

CURRICULUM & STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 22 JUNE 2021 AT 4.00 PM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

Jill Lanning (Chair), Corrienne Peasgood, Andrea Blanchflower, Emily Staley, Philip Richardson

Attendees:

Jerry White (Deputy Principal), Helen Richardson-Hulme (Assistant Principal, Student Services), Julia Bates (Vice Principal, FE, Curriculum and Quality) – from agenda item 6.2, Jodie Mitchell (Head of Professional Services), Clare Johnson (Clerk to the Corporation), Sue Millions (Administrator)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Aron Whiles and Nikki Gray.

2. Declarations of Interest

Governors and Committee members are requested to make known any relevant pecuniary interests relating to any items on the agenda and it was noted that all declarations will be recorded.

There were no new declarations of interest given at the meeting.

3. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 May 2021 (Paper 02)

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2021, were agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the first available opportunity.

4. Unconfirmed Confidential Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 May 2021 (Paper 03)

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2021, were agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the first available opportunity.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes (Paper 04)

Action 1 (C&S 04): The approach to gathering satisfaction data to be reviewed at the next C&S Committee Meeting taking place on 11 May 2021. It was agreed that a fuller summary will be prepared by Jerry White, as part of the Quality Report, and discussed at the next meeting being held on 22 June 2021. Please see agenda item 6.1. Action completed.

Action 1 (C&S 05): English to be included in the Easton Report to be discussed at the next meeting taking place on 22 June 2021. Please see agenda item 6.6.1. Action completed.

Action 2 (C&S 05): Maths to be included on the Easton Report at the next meeting taking place on 22 June 2021. Please see agenda item 6.6.2. Action completed.

Action 3 (C&S 05): Jerry White to clarify the sentence in section 1 of the NTTC Report. The NTTC Report was amended, and the meeting pack uploaded onto Passageways. Action completed.

6. SECTION A – papers for discussion and action

6.1 Quality Report

(Paper 05)

The Quality Report, previously distributed, was discussed at the meeting. The following key points were discussed and explained:

Jerry White informed the committee that the retention rates for both 16-18 students and adults are declining, with 16-18 down around 2% from the previous report. Comparison to previous years remains satisfactory. It was noted that it is not unusual to see withdrawals and staff are feeling confident this year that they are working hard to secure progression routes for all for next year. The question was asked as to the reasons behind the withdrawals and Jerry White confirmed that post COVID student decisions have been heightened by anxiety with concerns about lack of progress made and assessment pressures. He reassured governors that the college is doing all it can by talking to individuals to ascertain their reasons and provide support.

A detailed review of the current position for Apprenticeship achievement rates was presented and discussed and the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on apprentices on Standards was noted. Details of the recent work undertaken to establish the sources of student, apprentice and employers' satisfaction was also presented. For Standards, the lack of practical access has hampered progress, delaying progress beyond expected end dates in Engineering, Carpentry, Bricklaying, Plumbing and Gas Engineering. In some areas such as Dental Nursing, difficulties in gaining access to employers' premises for assessment and support has delayed progress. It was noted that there are significant withdrawals from the apprenticeship Standards particularly impacted by Retail and Commercial programmes – Hairdressing and Hospitality – mainly as a result of the pandemic. Overall retention, considering the length of some programmes, is positive at around 75% when compared with national trends.

Age data shows that the older age group is achieving less well (except on Level 2 apprenticeship frameworks). Whilst Standards achievements are performing less well for all age groups, 16-18 and 19-24s are doing well at Level 2 and 3 on the older frameworks. It was confirmed that this is being monitored carefully. Philip Richardson raised his concerns over the complexity of the tables included in the report and Jerry White agreed to make the column headings clearer in the future.

Jerry White informed governors that following work with the college management team, a broad range of sources of satisfaction information have been identified that can show the position at different points in the year and feed into the self-assessment process. It was confirmed that the very useful exercise had prompted managers to share alternative approaches to capturing satisfaction information between different types of provision. The sources of satisfaction information, the current sources of evidence of Apprentice satisfaction and the current sources of evidence for employer satisfaction were noted.

The Principal explained that it is not a quick and easy process, but it is critical to have this breadth of feedback and evidence going forward. It was agreed that it is important to triangulate the different measures of satisfaction and also make necessary interventions when they arise. Andrea Blanchflower welcomed this information and commented that this should mean that the NSS result, whilst remaining important, should not come as a surprise. There was some discussion about the difficulties of getting satisfaction data from employees and apprentices where annual surveys may be less effective. A life cycle approach to capture feedback on their experience at different points in their apprenticeship was suggested. The Principal agreed to give this further consideration.

The full content of the report was noted.

Action 1: Jerry White to provide more detail on retention rates for both 16-18 students and adults in 2020/21 to the C&S committee at their next meeting taking place on 5 October 2021 (JW / CJ).

6.2 TLA Report

(Paper 06)

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Update, was discussed at the meeting and the following key points for discussion and explanation were highlighted:

The significant majority of qualifications for 2021 which required a teacher assessed grade (QTAG) have now been confirmed at the FE Awards' Boards. The Awards Board process highlighted some very best practice from the majority of teams. Prior to the Awards' Boards, there were 'pre' awards boards which built on the practice from last year's Awards' Boards and identified the proposed evidence for students and this much improved the final process this year. This pre-work has been extremely helpful as it was easier to identify potential issues early and provide support and challenge as and when appropriate. Please see agenda item 6.6 for an update on the Easton teacher assessed grades.

Exam access arrangements - although exams did not take place in the normal way this year, it was still necessary to ensure students had exam access arrangements (EAA's) in place where appropriate and details were checked at the Awards Boards. There has been an increase overall in the number of EAA's in place for students this year. Currently, there are 1511 EAA's in place with a year on year increase being seen. The question was asked as to why the numbers continue to increase within the college and Julia Bates informed the Committee that the college is working to better understand the challenges and barriers but it was confirmed that the college figures are inline with national figures. It was noted that for a number of students their need for EEAs have not been identified previously. It was suggested that the increase could be due to a lack of confidence at a younger age and the stigma of needing assistance is reduced in the college environment. Andrea Blanchflower commented that this is also true at the UEA. Feedback is not given to feeder schools in this regard due to data sharing restrictions but Jerry White informed governors that he is happy to pick this up at County level. Jerry White informed governors that there is a higher level of 16-19 students having an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) in Norfolk in comparison to other counties.

Staff development - staff were asked to undertake the Fika 'essentials programme' prior to roll out of the full Fika programme to students during induction. The Fika programme is designed to help people develop the skills of mental fitness, with courses proven to reduce stress, improve mental health, boost performance and regulate behaviour and emotions. The App available is designed to support students to develop positive mental wellbeing, the programme is comprehensive and aims to help students boost their confidence, becoming more emotionally resilient. It was noted that the management team have received very positive feedback from staff and the App has provided useful hints and tips for everyone. Blackboard continues to offer a wide range of training webinars for staff and the uptake is excellent.

It was noted that the personal development materials on Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) have been updated to include a number of useful resources for both teachers and tutorial supervisors to use with students.

The full content of the TLA Report was noted.

Action 2: Jerry White to discuss with others at County level the general increase in EAAs and the fact that some students are not seeking EAAs prior to coming to college (JW).

6.3 IAG Update

(Paper 07)

The IAG Update Report, previously distributed, was discussed at the meeting. The following key points for discussion and explanation were highlighted:

Helen Richardson-Hulme informed governors that advisers continue to be busy with course enquiries from the public. Live chat is proving very popular as well as email and telephone enquiries. The online booking system has also been a great asset and current students are being referred to the IAG team for progression talks, and one to one appointments are taking place, following the control measures in place, if required.

It was noted that high schools and academies are starting to approach the IAG team for support with careers events next year. The college's response has been positive, and the events proposed will be reviewed nearer the time. Any events planned for the summer term will be delivered on-line. Jerry White continues to run weekly Q&A sessions for potential students, parents, carers and staff who work with young people. These have received mixed attendance, some 80+, some with very low participation, but good comments have been received from those attending.

The end of year Compass evaluations were noted and the results of the Compass evaluations in June remain in line with those noted in November 2020.

The Risk and Assurance Audit Report on the Gatsby Career Plan from Scrutton Bland was previously distributed for information and the significant assurance opinion was noted. The Chair noted that there was only one low risk recommendation that has been met with a very positive management response.

The full content of the IAG Update was noted.

6.4 Residential Report

Please see confidential minutes.

6.5 HE Report

(Paper 08)

Jerry White apologised that the HE Report was not uploaded to Passageways prior to the meeting and if any governors had any additional questions, he was happy to discuss them after the completion of the meeting. The following key points for discussion and explanation were noted and the headlines from the report were as follows:

Jerry White informed governors that the sector level outcomes of the National Student Survey (NSS) will be published online and be available to access from 9.30 am on 15 July 2021. This is a change from the usual approach, as data will not be publicly available at an institutional level and cannot be used in publicity. The college will get the CCN results and a full data analysis will be reported back to governors in the first Curriculum and Standards meeting of the new academic year, taking place on 5 October 2021.

It was noted that the OfS has released more detail on the timeline for the development and implementation of the new Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) to replace the existing scheme. Consultation will begin in the autumn term with a view to a submission window for the new scheme to open in summer 2022 for publication in 2023.

Current TEF awards have been extended to that time, although the OfS advises providers not to use their TEF awards in marketing or promotional materials from September 2021. Work will be required within the School of HE to ensure alignment with the likely metrics for the new TEF.

The OfS have written to all colleges outlining their expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in Higher Education. It was agreed that this is not just a HE concern; it is a whole college approach and the relevant policies and procedures will be updated to reflect the OfS requirements. Helen Richardson-Hulme noted that this is captured in an action plan which is kept up to date and could be produced for the OfS if necessary. The OfS Policy will be published on the college's website.

Applications – the college are now seeing a clearer picture of recruitment to programmes in September and overall, the number of students accepting their offer is broadly in line with the same time last year. It was noted that there are areas of concern and low numbers for some Easton based programmes. Work continues to be undertaken between now and September to encourage additional applications through UCAS Clearing and a more widespread review will explore potential avenues for increasing recruitment for 2021/22.

Revalidation processes for all Stage 1 events have now taken place with all programmes progressing successfully through to validation with a range of conditions, recommendations and commendations. These included references to the qualification level of staff and the structure of placements.

It was noted that work continues to ensure that students are able to either complete their awards or meet their progression requirements over the Summer in light of the continued impact of COVID. This includes making use of regulatory amendments such as having extra time to complete work or taking a break in study.

The full content of the report was noted.

6.6 Easton Report

Please see confidential minutes.

6.6.1 English Update

(Paper 09)

The Governors Curriculum Visit Feedback Form, completed by Aron Whiles, following his visit to Easton on 11 May 2021, was previously distributed and the full content noted.

6.6.2 Maths Update

Andrea Blanchflower informed the Committee that her discussions on Easton, held in April 2021, brought to light the same issues noted in the English curriculum visit update.

Andrea Blanchflower left the meeting at 6.05 pm.

6.7 Governor Curriculum Scrutiny

6.7.1 HE – Noel Bartram

The Chair informed the Committee that Noel Bartram is currently undertaking background research on HE and has held one virtual meeting with the HE team and it was agreed that his report will be discussed at the next meeting taking place in October 2021.

Action 3: HE Curriculum Scrutiny Update to be discussed at the next C&S Meeting taking place on 5 October 2021 (CJ).

6.7.2 T Levels – Nikki Gray

Following discussions, and in Nikki Gray's absence, it was agreed that Julia Bates would provide an update to the next C&S Committee Meeting to reflect on the first year of T Levels, highlighting the successes, the challenges faced and met and the planning for the coming year.

It was also agreed that the T Level Governor Scrutiny update would be carried forward to the next meeting.

Action 4: Julia Bates to provide a T Levels Report for the next C&S Committee Meeting taking place on 5 October 2021 (JB / CJ).

Action 5: T Level Scrutiny Update to be discussed at the next C&S Meeting taking place on 5 October 2021 (CJ).

Action 6: The Chair to inform Noel Bartram and Nikki Gray that HE and T Level Scrutiny updates will be provided at the next C&S Committee Meeting taking place on 5 October 2021 (JL).

6.8 Strategic Priorities and Targets Update

6.8.1 Catch Up Measures for 2021/22

The Principal informed governors that the government have indicated at least the same, if not more, funding than this year will be received for Catch-Up for 2021/22 and that monies underspent this year can be rolled over into next year's budget, giving a possible income of over £1m. The three possible areas for support were discussed and it was noted that support will be provided for English and Maths resits in November 2021 with tutorial support and additional revision sessions. This is likely to be needed in advance of the summer 2022 exams with those requiring additional support identified by February half term. Other areas are the need for social skills and personal development to be built on through curriculum activities, which will be coordinated centrally and also students will be able to receive additional support in study and organisations skills with new tutorial supervisors being recruited for central support.

6.8.2 Changes to Exams and Assessments

It was noted that full details of changes to exams and assessments were discussed under agenda item 6.2 of today's meeting.

6.9 Governance Matters

6.9.1 Review of Committee Terms of Reference

It was agreed that the Committee's Terms of Reference will be reviewed following the receipt of the AoC's new Code of Good Governance.

7. SECTION B – papers for discussion only if required by Governors

7.1 Student Voice Report

(Paper 10)

The Student Voice Report previously distributed to the committee was discussed and the following highlighted:

- Emily Staley informed governors that the End of Year Feedback form has now been sent to all class representatives and is currently open until 12 July but will be extended if needed.
- Welcome Week 2021 – it was noted that due to the current climate, all ideas are not set in stone as COVID-19 regulations are constantly changing, but it was noted that no matter the circumstances, the Student Unions will adapt to the changes and will host a 'Welcome Week' either virtually or part-virtually.
- Prom - Dawn's Horizons is a local charity based in North Walsham who has been asking for donations of prom dresses / suits and the college have dropped off some donations to the charity. Emily Staley asks if anyone has / or knows anyone who has any clothing to donate to contact her and she will kindly arrange collection / delivery.
- The Student Union are reminding students to pick up their Lateral Flow Testing kits before the end of term through social media and are gently reminding students to ensure they are washing and sanitising their hands on a regular basis as it keeps them safe and others around them.

The full content of the Student Voice Report was noted, with thanks to Emily Staley.

8. SECTION C – papers for information only

There were no papers tabled in this section of the meeting.

9. Other Urgent Business

There was no other urgent business tabled at today's meeting.

10. Confidentiality

It was agreed at the meeting that agenda items 6.4 and 6.6 would remain confidential.

11. Date of Next Meeting

C&S Committee: 5 October 2021 at 4.00 pm, via Microsoft Teams.

Venue to be confirmed at a later date when updated guidance is made available.

All business having been concluded; the meeting closed at 6.30 pm.

Signed
(Chairman)

Date