



Northern College

THE CURRICULUM, QUALITY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on **17 June 2021**.

Present: Prof Mike Bramhall (Chair), Colin Forrest, Sarah Tyler (up to and including Q21/28) 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: None.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Q21/20 None.

MINUTES

Q21/21 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

Q21/22 None.

SECTOR REPORT

Q21/23 The committee received an update on sector developments and changes in the external environment that could have an impact on quality, curriculum and student experience, including:

- the impact of COVID-19 on the student experience;
- press and public relations – noting that the College had received a huge amount of public support from organisations and individuals, including MPs from across the political spectrum, and that whilst this was very positive the perceived uncertainty about the College's future could have a negative impact on student recruitment for 2021/22;
- devolution;
- Ofsted developments;
- the planned approach to the publication of qualification achievement rates for 2020/21;
- the Skills Index Report.

Q21/22 The committee particularly:

- considered predicted outcomes for long course students – noting that:
 - it had been a very challenging year;
 - some students had not been confident to return to campus and continued to learn remotely;

- retention was higher than expected and provisional outturn was access – 77%, pre-access - 78%;
- whilst lower than normal retention remained high considering the challenging circumstances and was likely to be in line with or higher than the sector;
- considered predicted year end outcomes for short course students – noting that recruitment had been significantly negatively impacted by COVID, both on-line and residentially, and the extended lockdown meant the position was unlikely to recover by the end of July;
- noted the very positive relationships that had developed with Sheffield City Region and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, welcoming the secured funding for the next three years including the continuation of the x4.7 factor;
- noted the planned resumption of full Ofsted inspection work in the Autumn and the potential implications for the College;
- noted the review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges and that whilst this was not a legislative requirement in relation to the College's adult student population the College would be mindful of the work in its future planning and would utilise the guidance in relation to culture change to shape its work – this would include:
 - full participation in a borough wide safeguarding week on 15-19 November 2021;
 - working with the NEBRC to become a blue print College for digital safeguarding;
 - working with adult students to enable them to support safeguarding in their families and communities;
- welcomed the College's continuing approach to safeguarding which it noted went well beyond compliance and added significant value;
- explored the implications for any children who may accompany adults on courses, noting that these would be managed in line with all safeguarding requirements as appropriate;
- considered the potential implications of the publication of qualification achievement rates for 2020/21, noting that the final position had not yet been clarified, it was likely that only examined achievements would be published, and this would mean that very limited achievements would be published for the College;
- noted that as demonstrated in the Skills Index Report, with 61% of adults stating they were not equipped with the skills they needed, 64% stating that they had received no CPD in the last years and 30% stating they had received no CPD in the last 5 years, the College's ambition and curriculum for adults was more significant and required than ever;
- explored the College's links with volunteer networks and how they were maximised and would be further developed in future.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD 2020/21 (Document 3j)

- Q21/23 The committee considered the performance dashboard for 2020/21 to 30 April 2021 particularly noting that:
- recruitment was below target in all areas, with short courses hit particularly hard as previously discussed;
 - student success had performed well under challenging circumstances.
- Q21/24 The committee noted the performance reported and agreed that the data presented was as anticipated. The committee particularly considered the current position regarding the ESFA tolerance level for AEB funded provision, noting that:

- whilst lobbying from the sector continued, there had as yet been no position change from the ESFA;
- the continuation of COVID restrictions beyond June 2021 could impact on this decision;
- the College's current position had further worsened due to the continued challenging position for adult learners and now stood at just over 50%.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

PERFORMANCE REPORT (Document 3ii)

- Q21/25 The committee considered the performance report which provided an update in relation to:
- student support and estates;
 - COVID 19;
 - curriculum and quality;
 - marketing and partnerships.
- Q21/26 The committee particularly explored:
- the positive impacts of the review of the student admissions process on the student experience;
 - the benefits in relation to improved tracking of student support services, for both the College and individual students, noting that the system would be fully implemented by September 2021;
 - the College's management of COVID 19, noting:
 - that there had been no instances of College based contraction;
 - the monitoring work undertaken by the HSE had not identified any further actions required;
 - the effective management of isolation for a number of students, with all being able to continue their studies throughout;
 - the College's planned approach to engaging with hidden NEETS as part of its project funded curriculum growth, noting that this would require the development of further collaborative partnerships and creative activity to engage young adults who were not currently engaged with services;
 - quality improvement activities in term three, including the outcome of moderation activity;
 - the roll out of the staff digital learning programme which had been very positively received by staff;
 - the refresh of the College brand and the impact of the recent marketing campaign in raising awareness of the College and its offer.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

HE UPDATE REPORT (Document 3iii)

- Q21/27 The committee considered a higher education update report which included;
- achievement and retention data for 2021/21;
 - the College's approach to remote delivery during COVID 19;
 - retention and extenuating circumstances data;
 - the 2021/22 delivery plan and recruitment data;
 - feedback relating to the student experience;
 - the further development of quality procedures for higher education;
 - new provision.

Q21/28 The committee particularly explored:

- the impact of students requiring extenuating circumstances as a result of being unable to complete placements and how the additional work for the College could be mitigated in future delivery models;
- the new quality procedure which would be presented for consideration at its meeting in November 2021;
- how the College managed the expectation of time off for scholarly activity, noting that this would be managed by the curriculum manager, with a conference planned for the end of the year;
- planned new provision, welcoming the introduction of a level 4 certificate and noting the College's intention to consider the introduction of an apprenticeship model for 2022/23.

Resolved: i That the new quality procedure be presented for consideration at the next meeting.

EDI UPDATE (Document 3iv)

Q21/29 The committee considered a report which set out how the College would ensure compliance with its equality, diversity and inclusion obligations and responsibilities, including the development of EDI key performance indicators and how achievement against them would be monitored and reported.

Q21/30 The committee:

- noted that a refreshed EDI policy would be presented to them for consideration at its meeting in November 2021;
- explored terminology and agreed that the use of the words 'training' and 'intervention' be reconsidered;
- suggested that 'pathways of reporting to ELT and governance' would be better expressed as accountability;
- welcomed considering future performance reports.

Resolved: i That the EDI policy be presented for consideration at the next meeting.

CURRICULUM PLANNING

Q21/31 The committee considered the 2021/22 curriculum plan which included the following key features:

- a focus on unlocking and utilising transferable skills within Community Learning as the first step towards employment;
- the inclusion of sector-based career transition courses in health & care, intensive employability skills programmes and a foundation business & enterprise offer;
- increased flexibility within the English, Maths & digital essentials provision to facilitate an opportunity for all adults to achieve in line with entitlements;
- blended, online, intensive residential, weekend, boot camp and evenings options;
- new key employment/growth sector pathways including full level 2 and level 3 provision - both residential and non-residential.

Q21/32 The committee:

- noted that the planned move from Canvas to Teams for Education was on track for completion by September 2021 and would ensure that a single accessible platform would be available across all courses at the College;

- welcomed the interesting new courses and approaches, recognising further development was required,
- noted clear links to the Ofsted intent concept, and the evidence that the College had explored, understood and clearly articulated its curriculum intent;
- welcomed the securing of a 3-year funding model from the combined authorities, which was extremely positive and would provide the opportunity for the College to progress a strong and developing curriculum offer over the 3-year period.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

RISKS OVERSEEN BY THE COMMITTEE (Document 4ii)

- Q21/33 The committee considered the risk register, noting that whilst none of the currently active risks were specifically allocated to the committee for oversight a number of them had implications in relation to curriculum, quality and student experience. It was noted that:
- the register would be updated to reflect the funding allocations agreed by the combined authorities;
 - a number of the key risks had formed the basis for the discussions during the meeting.

Resolved: i That the risk register be noted.

POLICIES (Document 5i)

- Q21/34 The committee considered the following policies:
- admissions;
 - residential admissions – noting that 5.6 (criteria for residential status) would be further reviewed prior to submission to the Board for final approval in light of the funding agreed with the combined authorities, and agreeing that 4.7 (care leavers requesting accommodation) and 4.9 should be reviewed to ensure that the prioritisation criteria was consistent throughout;
 - safeguarding adults – noting that 9.6 would be amended in September 2021 to replace canvas with advantage.

Resolved: i That subject to the above amendments the admissions, residential admissions and safeguarding adults policies be recommended to the Board of Governors for approval.

GOVERNANCE

- Q21/35 The committee noted that:
- due to a potential conflict of interest arising from the on-going structure and prospects appraisal Tim Thornton would be taking a short sabbatical from his role as a governor and would not therefore be attending the committee during that time;
 - following the recent recruitment process a number of new governors would be proposed to the meeting of the Board of Governors in July 2021, at least one of which would be asked to join the committee.

Resolved: i That the report be noted.

DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS

- Q21/36 29 November 2021 – 1.30pm
21 February 2022 - 1.30pm
16 June 2022 – 1.30pm