



CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 05 October 2023 – Main Minutes

Gateshead College

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Mike Welsh	Chair / Independent	MW	X	
David Alexander	Principal / CEO	DA	X	
Michael Wood-Williams	Independent	MWW	X	
Aneela Ali	Independent	AA	X^	
Carol Davenport	Independent	CD	X	
Claire-Jane Rewcastle	Independent	CJR	X	
Richard Wensley	Staff	RW	X	
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Presenters				
Chris Toon	Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality	CT	X	
Deni Chambers	Director of Curriculum & Skills	DC	X	
Nadine Hudspeth	Director of Brand & Learner Experience	NH	X	
Jeremy Cook	Deputy Principal: Finance & Resources	JC	X	
Darren Heathcote	Head of Student Services and Customer Experience	DH	X^	
Richard Ward	Head of Quality Improvement	RW	X	
Suzanne Cunningham	Assistant Principal	SC	X	
Tracy Foreman	Assistant Principal	TF	X	
Tom Bradley	Assistant Principal	TB	X	
John Deary	Assistant Principal	JD	X	

^Attended for part of the meeting

CQ/171 1. Chair's Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. It was noted that CJR had joined the Committee and introductions took place.

The Chair provided an overview of the work of the Committee, the process for briefly presenting an overview of papers and the ongoing review of levels of detail / information. The Chair noted the Committee's role in considering papers was to constructively challenge information and process where required rather than individuals.

AA joined the meeting.

There were no apologies to report. The Committee **agreed** that the meeting was quorate. There were no conflicts of interest declared. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the meeting.

CQ/172 2. Minutes of the last meeting dated 11 May 2023

A) Main minutes

The Committee **reviewed** the main minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

B) Confidential minutes

The Committee **reviewed** the confidential minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

The minutes were approved.

Item 10 was taken at this point.

DH left the meeting.

CQ/173 3. Matters Arising / Action Log

A) Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee Terms of Reference

NT presented the proposed revised Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee Terms of Reference ahead of seeking Board approval at the October 2023 meeting.

The Committee **recommended** the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee Terms of Reference for Board approval at the October 2023 meeting.

The Terms of Reference were recommended for Board approval.

B) Appointment of Committee Vice Chair

NT confirmed that as part of the Terms of Reference for 2023/2024, a Vice Chair would be implemented for each Committee. Committee members had been contacted in advance of the meeting to seek expressions of interest. An expression of interest had been received from CD.

The Committee **approved** the appointment of CD as the Vice Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee.

The Vice Chair was appointed.

C) Action Log

NT presented the action log and highlighted that three actions were in progress and due to be completed within the agreed timescales. All other actions had been completed or closed.

The action log was noted.

- D) 2023/2024 Enrolment Report
Covered under a confidential minute.

The report was noted.

CQ/174 4. Quality Strategy

CT presented the Quality Strategy, noting that this had been revised following the Committee's feedback at the May 2023 meeting which included the shaping of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

CT noted that the College would be implementing a self-evaluation and review process for support teams. This approach would link to the strategic plan and help inform operational plan actions. Appropriate KPIs would be developed relating to this once rolled out across the College.

Action: CT to add KPIs relating to the self-evaluation process for support teams once embedded across the College.

The Committee **noted their positive comments** around the implementation of self-evaluation across the College.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The KPI relating to QS1.1 "Developing new teachers, with a clear pathway through initial teacher training, and recruiting teachers at the top of their game".
Action: CT to consider the appropriateness of the KPIs linking to QS 1.1 ahead of seeking Board approval.
- The effectiveness of measuring E&T retention, pass and achievement within QS2 – it was noted that there would be variations to each measure.
Action: CT to consider if E&T retention, pass and achievement rates were all required as KPIs.
- Adding a KPI relating to staff participation within the annual staff survey – it was suggested that this would be covered within the People Strategy, overseen by the People Committee.
- The timing of the annual report – it was confirmed that this would be factored into the Committee workplan for 2024/2025 at an appropriate point and avoid overlap with the Self-Assessment Report (SAR).
Action: CT and NT to plan in Quality Strategy Annual Report for 2024/2025.
- The measurement of early leavers (learners) – it was noted that the College had more early leavers than other organisations however, had a higher retention rate. The Committee **requested** reporting of early leavers to allow monitoring of the impact of the work within this area.
Action: CT to include early leavers reporting within the Performance report going forward to allow the Committee to monitor these figures year on year.

The Committee Chair **requested** acronyms to be written out in full at first use.

Action: CT to add meaning of SOL (Scheme of Learning) ahead of seeking Board approval.

The Committee **recommended** the Quality Strategy for Board approval.

The strategy was recommended for Board approval.

CQ/175 5. Curriculum Strategy

DC presented the Curriculum Strategy, noting that this had been revised following the Committee's feedback at the May 2023 meeting which included the measures relating to the KPIs.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- Ensuring alignment of KPIs with overall strategy – it was confirmed that DC was taking the lead on Corporate Planning and work was underway to consider and streamline KPI reporting, along with ensuring alignment with the overarching College Strategic Plan. DC confirmed that all KPIs contained within the Quality and Curriculum Strategies had been cross referenced and linked with the objectives within the College Strategic Plan.
- Ensuring learners and apprentices were being equipped with essential skills and knowledge – it was confirmed that the College continued to work hard in this area, and this was evidenced by the College being graded 'Strong' for meeting employers' skills needs following the Ofsted inspection in March 2023. KPIs related to engaging with employers and the LSIP, and skills needs also formed part of the planning process and stakeholder engagement. It was also noted that the Self-Assessment Report would include a skills section going forward.
- Curriculum reform – it was agreed that the Curriculum Strategy allowed the flexibility to adapt and for the College to be dynamic in its provision.

The Committee **recommended** the Curriculum Strategy for Board approval.

The strategy was recommended for Board approval.

CQ/176 6. Duty to Review

CT presented the report, noting that this was based on the supply and demand research report, the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), outcomes from the annual Community Conversation, the Accountability Statement and Ofsted feedback. CT noted that the report highlighted the proportionality of the curriculum and provided assurance of alignment with needs. CT highlighted that an Executive Summary would be added to the report ahead of seeking Board approval.

The Committee Chair requested that, going forward, where an update to a document is presented that has previously been considered by the Committee, a clear summary of additional information and changes is provided.

Action: NT to consider Committee reporting where documents are updated so that new information and changes are clearly highlighted.

The Committee Chair requested information to be added relating to the level of recruitment of BAME learners compared with the local population, which was a positive story for the College, which had been discussed previously.

Action: CT to add data relating to the recruitment of BAME learners compared with the local population ahead of seeking Board approval.

The Committee **noted their positive comments** relating to the report and it was **recognised** that this was specifically useful for those new to the Committee.

The Committee **recommended** the Duty to Review for Board approval.

The report was recommended for Board approval.

CQ/177 7. Performance Report 2022/2023

Covered under a confidential minute.

The report was noted.

CQ/178 8. Discussion: Committee KPIs

The Committee **discussed** the KPIs as set out within the Quality and Curriculum Strategy, as well as the measures set out within the Performance Report. It was noted that 4 KPIs relating to this Committee formed part of the overall Board KPIs. It was agreed that the KPIs might change and evolve over time.

The Committee **agreed** for MW, CD, CT, DA and NT to meet to discuss KPI reporting.

Action: NT to arrange a meeting between MW, CD, CT, DA and NT to discuss Committee KPIs ahead of the February 2024 meeting.

The **Committee Chair noted his expectation** of attendance data to date, a summary of withdrawals (including reasoning), the impact of the additional welfare staffing, safeguarding referrals to date and narrative around the impact of the improved IT infrastructure on learner experience. This was **requested** for the October 2023 Board Meeting.

Action: Report to Board in October setting out; attendance to date, data relating to number of early leavers (including reasoning), the number of Safeguarding referrals and behaviour.

In relation to the impact of additional welfare staffing, it was confirmed that this team had recently been implemented and therefore impact was difficult to measure at such as early stage.

Relating to IT infrastructure, it was confirmed that the Digital Strategy was being taken for Board approval at the October 2023 meeting, following recommendation from Finance & General Purposes, and a Digital Steering Group was being created to support the implementation of this.

The report was noted.

CQ/179 9. Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Learner Focused Quality Activities

RW presented the report, noting that it provided an overview of the College's ongoing commitment to improving teaching and learning quality, with a specific focus on Learner Focused Quality Activities. RW noted that, overall, learner satisfaction remained strong, with 93.9% expressing contentment with the college and 90.4% satisfied with their

courses, However, recommendations to friends or family had seen a slight decline and the College were working to understand this better, although noting that the survey response rate had seen an approximate increase of 600 learners.

As part of the exploratory work relating to the survey data, the questions asked of learners were being reviewed to ensure they were fully understood as intended and accessible to all learners. This work included linking with the Head of Student Services and Learner Engagement Manager.

The Committee **discussed** the framing of questions and **queried** whether questions were taken through a learner review to obtain feedback ahead of the next survey. It was confirmed that this was being undertaken.

The Committee **noted** that questions relating to recommending services could be problematic and this was similar across other sectors. This was agreed, with RW providing further learner feedback regarding not wishing to recommend the College to friends / family due to this not being relevant to them.

The Committee **requested** where further data exploration was required, for this to take place in advance of the reporting to the Committee where possible, to allow the Committee to consider the outcomes / proposed next steps.

Action: Where data relates to further work being undertaken, for this to be done ahead of Committee reporting, or for the report to wait until the exploratory work has taken place so that the Committee can understand the proposed next steps.

The report was noted.

CQ/180 10. Safeguarding Annual Report 2022/2023 and Revised Policies

DH presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The College's compliance with the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023 guidance and the Gateshead local authority safeguarding audit tool.
- During the Ofsted inspection in March 2023 the Inspection Team found the College's safeguarding arrangements to be effective.
- The College had increased the number of trained Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) from 11 to 14.
- The College was a valued partner of external agencies such as the local authority, the police, and social services through the DSL.
- *Covered under a confidential minute.*
- 99% of apprentices strongly agreed/agreed that during their apprenticeship they had undertaken learning on topics such as safeguarding, Prevent, sexual harassment, county lines and resilience and wellbeing.
- Supervision for safeguarding staff was an established practice at the college.
- The College's Safeguarding Steering Group continued to meet, which oversaw the management and delivery of safeguarding across the College, with MWW in attendance as the Safeguarding Link Governor.
- For 2023/2024, a new Safeguarding, Welfare and Wellbeing team had been established and 4 new full-time members of staff employed; a Safeguarding Manager (soon to take up post) and 3 Welfare and Wellbeing Advisers. The College were already seeing a positive impact from this, and multiple referrals had already been made for the new academic year.

The Safeguarding Link Governor (MWW) noted his levels of assurance provided by his attendance at the Safeguarding Steering Group, with the group's continued focus on supporting staff and students.

The Staff Governor agreed that staff had welcomed the additional mental health and wellbeing resource and was glad to have this in place to continue to support learners.

The Committee **noted their positive comments** regarding the report and the continued focus on effective Safeguarding controls and support.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- Ability to report on EDI measures with the new Safeguarding system – it was hoped that reporting would improve with the new system. Staff were receiving appropriate training. It was hoped that additional data would be recorded such as gender assignment, gender identity and sexual preference to allow better trend monitoring to ensure all groups of learners were supported.
 - The Committee **queried** if the College were utilising focus groups with learners / gaining learner insights from those within different EDI categories to understand their challenges / concerns / support needs. It was confirmed that this was already being progressed by the Learner Engagement Manager. It was also noted that learners had been involved within the Community Conversation where their ideas / needs had been considered, as well as learners being part of the interviews for the new mental health and wellbeing staff. It was confirmed that the newly appointed welfare officers had had a positive impact with learners so far during the 2023/2024 academic year and would link into the Safeguarding Steering Group.
 - The Committee **queried** if staff were appropriately kept up to date with new and evolving themes relating to Safeguarding and it was confirmed that they were with information being shared as part of the Safeguarding Steering Group, learner campaigns and weekly brief.
- Ability to report on learner type – it was confirmed that this would be explored with the new safeguarding system, however not possible on the current system.
- Completion of mandatory Safeguarding training – it was confirmed that this was being monitored internally and that NT was following up with governors regarding their completion.
- Sufficiency of safeguarding resource – it was confirmed that the College had increased the number of Deputy DSLs as well as the implementation of additional posts however this would be monitored. The College were exploring the opportunity for Learner Facilitators to be mental health trained.
- Safeguarding supervision for staff – it was noted that this was valued by staff and the process for this would be formalised once the Safeguarding Manager took up post.
- Extremist politically driven activity – it was suggested that there had been no such activity at the College, however the DSL had been made aware of activity at other colleges and had been asked to report any relevant activity to the police.

Covered under a confidential minute.

The report was noted and the revised policies were recommended for Board approval.

CQ/181 11. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Annual Report 2022/203

TD presented the report, noting that this set out the Board's requirements / recommendations along with suggested compliance measures, one of which was to provide the Committee with an annual report to provide an update of provision, support measures, number of learners and initiatives / improvements across the academic year. The report also sets out the comments from Ofsted during the March 2023 inspection in relation to areas for development and the progress made against these points.

TD confirmed that departments had been asked to include a section on high needs within the Self-Assessment Process which would translate into the Quality Improvement Plans and ensure tracking and monitoring of progress.

TD highlighted the increase of learners with EHCPs and that this had been noted at a recent operational risk meeting.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The implementation of the quiet room – it was confirmed that this was popular with students and supervised by a staff member.
- Meeting needs of learners – it was confirmed that the College had invested resource linked with mental health and wellbeing and would remain flexible to needs. The Learner Engagement Manager continued to work with learners to capture and respond to learner voice.
- Relationships with local authorities and schools – it was confirmed that transition improvements had been seen with further policies developed in this area. The College were being more proactive to obtain all relevant information at the earliest points however there were differing services across the organisations.
- Levels of inclusivity – It was noted that the College were continuing to support learners and that learners had the opportunity to self-declare conditions and therefore there was a larger number with self-declared conditions without an EHCP. Work was undertaken within initial assessment and the recruitment / enrolment of learners to understand support needs.

The Committee **noted their positive comments** regarding the report, with the specific encouragement around all staff being provided with SEND training. The Committee **suggested** that future versions of the SEND annual report should include the positive culture and ethos of the College.

Action: Future versions of the SEND annual report to include the positive culture and ethos of the College.

Action: NT to progress SEND training for Board.

The report was noted.

CQ/182 12. HE Annual Report

CT presented the report which was to provide reassurance of the compliance with the Office for Students' (OfS) conditions of registration and outline the structure for the management and oversight of HE provision. CT noted that the provision was aligned to regional priorities, and opportunities were being explored relating to Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). CT highlighted the difficulty with National Student Survey (NSS reporting) due to small numbers and specific sampling rules.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- Sharing of the College's HE opportunities with schools and educational providers – it was confirmed that obtaining opportunities to share provision options with learners in schools was still proving difficult.
- Incentivisation of the NSS – it was agreed that this could be explored further however the College would continue to face difficulties relating to small numbers.
Action: CT to work with the Quality Team / HE Oversight Panel to consider the incentivisation of completion of the NSS.
- The development of HTQs – it was confirmed that the College were working with multiple employers within this area. The Committee **noted their interest** in the development of this.
Action: CT to provide an update to the Committee relating to the development of HTQs at an appropriate point.

The report was noted.

CQ/183 13. Risk Register

JC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The Executive Team had undertaken a review of all risks of the register as at the end of the 2022/2023 academic year. Minor wording changes had been made, including the addition of "high quality" within Risk 1 (*Inability to deliver planned, high quality, curriculum provision leads to failure to meet student outcome and progression targets*) which was specific to the oversight of this Committee, however the majority of risks remained substantially unchanged.
- Changes included the addition of two new risks covering the College's impact on the environment and the potential impact of the ONS reclassification of the College.
- As reported to governors towards the end of 2022/23, risks relating to Ofsted and DfE/FEC intervention had been removed from the register following the successful Ofsted inspection and the College's removal from Post Intervention Monitoring Support (PIMS) in March 2023.
- In relation to risk appetite, it was proposed following the above the tolerable level of risk appetite for the teaching and learning category is raised from 'open' to 'willing'.
- The first 2023/2024 meeting of the Curriculum focused Operational Risk Management Group had met, and there had been positive discussion and consideration of risks relating to funding, curriculum reform, bootcamps, and the increase of EHCP learners. These discussions were being highlighted with the Executive Team for further consideration in relation to the Strategic Risk Register.

The Committee **noted their positive comments** regarding the process, evolution and positive approach to risk management.

The report was noted.

CQ/184 14. Any Other Business

N/A

CQ/185 15. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as **Thursday 23 November 2023 at 4pm.**

The Committee Chair **requested** name cards for attendees as future meetings.

Action: NT to arrange name cards for future meetings.