

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 13 February 2025 at 09:30
at Sparsholt Campus

¹PRESENT G Baker (C); X Ferreira-Pike (St) (to minute 53); J Loretto (E)²; J Milburn (P); N Moody (E); H Perry (S) (to minute 53); A Rowley (E) (Chair); C Wilson (C)

In attendance: D Mernagh, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education
H Mitchell, Apprenticeships Manager
R Price, Director of Learning & Quality (to minute 53)
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) (to minute 53)
Shea Taylor, Learning & Standards Lead (to minute 53)
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) (to minute 53)
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES & MEMBERSHIP

1. Apologies were received from R Palmer and M Wall.
2. The Chair welcomed P Jordan as a guest.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

3. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

4. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.
5. Higher education (minute 142/25): It was noted that growth in UCS student numbers was one of the aims of the new HE strategy under development, with input and scrutiny from the HE Strategy Governors' Working Group.
6. Learner voice (minute 147/25): Further to feedback from the student governors at the previous meeting, it was confirmed a new system was being introduced to enable and encourage feedback from FE and UCS students at any time, in addition to the regular student surveys and the safeguarding/safety reporting system. Posters featuring QR codes were shown to the committee, and it was confirmed that the MS Forms based system would be monitored in real time so that feedback could be disseminated and acted upon, with the student then updated.
7. FdSc Vet Nursing provision (minute 148/25): The Dean of HE provided an update for assurance on delivery of quality improvement actions which responded to feedback from the last National Students Survey (NSS).

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

² Via online video conference

8. Learner support (minute 158/25): The Principal updated the committee on management actions in relation to local authorities' statutory duties and Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), noting the national resourcing challenges.
9. WiFi coverage (minute 164/25): The committee welcomed confirmation of the specific actions in progress to enhance WiFi coverage on both campuses and the evidence that responding to the WiFi usage needs of teachers and students, including residential students, was a priority for management.
10. There were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

11. The committee had received and reviewed the progress report of the Vice Principals Curriculum, Director of Learning & Quality, and Apprenticeships Manager on FE performance and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).
12. The committee noted the continuing positive progress made by the college towards fulfilling the targets identified within the 2024/25 Quality Improvement Plan, although noting challenges with attendance in some curriculum areas. The assessment of sector benchmarking data (MiDES) for 2023/24 had confirmed high performance in relation to pass rates and reinforced the priority of improving retention during this academic year, with retention currently up at both campuses. The committee noted that the external benchmarking data triangulated with internal assessment and with the areas of focus for the QIP.
13. The Vice Principals provided explanation of the underlying factors for variation of performance between curriculum areas and confirmed the actions which had been taken in areas where a need for improvement had been identified.
14. The Vice Principal (Sparsholt) alerted the committee to concerns which had been expressed by some Animal Care & Management T Level learners and their parents about their progression pathway to higher education due to certain universities not yet including T levels in their entry requirements for certain courses. This was a sector wide issue for FE colleges tasked with delivering the government's qualifications strategy and a potential risk to enrolments and retention. The Principal summarised liaison and lobbying activities involving Landex, the DfE, the FE Commissioner, the Minister for Skills, the OfS, UCAS and the universities, noting that there had been progress in universities changing their policies to accept T Levels in most programmes relevant to the land-based curriculum but that there remained some challenges particularly with veterinary studies. The college had communicated the latest position to parents and this would also inform communications for new joiners.
15. The Vice Principal (Sparsholt) also emphasised the actions to improve overall attendance on Sparsholt campus main programmes, noting that these were starting to produce some improvement.
16. Members further probed the reasons for improvements in retention and attendance and were satisfied that these were understood and that appropriate management strategies were being implemented by the curriculum teams.

17. The Committee Chair shared her experiences from attending curriculum area mid-year SAR meetings, noting in particular the engagement of the Curriculum Leaders in actions to increase attendance and retention.
18. The committee also noted and was assured by the summary of the positive outcomes of external verification/quality assurance activity for awarding body quality reviews.
19. The committee reviewed the update on SEND and Foundation provision performance, noting in particular the work on supporting learners to transition from school and engaging with local employers to provide work placements for supported internship learners. The Staff Governor also highlighted the integration of Foundation learners into mainstream teaching areas on the Andover campus as a positive.
20. As the current SEND Lead Governor, the Committee Chair recommended to other governors the value of visiting the Foundation provision. The Committee Chair also recorded her appreciation to those who had supported the SEND/Foundation provision during the period of absence of the Assistant Principal.
21. The committee considered the update on apprenticeships performance and received a report on headlines from the newly published changes to the government's apprenticeships policy and funding rules, noting that further guidance was expected and management would be assessing the strategic implications for the college.
22. The committee was assured by the performance of apprenticeships at this point of the year and the explanation of actions undertaken by management to monitor areas of performance. The committee also welcomed the positive outcome and analysis of the interim apprenticeship learner survey conducted in November 2024, with an overall 98% satisfaction rate.
23. In relation to progress against the QIP, the committee also noted the increase in awareness and use of AI with staff and students, with the partial introduction of TeacherMatic having been successful and the decision to roll out the system to wider curriculum areas in the summer.
24. Overall, the committee was content to report to the Board that the report and discussions evidenced progress towards fulfilling the targets within the QIP and the college's key strategic target of becoming an 'outstanding' educational provider.

Maths and English

25. 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. This followed a review at the Governors' Seminar in January of the progress in English and Maths outcomes.
26. The committee's discussion focused on the changes to delivery of English and Maths and the strategy for resits in 2024/25. Members endorsed the new approach to the November GCSE resits and the actions which had been taken to analyse GCSE and Functional Skills exam data to inform teaching delivery and engagement with parents to support and motivate learners.
27. The committee also welcomed confirmation of increased strength and experience in the English and Maths teams and the ambition of the Curriculum Leaders to drive further improvements, which had been witnessed by governors attending the curriculum area mid-year SAR meetings. It was noted that actions were also being taken to respond to feedback

from learner surveys, aligned with the TALO (Teaching and Learning Observations) programme and staff CPD and performance policies.

28. The committee was encouraged by the analysis of performance in relation to sector benchmarking data (MiDES) and endorsed the SLT continuing to set strategic targets which were stretching because of the importance of English and Maths qualifications to learners progression to further study and employment.
29. Overall, the committee was content to report to the Board that the performance issues were understood by management and continued to be addressed as a priority.

Quality Activities

30. The committee had received the report of the Director of Learning & Quality updating on quality monitoring, assurance and improvement activities in the year to date: EQR (External Quality Review) on Checks on Learning; the TALO (Teaching and Learning Observations) programme; feedback from the Autumn learner 'Pulse' survey; and learner progress reviews.
31. It was noted that the EQR report on Active Learning & Assessment had been reviewed at the previous meeting and a Landex review of the Agriculture Curriculum was due in May.
32. Committee members sought further information about the EQR and Landex review programmes, including the selection of areas for review, the experience of the reviewers, and standardisation and benchmarking processes, and were assured by the Director of Learning & Quality's responses about the integrity and relevance of the processes. The Director of Learning & Quality also highlighted that the outcomes of the reviews had reinforced the assessments by the college's Quality team and provided valuable triangulation of evidence to support further work with the curriculum teams.
33. The committee discussed the development and outcomes of the TALO process in 2024/25, welcoming the focus on improving lessons which were considered less strong in terms of content, engagement or delivery in order to support consistency of good/outstanding teaching and the progress which had been demonstrated. In response to a member's challenge as to whether there were any structural or other barriers to improvements in teaching, it was noted that processes continued to be adapted to respond to TALO findings, such as support for new teaching staff, and to support teachers with changes to the curriculum, such as the introduction of T levels.
34. The committee reviewed the outcomes of the Pulse Learner Survey which, with the overall completion rate up to 84%, provided valuable assurance and feedback and enabled the identification of areas for further action and discussion at post-survey focus groups.
35. The Committee Chair highlighted the value of the role of Progress Coaches which had been referenced during the curriculum area SAR meetings she had attended and was reflected in the Pulse Learner Survey feedback and was assured by management of the processes in place to support Progress Coaches, including support for new starters, targeted CPD, and the opportunity to undertake a careers guidance qualification.
36. The committee also noted the analysis of the Progress Reviews which were conducted with learners at three points during the year to identify and support further development and improvement.

37. The committee welcomed the transparency of evidence provided by the report of robust quality assessment and improvement processes and the high levels of overall learner satisfaction identified through the Pulse surveys.
- 1.1. The committee was content to report to the Board that the college continues to make sustained progress against its teaching, learning and assessment-based targets established through the QIP, in addition to ‘areas for improvement’ signalled by external quality reviews.

Ofsted Education Inspection Consultation

38. G Baker provided a verbal update for the information of other committee members on the proposed reforms to the inspection framework, noting that the changes were under consultation until 28 April and due to be implemented from November 2025.
39. The committee noted that the proposed changes were substantial, including a new 5-point scale across different areas of evaluation (including the continuation of an evaluation of contribution to meeting skills needs), a new toolkit to replace the inspection handbook, and a new methodology for inspectors. It was expected that Landex would co-ordinate responses from land-based colleges, in addition to the AoC submitting collective views of the sector. The changes would require time to train inspectors and for colleges to prepare and align their internal quality assessment processes.
40. G Baker undertook to provide a further update at the next meeting of the committee and the Principal confirmed that a full briefing would be provided to the Board of Governors in due course.

Employability Skills

41. The committee had received and reviewed the annual report from the Vice Principals (Andover and Sparsholt) on assessing the progress of the teaching and development of the employability and soft skills of FE learners. This provided the Board with assurance about the delivery of these skills, alongside the analysis of learner destinations scrutinised by the Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee.
42. The committee noted the use of the Professional Learner Survey to assess learners’ views of their competencies across a range of soft skills and examples of the interventions introduced by curriculum areas to raise levels of confidence in areas identified as beneficial to progression and employment. The committee also noted the examples of careers supporting activities in relation to the Gatsby Benchmarks and the positive assurance provided by the Matrix Assessment outcome.
43. The committee was assured to the report to the Board that the college continues to implement a range of activities to gather information, assess performance and provide learners with a depth and range of experiences to develop their soft skills and employability skills to support positive outcomes for learners.

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY & PERFORMANCE

44. The committee had received for scrutiny and assurance the report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (HE) on the current progress in the quality of HE provision and the HE student experience.
45. The Dean of HE outlined the changes which had been introduced the previous term by the University of Portsmouth to the annual quality review process and his assessment that there

were shortcomings in relation to applicability to University Centre Sparsholt due to the different make-up of the UCS course offer, modes of delivery and student experience, and cohort sizes. The committee noted the assurance that, to supplement the oversight by the UoP, UCS had undertaken internal data analysis and Board of Studies sessions in November focusing on student experience and cross-institutional measures to support continuous improvement and would continue to collect and monitor quality data to drive management action and report to the committee.

46. The committee also reviewed the analysis of the results of the survey of first-year students, noting that, although the results demonstrated an overall positive induction experience and actions were in place to respond to feedback, the participation rate had been very low. The Dean of HE confirmed that actions were planned to raise the participation rate for the next academic year and the HE Student Governor also provided some feedback.
47. Overall, the committee was content to endorse the actions and approaches reported to support and enhance the HE student experience.

POLICIES

48. The committee had received and considered the outcome of the cyclical review of College Group policies in relation to students/learners. A number of minor changes were proposed to address new legal/regulatory requirements, emerging themes and operational updates.
49. The Principal confirmed that there were no changes to the statutory special education needs and disability (SEND) code of practice which required revision of the college's FE SEND Policy.
50. The HE Student Governor offered positive feedback from her experience of SEND support for learners, both from her previous enrolment as an FE student at the college and from feedback from other UCS students.
51. It was noted that the FE & Apprenticeships Admissions Policy would be further reviewed in light of the recently announced changes in relation to English and maths requirements for apprentices.
52. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve:
 - a. FE SEND Policy
 - b. FE & Apprenticeships Admissions Policy (subject to minute 49)
 - c. UCS Admissions Policy
 - d. UCS Fitness to Study Policy
 - e. UCS Student Transfer Policy
 - f. E-Safety & Online Communications Policy (Learners/Students)
 - g. Academic Conflicts of Interest Policy
53. The committee noted that the updated Academic Conflicts of Interest Policy was required for circulation prior to the next meeting of the Board of Governors and therefore the Chair of Governors would be asked to approve the policy on the committee's recommendation.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

54. The committee had received and reviewed the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2024/25-Issue 05). There were no matters identified for discussion which had not been covered earlier in the meeting.

55. The meeting concluded at 12:30. Confidential minutes were recorded separately.

Approved: Quality & Standards Committee Meeting 26 June 2025