Agenda No: 04

CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE – MAIN MINUTES
THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2025 4PM TO 6PM – Gateshead College

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Peter Francis	Chair / Independent	PF	X	
David Alexander	Principal / CEO	DA	X	
Michael Williams	Independent	MWi	X*	
Aneela Ali	Independent	AA	X^	
Carol Davenport	Independent	CD		X
Katy Malia	Staff Governor	KMal	X^	
Dan Green	Student Governor	DG	X	
Milly Wall	Student Governor	MWa	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	
Sarah Judson	Deputy Principal Finance & Resources	SJ	X	
Richard Ward	Assistant Principal	RW	X	
Kevin Marston	Assistant Principal	KMar	X	
Tracy Foreman	Assistant Principal	TF	X	
John Deary	Assistant Principal	JD	X	
Tom Bradley	Assistant Principal	TB	X	
Suzanne Cunningham	Head of Quality Improvement	SC	X	
Michelle Callaghan	Lead Practitioner	MC	X	
Melissa Gardiner	Head of Quality Assurance	MG	X	
Darren Heathcote	Head of Student Services and Customer Experience	DH	X	
Vicky Cross	Head of Department, Visual and Performing Arts	VC	X	

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

1. Initial Governance

CQ/259 1.1 Chair's Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

Apologies were received from CD. KMal and AA would be joining the meeting slightly later. 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/260 1.2 Minutes of the last meetings

A. The Committee **reviewed** the main minutes from the meeting on 13 February 2025 and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

The minutes were approved.

CQ/261 1.3 Matters Arising / Action Log

NT presented the action log and provided updates relating to ongoing actions.

The action log was noted.

MWa joined the meeting.

CQ/262 1.4 Terms of Reference

1.4.1 Terms of Reference and Workplan 2024/2025

The Chair presented the report, setting out a reminder of the Committee's remit and the workplan agreed for the year.

The report was noted.

CQ/263 1.4.2 Terms of Reference 2025/2026

NT presented the report and noted that for 2025/2026, only minor housekeeping amends were suggested which did not materially impact the context of the document.

The Chair had made some additional observations, and a further revised version was included, the Chair talked these through.

The Committee **recommended** the Terms of Reference (including the Chair's proposed amends) for 2025/2026 for Board approval.

Action: NT to update proposed Terms of Reference and present to the Board at the July 2025 meeting for Board approval.

The report was noted.

2. Strategy

CQ/264 2.1 Shaping of the Accountability Agreement 2025/2026

CT presented the report, setting out the following:

- Progress against aims included within the 2024/2025 Accountability Agreement.
- The additional learner growth in 16-18 for 2024/2025, and that further growth was expected for 2025/2026.

- Work had been undertaken to map the College's qualifications to LSIP priorities however some qualifications sat outside the priority areas. Evidence showed that these qualifications still led to progression and future opportunities.
- Further work was to be done with Higher Technical Qualifications.

KMal joined the meeting.

- The report set out the proposed aims for the 2025/2026 Accountability Agreement for discussion.

The attendees worked in groups to discuss the proposed aims and fed back the following:

- For Committee members, a greater prior understanding of curriculum intent, alongside alignment to local and national strategic objectives, would be helpful.
- Explore a modular / mixed approach to 16-18 qualifications (A Levels, BTECs etc).
- Obtain views from prospective students to feed into future qualification options.
- Explore opportunities of networking / wider learning for learners, and raising awareness of events such as networking opportunities, webinars, seminars etc, linking to employment edge.
- Positive feedback of a values led approach to trauma informed practice, and the need to ensure that associated CPD for staff was a key priority.
- Consider the measurability of performance, including retention and attendance, and considering EDI characteristics / trends of differing groups of learners to close any gaps.
- Have a greater understanding of pathways and qualification routes for learners, specifically adults, rather than standalone courses.
- Create opportunities for learners to be involved in community engagement and events.
- Consider the College's HE offer and allowing flexibility within this. Work with those providers in the region and consider any gaps in the market.
- Explore the opportunity to become a Technical Excellence College for Construction and consider what opportunities this could bring.
- Consider demand for foundation apprenticeships amongst employers within the region, with a focus on the construction sector.
- Consider the impact of the learner experience whilst at Gateshead College.
- Consider a wider aim relating to Digital, rather than specifics of the Digital Up North hub.

The Chair reiterated the purpose of the Accountability Agreement – *the annual accountability statement should focus on what provision you will deliver in the year ahead to support local, regional, and national needs and (for those institutions within scope) the actions and outcomes from the Local Needs Duty.* The Chair asked for further consideration of the aims, ensuring alignment to the asks for the document.

The deadline for submission to the DfE was 7 July 2025. It was agreed for CT to update the accountability agreement aims and produce a finalised document including the narrative and SMART measurable targets and circulate to the Committee ahead of seeking Board approval.

Action: CT to reflect committee considerations and finalise the document, circulating to the Committee ahead of seeking Board approval (June 2025).

The report was noted.

CQ/265 2.2 Strategic Risk Register

SJ presented the report noting that this was largely the same as presented to the Board in April 2025. A review of the risk register would be undertaken in the summer term, alongside ensuring it is understandable / digestible to governors.

The Committee **supported** this review.

The report was noted.

3. Policy, Procedure and Regulation

CQ/266 3.1 Safeguarding Update – Term 1

DH presented the report and highlighted safeguarding and welfare referrals had increased significantly.

Additional information had been included within the report relating to retention of learners past the day-42 census point who had received safeguarding / welfare support.

The Committee **discussed** the values led delivery of pastoral support and the likelihood of an increase in referrals because of this.

AA joined the meeting.

The Safeguarding Link Governor (MWi) provided reassurance of the work of the Safeguarding Steering Group, specifically noting the research and development of the team and wider community across the College.

It was noted the report wouldn't largely change between this point in the year and the end of year report so the Committee **agreed** for an annual report to be submitted to cover the full academic year and other termly reports to include high level tabular information with less narrative, and to also highlight key trends / potential safeguarding risks to allow the Committee to maintain oversight of safeguarding and welfare referrals.

Action: DH to provide an annual report, alongside termly updates of high-level information, setting out key trends / safeguarding risks.

The report was noted.

CQ/267 3.2 Curriculum Changes 2025/2026

DC presented the report and highlighted that, following the curriculum presentation to the Committee at the February 2025 meeting, the report set out the curriculum changes for 2025/2026.

The Committee **noted** the helpfulness of the summary setting out alignment to local, regional and national skills needs.

The Committee **discussed** the College's ethos of employment edge and the measurability of this, including destination data, although noting this was lagged.

The report was noted.

CQ/268 3.3 Updated Guidance - Careers guidance and access for education and training providers

NT presented the report and highlighted that from September 2025, the DfE expects all institutions to use the updated Gatsby Benchmarks. The College would continue to provide the Committee with an annual report in February of each year setting out the College's compliance against the benchmarks and the forward-looking careers plan for approval.

The report was noted.

4. Quality and Performance

CQ/269 4.1 Performance Report

CT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The College was maintaining strong performance in teaching, learning, and assessment, with attendance and retention broadly stable or improving, and apprenticeship outcomes slightly up but still just below government targets, although looking to achieve 70% achievement going forward.
- The college was prioritising exam readiness, improving ESOL outcomes, and closely monitoring apprenticeship assessments to ensure continued progress and learner success.
- National achievement rate data has been included, with the College sitting 3rd in the country for A Level achievements. CT noted other colleges' use of non-regulated qualifications and the inflation impact this can have on national achievement rates.
- The DfE was piloting a new FE Provider Dashboard that consolidated publicly available performance data to support strategic planning and review. It offered useful insights across nine key measures.
- Further growth in 16-18 learner numbers was expected for 2025/2026.

The Committee <u>discussed and queried</u> the following:

- The RAG rating of performance when being compared to targets and it being important to highlight positive comparisons to previous years.
- The variation of achievement across different apprenticeships.
- Gaps in achievement and retention across EDI characteristics with the want to understand this in more detail.
- The College's aim to be in the top quartile figures and how future learner growth may impact this.
- The support offered to ESOL learners, and understanding the potential complex needs some learners may have.

The Committee sought to understand if there were any areas for concern going into 2025/2026 and it was suggested not, although apprenticeship achievement was being monitored closely, and that the annual self-assessment exercise would be undertaken to consider areas for improvement.

The Committee **<u>noted</u>** the positive attendance rates for Maths and English GCSE exams at over 97% and agreed this was a great achievement.

The report was noted.

CQ/270 4.2 Quality Improvement Plan Update

RW presented the report, setting out that 5 areas were RAG rated green and 2 RAG rated amber, with confidence that all would be achieved by the year end.

Attendance at Maths and English lessons was still below target despite significant work from staff.

The Committee **discussed and queried** the number of learner applicants having disclosed SEN but had not accessed learning support, despite efforts from the College. It was confirmed that the number of learner applicants who had accessed support (257) was an improvement on previous years. There was learning support available at every campus and attending every open event to improve this position. RW confirmed that 20% of 16-18 learners had an EHCP or a SEND support plan, with numbers increasing year on year. It was noted that communications were being explored to ensure learners felt included and supported ahead of starting their college course. The Committee **discussed** the potential barriers to accessing learning support, such as stigma and peer pressure. It was confirmed that all applicants disclosing SEN were followed up with once starting the College.

The report was noted.

CQ/271 4.3 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Teacher Academy

SC presented the report and covered the following:

- The purpose of the Teacher Academy.
- The support categories of focussed, enhanced and dissemination, none of which were hierarchical, with bespoke support being offered to support alignment between personal developmental goals and the College's priorities.
- The inclusion of learner voice as part of observations.
- The recent termly coaching summaries data showing an average engagement score of 3.5 out of 4, and 3.2 out of 4 for progress against objectives.
- Support being enhanced around behaviour management, based on need across the college with additional learners.
- The enhancement of data dashboards and utilisation of technology such as AI.

MC, Lead Practitioner, provided the Committee with a summary of the work undertaken within the Health & Social Care department to improve behaviour management. This entailed the need to adapt and tailor approaches to different learners and understand their needs. Initiatives included encouraging the whole class, as part of an additional registration session, to attend the College's free breakfast to ensure all learners had eaten ahead of starting their day.

Following this project, CPD was to be rolled out to staff to develop this further.

The Committee **queried** progress on canteen pricing within the College. It was confirmed that additional options, such as free soup at lunchtime, had been added, as well as work done on pricing and options.

A Student Governor suggested removing the need for those in receipt of free college meals to show a barcode, differing themselves from others, and it was confirmed that this had been replaced with learners able to use something similar to apple pay which made the free college meal offer much more discreet.

The College continued to top up the free college meal allowance to £4 per day, as opposed to the standard funded rate of £2.61 which the College felt was insufficient.

The Committee **recognised** the positive relationships with learners, and the aim to understand and support their individual needs. This was expected to link to positive performance outcomes. The Committee noted the challenge to maintain this.

The report was noted.

5. Student Experience

CQ/272 5.1 Follow-up from last meeting – Student Voice

Deferred to the next meeting.

6. Relationships and External Engagement

CQ/273 6.1 CoLab Update

VC presented the report and provided a presentation setting out the following:

- The impact of CoLab across the College and using this as a vehicle to drive more cross-college collaboration to maximise opportunity from employer briefs and projects.
- The work with employers, the opportunity for learners to develop skills, and delivery outcomes / outputs.
- The number of different departments able to get involved and work together depending on the employment brief.

MWa left the meeting.

- The positive feedback from learners and employers.
- Opportunities leading to further work, further opportunities for learners and positive reputation for the College.
- The links to all pillars of the strategic plan; learners, people, sustainability and partnership.
- The aim for current learners involved in the project to become mentors and peer support for the next cohort of learners.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The level of collaboration and cross-college opportunities.
- Larger scale opportunities and the resourcing of this.
- Support for learners leaving the College and looking to explore self-employment, business start-up etc.
- Links with the College's ethos of employment edge and the measurement of opportunity as set out within the presentation.
- The powerful advocacy received from partners.

The Committee **thanked** VC and the teams for their work.

The report was noted.

7. End of Meeting Governance

CQ/274 **7.1 Actions Agreed**

Actions related to finalising the Committee Terms of Reference and the Accountability Agreement for Board approval. The Accountability Agreement was to be circulated to the Committee for recommendation ahead of submitting to the Board.

The Safeguarding report would be made up of an annual report, supported by termly summary updates going forward.

The Chair reiterated the importance of the College being an anchor within the region and noted the great performance coming out of the reports presented.

CQ/275 **7.2 Any Other Business and Meeting Evaluation**

AOB

N/A

Meeting Evaluation

Feedback link circulated post-meeting.

CQ/276 **7.3 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was to be 30 September 2025.