

**MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON
THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2020**

PRESENT:

Mark Allanson	Chair
Lillian Croston	Member
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Geoff Disley	Academic Staff Governor
Catherine Hill OBE	Member
Glenys Pashley-Crawford	Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Kerry Baron	HE Student Governor Elect
Michelle Mellor	Observer
Caroline Bracewell	Head of School: Higher Education
Andrew Gadsdon	Head of Quality of Education
Chris Hepworth	Head of Quality and Standards (HE)
Damian Stewart	Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre)
Rachel Tarplee	Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) (Item Clerk to the Corporation)
Jean Tracy	

It was noted that the meeting commenced at 17.00pm and was quorate.

Having been welcomed to the meeting by the Chair, Michelle Mellor introduced herself to the Committee, including her work in the recruitment and employment industry. The Chair commented that her background knowledge of employment would be beneficial to the College.

Kerry Baron was also welcomed and the Committee noted that her appointment as HE Student Governor would be brought to the 11 December 2020 Board meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Pickles, Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement.

2. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chair advised those in attendance that should members of the Learning and Quality Committee become aware of any potential conflicts of interest, they should be disclosed at the earliest opportunity during the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2020

The minutes of the Learning and Quality Committee meeting held on Thursday 1 October 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record and these would be signed by the Chair when able to do so (Covid-19 restrictions).

4. MATTERS ARISING

The Committee was informed that all actions had now been completed.

5. ACADEMIC BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee considered the proposed changes to Academic Board Terms of Reference which would reflect changes in titles and membership.

Learning and Quality Committee **APPROVED** the revised Academic Board Terms of Reference.

The Chair noted the plans for the HE scoping going forward.

6. COVID-19 – COLLEGE UPDATE

As agreed by the Board at its meeting on 3 June 2020, the Report provided the Committee with an update on the impact of Covid-19 on Quality of Education, Finance and the progress on re-opening the College.

The Report provided information on the challenges in light of staff and students having to self-isolate and work from home. This had resulted in making alternative arrangements to support dual learning (face to face and online) at very short notice and to ensure staff and students adhered to on-site guidance. The Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that the equipment of the necessary IT equipment in classrooms had been completed.

The impact on timely achievement of some Apprenticeship students of the second national lockdown was noted. The College would work with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to explore how this could be resolved, this being a national issue.

The Committee noted the financial impact in terms of the continuing purchase of IT resources and on the increased level of applications for student bursary funds. In terms of the impact on recruitment, it was noted that full-time 16-18 numbers were broadly in line with College targets but that HE recruitment had not been met. Apprenticeship enrolments were currently broadly in line with target, though this would be affected by the current national lockdown. Robust marketing plans were in place to recruit new Apprentices from January 2021 onwards.

The Principal and Chief Executive updated the Committee on the proposed mass testing in schools and the application by BwD Council for this to take place in the borough.

The Chair of the Corporation Board thanked the Principal and Chief Executive for his work and requested that he pass on the Board's thanks to all College staff for the work which they are doing to enable quality learning to continue.

The Chair commented on the potential difficulty in getting students back into College after the Christmas break and back into learning. The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Committee that a full week of BTEC examinations were taking place in that first week and that an announcement was expected on Monday 30 November, regarding assessments in England for A level and GCSEs.

7. PERFORMANCE AGAINST COLLEGE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

(i) 2019/20 FINAL

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report. Information on the final position regarding the 24 key performance indicators (KPIs) monitored by Learning and Quality

Committee was considered. The Committee noted the explanation and reasons for the three KPIs which were under target.

The Chair commented on the significant progress in Further Education which had been made but noted that Higher Education remained a concern. Student attendance continued to be a challenge; value added had improved but, as previously agreed by the Board, this needed to move from Grade 4 to Grade 3.

For the benefit of Michelle Mellor and Kerry Baron, the Chair provided more detail on the KPIs and on the Committee's focus on the key elements.

(ii) 2020/21

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report which provided information on the 21 KPIs which were monitored by Learning and Quality Committee and which included prior year performance, benchmark data or national averages and targets for the previous years. The Committee was reminded that the Principal and Chief Executive had been given a mandate to reflect on the strategic objective outcomes and to amend as necessary; the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and TEF target grades had thus been amended.

It was noted that as this was the first report of the year, the direction of travel arrows had not been added.

The Principal and Chief Executive provided information on the learning walks which, in the current situation, had replaced the lesson observation process. He also noted that a key focus remained the Higher Education Retention Rate (KPI 22a). A member of the Committee asked how the College would ensure that retention from Year 1 to Year 2; from Year 2 to Year 3 and end-programme was monitored and was informed that this information would be provided in a separate HE report later in the agenda (Item 12 (i)).

8. A/AS/GCES/VOCATIONAL/APPRENTICESHIPS/HE RESULTS 2019/20 – FINAL

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) presented the Report which covered the finalised results for FE and HE and the latest Apprenticeship results. The final position for Apprenticeships would not be available until December 2020.

The Committee noted the improvements in FE achievement and retention and the impact of Covid-19, including the Centre Assessed Grades, on these. The percentage of students achieving a 9 – 4 Grade in GCSE maths and English and the A* - B A level grades had also increased. There had now been a 3-year upward trend in Apprenticeship achievement.

Information on FE outcomes by subject area also included the detail of performance against the National Average and identified those areas which were more than 10 percentage points above the National Average.

A member of the Committee asked for clarification regarding the impact of Covid-19. It was explained that the achievement for the majority of FE achievement had been based on Centre Assessed Grades and not examination grades and was thus higher than would have been expected under normal circumstances. The Principal and Chief Executive commented on the large number of resit examinations in GCSE maths and English and his concern that the College may not be able to maintain the improvements as the results this year had been based on Centre Assessed Grades and not examination grades.

A Committee member noted that the College was continuing to focus on attendance, retention and maths and English, commenting that it was right that the College was doing so.

The Chair thanked all staff on the improvements detailed in the Report. The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) had commented that the expectations of staff and students was high; the Chair applauded this change and that the high expectations would continue.

9. COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) 2019/20

The Head of Quality of Education presented the draft College Further Education Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2019/20. It was noted that the draft SAR had been through a two-day external validation process with an Ofsted Inspector and Educational Consultant who was engaged to validate the curriculum and whole College SAR and Quality Improvement Plan.

Having addressed all of the key areas for improvement identified in the previous Ofsted inspection, and noting the 11.9 percentage point increase in overall achievement since that inspection, overall the College had self-assessed its Further Education provision types as at least 'good'. The areas which had been self-assessed as 'outstanding' were detailed in the Report.

The Head of Quality of Education informed the Committee were the College to receive notification of an Ofsted inspection, the SAR would be uploaded to Ofsted as a starting point but the College would be given the opportunity to update the document as necessary.

The Principal and Chief Executive noted that overall, the leadership grades were positive and that managers at curriculum level had helped to bring about this improvement. He wished to thank them for their work in both supporting students and managing staff.

A full discussion took place on the SAR and it was agreed that the Report was honest and reflected the grades put forward. The Chair commented that performance had been addressed by the College but that this did not come through consistently in the SAR. Statements were generally backed up by data and he asked that the College review where this was not the case. Specific information would be sent directly to the Head of Quality of Education.

Further comments from members of the Committee were noted and would be considered by the College, the SAR being updated as necessary. The Committee agreed that the SAR had been well put together against the new inspection framework and have been well written.

The Principal and Chief Executive proposed that a dedicated meeting should be held in future years to review the SAR and Higher Education Self-Evaluation Document. The Committee **AGREED** with the proposal.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive/Clerk to the Corporation

10. FE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN – 2020/21

The Head of Quality of Education presented the paper which provided the Committee with an update on the actions included within the FE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2020/21. The QIP had been validated by Learning and Quality Committee at its meeting on 1 October and, as with the Self-Assessment Report, had been further validated by a practising Ofsted Inspector and Educational Consultant. It was noted that some actions had been impacted by Covid and that some actions were linked to a year-long timeline and thus there would be limited detail at this point.

A member of the Committee commented that the Report was good and succinct and was pleased that at this point, there were no actions which had already flagged as green. The College was asked to explain how, when lessons were taught on-line, staff were monitoring that students were learning and progressing. The Principal and Chief Executive replied that the regular Quality Summit meetings, to which all Governors were invited, was one way in which monitoring took place. Student feedback and outcomes from Learning Walks were also used. In answer to a

question from a Committee member, the College confirmed that assessments in all their forms were also being monitored.

The role of the Quality Leads was explained which included weekly tips on how to engage better, digital and on-line learning tips, a digital blueprint and 'the 10 things that have to happen'. The Chair asked how evidence is obtained from the students themselves and was informed of the induction survey and that a digital survey would be launched the following week. The Principal and Chief Executive also informed the Committee that a number of students had attended a meeting of the Student Voice Committee and had commented on the support being received from staff.

The Chair commented that the College had been forced to move into digital learning quickly because of Covid and that a lot had been learnt and was to be learnt; the digital tips would therefore be very valuable to College staff.

The Chair thanked the Head of Quality of Education for his report.

11. FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) STUDENT IN-YEAR PERFORMANCE 2020/21 – RETENTION, ATTENDANCE AND STUDENT PROGRESS

(i) ACADEMIC

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) presented the Report which provided Governors with a top-level dissection of the current performance of students against, where available, like-for-like data from the last academic year. The Report focussed on Term 1 and covered enrolment and retention, A level and Vocational Value Added, attendance, progress, high needs students and Covid-19. The Committee was informed that the Value Added score had now been finalised at Grade 4 – from Grade 8 in the previous year.

A main action was to effect improvement in vocational value added, it being noted that this had been included in the Quality Improvement Plan and that interactive software had been purchased to cover all vocational courses.

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) was thanked for her report.

(ii) TECHNICAL

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre) presented the Report which provided an overview of the current position for Term 1 in relation to enrolment and retention, progress and Value Added, English and maths, attendance and the other main areas of focus for 2020/21.

The Committee noted the overall attendance figure for the Centre and those areas where attendance was above the minimum College expectation (90%). The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) informed the Committee that the curriculum management team in Motor Vehicle and Construction had launched a new and focused attendance monitoring system to improve rates in those areas and that attendance would be the focus of the Curriculum Leader for Foundation Learning on taking up this new post on 1 December 2020. Similarly, the curriculum management team for English and maths was now focused on improvements in attendance; all being to support student achievement.

As also included in the Report on the Academic Centre, information had been included in the Report on the confirmed positive cases of Covid-19. This had resulted in a high volume of self-isolation for students and staff which necessitated the move to directed online study.

In answer to a question from the Committee, the Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre) explained the reasons for the different Value Added scores in Sport.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre) for the very positive Report.

12. HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) STUDENT PERFORMANCE 2020/21

(i) RETENTION, COMPLETION, ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

The Head of School: Higher Education was welcomed to the meeting to present her Report.

The Report provided the Committee with a top-level dissection of the current performance of Higher Education students for the next three years and also introduced a new revised Higher Education structure to strengthen and address poor performance.

The overall achievement for 2019/20 was agreed to be not acceptable. The Committee noted that the student continuation rate of 75.4% was slightly above the OfS minimum of 75%; rates had increases for all programme types with the exception of a small decline for part-time students.

Expected retention and achievement data and commentary for the hybrid-end years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 was included in the Report and noted by the Committee. The key issues and responses to these were also covered in the Report and it was noted that actions were in place to address these. These included weekly Academic Group Level Quality Summit meetings using the ProAchieve data and ProMonitor detail to identify risk and intervention. The HE Quality Improvement Plan which followed would provide further information.

The Chair commented that he was pleased to see some of the movements and that the new structure in HE was important. The Academic Coaching system was welcomed and was much needed. However, the College now needed to show clear improvements.

The Academic Staff Governor welcomed the new structure in HE and commented that the increased use of ProMonitor was showing positive movements, with staff being able identify those students who were not attending.

(ii) OFFICE FOR STUDENTS IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) presented the Report which provided an update on the college's performance on its Office for Students (OfS) Improvement Plan to address student outcomes.

The Report included a summary of how the College was currently performing in relation to its internal targets and the OfS baseline metrics, including the direction of travel since the last report presented to Learning and Quality Committee. Whilst there was evidence of positive improvements being made, the Head of Quality and Standards (HE) noted that this must continue. The Principal and Chief Executive commented that the first semester results would provide a first measure of the work being done.

A member of the Committee asked whether staff in UCBC were committed to bring about the improvements needed and was informed that not all staff had taken on the impact of their area on overall outcomes. Staff within UCBC were now taking ownership of their learners, had welcomed the Learning Walks and were happy to take the feedback from these. Staff were also positive about the changes to the management structure in UCBC.

The Chair thanked the Head of Quality and Standards (HE) for his Report. He commented that some positives were now being seen but that the college was still below where it needed to be and that all staff within the area needed to be working at the standard expected in order to being about the required improvements.

13. URGENT CARE/QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

(i) FE AND WBL

The Report provided the Committee with an overview of the courses that were currently being scrutinised as part of the Urgent Care process for 2020/21 and the process by which courses were identified for inclusion.

Information by course on retention, achievement and pass rates for 2019/20 was included in the Appendix. The Head of Quality of Education informed the Committee that the Performance Quality Reviews had taken place in the week beginning 16 November, but had not all been completed because of staff absence.

The Chair commented that the Urgent Care process had worked well in the previous and noted that the Report had been provided very early in the monitoring cycle.

(ii) HE

The Report was presented by the Head of School: HE and contained information on the metrics by which HE courses had been identified as failing. A Quality Improvement Process (QIP) and template had been introduced and these were included in the papers, together with an example of a live action plan.

Having considered the Report, the Chair asked, had the metrics not been used, whether more courses would have been identified as in urgent need of improvement. He was assured that the whilst the current process identified those courses which were the most urgent, the meetings with the Heads of Schools looked at every course, FE and HE. It was also confirmed that courses could be included in the process in-year.

14. HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW – INITIAL OUTLINE

Following the request by the Committee that the Principal and Chief Executive prepare scoping paper on HE at Blackburn College over the next 5-10 years, an initial outline was presented to the Committee for consideration. The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Committee that, under the leadership of the Head of School: HE, staff in HE were looking at the initial outline document and would feed into the scoping document. A formal document would be brought back to the Committee later in the year.

A member of the Committee asked how the College would balance what the HE profile might look like with what is currently in the HE portfolio. It was also noted that the College would also need to look externally, at employer need for example, and it was agreed that both points would be taken into account when developing the HE paper.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive

15. INTERNAL PROGRESSION 2019/20 TO 2020/21

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report which provided an overview of the progression rate across levels for all students, FE and HE. The key issues covered the need to address the poor achievement and rates in HE in order to bring about a higher rate of internal progression, and the critical themes coming from an analysis of student progression data. The detail of these were noted by the Committee.

16. FE AND HE STUDENT COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Report provided the Committee with a brief summary of the complaints and appeals received during the academic year 2019/20. A number of complaints related to either the period

immediately following the lockdown where online learning had to start rapidly, or the examination results following the Centre Assessed Grades which the College had been required to submit.

The Committee considered the common themes identified and the learning points which were being followed up.

In response to a request from a member of the Committee, it was **AGREED** that future reports would include numbers from previous years to allow for comparison.

Action: Head of Quality of Education & Head of Quality and Standards (HE)

17. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPACT REPORT 2019/20 AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020/21

Information on the impact of core organisational development interventions taken place in 2019/20 and the Development Plan for 2020/21 was contained in the report. A member of the Committee noted the staff satisfaction rate of 63% and asked about the key concerns. In response, the Head of Quality of Education informed the Committee that because of Covid and changes in management, this would be followed up during this year and an update would be provided to the Committee at a future meeting.

Action: Head of Quality of Education

18. SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE CHECK

In the absence of the Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement, the Report was presented by the Principal and Chief Executive. The College continued to prioritise safeguarding arrangements for students across all aspects of provision and effective internal structures and processes supported statutory expectations and positive external agency interventions. The Committee noted the key messages and the Committee Assurance document as provided in the Appendix.

Having considered the Report, a member of the Committee informed the meeting that in their role as Safeguarding/SEND Governor Champion, they also attend the Safeguarding Committee meetings and found them to be helpful and useful.

In answer to a question from the Committee, the Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that the College followed ESFA safeguarding requirements.

19. SINGLE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2019/20 FINAL UPDATE INC. SINGLE EQUALITY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Report, which had been considered at the Single Equality and Safeguarding Committee held on 11 November 2020, provided a final update of the key points of information on the Single Equality Action Plan 2019/20. The full Annual Report 2019/20 was due to be published in January 2021 and provided an overview of all College activity in relation to Equality and Diversity protected characteristics.

The Committee noted the information provided on the Learner Equality and Workforce Diversity objectives and the key College developmental activity. A summary of the key issues in relation to Learner Equality and Workforce Diversity was included in the Action Plan and had been included in the Appendix.

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) was thanked.

20. STUDENT VOICE COMMITTEE

(i) TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEETING DATES FOR 2020/21

Having considered the Report, the Committee **AGREED** to recommend the Student Voice Committee Terms of Reference to the Board for approval.

(ii) FEEDBACK FROM 18 NOVEMBER 2020 MEETING

The Chair of the Corporation Board, the Principal and Chief Executive and a member of the Committee provided an update on the meeting. Feedback from the students had been positive and included comments on the good support there were receiving from staff, both during lockdown and currently, and on that careers advice was good. Areas to be considered by the College including library opening times, some inconsistency in ALS support as a result of the impact of Covid on staffing in that area, assignments having the same deadline date.

In answer to a question from the Chair, the Committee noted that there had been a mix of students but that they were happy to be at the College and were positive about most things. It was agreed that the Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement would be asked to look further into the development of students' communication skills as part of the careers advice and guidance support.

Action: Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement

21. LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE 2020/21

The Committee considered the background to the proposed amendments to its Terms of Reference. The amendments were to include the Committee's role to in review the Students' Union Annual Report and Accounts and to receive and consider reports from the Student Voice Committee. It **AGREED** that these should be recommended to the Board for approval.

22. CHAIR APPROVED MINUTES OF ACADEMIC BOARD – 20 OCTOBER 2020

The Committee noted the Chair Approved minutes of the Academic Board meeting held on 20 October, these being presented for information.

23. HIGHER EDUCATION VALIDATION SCHEDULE FOR 2020/21 AND PLANNING FOR 2021/22

The Report, presented for information, provided an update on the progress of the validations and re-validations for 2020/21 and summarised the progress on planning for 2021/22 following discussions at the Development Review and Approval Committee held on 12 October 2020.

24. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Business.

25. REVIEW OF MEETING

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and contribution to the meeting. The meeting had been positive and evidenced the Committee's challenge of College staff.

26. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Learning and Quality Committee would take place on Thursday 11 February 2021 at 5.00pm via Microsoft Teams/Board room.

19:25pm: The meeting closed.

Signed:

Date: