

**MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON
THURSDAY 17 JUNE 2021**

PRESENT:

Mark Allanson	Chair
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Ram Gupta	Member
Mark Moren	Academic Staff Governor
Catherine Hill OBE	Member
Glenys Pashley-Crawford	Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Caroline Bracewell	Head of School: Higher Education
Hafiz Abdul	Academic Group Leader in HE
Nicola Clayton	Director: Business Development and External Engagement
Andrew Gadsdon	Head of Quality of Education
Chris Hepworth	Head of Quality and Standards (HE)
Andrew Pickles	Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement
Damian Stewart	Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre)
Rachel Tarplee	Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre)
Jean Tracy	Clerk to the Corporation

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

The Chair welcomed Mark Moren to his first meeting.

Members of the College joined the meeting as necessary to present their papers.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Lillian Croston.

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 11 FEBRUARY 2021

The minutes of the Learning and Quality Committee meeting held on Thursday 11 February 2021 were accepted as a true and accurate record and would be signed by the Chair when able to do so (Covid-19 restrictions).

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee noted the updates against previous actions points.

5. **LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE**

- **MEETING DATES 2022/23**
- **ANNUAL CALENDAR OF BUSINESS 2021/22**
- **REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR 2021/22 AND PERFORMANCE AGAINST FOR 2020/21**

The Clerk to the Corporation went through the Report, noting that work would continue with the Principal and Chief Executive to further review both the Terms of Reference and the reports presented to the Committee and that the updated Committee Calendar of Business would be brought to the next meeting.

The Committee noted the changes to the Committee's Terms of Reference to take account of changes in staffing, strategy titles and to include the review of the Quality Improvement Plans. The Committee did not wish to make recommendations on further changes to its Terms of Reference.

The Committee noted that it had satisfied all of the requirements under its Terms of Reference and that attendance to date showed an improvement on the previous year.

Having considered the Report, the Committee:

- **APPROVED** the meetings dates for 2022/23
- **AGREED** to recommend to the Board the amended Terms of Reference and that it did not wish to make further changes
- **AGREED** the commentary covering its progress against its Terms of Reference for 2019/20

6. **THE UNIVERSITY CENTRE REVIEW**

The Head of School: HE and Academic Group Leader were welcomed to the meeting.

A review of HE provision had been requested by the Board and the Report provided an update on the review and the 3-year plan for the University Centre. Both an internal and external audit had been undertaken and the plan was intended to secure both quality improvement and financial sustainability. Details on the future quality improvements and options for change, and the portfolio review were highlighted (Tables 3 & 4).

In answer to a question from a Committee member, the College confirmed that a minimum student number per programme would be implemented, though it was noted that some programmes were taught together. In noting that some graduates were accessing apprenticeships and undertaking work paid at the minimum wage, the Head of School: HE stated it was her intention that an employer advisory board be in place at the College within twelve months in order to provide employability support. The College also confirmed that its programmes would help to ensure work readiness. The Committee felt that a focus on HE linked to employers and graduate employability outcomes through apprenticeships, placements and work related learning should be at the core of the Blackburn offer

A detailed discussion on the Report took place. The Committee requested more information on the rationale for the decisions contained in the Report and on the background of a number of areas – including post-graduate, one-year award and international. The Committee asked to ensure high quality on the core areas of HE deliver is the focus. It was also suggested that the Report should be more student focussed and cover what the Blackburn graduate looked like and what made them attractive to employers. Detail on market analysis was requested and the inclusion of a glossary of courses and an Academic Plan.

It was **AGREED** that the Report would be updated to reflect the feedback received from Learning and Quality Committee.

Action: Head of School (HE)

The need to improve quality was agreed to be paramount. The College needed to recruit the best students to courses which were attractive and offered good career progression, noting that engaging with employers would be a key development for the College to pursue. The Principal and Chief Executive commented that the College needed to be ambitious in order to move forward but agreed that improving quality was paramount.

5:50pm - the Academic Group Leader left the meeting.

It was **AGREED** that Item 13 (i) – Higher Education Student Performance – would be taken as the next item.

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

(i) RETENTION, COMPLETION, ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

The Report provided the Committee with the current performance of Higher Education students for the next four years based on hybrid end year data and the historic Office for Students (OfS) metrics. The Committee noted the information on the key issues and response to those issues for OfS and hybrid Year End Metrics.

The Head of School: HE informed the Committee that students were continuing to be supported – both in terms of actual teaching and to support re-sits. The Committee noted the key issues regarding OfS and Hybrid Year End metrics and College responses to these.

The Chair of the Committee commented that whilst it was good to see the improvements which had been made, there was still a lot to do.

6.03pm – the Head of School: HE left the meeting.

7. OFSTED PILOT INSPECTION

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report which provided an update following the College's involvement in the Ofsted Pilot Inspection. Whilst no grades were provided, the Pilot Inspection had provided good development opportunities for College managers and staff. It had been confirmed that the Ofsted Inspection Handbook for September 2021 would be amended as a result of the pilot inspections, but no information on the changes was as yet available.

The Chair of the Committee also commented that it had been a much more positive experience from the Governors' point of view.

8. 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 since the re-opening the College.

The Committee noted the content of the Report and received information on the number of positive cases as at the date of the meeting and on the current level of applications for FE, HE and apprenticeship programmes. The Committee noted that the face-to-face open event planned for June had reverted to virtual and that the College continued to liaise with all applicants, local schools and employers to maximise the intake for the next academic year.

The Principal and Chief Executive acknowledged and wished to thank all staff for their hard work over the past year.

9. PERFORMANCE AGAINST COLLEGE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2020/21

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report which provided information on the 24 KPIs which were monitored by Learning and Quality Committee, including those four which were currently under target. It was noted that value added would be covered in the reports on FE student progress and that external examinations were continuing for Functional Skills English and maths.

The Committee was informed that all Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) had been uploaded, with exception of OCR whose website had crashed. OCR results would be uploaded once the site was available.

10. COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020/21 – UPDATE ON TIMINGS

6.14pm – the Head of Quality of Education joined the meeting.

The Committee noted the Report which provided an update on the timescale for the 2020/21 Further Education Self-Assessment Report, including the validation events. The process had been further streamlined to ensure that the Quality Improvement Plan would be in place at the start of the academic year.

11. FE COLLEGE 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. Whilst the pandemic had impacted on much of the activity associated with the QIP's actions, the QIP reflected the distance travelled across the vast majority of provision and was noted to be shorter and more focused than previously.

It was **AGREED** that Items 14 (i) – FE Urgent Care Courses and 14 (ii) Quality Improvement Process HE – would be taken as the next item.

14. URGENT CARE/QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

(i) FE

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 included detail on their progress in improving key metrics.

The Committee again noted the positive figures in relation to retention and the measures in place to increase engagement with those groups whose attendance was below that expected. It again noted the work of the Performance Quality Review meetings in the monitoring of the improvement plans.

The Committee noted that further changes to the process were being proposed - inclusion in the QIPs, for example.

The Chair thanked the Head of Quality and Standards, commenting that the Report was succinct and very clear.

(ii) **HE**

The Report provided an update on the quality improvement process approach being implemented in Higher Education and included information on each course in the process against the key targets.

The Committee noted that improvements in data collection and reporting were being made to ensure better reliance and staff ownership. The Chair commented that it was not acceptable that tutors were not aware of those students who were at risk when data was available to them. He would wish the process to be much firmer going forward. Improvements in data collection and reporting would also be of value in the HE Boards.

6:24pm the Head of Quality and Standards: HE left the meeting; the Assistant Principals (Teaching and Learning) for Academic and Technical joined the meeting.

12. 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 an update on the in-year performance against set metrics, including retention, value added, attendance and engagement and quality assurance.

The Committee noted the improvement in the current achievement prediction in Business but was disappointed in the fall in the predicted value added score. Whilst achievement and retention had both dramatically improved, the Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) stated that more work was needed by teaching staff and students to further improve achievement and to effect an increase in the number of students exceeding target grades. The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Committee that the Chair of the Corporation Board wanted to thank staff for their hard work but had commented that the decline in value added was disappointing, the expectation having been to build on last year's performance. He confirmed that a plan was in place to address this.

(ii) **TECHNICAL**

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre) presented the Report which provided an update on the in-year performance against set metrics, including retention, value added, maths and English outcomes and quality assurance for the Technical Centre. In answer to a question from a Committee member, he confirmed that GCSE achievement did include the November figures.

Predicted achievement for the core aim remained high and showed a slight increase on the previous year. The Committee noted that predicted achievement in Brickwork (Construction) had dropped slightly because of staffing issues but that the College was continuing to work to improve the final achievement figure. Latest information on GCSE 9-4 predicted achievement showed an improved position for both English and maths.

The predicted value added scores showed a better position than in the previous year across a number of areas of provision, overall Grade 5 against Grade 8. The Committee noted the latest information on attendance, High Needs and Covid-19.

The Chair commented on the positive overall position, that issues had been highlighted well and that actions were in place to effect further improvements.

6:42pm – the Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Vocational Centre) left the meeting.

(iii) APPRENTICESHIP

For the benefit of new Committee members, an explanation was provided on timely and overall achievement. It was noted that apprenticeship achievement for 2019/20 continued to improve and remained significantly above national rates for both timely and overall. Targets for 2020/21 would provide a further challenging increase and predicted achievement was above target. It was noted that some areas would continue to be impacted by the pandemic, Hair in particular.

Information on other developments within apprenticeships was provided in the Report.

A member of the Committee commented that this was a well-performing area and that to get such results in a pandemic year was to be applauded. She asked that her congratulations be passed on to the team.

The College was also asked whether best practice in this area could be applied to the rest of the College. The Director of Business Development and Employer Engagement confirmed that this took place.

6:49pm The Director of Business Development and Employer Engagement left the meeting. The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) joined the meeting.

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

(i) RETENTION, COMPLETION, ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

The minutes are recorded as above.

(ii) OFFICE FOR STUDENTS IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS 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 performing as at 30 April 2021 in relation to its internal targets and the OfS baseline metrics. The detailed information on the actions and progress against was contained in the Appendix.

It was noted that the OfS had still not provided information on the format in which it would like to see evidence of the College's performance.

The Committee noted the positive increases in some areas since the last update but that continuation rates in some still required significant improvement. Whilst in-year data demonstrated the impact of the action plan covering the OfS Remaining Actions, this would need to be sustained in order that the target be exceeded.

As requested by the OfS in a letter sent to College Principals, the College confirmed compliance against Condition C1: *The provide must demonstrate that in developing and implementing its policies, procedures and terms and conditions, it has given due regard to relevant guidance about how to comply with consumer protection data.* Details on the actions taken to ensure compliance were contained in the Report.

It was noted that graduate outcomes would be covered in July when results were available.

The Chair commented on the need for improvements to continue. He also requested that the report be more concise and thus easier to read.

Action: Head of Quality and Standards (HE)

6:53pm – the Head of Quality and Standards (HE) left the meeting.

14. URGENT CARE/QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

(iii) **FE**

The minutes are recorded as above.

(iv) **HE**

The minutes are recorded as above

15. STUDENT SURVEYS (FE CHOICES, NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY AND EMPLOYER SURVEY)

The Committee noted the FE Choices Learner Satisfaction and FE Choices Employer Satisfaction surveys had been cancelled for second year because of the pandemic.

The HE National Student Survey had been launched on 6 January 2021 and the Committee noted the improvement in the response rate – 85.04% against 78.28%. Results would be published in July 2021 and the Committee would receive an update report at a later date.

16. STUDENT VOICE COMMITTEE 12 MAY 2021 - FEEDBACK

A member of the Committee provided feedback on the meeting, noting that students were generally very positive about their programmes of study and support from the College. Any issues raised were small, noted and were dealt with quickly. As usual, minutes of the meeting would be included in the Board papers for 2 July 2021.

17. (i) SINGLE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2020/21 UPDATE AND SINGLE EQUALITY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 (ii) SINGLE EQUALITY AND INCLUSION SCHEME 2021-2025

It was noted that both items would be taken together.

The Report provided a final update on the key points of information on the Single Equality Action Plan 2019/20 and an update for 2020/21. The Committee noted that information provided against the five Learner Equality Objectives and six Workforce Impact Measures. An update was provided to the Committee on the current position regarding the number of 'under 20' employees.

The Committee noted the information provided on the Single Equality and Inclusion Scheme 2021-2025 and the key areas of focus identified in a review of the Scheme and the annual associated Action Plan.

The Committee **AGREED** to recommend the Single Equality and Inclusion Scheme 2021-2025 to the Board for approval.

18. CHAIR APPROVED MINUTES OF ACADEMIC BOARD – 18 MAY 2021

The Committee noted the Chair Approved minutes of the Academic Board meeting held on 18 May 2021, these being presented for information.

19. OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS) ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2019-20 MONITORING RETURN

As required by the OfS, the College completed and uploaded the 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan (APP) monitoring return: provider submission and monitoring return supplementary information by the deadline of 16 April 2021.

The provider submission provided a report on progress against commitments set out in the 2019/20 APP and would be used by the OfS to monitor compliance against condition A1 whereby the College must have in force an APP approved by the OfS and take all reasonable steps to comply with the provisions of the APP.

20. HIGHER EDUCATION VALIDATION SCHEDULE 2021/22

The Committee received the Report for information. The Report provided a business plan for validations and re-validations in 2021/22, following their approval by the Development Review and Approval Panels in 2020/21.

21. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT 2019/20

The Committee noted the Equality and Diversity Report 2019/20 which had been provided for information.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Andrew Pickles, Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement, would be leaving the College in the next month and had asked that his thanks be passed on to the Committee for the support and challenge which it had provided.

There were no other items of Any Other Business.

23. REVIEW OF MEETING

The Chair thanked all members for their contribution to the meeting, noting the detailed discussion on the University Centre Review which had taken place.

The Academic Staff Governor was asked for and provided his views on the meeting.

The Committee noted the detailed review of the Committee’s Calendar of Business which was taking place and also requested that the College review the report formats to ensure that the key issues were covered in the front sheet and that these were succinct, with any detailed information being provided in the appendices.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive/Clerk to the Corporation

A member of the Committee also requested that information on success rates and achievement for 2020/21 be sent out ahead of the 21 October 2021 meeting. The Principal and Chief Executive agreed that the information would be provided by the end of September 2021.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive

24. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Learning and Quality Committee would take place on Thursday 21 October 2021 (from 7 October 2021) at 5.00pm via Microsoft Teams/Board room.

19:10pm: The meeting ended.

Signed:

Date: