



## Northern College

### CURRICULUM, QUALITY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee held on **20 February 2022**.

**Present:** Colin Forrest (Chair), Tim Thornton, Sue Horner, Yultan Mellor (Principal) and Bob Craig.

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

**Apologies:** None.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Q23/1 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 HE advisory member of the West Yorkshire Employment and Skills Committee 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 AND MATTERS ARISING

Q23/2 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

Q22/80 The committee noted that an update to the self-assessment report was included on the agenda.

Q22/90 The committee noted that the agreed changes to the Safeguarding Annual Report for 2021/22 had been actioned and the report was presented to the Board for consideration at its meeting in December 2023.

### ENVIRONMENT/SECTOR UPDATE

Q23/3 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:

- FE qualification reforms;
- Ofsted;
- the FEC stocktake visit scheduled for 27 February 2023.

Q23/4 The committee particularly explored:

- the likely impact of FE qualification reforms on the College's curriculum offer and adult funding, and how this would be fed into strategic and curriculum planning activities, particularly in relation to the College's employability offer and how the combined authority funders would interpret and respond to the central policy review;
- the College's employability offer, agreeing that:
  - whilst a significant proportion of the adults the College worked with were further away from the jobs market, evidence suggested that the curriculum offer supported the development of skills which effectively moved students towards employment or better employment, and was clearly aligned with the South and West Yorkshire skills priorities;
  - the College's accredited provision was clearly aligned to skills priorities, and the community learning offer was in line with the seven funding indicators recently released, particularly wellbeing and community needs, though the future of community learning funding remained unclear at this stage;
  - clarity in marketing and course information regarding how courses developed employability skills was critical;
- the College's work with employers, noting this was a continually developing area and provided an opportunity for growth.

Q23/5 The committee noted the call received from Ofsted in February 2023 regarding the College having been aware of the date of its inspection (which it was not), and the subsequent apology and assurance letter received.

**Resolved: i That the update be noted.**

## PERFORMANCE REPORT (Document 3i)

Q23/6 The committee considered the College's performance in 2022/23 to date in relation to curriculum quality and student experience. The committee agreed that in addition to undertaking performance monitoring it would be critical to ensure that the consideration of the data was appropriately fed into the financial and strategic planning discussion at the Board meeting on 22 February 2023.

Q23/7 The committee considered the College's **KPI dashboard to 23 January 2023**, particularly noting that:

- student satisfaction remained high;
- attendance had risen to 90%;
- best case achievement was at 96%;
- year to date retention was slightly below target at 96%;
- year to date pass rates were tracking at 70% which was below target, mainly due to timing;
- achievement rates were tracking above published rates;
- overall, the data presented was positive, but the key issue continued to be student recruitment.

Q23/8 The committee considered **student recruitment data to 26 January 2023**, noting that:

- recruitment performance on both AEB and CL funded provision remained behind target;

- whilst long course recruitment had performed in line with target in the Autumn, short course recruitment had not experienced the same post pandemic recovery;
- new provision arising from South Yorkshire funding flexibilities was recruiting well;
- courses with a very clear target market were performing well, with the broader, more traditional offer proving more challenging.

Q23/9 The committee considered a report on **student attendance and progress to 9 February 2023** noting that:

- whilst attendance was below target, the report regarding the catch-up support provided and the tracking of this was effective;
- student progress was closely and effectively monitored by staff and support provided and actions were appropriate.

Q23/10 The committee particularly explored:

- the potential impact of lower than planned recruitment on the student experience and quality and how this was being mitigated, noting that nothing in the data suggested this had materialised into an issue;
- recruitment conversion data:
  - noting that the conversion rate had dipped further slightly from the last report;
  - exploring how the College was targeting its marketing resource to ensure greatest returns;
  - agreeing with management that a focus on strategies to increase initial enquiries was now required;
  - supporting the current work analysing progression to understand why some students did not return after studying one course;
  - welcoming the work on developing a greater understanding of the impact of marketing; and
  - agreeing that the main area for potential recruitment impact was with community partners, but noting that this was often slow and resource intensive work;
- attendance data, noting that the position had recovered from the dip seen in December 2022, that a new student engagement approach had been introduced to track the substantial catch-up activities for long courses being delivered to ensure attendance did not negatively impact on student progression, and that teachers were confident with offering and delivering online and hybrid attendance options where appropriate;
- challenges relating to staff turnover in the curriculum team, agreeing that this was an area for concern and exploring opportunities for attracting and retaining particularly part time staff - it was noted that this was reflected as an area of risk in the College's strategic risk register.

Q23/11 The committee considered a report on **student voice**, particularly:

- Student Council and student input to College committees, noting that engagement had been strong throughout the year to date;
- results to date arising from the student feedback survey, noting that the approach to collecting data had been changed and this had resulted in improved engagement, and inclusion of an action plan addressing any negative comments;

- themed surveys undertaken relating to Safeguarding and healthy boundaries.

- Q23/12 The committee welcomed the new approach to the feedback survey and the nomination for a student governor which would be presented to the Board for approval at its meeting in February 2023, noting that the nomination was for a level 2 student who was intending continuing to level 3 in 2023/24, therefore hopefully enabling the opportunity for some continuity of student governor input.
- Q23/13 The committee considered a report which set out **complaints** received and handled since the last meeting, noting that the one issue raised was from a prospective rather than enrolled student and related to the College's policy regarding children on site. It was noted that the College had restated its current policy which remained appropriate.
- Q23/14 The committee considered the **student destinations update report**, and particularly explored the data provided:
- welcoming the enhanced data collection process;
  - noting the data provided was to early January 2023 and that further data had since been collected which would be included in the next report;
  - noting that overall destinations were positive, with 95% of students progressing to a positive destination;
  - being realistic about the nature of the short term impact of short courses;
  - challenging the College to continue to pursue those students where destinations data had not been collected and drive up the return rate;
  - seeking and receiving assurance that the College was efficiently and effectively capturing where students had returned to the College for further study;
  - welcoming the breakdowns by funding stream, gender, disability, residence and returning students, noting particularly the strong destinations for those who studied residentially;
  - exploring the impact of the skills narrative with regards to destinations;
  - welcoming the improvement demonstrated by the data;
  - noting the importance of understanding destinations at a course-by-course level to plan curriculum.
- Q23/15 The committee explored whether the performance data considered was robust and provided appropriate assurance, agreeing that it was but further actions and areas for improvement had been identified.

**Resolved: i That the report be noted.**

## QUALITY REPORT (Document 3ii)

- Q23/16 The committee considered the quality report which provided:
- a summary quality update;
  - progress against the College's quality improvement plan;
  - the updated externally validated self-assessment report for consideration;
  - the College's skills statement for consideration.
- Q23/17 The committee considered the quality work undertaken since the previous meeting, noting that:

- this had included external input from the Further Education Commissioner, 10 days of external quality support (arranged by the College), visits to classes from members of the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee, CPD planning (supported by a member of the Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee) and the delivery of additional CPD to teaching staff focused on inspection readiness, additional lesson observations, professional conversations and work scrutiny across the College;
- reviewed the actions completed and planned in response to recommendations, agreeing these were appropriate, and encouraging the College to be more explicit about the nature of the issue in relation to impartial IAG;
- noted a risk area regarding counselling which had arisen since the report was written, seeking and receiving assurance that the College understood the issue and was addressing it;
- reviewed and noted the good progress being made in response to the recommendations arising from the South Yorkshire Combined Authority audit;
- considered the amber rated awarding organisation external monitoring visits, noting that there were no significant issues raised;
- agreed that good progress was being made in relation to quality and the assurance provided was appropriate.

- Q23/18 The committee considered the College's updated quality improvement plan:
- noting that the QIP was a 'live' document, with new improvement areas added as appropriate, alongside the tracking of progress against actions;
  - particularly considering the actions rag rated amber, agreeing that activity was progressing well.
- Q23/19 The committee considered an updated self-assessment report for 2021/22 noting that:
- the report had been further developed in-line with external validation recommendations;
  - no fundamental changes had been made, areas of impact had been strengthened following feedback;
  - the SAR being scrutinising was the latest one on the portal.
- Q23/20 The committee reviewed the report and agreed it was an accurate self-assessment, and agreed to recommend it to the Board of Governors for approval.
- Q23/21 The committee considered the College's skills statement which complemented the self-assessment report and:
- explored links to the combined authority's skills priorities;
  - agreed that it was largely Barnsley/South Yorkshire focussed and a more region wide approach could be better reflected;
  - agreed the statement demonstrated good work and strong actions planned;
  - explored the opportunities for developing greater employer based provision;
  - welcomed the links to student stories and encouraged the further development of this approach.
- Q23/22 The committee:
- sought and received assurance that full capacity remained for the Assistant Principal role being vacated by Emma Beal, including the role of Ofsted nominee;

- noted that this linked to the risk discussion at Min 23 to 24;
- noted the new role of new director of curriculum and quality.

- Resolved: i That the IAG area of development be more explicitly described.**
- ii That the revised self-assessment report for 2021/22 be recommended to the Board of Governors for approval.**
- iii That the skills statement be endorsed and recommended to the Board of Governors for consideration.**

## CURRICULUM STRATEGY AND PLANNING

- Q23/23 The committee considered the approach and progress to date in relation to curriculum planning for 2023/24, noting particularly:
- the challenges in relation to future funding and the impact this had on longer term planning;
  - the robust review of the curriculum offer and planned re-modelling;
  - balancing the pace of change with the need to be bold;
  - the College's understanding of its target market;
  - opportunities relating to volunteering, noting that current provision in this area recruited well.

- Q23/24 The committee supported the planned approach and the proposed boldness.

- Resolved: i That the report be noted.**

## MARKETING UPDATE (Document 4ii)

- Q23/25 The committee considered a marketing update, including:
- positioning;
  - student voice;
  - specific campaigns;
  - website development;
  - upselling;
  - work with partners;
  - geographical targeting.
- Q23/26 The committee particularly explored:
- clarity of the College brand;
  - the analysis of feedback and campaign effectiveness;
  - the further development of the website;
  - partnership work, particularly with DWP noting that the College continued to host DWP meetings on campus and was working in partnership to package the College's offer;
  - the focus on business engagement work;
  - the communications plan working with past students;
  - feedback and impact of the recent open day;
  - seeking and receiving assurance that reference to 'what is an adult learner' was an internal rather than outward facing message.

**Resolved: i That the report be noted.**

### **RISK OVERSEEN BY THE COMMITTEE (Document 4iii)**

- Q23/27 The committee considered the risk register noting that the areas allocated to the committee for oversight had been explored in detail during the meeting, particularly risk 6 - a poor Ofsted result negatively impacts on the College's reputation and student recruitment. The committee explored the risks related to:
- workforce recruitment and turnover and the potential impact on teaching and learning, particularly in relation to course delivery and development;
  - recruiting students with integrity;
  - change in Principal, agreeing that there were no additional specific risks relating to the change and backfill arrangements were appropriate and timely.
- Q23/28 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.**

### **SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT UPDATE (Document 5i)**

- Q23/29 The committee considered a report which provided an update regarding Safeguarding and Prevent arrangements, responsibilities and activity at the College including referrals, due diligence activity, training, and key actions.
- Q23/30 The committee particularly considered:
- referrals, noting that they had been reviewed as appropriate with the Lead Governor - Safeguarding and were appropriate and actioned effectively and in-line with legislation and guidance;
  - the outcome of due diligence activity and external scrutiny;
  - progress with governor refresher training, noting that only a small number were now outstanding;
  - British Values particularly exploring what had been done in relation to ensuring staff understood local risks;
  - the activity of the Lead Governor - Safeguarding including his invitation to serve as part of a safeguarding focus group for the ETF.

**Resolved: i That the report be noted.**

### **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE (Document 5ii)**

- Q23/31 The committee considered a report which provided an update on key equality, diversity and inclusion actions and progress including progress against equality objectives, key reporting and further action planned. The committee particularly explored:
- pass rate data for different student groups, referring back to the data included in the self-assessment report;
  - the good progress being made with mental health support and mental health first aiders and ambassadors;
  - outcomes for those with protected characteristics and specific groups;
  - the planned deep dive into Additional Learning Support.

**Resolved: i That the report be noted.**

**GOVERNANCE**

Q23/32 The committee supported the proposed recommendation to the Board of Governors that Maria Bowie be appointed as an independent member of the committee and welcomed the appointment of a student governor.

**DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS**

Q23/33 12 June 2023 - 1.30pm