



CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2020

Report: Minutes of the Teaching and Learning Committee meeting held on Wednesday 24 June 2020
Author: Clerk
Action: Approve
Status: Open

Present: David Mitchell (Chair)
Sarah Stewart
John Hogg
Chris Toon

In attendance: Deni Chambers
Tracy Foreman
John Gray
Helen Hepple
Andrew Robson
Suzanne Slater
Richard Ward
Sharon Fenwick (part attendance - agenda item 8 only)
Sally Cooper (Clerk)
Suzanne Clark (Minutes)

T/320 Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Andy Cole and Kevin Marston.

There were no conflicts of interest declared at this stage. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the meeting.

T/321 Minutes of the last meeting dated 29 April 2020

The Chair indicated that the status of the minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 29 April 2020 should be open as it had been previously agreed that there were no confidential items within them. Save for this amendment the minutes were agreed as a correct record.

T/322 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

T/323 College buildings – phased opening

A verbal update was given by the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality reported that the College had been presented with a challenge in May to reopen to current year 12 students. These are learners who in school would be in the lower 6th form. The College team have worked closely with the ESFA in relation to this. A number of learners who had missed practical assessments required to successfully complete their programme or practical work to allow them to progress to employment or further study have been prioritised. These learners have been contacted and timetabled to attend the College site over the coming weeks to allow them to either complete the practical assessments or be equipped with the practical skills required. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that the demeanor of learners who have returned has been fantastic. The Committee was assured that all College buildings that have reopened are Covid secure. Classrooms have been set up to allow for 2 metre distancing, one-way systems have been introduced and sanitising stations are in place. Excellent videos have been produced and shared with learners and staff returning to College which show the journey around the buildings and show the additional measures that have been put in place to keep staff and learners safe. The links to these videos will be shared with governors.

It was reported that the College has welcomed 127 learners back across both the ACE and Baltic campuses over the last two weeks. Learners have attended sessions and have been supported by 18 members of delivery staff. Attendance has been voluntary. Learners and staff were contacted prior to their return to ensure that they were comfortable with the measures put in place to enable them to return in a safe way. Unfortunately, not all learners who were planned to return have actually attended which is disappointing but some of this is due to genuine reasons. Feedback from staff is that morning sessions are a particular issue due to learners losing their normal routines. There are currently no catering facilities available. However, attendance is felt to be very good generally and attendance in some areas has been very strong. Sessions at the Construction campus commenced on 24 June 2020 with a small number of learners attending classroom based sessions. It is planned for workshop activity to begin week commencing 29 June 2020.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality confirmed the plan is not to increase the number of learners on a week by week basis. The current plan is to ensure all learners are able to complete their programme of study for the current year and learners would be coming to the end of their courses naturally in June so only those who need to attend for the reasons outlined earlier will be asked to return. The College team are working on having a separate plan in place for September. The team are working on a number of scenarios and have been considering potentially introducing staggered start times to allow all learners to return safely. Following a further member question, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that currently he would expect that less than 5% of full cohort were attending face to face sessions within the College. This could rise to potentially 20% by the end of the current 4-week period of activity that is planned. The remainder of students are continuing to access content online and members were assured that all learners have been engaged with throughout the closure period. The Chair of the Corporation was supportive of the level of activity that has been taking place and commented that it was disappointing that colleges would not be eligible for the additional funding being made available to schools to support catch-up activity. He indicated that he would ask the ESFA to raise this with the Minister. The Chair of the Committee advised that he had attended a separate meeting earlier in the day in relation to safeguarding and he was very impressed with the work that has taken place with both health and safety and safeguarding to give staff and learners confidence in returning to College.

Action: Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality to circulate links to campus videos.

The report was noted.

T/324 Education & Training Performance – 2019/20 (year to date)

The report was presented by the Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance.

The Chair acknowledged the statement within the report that colleges would not be held to account on the basis of exam and assessment data due to the impact of Covid-19 and asked whether there will still be comparative tables. The Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance confirmed that the College will have its own published data but the data of other institutions will not be published. The College will only be able to compare back against its own data and data from other colleges from previous years. The Chair recognised that this would also present a challenge for other organisations in relation to benchmarking. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality added that whilst data will not be published he felt that the College will still be held to account. He shared his view that success rates will likely decrease as a result of Covid and stressed that the College is likely to be inspected against this data in the new academic year. The Chair of the Corporation commented that he would be content with achieving the data presented in the forecast for all three scenarios and that this would still be a very good outcome. A member asked whether, based on the decision not to publish individual data, an overall average for 2019/20 would be published. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality confirmed that no data will be published. The member commented that she would find it very unlikely that any of the awarding bodies would impose a reduction in pass rates based on Centre Assessed Grades as this would penalise young people who have already had their learning significantly disrupted. The Chair indicated that there were some curriculum areas that particularly stood out within the report and asked whether anything was currently being done to give the Committee comfort that issues were being addressed. The Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance confirmed that delivery teams are currently going through the CRE (Course Review and Evaluation) end of year process where course teams set themselves action plans to make improvements. This will then inform the College's self-assessment process. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality added that the College's management team provided challenge within this process and set extremely high standards. The Chair expressed his appreciation for the report which he felt demonstrated a very positive position in such a challenging situation.

The report was noted.

T/325 Apprenticeship Performance – 2019/20 (year to date)

The report was presented by the Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance.

The Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance advised the Committee that there had been 48 data status changes for apprentices since the data for the report was taken from the ILR. This would have a positive effect on the data as some of the changes were achievements. Members were advised that some of the scenarios included within the report are extremely unlikely but they have been included to give the Committee as full a picture as possible.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance for what he felt was a fantastic piece of work, presenting the data and helping governors to understand what is a very complex picture. Another member agreed that the explanation provided was very helpful. In response to a question from the member, the Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance indicated that he would expect the overall performance for apprenticeship performance for 2019/20 to be potentially around mid-60%. The member recognised that Covid will have an impact sector wide and felt that the College's approach of supporting each individual apprentice needed to continue. The Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance commented that it was very disappointing that improvements made in recent

months in relation to systems and processes will not be evidenced by an improvement in performance rates due to the impact of Covid. The Chair asked whether there was anything significant in relation to SORA Services Ltd that the Committee should be aware of. The Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance confirmed that there have been a large number of Breaks in Learning (BIL) from SORA but this is mainly due to the companies and sectors they are working with, some of which are impacted by Covid more than others. The Assistant Principal: Apprentices confirmed that BIL have been used with a minority of employers which are those impacted by Covid. They tend to be within the engineering and manufacturing sectors which have been particularly affected. The Chair recognised the challenge in supporting these learners and asked that the current focus be maintained.

The report was noted.

T/326 Apprenticeship Minimum Standards

The report was presented by the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

The Chair of the Corporation indicated that he felt an interesting formula had been used to determine the minimum standards and he felt many colleges had been in a similar position in relation to this. He stressed that it was important not to understate the position and it was absolutely right that the College team are disappointed. He indicated that the team would be limited in terms of what they can do in retrospect with things that have already happened. The Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance advised that there are no continuing learners on spectator safety provision and that this provision is not continuing. The Chair asked whether it is possible to get an indication of how the College would be performing against the minimum standards within the current year. The Assistant Principal: Standards and Performance responded advising that in a normal year you could probably do this confidently reporting by SSA or department. The impact of Covid makes this very difficult but the in-year best case is thought to be positive. An analysis and comparison could be undertaken but due to ongoing disruption to activity this would not give a full understanding. In response to a question from the Chair, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that the biggest risk should an intervention take place would be a block on being able to recruit apprentices or recruitment into specific curriculum areas. The Committee was advised that the minimum standard is released on an annual basis and is subject to review. The Chair asked that appropriate scrutiny be given to this area in future meetings.

The report was noted.

T/327 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Sharon Fenwick, Curriculum Leader; Art & Design / Media joined the meeting at 17.00.

The report was presented by the Head of Quality Improvement with input from Sharon Fenwick.

The Committee was advised that support has been targeted at departments who have not adapted as well to the use of technology. The annual Teacher Academy Conference would normally have taken place on 24 June 2020 and some of the work that had been planned to be included as part of the conference has been taken online to ensure that staff are supported in the use of technology.

The Chair commented that the current situation has stimulated creativity in ways that should be captured and continue in the future. He had found it interesting to hear that learners miss coming into College and interacting with staff and other learners which he thought was extremely reassuring. A member asked whether blended learning will be further enhanced as a result of recent activity. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that

previously there have been individuals who have been very engaged with blended learning. The College are now looking to capitalise on this and a possible suggestion to support this development includes potentially giving teams a monthly challenge. The College will be continuing to ask staff to engage with technology. This engagement will be monitored and supported. A bank of materials that can support this will be developed. The Head of Quality Improvement added that there is now a much more considered approach on how technology can support learning. The Chair felt that this was very interesting and should be encouraged to continue.

The report was noted.

Sharon Fenwick left the meeting at 17.25.

T/328 Higher Education

The report was presented by the Head of Quality Improvement.

The report was noted.

T/329 Curriculum Plan

The report was presented by the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

The Chair of the Corporation commented that it is his view that the curriculum plan is the single most important operational document of the College which outlines all key activity. He proposed that, perhaps in the new academic year when governors can meet in person, the Board should have a meeting devoted to an extended presentation of the curriculum plan. The plan informs everything the College does and governors need to be given confidence that when looking for efficiencies the curriculum plan is at the heart of these decisions. He felt that all governors should have an awareness of the curriculum planning process.

John Hogg left the meeting at 17.35.

The Chair of the Committee was supportive of the Chair of the Corporation's comments indicating that he had found the plan fascinating and he agreed that other governors should have an awareness of the plan and the process. Another member added that she thought the plan should be circulated to governors as she felt it would be very powerful and would help governors to understand what the College is trying to deliver. The Chair asked whether the curriculum plan was an internal document. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality confirmed that the plan was presented as part of the suite of recovery plan documents. It is currently being audited by FRP who are very interested in the data and are interrogating learner numbers stated in the plan and the estimated income. The annual curriculum planning process is part of College operations and the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality would want to continue to create a plan in future years similar to the report that has been presented. A member indicated that the data within the report was vital in terms of supporting work with the FEC and she felt that it could be used in many ways adding that it was very relevant for other governors to see and understand the plan. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality stated that he was very proud of the College product. He added that the plan included very robust data which is in the public domain with the exception of the internal cost metrics.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality confirmed that the plan does include a growth in numbers in A Level provision. The current year 2 is a very small cohort and he explained that the majority of current year 1 learners are looking to progress. Current demand shows there will be a similar sized year 1 cohort in 2020/21. In response to a further question from the Chair, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum

& Quality advised that there is a consensus in the sector that 50% is a good contribution. He outlined the colour coding applied to the cost centre analysis section of the plan. Green areas recognise a good contribution, red is reflective of a poor and orange is an average contribution. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality acknowledged that some provision has smaller group sizes so bring in less income but the kit and resources required to deliver these programmes has a higher cost. The analysis has been completed to highlight where there is comfort and where there are already improvements being made. The Chair felt that this was a very complex equation. The Committee discussed other A Level provision within the Gateshead area including that at Kingsmeadow which is currently franchised via Sunderland College and provision at Grace Academy.

The report was noted.

T/330 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

T/331 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed on the new meeting schedule for academic year 2020/21.

The meeting closed at 17.50.