



Northern College

THE CURRICULUM, QUALITY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on **29 November 2021**.

Present: Prof Mike Bramhall (Chair), Colin Forrest, Tim Thornton, Sue Horner, Henry Otulakowski and Yultan Mellor (Principal).

In attendance: The Assistant Principal – Curriculum, Quality, Business Development (Emma Beal), the Assistant Principal – Student Experience (Diane Lawson) and the Clerk to the Governors (Sarah Johnson).

Apologies: Sarah Tyler.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Q21/37 Each governor present declared any potential interests/conflicts of loyalty related to items to be considered at the meeting. With respect to his roles as Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Huddersfield and member of the Leeds City Region Employment and Skills Panel Prof Tim Thornton declared a potential conflict of loyalty in items relating to the College's higher education provision. It was agreed that no decisions to be taken at the meeting would be affected and it was not considered necessary for the member to withdraw.

MINUTES

Q21/38 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

Q21/39 None.

SECTOR REPORT

Q21/40 The committee received a verbal update on sector developments and changes in the external environment that could have an impact on quality, curriculum and student experience, including:

- Ofsted preparation, noting that all College's would be inspected by 2025;
- work with local MPs, noting that Miriam Cates was working with the College to further develop its relationship with DWP, and Alex Burghart had been invited to visit the College prior to making his decision about future funding of residential education;
- partnership working with Barnsley Council communities team;
- feedback from the Association of Colleges (AoC) national conference;
- partnership work with the National Trust;
- COVID.

Q21/41 The committee particularly considered:

- the mood of the sector at the AoC conference;
- potential implications of the Omicron COVID variant and the College's response, noting that the College had issued new guidance to students and staff, and that the

situation was potentially very worrying in terms of student recruitment and participation for the remainder of the academic year.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

PERFORMANCE (Document 3i)

- Q21/42 The committee considered the performance review report which set out details of the College's performance monitoring process for curriculum managers and heads of departments, along with the outcome of the latest round undertaken in November 2021. The committee noted that:
- new performance monitoring reports had been developed;
 - this was the first full round of reviews against the new framework;
 - each review covered performance against budget, staff sickness absence, mandatory training, vacancies, progress against individual area implementation plans for 2021/22; plus for curriculum managers student recruitment against target and updated curriculum plans, attendance, at risk students, staff utilisation and sessional staff requirements, and review of SAR and QIP.
 - key actions had included marketing, maximisation of staff utilisation, minimisation of non-pay expenditure, managing utility costs, introducing recharges, teaching staff skills audit, attendance, progression maps, mandatory training and ICT CPD.
- Q21/43 The committee particularly explored:
- January 2022 recruitment, finance and attendance, retention, achievement and pass data, benchmarking data;
 - conversion rates from interest/application to enrolment, noting that this was a key area of development for the College and work was being done to develop an appropriate data set for analysis and improving processes;
 - how the quality of teaching, learning and assessment was incorporated into the process;
 - how student feedback could be incorporated into future reports.
- Q21/44 The committee considered a report on **student recruitment for 2021/22** to date, noting that:
- recruitment for September starts was below target;
 - two further cohorts for January 2022 were currently advertised, one in health Sciences and the other in criminology and psychology;
 - recruitment for pre access (term 2) was strong, and students were being offered a programme of study starting in January 2022, including additional preparation courses in term one, alongside English, maths and digital as required;
 - GCSE English and maths courses had recruited under target in term one, further cohorts had been planned for term two;
 - the College had secured a space in Barnsley town centre to undertake initial assessment and IAG with the intention of improving the rate at which students moved through the admissions process;
 - teacher education student numbers had performed slightly under target;
 - short courses had continued to run on campus, and for term one were being authorised to run on low numbers in order to stimulate delivery and further enrolments;
 - no show / cancellations continued to be a difficulty and the College was putting in extra prestart steps to reduce the number;
 - business and management courses had been slow to recruit, and replotting was taking place to move start dates to term two;

- there was a continued focus across the College on marketing activities, and the College was working with an FE specialist online marketing company who were supporting social media and pay per click online advertising.

Q21/45 The committee agreed that:

- the context and recruitment position was extremely challenging;
- recent developments regarding COVID variants were likely to make the position more challenging;
- the decision to run small groups, whilst financially challenging, was the right one;
- the encouraging feedback received from students and the recruitment of new students to the College was positive;
- appropriate use of student testimonials in marketing was essential.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

DRAFT SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020/21 (Document 3ii)

- Q21/46 The committee considered the College draft self-assessment report for 2020/21, noting that:
- overall effectiveness had been self-assessed as good, with outstanding features;
 - the report and grading had been tested independently by an experienced inspector as part of a recent Ofsted healthcheck, who had supported the College's evaluation;
 - the report had been challenging to write due to the impact of COVID, particularly in relation to accessing benchmarking data;
 - comparative data had been included wherever possible;
 - an associated quality improvement plan was in development and would be considered by the committee at its meeting in February 2022;
 - key areas of action would include achievement rates; employability and intent; teaching, learning and assessment quality actions; and student journey.

Q21/47 The committee:

- noted the significance of the report in relation to a future Ofsted inspection;
- explored their position regarding grading, noting that whilst the FEC had strongly encouraged grading it risked distracting from the narrative;
- agreed that overall it supported the proposal to grade and supported the grades included;
- agreed that links to the evidence could be strengthened in some places;
- suggested areas where the narrative could be shifted from descriptive to evaluative;
- agreed that the report was too modest in some areas, and that a reflection of the narrative from the FEC reports could be helpful;
- explored the actions to be included in the quality improvement plan;
- agreed that progression could be addressed in more detail;
- explored English and Maths pass rates and noted that work was required to encourage all students to attend the examination.

Resolved: i That the SAR be further developed in line with the discussion and submitted to the Board of Governors for consideration.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION REPORT 2020/21 (Document 3iii)

- Q21/48 The committee considered the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2020/21**, noting that:
- this was the first report which had combined data regarding staff and students;
 - the College had reviewed and updated its equality objectives and framework during the year;

- in response to an increasing number of students with disability and mental health issues negatively impacted by COVID new systems had been developed to support students with disabilities, creating more targeted support and clearer processes.

Q21/49 The committee:

- particularly focused on BAME representation in the staff group, agreeing that this was a persistent issue for the College, and challenged the College to reflect the issues more strongly in the report and seek to develop additional creative actions and targets;
- explored the data relating to male recruitment, which had increased;
- explored the data relating to achievement for students with a disability and/or mental health issue;
- explored how the College supported students to develop self-efficacy;
- noted that staff recruitment during the year had been challenging.

Resolved: i That the report be submitted to the Board of Governors for consideration.

HE UPDATE REPORT (Document 3iii)

Q21/50 The committee considered a higher education update report which included;

- enrolment data for 2021/22;
- digital developments;
- recruitment for 2022/23;
- quality of the student experience;
- HE quality procedures;
- teacher education summer conference;
- the new Level 4 certificate in education and training;
- the upcoming validation event for the new foundation degree in professional health and social care with Sheffield Hallam University;

Q21/51 The committee particularly explored:

- how the professional expertise of College staff was being maximised;
- the quality monitoring framework with Huddersfield University.

Resolved: i That a report regarding the monitoring and reporting framework for HE be considered at the next meeting.

RISKS OVERSEEN BY THE COMMITTEE (Document 4ii)

Q21/52 The committee considered the risk register noting that the areas allocated to the committee for oversight - recruitment and marketing and Ofsted - had been explored during the meeting.

Q21/53 The committee agreed that the risks were suitably reflected in the register and the controls and mitigation were appropriate.

Resolved: i That the risk register be noted.

PREPARATION FOR OFSTED

Q21/54 The committee considered the College's activities in preparation for Ofsted and the further development and preparation required for governors, noting:

- that the health check event had been extremely useful and had supported the College's own self-assessment process;
- the development work being undertaken with staff;
- the planned preparations to be put in place in January 2022 for governors.

Q21/55 The committee explored the role of Ofsted in relation to residence.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

POLICIES (Document 5i)

Q21/56 The committee considered and recommended the following policies to the Board:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Additional Learning Support.

Q21/57 The committee requested that the College seek feedback on the EDI policy from representative(s) of the BAME community.

Resolved: i That feedback be sought on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy from representative(s) of the BAME community.

ii That subject to the above the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Additional Learning Support policies be recommended to the Board of Governors for approval.

SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

Q21/58 The committee considered a detailed update regarding Safeguarding and Prevent matters, including an update from the Lead Governor – Safeguarding, particularly:

- the context and legislation;
- the College's Safeguarding team and responsibilities;
- Prevent matters;
- local risks and threats;
- national risks and threats;
- safer recruitment arrangements;
- responsibilities of governors and training;
- the DfE Prevent event planned to take place at the College the following week;
- the role of the Lead Governor – Safeguarding.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND KPIs (Document 6i)

Q21/59 The committee:

- considered its own performance in relation to its key performance indicators, and noted that all the indicators had been met;
- considered and agreed proposed indicators for 2021/22;
- considered its terms of reference and agreed that it be proposed to the Board that membership be amended to 4 – 6.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS

Q21/60 21 February 2022 - 1.30pm
16 June 2022 – 1.30pm