

MINUTES OF LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3RD JULY 2024

PART ONE

Members:

Paul Averis (Chair)
 Mary Mahoney
 Barbara Van Der Eecken (Associate)

In Attendance:

David Turner, Assistant Principal Quality & HE
 Richard Brennan, Assistant Principal Curriculum
 James Norris, Assistant Principal (Commercial Development)
 Lesley Venables, Head of Governance
 Rachael Smith, Director of Apprenticeships – minutes 140 to 147

	Apologies for Absence	
89	Apologies for absence were received from Jat Sharma, Heather Lodge, Linda Enow, Aysha Rahman Amani. The absence of Rani Sahota was noted.	
	Declarations of Interest	
90	No declarations of interest were received in respect of any agenda item.	
	Minutes	
91	Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 27 th September 2023, 4 th October 2023 and 14 th March 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
	Matters Arising	
92	Governors received a progress report on the actions arising from the previous meeting. A number of items had been completed and the Committee noted the following issues.	Exec
93	Under minute 38.23.3 the APQ&HE advised that a governor training session on Ofsted inspection had been held in February 2024 and the next step would be the development and sharing of position papers on each aspect of the inspection process.	
94	The Committee noted that the action relating to the Office for Students (minute 44.23.3) had now been closed.	
	CURRICULUM STRATEGY 2024=2027	
95	The APCD presented the draft Curriculum Strategy, which had been circulated in advance to enable governors to submit comments and questions. It was noted that there was a close link between this and the new Corporate Plan, which meant that any changes made would impact on the other document. The Strategy had been drafted to reflect the College's strategic priorities and those of the Combined Authority in terms of meeting local skills needs.	
96	A number of amendments were suggested by the Committee, namely: a) Addition of the 5 pledges from the Corporate Plan (once finalised) b) Moving the section on SEND/High Needs to the end of the section on different provision types c) Page 52 – amend 'commercial' to 'bespoke'	

97	d) Maths & English provision to move to section about courses for Young People. e) The importance of digital literacy to be stressed under each area of provision. f) Move content on the aspiration for the College's position at the end of the Curriculum Strategy to after the contextualisation of place. Resolved – That, subject to the amendments outlined above, the Corporation be recommended to approve the revised Curriculum Strategy	
QUALITY ASSURANCE & PERFORMANCE DATA		
98	The Committee received for information a report on performance against key curriculum indicators.	
99	Attendance – Term 3 The average attendance level for 2023/2024 was 81.3% compared to 83.3% in Term 2 and 84.4% in Term 1. Reducing attendance levels was an issue of concern for Ofsted nationally. A governor asked whether data was available from other colleges, but was advised that most were reluctant to share such performance information.	
100	Good attendance levels were linked to high rates of retention. Following staff changes in the College's MIS department regular and persistent absenteeism could be identified with targeted interventions for these students. Other contributory factors could also be evidenced, such as a significant proportion of poor attendees who were in reception of free school meals.	
101	The APCurr reported that the College had changed the pattern of delivery, which had meant that attendance reporting in some curriculum areas was not yet aligned.	
102	The Committee asked what strategies were in place to maintain engagement of the most vulnerable students, such as those with SEN. The APCurr advised that a cultural shift was underway to ensure that students were supported to achieve their qualification aims despite it being challenging for their attendance levels to meet the College target.	
103	Overall attendance for Maths and English was currently 74.9%, with the lowest recorded in V6 at 72.7%, and the highest in Adults, Community Learning and SEND at 82.3%.	
104	Quality Summits The process had almost been completed and currently a total of 11 areas had been assessed as 'outstanding', 15 as 'good' and 3 as 'requires improvement' (10%). Quality improvement activities would continue to identify actions to improve this position in 2024/2025. The final outturn for 2023/2024 would also impact on these grades.	
105	It was noted that Personal Development had now been graded as 'good' compared to the same point in 2022/2023 when it had been assessed as 'requires improvement'. Evidence to support these judgements was in place and managers needed to ensure that the gradings remained accurate.	

106	The introduction of a Quality Improvement team in addition to the Quality Assurance function would support this development process.	
107	Governors asked about the approach required to improve performance in Construction & Engineering. The APCurr reported that a new manager had been appointed recently and had been highly receptive to any support offered by the Quality Team and other departments. Automotive courses were now part of this department's remit and it was hoped that ongoing improvement strategies would prove successful in 2024/2025.	
108	Work Experience & Personal Development One of the areas of concern identified during the Quality Summit process was the relatively low numbers of students who had not started to reflect on their work experience (36.7%), with STEAM having the highest percentage (47.9%).	
109	This contrasted to only 9% of students who have yet to reflect on their personal development.	
110	Quality Review for Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning Governors were advised that a total of 126 progress reviews for apprentices had been considered. Areas for improvement identified by the process included ensuring the correct paperwork was used by staff, embedding Maths and English skills through core skill development, constant linking of delivery to the world of work and full exploration of topics such as Health & Safety, Safeguarding, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, Prevent and Fundamental British Values with appropriate links to core programmes.	
111	A significant number of progress reviews for Construction College Midlands had been graded as 'requires improvement'.	
112	The APCD reported that staff had already implemented a number of remedial measures to address these issues, but further reports on progress would be provided to future meetings. Governors were reminded that a review of the number of apprenticeship standards offered by the College was underway, with proposals to reduce the number from 39 to approximately 22 over an extended period of time.	
113	Quality Review for Safeguarding This review had taken place between March and June 2024, to identify and evaluate the current level of student understanding of Safeguarding and Prevent, and to provide a comparison to May 2023.	
114	A total of 298 student responses had been reviewed and the results were currently being analysed by the Quality Team. The proportion of students who were unclear in their understanding of safeguarding was 20.14% compared to 31.54% in 2022/2023. For Prevent, the corresponding figure was 62.75% compared to 78.47% last year. It was important for students to focus on teaching and learning on these issues and there was some evidence that the position had improved since the quality review had taken place.	
115	Complaints 2023/2024	

116	The APQ&SE reported that the number of complaints and appeals had increased, with many of these being poorly managed, leading to an exacerbation of the original customer concerns. Further training would be provided to staff to enable them to deal with complaints effectively and to resolve issues satisfactorily. Governors asked for information to be provided on the number of complaints and how many of these had been resolved.	APQ&SE
117	Lesson Observations Approximately 71% of teaching staff had been observed during 2023/2024, which was likely to increase to 76% by the year end. In 2024/2025 it would be important to ensure that Advanced Practitioners conducted observations as part of their role (some individuals had not complied with this responsibility in 2023/2024). Managers should also monitor progress in 1:1 meetings with these staff. A new tracking system would be in place for September which should provide timely data on observations and gradings.	
118	Annual observations would be both developmental and supportive for staff. Some would be unannounced and peer observations would take place throughout the year. It was agreed that several advanced practitioners would be invited to the Committee's October meeting to provide information on the process and the impact it has made on teaching, learning and assessment.	
119	A more formal timetable for reviews and observations was required, which would enable regular monitoring of performance and evidence its effects.	DPCurr
120	Internal Audit of QA Systems The Committee was informed that a recent internal audit of QA Systems had concluded that the College's internal controls in this area provided a 'substantial' level of assurance. A number of recommendations had been made, progress on which would be monitored by the Audit Committee.	DPCurr/ LV
121	Predicted Achievement Rates 2023/2024 The APQ&SE reported that currently 54.4% of students were working on or above their identified target grade. However, it had been highlighted by Faculty Directors that 7.84% of students had not been set a target. A total of 37.72% of students were currently working below their target grade (compared to 41.79% in March 2024).	
122	The overall achievement level for 2022/23 was 82.9%. The predicted achievement rate for 2023/24 was currently 87.6%, subject to confirmation in October 2024. As a different assessment method had been used for students this year there was a higher risk to attaining the overall predicted outcome. Governors were advised that there was a correlation between retention and predicted achievement.	
123	At Levels 3 and 4 there was a challenge in terms of student leavers who may not necessarily complete their qualifications and would impact on the achievement rates.	
124	For apprenticeships the predicted achievement rate was 54%, which was an increase compared to 2022/2023.	

	CURRICULUM UPDATE	
125	The AP Curriculum presented a report on curriculum developments, which included proposed amendments to the College's 14-16 provision (Achieving Together).	
126	Governors were advised that applications had increased compared to 2023/2024 (up by 482), but a significant proportion had not yet accepted their offers. Courses such as Automotive and Engineering were set to fill up shortly, with individuals offered alternative provision.	
127	At the Curriculum Conference there would be a demonstration by Advanced Practitioners of their work and its impact in 2023/2024.	
128	In addition to the 120 existing students there had been 393 applications for T Levels for 2024/2025. However, some of these were contingent on them achieving GCSE Maths and English qualifications, particularly on courses such as Engineering. Students who failed their GCSEs would be offered an alternative programme within the same curriculum area.	
129	Governors were advised that there had been 130 applications for Education & Childcare T Level, which was the only Level 3 qualification in this curriculum area that was still funded by the Department for Education. Plans were in place to offer a Health T Level for 2025/2026 as the alternative Level 3 qualification would not be funded.	
130	In response to a question about resourcing T Level teaching at an appropriate level the AP Curr reported that a huge amount of planning took place before any new T Level was offered. Management needed to ensure that students would receive a high quality experience and the results of the College's T Level provision confirmed that this was the case. Visits to high-performing providers enabled staff to obtain information and ideas of outstanding and innovative teaching. Strong links between practical experience, the work placements and College-based delivery was necessary.	
131	There was a high degree of uncertainty regarding future curriculum reform for the sector, due to the imminent General Election.	
132	The Committee was reminded of previous discussions on the College's A Level programmes, with plans to develop this further to a full suite of provision. Currently students wishing to study A Levels could do so through a number of 'packages' of subjects.	
133	It was felt that the College would reach a critical mass of learners in the next 12 to 18 months. The opening of the Park Street Campus (Adult Learning Centre) in 2026 would free up space within the Wisemore Campus for a dedicated A Level centre.	
134	A governor asked about progression for A Level students and was advised that this was being considered as part of the review of the College's HE Strategy.	
135	A Levels was likely to be a particular area of interest during any future Ofsted inspection as the College did not currently have a discrete set of results.	

136	The College's course monitoring process was tracking performance, particularly for new courses and those that were causing concern.	
137	Performance on adult programmes was good, with a slight reduction in ESFA out of area provision.	
138	The Committee received information on the grade profile of the third assessment undertaken by GCSE students. This indicated that some learners were making progress and achieving a grade 4 GCSE.	
139	The College had a high proportion of vulnerable learners (SEN, Free School Meals etc), who traditionally tended to perform less well at Key Stage 5. Attendance at English and Maths examinations had been strong, against a much larger cohort and a higher risk profile of learners. A different assessment board had been contracted for 2024/2025 (Educas), which required students to take 2 slightly longer papers instead of the current 3 papers.	
Apprenticeships Update		
	Rachael Smith joined the meeting.	
140	The APCD and the Director of Apprenticeships presented a report on performance against key apprenticeships indicators. The current achievement rate for 2023/2024 was 51.9% compared to 49.5% in 2022/2023. The number of apprentices yet to complete or undertake their end point assessments had decreased so there would be some 'carry-overs'.	
141	As outlined under a separate agenda item a review of the apprenticeship offer meant that the number of standards to be offered in future would decrease from 39 currently to 21. The decision as to which standards would be maintained had been based on market needs, contribution rates, feedback on key performance indicators and from Click consultants and availability and skill levels of staffing resources.	
142	A total of 158 out of 1153 apprentices had now overrun their end dates. This equated to 13.7% against the target of 10% (previously reported as 18%). It was agreed that future reports would include additional data on OOFs.	JN/RS
143	Achievements for 2022/2023 had been discussed with the DfE as part of the College's Accountability Agreement. The DfE's representatives had been satisfied with the contextual information on retention that had been provided and the improvements that had already occurred in 2023/2024.	
144	The Committee asked that a dashboard of apprenticeship performance should be devised to enable it to monitor performance more effectively.	JN/RS/ RJones
145	Governors were advised of the recent Funding Assurance Audits undertaken by various external providers, a summary of which had been discussed in detail by both the Audit and Finance & Resources Committees. Monitoring of progress against the recommendations and the financial implications of the outturn position would continue and this Committee would provide oversight of the student experience and key curriculum indicators.	

146	In terms of sub-contracted provision, 3 firms were currently engaged by the College with no concerns on quality and all were on target to meet or exceed national achievement rates (NAR). Performance against these contracts was monitored by the Combined Authority as well as internally.	
147	A further contract for Learning Curve had been approved recently by the Financial & Resources Committee for Free Courses For Jobs provision requested by the Combined Authority. Rachael Smith left the meeting.	
COMMITTEE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2023/2024		
148	Governors received a draft of the completed Committee Self-Assessment for 2023/2024. It was agreed that members of the Committee would consider the proposed content and provide any comments or additions to the Head of Governance within a 2-week timeframe.	ALL
DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS		
	14th Oct 2024 28th Nov 2024 27th Feb 2025 1st Jul 2025	