 81% and in keeping with historical norms. The Dean of HE reported the underlying factors behind the lower scores in relation to course organisation and communication and the reasons for variation in scores between curriculum areas. It was noted that actions had already been implemented and it was hoped these would result in improved feedback in future surveys. The committee was pleased to note that questions related to teaching, assessment and learning support scored highly.
146. The HE Student Governor shared her experience of being a member of the Student Association, confirming that the student members had been able to progress actions through the Student Association and noting that it was helpful for there to be some consistency in the reps for each cohort over the length of their course, where this was feasible.
147. The Student Governor also suggested that it could be helpful to put in place a mechanism for any student to raise any feedback between surveys and the SLT members undertook to

review whether there were enhancements that could be made to FE and HE feedback processes.

148. The committee noted that an enhanced course support quality action plan had been put in place for the FdSc Veterinary Nursing course and sought confirmation that the plan was sufficiently robust. The Dean of HE explained that there were more detailed actions underpinning the plan and it was agreed that progress on these be reported to the committee for assurance.
149. The Dean of HE updated the committee on changes to the University of Portsmouth's quality assurance processes, noting that the university no longer required the Board of Studies or Equip activities which were currently in place. Given the short notice of the changes and that the university's new systems did not appear to provide the underlying assessment and enhancement planning required by UCS, the Dean of HE was reviewing and developing internal quality processes and would report back to the committee. It was also noted that UCS had introduced fortnightly meetings for subject leads to continue to benefit from bringing different courses together.
150. The committee was assured by the report and discussion that management was committed to HE standards and the quality of the student experience, and that areas for improvement were understood and actions in place.

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

FE Self- Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

151. The committee had received the college's draft FE Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2023-24 and FE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2024-25, together with an accompanying report from the Head of Learning & Quality and the Vice Principals Curriculum.
152. The Head of Learning & Quality drew the committee's attention to the process which had been followed this year in developing the SAR, following the model adopted in previous years, and noted that the Committee Chair had attended a review meeting of the draft SAR with a member of the Landex Quality Committee.
153. The committee reviewed the findings of the SAR, noting in particular the improvements which had been delivered in areas identified for enhanced quality scrutiny the previous year and the overall improvement in retention and achievement, with a notable increase in achievement rates for apprenticeships. There had also been an increase in the proportion of teaching and learning observations (TALOs) which assessed teaching as 'highly confident'.
154. The Vice Principal (Andover) reported headlines from sector benchmark (Midas) data for the different levels of FE provision which had recently become available and noted that this would be integrated into the final version of the SAR.
155. The Vice Principals highlighted key points from the SAR for each campus, explaining the underlying factors for performance of specific curriculum areas and providing assurance that, where areas had underperformed, actions had been taken to address the issues. The FE Student Governor shared positive feedback about teaching of A Levels which concurred with the actions described.
156. The Staff Governor provided further assurance about the strategic relationships developed between employers and Professions staff at Andover and the benefit to students of new staff

with recent industry experience, although it was acknowledged that this required support from the Quality team while staff members undertook teacher training.

157. Responding to a member's challenge as to whether the grading of all the curriculum areas was consistent with the data, the Vice Principal (Andover) and Director of Learning & Quality explained the underlying reasons why certain areas under discussions were graded as 'Good', noting that the assessment took into account a range of information to reach a finding. This could also result in an area being graded lower than the headline data would suggest. The Committee Chair confirmed that this approach aligned with the advice of the Landex review.
158. The Principal drew the committee's attention to the challenge presented by the significant increase this year in learners enrolled with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), including in cases where the college had advised that it was not in a position to meet the individual's needs within its curriculum delivery. This was creating a number of challenges for the staff teams which it was intended to raise with the local authority and the committee supported this approach.
159. Responding to a member's question as to whether the student survey results could be analysed in terms of equality and diversity characteristics, the Director of Learning & Quality undertook to report on this at the next meeting of the committee.
160. **Resolved** – that the committee recommend to the Board of Governors that the Self-Assessment Report 2023-24 (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 (QIP) 2024-25 be approved by the Board.

External Quality Review

161. The committee had received and reviewed for assurance the report of the external quality review (EQR) conducted on active learning and assessment (both campuses) in November.
162. It was noted that overall report was very positive, recognising a range of examples of good practice and proposing some areas for improvement around sharing of good best practice between staff.
163. Asked about the selection of topics for EQRs, the Director of Learning & Quality explained these were identified by him from themes emerging from the college's teaching and learning observation (TALO) processes.
164. The committee also discussed the difficulties with WiFi coverage in some areas of the college and the Principal reported investigations into possible solutions.
165. The Student Governors shared their experiences of the impact on accessing the internet and MS Teams of new cybersecurity measures introduced by the college and the SLT members present undertook to consider if further communications would be helpful.

Maths and English

166. The committee had received for review and assurance the report of the Assistant Principal English, Maths & Adult Education and the Vice Principals on progress with the performance action plan for English and Maths.
167. The Vice Principal (Andover) reported benchmark data (Midas) which indicated that the college's GCSE results were above the sector averages, although further raising achievement levels remained a strategic priority. Initial data analysis identified specific learner groups

which were under performing which was helpful in steering management actions. The college's Functional Skills results had also been above average, other than Level 2 maths where the college was already alert to the challenges.

168. It was noted that the AoC and college continued to lobby government for changes to the policies relating to English and maths requirements to empower colleges to support learners to make the appropriate choices.
169. The Vice Principal (Andover) explained the SLT's decision to open the November GCSE resits to all learners with a Grade 3 with the aim of increasing the number of learners achieving a pass early in their enrolment and the ability to then focus resources on the remaining English and Maths learners. This represented an over four-fold increase of entrants to 820 (772 of whom sat the exam) and had required significant logistical planning, including with regard to high levels of exam access arrangements, and increased costs. Actions had also been necessary to maintain motivation and attendance of learners at Maths and English sessions until the results were known in January.
170. The committee recognised that there was a risk that the GCSE results might not deliver on the ambition but commended management for taking a new approach and the efforts of all the teams involved.
171. In relation to Functional Skills, it was noted that the first wave of assessments was scheduled in December.
172. The Principal confirmed that it was planned to include a session on English and Maths at the Governors' Seminar in January given the continued strategic significance of this area of the college's curriculum delivery.

PREVENT DUTY

173. The committee had received and reviewed the college's updated FE and HE Prevent Duty Risk Assessment/Action Plan for information and assurance. The plan had also been scrutinised by the Wellbeing Committee.
174. The committee noted that the controls had been updated to include an updated tutorial programme linked to the conflicts in the Middle East, talks from an external agency to groups of male learners focused on healthy relationships, rollout of new security measures and a security alert digital system, and establishment of communications with the local Chief Inspectors of Police to ensure an up-to-date understanding of relevant issues in the local communities.
175. The committee was assured by the assessment of risks associated with Prevent and the review of the controls and actions in place to mitigate these risks.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

176. The committee had received and reviewed the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2024/25-Issue 03) and discussed the FE attendance and safeguarding data, noting the assurance from the Designated Safeguarding Lead that processes were in place to identify and respond to safeguarding cases as required.
177. The meeting concluded at 12:45.

Approved: Quality & Standards Committee meeting 13 February 2025