

## MINUTES OF LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE – RECONVENED FROM 27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023

**Venue:** Teams

**Date:** Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023

### Members:

Paul Averis (Chair)  
Heather Lodge  
Jat Sharma (Principal)  
Mary Mahoney  
Rani Sahota

### In Attendance:

David Turner, Assistant Principal Quality and HE  
Richard Brennan, Assistant Principal Curriculum  
James Norris, Assistant Principal (Commercial Development)  
Lesley Venables, Head of Governance

<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
	Apologies for absence were received from Linda Enow (Associate Governor)	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	None	
<b>9</b>	<b>Apprenticeships &amp; Work-based Learning</b>	
9.1	The AP (CD) reported that the year end position outlined in the report would not change any further during data processing. The overall success rate was projected as 51.7% (which was similar to 2021/2022) against as yet unpublished national average of 52 to 53%.	
9.2	It was noted that this area of provision was still being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including some adverse behaviour from employers in the Construction sector and a relatively high number of withdrawals for reasons such as change in employer, salary improvement, completion of qualifications but not the End Point Assessment as this was deemed by some to be unnecessary and not a barrier to employment. Governors were advised that these issues affected the whole FE sector and had led the Government to change the regulations around apprenticeship standards to require students to undertake an EPA.	
9.3	A number concerns were highlighted. For Construction apprentices at Levels 2 and 3 at CCM attendance and achievement of functional skills were lower. A change in the awarding body for Dental Nursing Level 3 was required and students on the Level 5 Operational Management programme had high levels of breaks in learning, which affected retention and achievement rates.	
9.4	The College had engaged external consultants (Click) to carry out a review of this area. This had resulted in suggestions for the improvement of personal development sessions and a slight increase in first time pass rates on some functional skills courses. College staff were also taking a more robust line on non-attenders at Functional Skills sessions.	
9.5	A governor asked about the very low level of starts in the 2021/2022 data. The AP(CD) explained that for the sequencing of the Level 6 Chartered Management Degree programme had been amended so that the evidence portfolio was compiled by students must later in the course to improve attendance and retention. This differential approach was welcomed by the Committee.	

9.6	In-year statistics showed positive signs of improvement, however many of the EPAs were scheduled right at the end of courses. Any high risk elements had been withdrawn due to the need to comply with recommendations made by the College's internal auditors. It was noted that there was a fine balance between efficiency and quality on apprenticeship programmes.	
9.7	In response to questions about success rates amongst the hard to reach groups the Committee was advised that there is still a correlation due to the cost of living crisis and comparisons between apprenticeship pay rates compared to the National Minimum Wage, which led some students to change jobs as they could earn higher salaries under the latter.	
9.8	The integrated approach to qualifications under the new apprenticeship standards should improve this position, but it was sometimes more difficult to persuade employers to allow their employees to attend functional skills sessions, which affected the achievement of their courses. It was important that the College ensured that apprentices received the appropriate advice and guidance and that their qualifications were achievable.	
9.9	A governor asked whether any good practice had been obtained from sub-contractors with which the College worked. The AP(CD) reported that AEB programmes were performing at a higher rate than apprenticeships. It was felt that this was due to the profile of employers taking on apprentices, which tended to be small or medium enterprises where market conditions could have a significant impact on success and releasing staff to attend college was sometimes difficult.	
9.10	It was noted that the 45 apprentices who had not yet undertaken their end point assessments would roll into the 2023/2024 academic year. This was partly due to there being insufficient capacity in terms of physical resources and assessors. Management was reviewing the planning of EPAs for the current academic year.	
9.11	The Committee was advised that a Quality Improvement Coach had been appointed in May 2023 (after a significant gap) and had forged strong links with the Workforce Development Team, together with aligning quality process to those of the rest of the College.	
9.12	Click consultants had highlighted a number of areas for improvement. Attendance at Functional Skills sessions had been poor but the delivery model had been reviewed to address student demands., including a bridging course for Entry and Level 1 students. There was still work to be undertaken on the planning process and scheme of work for Personal Development.	
9.13	As a result of feedback from Click that not all apprenticeships will take on elements of PD, management was working with core lecturers at the Green Lane Campus to develop short PD sessions as part of each lesson. This would mean that PD was available and delivered through different methods.	
9.14	The College needed to ensure that the practical end dates for apprenticeships were realistic and took account of potential delays in EPAs. This should reduce the number of Out of Funding apprentices in future.	

9.15	The response rate to the apprenticeship survey had improved over the past 3 years,	
9.16	In terms of the Employer Gateway the volume of students was increasing but the achievement rate was still high. The College would be discussing the next steps for these individuals as part of the larger provision.	
9.17	Governors asked about the key focal points for 2023/2024 and were advised that these were: retention (where the best case position for 2022/2023 was 70%), attendance with particular emphasis on functional skills and making personal development relevant to each programme.	
9.18	There were no concerns over any of the College's sub-contractors, with good quality provision and achievements at the national benchmarks.	
9.19	The College had self-graded this area as being at the top end of a grade '2'. There had been significant changes in the management team over the past year which had led to more robust planning and an accurate picture of the data.	