

AGENDA ITEM 4



MINUTES OF LEARNER COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29TH JUNE 2017

Present:	Peter Clark	External Governor (Chair)
	Diane Cothey	Co-opted Non-Governor
	Richie Dunk	External Governor
	Roy Everett	Co-opted Non-Governor
	Jenny Grainger	External Governor
	John Rees	Chief Executive/Principal
	Pete Sanderson	External Governor
In Attendance:	Julia Gray	Assistant Principal (Quality & Learner Services)
	David Clapham	Assistant Head of HE (minutes 150 to 171)
	Rachael Hennigan	Vice-Principal (Quality & Standards)
	Karen Robson	Head of HE & Professional Studies (minutes 150 to 171)
	Lesley Venables	Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

150 Apologies for absence were received from Lettitia Ingham (Student Governor), Bailey Casson (Student Governor) and Greg O'Shea (Staff Governor).

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

151 There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

152 **Resolved** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 30th March 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING

153 The Committee noted that all matters arising had either been completed or were featured on the agenda.

154 Under minute 124, the Assistant Head of HE reported that the College had been accorded a 'Silver' award as a result of the TEF process. The Committee expressed its thanks to all staff who had contributed to this achievement.

155 The Learner Committee had previously been scheduled to receive aggregated learner responses to NSS survey (minute 126). However, the latter would not be published by the NSS until October, therefore, the report would be submitted to the Committee's October meeting.

156 In terms of the Access Agreement, the Head of HE reported that a final version would be submitted prior to the deadline of 31st July. The Chair of the Board would be asked to sign this version under delegated authority.

OVERALL COLLEGE PERFORMANCE REPORT

157 The Assistant Principal (Quality & Learner Services) presented for information a report on performance against key curriculum indicators to date for 2016/2017.

Attendance

158 The Committee was informed that overall attendance was 87%. Despite being below the challenging target of 90%, this was an increase of 3.2PP compared to the same point in 2015/2016.

159 16-18 English & maths attendance had continued to improve and increases in HE and apprenticeship attendance were also evident.

Retention

160 Overall retention was 93.1%, which was 0.1PP above the College target and represented a 3.6PP increase compared to 2015/2016. For 16-18 learners retention had increased by 2.6PP compared to 2015/2016 and was 1.9PP above the target, however, for the 19+ cohort the corresponding figure was 0.6PP below the College target.

161 A total of 8.4% of learners had been categorised as 'at risk', which was a reduction of 1.3PP on the March figure.

162 Governors asked for an assessment of how close the College was to the target for the full year. The Vice-Principal responded that well-managed processes were in place to maximise achievement, with weekly reports circulated to managers. A number of courses were dependent on external results and these would be entered onto the student records database over the next few weeks. Staff were now held to account for the data resulting from a comparison of predicted and actual achievements.

163 The Committee questioned the reduction in attendance on English and maths programmes to 82.98%. The focus for the first term of the year had been attendance amongst 16-18 year olds, but this had now been rolled out to the 19+ cohort. It was noted that the relatively high level of attendance at examinations was not included in the figures provided.

ANNUAL PROVIDER REVIEW AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

164 The Head of Higher Education presented a report on the recent Annual Provider Review and the outcome of the TEF process.

165 The College had met the requirements of the former and HEFCE had accepted the response given to earlier questions on the information submitted as part of the assessment process.

166 Governors had noted the achievement of the TEF Silver Award earlier in the meeting and now asked about the steps that needed to be taken to attain a Gold Award. The Assistant Head of HE reported that the metrics involved in the assessment would need to be reviewed to identify whether the College was above the national benchmark. It was possible for the College to re-submit its application with the aim of increasing the rating, however, the TEF may cease to exist in the near future and thus any such grading would be meaningless. For some criteria within the Framework, it would take longer than a year to fully embed any suitable initiatives.

167 The results of the National Student Survey would be published in October 2017 and would include 3 years of trend data. The Assistant Head of HE commented that it was necessary to maximise the outcomes of the latest survey.

168 The Committee was advised that the TEF was a narrow measure of quality, as it only focused on teaching and was not based on any lesson observations.

OPEN UNIVERSITY REPORT

169 The Head of HE presented a report on a recent assessment of the College's Open University provision. A total of 3 action points had been identified relating to submitting responses to External Examiners' reports, amendment of the statistical tables and completion of major and minor changes in line with the correct procedure.

170 Feedback from the report had been discussed extensively at Academic Board and a management response had been drafted and submitted to the Open University..

David Clapham and Karen Robson left the meeting at this point.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

171 The Committee received for information a progress report against each of the Areas for Improvement identified in the Quality Improvement Plan.

172 The issues surrounding Attendance and Retention had already been discussed under an earlier agenda item.

173 The grade boundaries for GCSE qualifications for 2017/2018 had not yet been finalised, which meant that the College could not model the outcomes of 2016/2017 with any certainty.

174 Attendance at the examinations had been high, with 20 learners not participating, which was a considerable improvement compared to 2015/2016 amongst a larger cohort. For most peer colleges, examination attendance was still a significant issue.

175 In response to questions on the reasons for non-attendance, the Vice-Principal reported that for some learners, attendance had been intermittent throughout their course. She believed that the College had made every effort to maximise attendance for examinations and that learners were fully aware of its importance.

176 The College had performed well against the target set for work experience, with 60% of learners participating in such activities compared to the planned figure of 12.3%.

177 Although there had been a significant improvement in the expected timely achievement rate for apprenticeships, the current outcome had been impacted by lower than anticipated performance at the Sora Group (3.5% lower). Interventions had been implemented by management and the situation would continue to be closely monitored.

178 Currently, the number of learners who had met or exceeded their target grades was 34.23PP higher than in 2015/2016.

179 The Assistant Principal (Quality & Learner Services) commented that the summary report did not necessarily reflect the full range of improvements made in 2016/2017 and that the key issue was performance improvement against the identified targets. It was agreed that future versions of this report would separate out the RAG-rated actions and the achievement of targets. Information on the QIP would be provided at a strategic level in terms of progress and the underlying rationale.

180 The Committee confirmed that it was more confident of the direction of travel and the predicted outcomes indicated in the report.

TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT

181 Governors received for information a report on Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

182 Staff were engaged in ensuring that lessons were differentiated to enable stretch and challenge to take place. Lesson observations were now more focused on learner progress, both in the classroom and over the period of study.

183 Walkthrough observations had indicated that 92.45 of lessons were highly engaging and 89.10% showed evidence of learner progress being made. Attendance levels in lesson observations were now taken into consideration when evaluating the quality of learning.

184 Work continued to fully embed English and maths within vocational lessons, which was evidenced in 86.24% of observations.

185 The Committee noted that the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy did not currently include bespoke quality assurance procedures for apprenticeships and HE provision. Management was currently reviewing this area and would ensure that a robust strategy was in place for 2017/2018, with appropriate staff development.

186 A total of 94.55% of teaching staff had been observed in 2016/2017. The remaining staff were either new in post, had left the College during the year or were on sickness leave. For apprenticeships the corresponding figure was 73.81%, with further observations still to be carried out.

187 The Assistant Principal reported that initially 25 staff had not met the requisite standards. Of these, on re-observation, 11 were still not attaining the required level, 4 of whom would be leaving the College, 3 of whom had been placed in the performance management process, with the remaining staff at various stages of the lesson observation process.

188 Governors were advised that the 2 of the staff in performance management all taught in the same curriculum area, for which retention on 19+ programmes had decreased for 2016/2017. Concern was expressed that IT featured heavily in the College's growth strategy and the Committee felt that it was vital for under-performance to be addressed. The Assistant Principal responded that a new curriculum manager had been appointed and that the outcomes for learners were likely to have improved by the end of the year.

189 The volume of learning walks and the value they generated was significant for 2016/2017. From development day activities, governors now had a realistic sense of what was happening within classrooms.

190 The Committee asked about the reaction from staff to the number of observations undertaken. The Vice-Principal reported that management had continually discussed the process with the trade unions, who had suggested that managers should be more present in classrooms to provide support to staff in tackling poor behaviour.

191 It was noted that lesson observations were ungraded, in line with the Ofsted process and that staff were measured against a College-wide standard. Each member of staff was formally observed in every year and learning walks were undertaken on an ad hoc basis. The total number of learning walks would be added to future versions of the report.

192 Governors questioned the cost of management time devoted to the process and were assured that improving the quality of the learner experience was at the centre of the College's strategy. The observation process had been streamlined as far as possible in terms of the administrative burden and carrying out observations was part of the formal job description of each curriculum manager.

193 In response to comments as to whether the process should be included in the TEF narrative, governors were advised that in some cases the way in which HE lessons were observed did not validate their quality and required a different skill set amongst the observers.

194 The evidence obtained from observations was used to inform future continuing professional development activities. The Committee noted that there was no information on performance and planning.

195 The Assistant Principal was asked to identify the shift in terms of management resources from the basic requirements to bringing about improvements in performance. This would be included in the TEF and in the Leadership & Management submission to Ofsted.

TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT STRATEGY 2017/2019

196 Governors received a revised Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy, which had been prepared on the basis of the 4 strategic pillars in the new version of the Strategic Plan.

197 The Strategy set out a number of aims for the improvement of Teaching, Learning & Assessment, together with how these would be achieved. The relevant targets had not yet been included, as these were dependent on outcomes for 2016/2017.

198 A number of amendments were agreed by the Committee, to provide additional robustness and clarity.

199 **Resolved -** That the Board **be RECOMMENDED** to approve the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy, subject to the amendments identified by the Committee

COMMITTEE SELF-EVALUATION 2016/2017

200 The Clerk presented a draft of the Committee's self-evaluation for 2016/2017.

201 Governors noted that, at 83%, the current level of attendance had improved compared to the full year 2015/2016.

202 It was agreed that the issues identified for further development should link to the governor training plan. Two additional areas for further work in 2017/2018 were learner voice and teaching, learning and assessment (with the latter forming part of the agenda for the November governor development day).

203 The Committee felt that it had worked effectively during the year, increasing the level of debate and challenge, which reflected the skills of its members. Governors now had a much clearer understanding of levels of performance and the standard of reporting provided had assisted in this process.

204 The Committee graded its performance as a '2' or 'good'.

ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE BOARD

205 The Committee agreed a list of items that would be report to the Board on 13th July 2017:

- Detailed performance monitoring report and progress report against the actions identified in the QIP report received for information
- Update on HE issues, including the TEF Silver Award, Annual Performance Monitoring and Open University report
- Information received on Teaching, Learning & Assessment and revised TLA Strategy recommended for approval by the Board
- Self-evaluation graded as a '2'.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

5th October 2017, 4.00 p.m.

Signed _____ (Chair)

Date 5 October 2017