



**CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE – MAIN MINUTES**  
**THURSDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2023 4PM TO 6PM – Gateshead College**

<b>Governors</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
Peter Francis	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	
Richard Wensley	Staff Governor	RW	X	
Dan Green	Student Governor	DG		X
Milly Wall	Student Governor	MW	X^	
<b>Clerk</b>				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
<b>Presenters</b>				
Chris Toon	Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality	CT	X	
Deni Chambers	Director of Curriculum & Skills	DC	X	
Richard Ward	Assistant Principal	RW	X	
Kevin Marston	Assistant Principal	KM	X	
Tracy Foreman	Assistant Principal	TF	X	
Tom Bradley	Assistant Principal	TB	X	
John Deary	Assistant Principal	JD	X	
Suzanne Cunningham	Head of Quality Improvement	SC	X	
Melissa Gardiner	Head of Quality Assurance	MG	X	
Graham Cunningham	Head of Department - Construction	GC	X^	
Graham Stouph	Head of Department - Engineering and Manufacturing	GS	X^	

\*Attended via Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting

**CQ/234 1. Chair's Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. Introductions took place.

Apologies were received from DG and MWW. MW would be joining the meeting late following her lesson. AA would need to leave the meeting early. 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/235 2. Matters Arising / Action Log**

It was noted that minutes and actions from the October 2024 meeting would be covered at the February 2025 meeting, however a link had been included to the November 2024 Board Performance and Enrolment report in case any governors wanted to discuss this in greater detail.

***The report was noted.***

## **CQ/236 3. Self-Assessment Report (SAR) Validation Process 2022/23 – Proposal of Grades and Judgements**

CT presented the report, noting that the creation of the Self-Assessment Report was an important piece of work for the College and cyclical in nature. The SAR presented reflected the 2023/2024 academic year. CT confirmed that the overall SAR was built up from departmental level SARs. The process included the Quality Team attending SAR meetings and gathering evidence relating to key themes. The purpose of the internal SAR meetings was also to provide support and challenge of the strengths and areas for improvement highlighted. The outcomes of the SAR informed the curriculum Quality Improvement Plan for 2024/2025, a draft of which had been included as part of the meeting.

The Chair **noted** the excellent quality of the report.

CT provided a presentation which covered an overview of the SAR process, the strengths and areas for improvement of each element of the SAR and the overall proposed SAR gradings.

To provide additional assurance, three departmental SARs were presented:

- Sport (where the proposed grading had improved from Grade 2 in 2022/2023 to a Grade 1).
- Construction (where the proposed grading remained consistent with 2022/23 at a Grade 2).
- Engineering (where the proposed grading had reduced from a Grade 2 in 2022/2023 to a Grade 3).

### **Sport and UPS – Proposed Grade: Outstanding**

JD provided an overview of the departmental SAR for Sport and Uniformed Public Services, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. JD noted this department had previously been self-assessed as Good for a number of years however had seen particular improvement during 2023/2024, allowing the department to self-assess as Outstanding. Some key areas of improvement related to a positive shift in culture, improved student behaviour and a highly ambitious curriculum. The department continued to have great engagement with employers relating to placements, work experience and wider enrichment and opportunities.

**The Committee discussed and queried the following:**

- The difference in achievement between English and Maths – JD noted that achievement was strong however the department wanted to continue to improve, and to do this were looking to further contextualise maths within the curriculum.
- Different methods of learning to suit the needs of learners – JD noted that this was being considered. RW noted that learners did not seem to be realising the progress they were making within their Maths skills and not recognising the mathematical requirements included as part of their course curriculum.

#### Construction – Proposed Grade: Good

GC provided an overview of the departmental SAR for Construction, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. GC noted the strength of relationships with local and regional employers and positive learner feedback. GC noted that improvements could be seen in the number of apprentices passing their End Point Assessments first time. The department were looking to improve attendance at English and Maths sessions.

#### **The Committee discussed and queried the following:**

- Any learning points from learner feedback responses – GC noted that this was something he explored to better understand the wants and needs of learners, but noted some negative responses were due to the wording of the question, for example, not all learners have something they would recommend the course too. GC provided reassurance that there were no concerns of note.
- Engagement of female learners within Construction – GC noted that there were still low numbers of female learners, however noted the higher number of female learners within the PlanBee provision. The Committee **queried** if there were any learning points to take forward from this however it was suggested that this was more specific to the programme type. It was agreed that further work could be done around role modelling, and strong examples of this were in place at Automotive and Engineering. It was also suggested to utilise female students from the PlanBee provision and to link up with VB (Property /Estates FGP Co-opted Governor) who also had a skillset and passion within this area.

#### **Action: CT to consider role modelling within Construction (including linking with VB).**

- Barriers to securing learner placements – the business development team were working hard to overcome this however some placements were difficult to secure due to health and safety elements, availability, movements in site etc. TB noted that some learners faced difficulties with travel and so the College were considering initiatives to resolve this. GC anecdotally noted that during 2023/2024 there seemed to be a lack of drive for learners wishing to seek employment or an apprenticeship, however this hadn't been recognised previously and didn't seem to be a continuing trend into 2024/2025.
- Attendance to date – GC noted that attendance so far this term was positive, and additional staffing resource had been focussed on attendance and retention which was having a positive impact, with a greater understanding of barriers faced by learners.

#### Manufacturing and Engineering

GS provided an overview of the departmental SAR for Manufacturing and Engineering, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. GS noted that a number of improvements had been made across 2023/2024, and this included strengthening relationships with industry partners, staff CPD, and investment in facilities and equipment. The department were also moving into new areas of work, being adaptable and responsive to skills needs of the future. The department were looking to improve attendance at English and Maths sessions and achievement rates for 16-18 year old learners. GS noted that there had been a number of staffing changes across 2023/2024,

with new staff in place, a majority of whom were new to teaching. Additional support had been implemented, and a revision of the structure for those delivering HE to better support learners.

**The Committee discussed and queried the following:**

- Starting points for learners – GS noted that the intake for 2024/2025 saw a larger amount of Level 1 and Level 2 learners, and it could be that prior learners had the qualifications to start at a higher level, however struggled. The department had been a lot more robust with starting points for 2024/2025 to ensure learners were better supported and able to achieve.
- Quality of teaching of new starters – GS noted there had been some learning points relating to lack of experience during 2024/2025 and this should have been more closely monitored. Focussed intervention was now in place with Lead Practitioners and additional supportive monitoring which would continue. GS noted the expectation of a more static workforce, which was future proofed, going forward.
- Key priorities for the next 12 months – this was noted as achievement rates for 16-18 year old learners, and English and Maths attendance. GS noted that bootcamps were also a challenge.

The Committee **thanked** GS for his honesty within his reflection and recognised the starting point of a continued journey of improvement.

*MW joined the meeting.*

*GC and GS left the meeting.*

The overall SAR provided proposed gradings and the Committee were being asked to consider the gradings and recommend for Board approval.

### **3.1. Education Programmes for Young People**

TF presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Outstanding.

**The Committee discussed and queried the following:**

- The College's aspirations in relation to national averages, noting that some national averages were well below the College's expectations – it was agreed that the College would consider this.

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Outstanding.**

### **3.2. Apprenticeships**

JD presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Outstanding. JD noted the significant quality improvement journey undertaken.

**The Committee discussed and queried the following:**

- Correlation between less engaged employers and learners not achieving – it was suggested there wasn't a correlation with this, however less engaged employers did often create a negative impact on the timeliness of entry for End Point Assessment. It was confirmed that the College did consider the engagement of employers when considering future business opportunities.
- The number of learners not achieving their End Point Assessment (EPA), and whether this would impact the overall area grading of Outstanding. It was clarified that this related to a small amount of learners only, however timely completion of End Point Assessment was a continued focus. The Committee **suggested** an amendment of wording to ensure clarity around this being a

micro issue relating to a small number of learners. MG noted the ability to compare apprenticeship performance against other organisations using the DfE data dashboards, noting that the College's performance was strong.

**Action: CT to revise wording to quantify number of learners not timely completing their EPA.**

- The impact of legacy issues – it was noted that this would continue however modelling of best case and worst case achievement per department had taken place. MG's apprenticeship specialism was a great addition and strength to the quality team.

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Outstanding.**

### **3.3. Provision for Learners with High Needs**

TB presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Good. TB made specific reference to the improvements made during 2023/2024 and the College's ethos of all teachers being teachers of Special Educational Needs.

The Committee noted a key area of improvement being progression to employment.

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Good.**

### **3.4. Adult Learning Programmes**

CT presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Outstanding. CT noted that this area was a continued focus with a strong provision and offer. The College were adapting and responding to challenges within this area and would continue to do so, overcoming barriers to learning.

**The Committee discussed and queried the following:**

- Differences between learners securing an interview and learners securing a job following the completion of their qualifications – this was recognised as a challenge, with the need for employers to be more flexible with their expectations and requirements regarding prior levels of experience. DA agreed that this would form part of the strategic thinking within this area.

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Outstanding.**

### **3.5. Quality of Education**

RW presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Outstanding. RW made specific reference to strength of the curriculum intent and close working relationships with employers. Achievement rates were consistently higher than national rates. The College was in an area of significant deprivation where students faced significant barriers to learning, however the College continued to support learners to succeed.

The Committee noted the level of support provided to learners and the continued focus on ensuring equity of education for all.

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Outstanding.**

### 3.6. Behaviour and Attitudes

HM presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Outstanding. KM noted the high standards of behaviour and conduct.

The Committee **recognised** the links between high standards of behaviour and conduct and ensuring learners were equipped for working life.

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Outstanding.**

### 3.7. Personal Development

DC presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Outstanding.

**The Committee discussed and queried the following:**

- The decrease in the number of learners going to University and the potential drivers for this – it was recognised that the College had seen a shift in the number of learners seeking higher apprenticeships over higher education and had also anecdotally noticed an increase of learners wishing to take a gap year ahead of progressing to University.

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Outstanding.**

### 3.8. Leadership and Management

CT presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Good. CT noted the strength of staff engagement and the investment in learners.

The Committee **suggested** strengthening the work of the Teacher Academy within the document and that further staff voice should be brought to Board to celebrate the engagement and dedication of the staff.

**Action: CT to strengthen the work of the Teacher Academy within the report.**

**Action: CT / NT to consider ways to bring additional staff voice at Board level regarding engagement and dedication of staff.**

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Good.**

### 3.9. Safeguarding

CT presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Effective. CT noted the exceptional approach to Safeguarding, which was over and above the College's statutory duties.

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Effective.**

### 3.10. Skills

DC presented this area, setting out the strengths and future areas for improvement. The proposed grading was Strong. DC noted that the College had been recognised as Strong for Skills during the Ofsted inspection in March 2023, and continued to build on this with further improvement in sequencing.

The Committee **recognised** the strength of this area and the links with the College's ethos of Employment Edge.

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Strong.**

### 3.11. Overall Self-Assessment

CT noted that the proposed overall grading for the 2023/2024 Self-Assessment was Good. The Committee **noted** the excellent depth and breadth of the information reported and **made specific reference** to the evident quality impact.

The Student Governor provided her views, noting the individualised focus on the needs and aspirations of learners with a genuine wish for learners to do their best. The College continued to achieve rates higher than national average, and exceed their own expectations.

**The Committee requested the College to consider the following ahead of submitting to Board.**

- **Quantifying numbers learners where there are areas for improvement.**
- **Reduction in emotive language.**
- **Increased consistency of EDI.**
- **The aims of the College in terms of being above national rates, top quartiles etc.**
- **Greater links with the College's values.**

Any additional comments were to be provided to CT by Tuesday 26 AM.

The Committee **recognised** the progress made during 2023/2024. The Committee **noted** the clarity of direction to improve and recognised this would be an ongoing journey. The Committee **noted their expectation** to see improvement across the key areas of focus for 2024/2025 as the year progressed

**The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed overall grading of Good.**

## CQ/237 4. Quality Improvement Plan

RW presented the QIP and highlighted that this set out the actions to take forward to address the 7 areas for development as set out within the SAR. The QIP was then delineated into departmental level QIPs and action plans. Improvement activity was already underway however a more detailed update would be provided at the February 2025 Committee meeting.

The Committee **queried** the measurability of the actions included within the QIP and **requested** leading and lagged indicators to provide oversight of monitoring.

**Action: CT and RW to consider leading and lagged indicators to provide oversight of monitoring.**

*The Curriculum and Quality Standards Committee noted the report.*

## CQ/238 5. Any Other Business

N/A

**CQ/239 6. Date of the Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 13 February 2025 at 4.00pm.