

Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday 21st November 2023 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 2, Broadway

Members Present: Julius Adams
Nirmal Gupta (via Teams)
Paul Hartridge
Valerie Little (via Teams)
Paul Noon (Chair)
Jack Stokes
Neil Thomas (Chief Executive and Principal) (CEP)

In attendance: Susanne Davies (Director of IoT & Partnerships)
Rachel Corns (Assistant Principal)
Gill Darwood (Director of Corporate Governance) (DCG)
Lynn Glazzard (Assistant Principal)
Samantha Jocelyn-Sears (Assistant Principal)
Kathryn Jones (Director of HR)
Diana Martin (Vice Principal) (VP)
Claire Millard (Assistant Principal)
Dean Price (Standards & Performance Manager)

Committee administrative matters

1 Confirmation of quorum

1.1 The Director of Corporate Governance (DCG) confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

2 Apologies for absence

2.1 There were no apologies for absence.

3 Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair 2023/24

3.1 Paul Noon was appointed as Chair and Valerie Little as Vice Chair for 2023/24.

4 Declarations of interest

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5 Approve minutes of previous meeting held on 3rd May 2023

5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd May 2023 were confirmed as a true record for signature by the Chair.

6 Matters arising

6.1 There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

6.2 The CEP provided a brief update following the Ofsted inspection which had taken place in the previous week. The inspection had focused on a number of deep dive areas which had presented a challenge in presenting evidence from the wider college to the inspection team. The inspection had not highlighted any areas for improvement which had not already been recognised by the College in terms of the operational development plan.

- 6.3 Members concurred with the view that the outcome of the inspection provided a clear endorsement of the College. It had been timely in respect of providing a solid basis for the current work on development of the next strategic plan alongside the announcement of additional funding for capital developments.
- 6.4 The CEP explained that the proposal was to slightly push back the finalisation of the new Strategic Plan to shortly after the Christmas break. This would be further discussed at the full Corporation meeting.
- 6.5 Members expressed their thanks to the staff and the senior team for their work in achieving this positive inspection outcome.

7 **Terms of reference 2023/24**

- 7.1 The terms of reference for the Standards Committee had been reviewed as highlighted in the tracked changes. The DCG advised that one item had been added relating to the committee's oversight of national curriculum policy and reform.
- 7.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the terms of reference to the Corporation for approval.

8 **Standards Committee's Annual Report for 2022/23**

- 8.1 The DCG presented the committee's annual report which summarised the work undertaken by the Standards Committee in 2022/23. Once approved by members the report would be placed in the document library of Convene for access by all Corporation members.
- 8.2 **It was resolved** to approve the standards committee's annual report for 2022/23.

Standards and Performance Matters

9 **Data dashboard review**

- 9.1 The CEP advised that the full data dashboard would be updated following the finalisation of the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment. Updates for in year performance had been undertaken and these had highlighted no concerns. Members were able to view this on the live dashboard.
- 9.2 The CEP advised that the proposal was to remove the section for sub-contracted apprenticeships from the dashboard as this now represented a very small number of learners. This would be replaced with a section focused on high needs learners.
- 9.3 **It was resolved** to note the data dashboard update.

10 **Operational Development Plan progress update**

- 10.1 The CEP advised that the College Operational Development Plan identified the key actions from the Strategic Plan or from the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment (ASIA) to provide a clear set of milestones for the current year. It was updated regularly by colleagues to show progress made and intervene where actions had drifted beyond the originally planned end date.
- 10.2 The current plan was provided for members to review, which included the latest updates on all actions. Many actions were now completed and some were still 'on

track' with due dates leading up to Christmas and beyond. There were a few actions which were marked as 'overdue' as either the scope of the action had changed, or the work was now planned to continue into the new calendar year.

10.3 The current plan would continue until December 2023. As part of the standard quality cycle, a new plan would be developed in January which would take on board actions from the Strategic Plan as well as areas for development identified through the ASIA process. This new plan would come to Standards Committee for discussion before being taken to Corporation for final approval.

10.4 The VP advised that the parent portal was ready for launch and would be piloted in a number of areas prior to roll out across the College.

10.5 **It was resolved** to note the College Operational Development Plan update.

11 **Annual Strategic Impact Assessment 2022/23**

11.1 The VP provided an update on progress towards finalising the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment judgements in respect of the year 2022/23:

11.2 *16 to 18*

- Slight drop in learner numbers but still engaged over 4500 young people.
- 61% in STEM subjects.
- Slightly more males than females but in line with last year.
- Females achieved slightly better than males but no significant difference.
- No significant difference in achievement by ethnicity and some gaps closed which were identified in the previous year, although mixed ethnicity was still the lowest performing cohort. Work was being undertaken with CWM on this issue which was across all colleges.
- There was no significant difference in achievement for LDD learners.
- Slight increase overall and at all levels on achievement rates.
- Strong performance on T level programmes.
- Strong positive destinations.

11.3 Areas for improvement were noted as:

- Work experience engagement where it was not a significant part of the programme.
- Employer input into curriculum.
- Marking and development of maths and English skills.
- Use of starting points on entry to look at progress.
- Attendance to English and maths.
- Achieve rates for mixed heritage learners.
- Continued improvement of achievement rates in some areas.

11.4 Members concurred with the proposal that this area was judged as 'meeting expectations'.

11.5 *A level*

- Continued increase in engagement with A levels at 550 learners.
- 65% STEM – large increase in learners choosing mathematics.
- Males achieved better than females (+9%).

- Very diverse cohort.
 - Black students achieved slightly less -4.8% but gap had closed significantly from previous years.
 - Learners declaring a disability achieved at a lower rate so this was an area for further exploration.
 - High grades maintained at 2018/19 level for A*-C now TAGs, CAGS and advanced information removed but increased at A*-B up by 7.5%.
 - Retention from year 1 to year 2 at over 80%. Learners not continuing on A levels were transferred to other programmes in the College.
 - 96% positive destinations.
- 11.6 Areas for improvement were noted as;
- Close gap between learners declaring a disability.
 - Close gap for black learners.
 - High grades in some subjects.
 - Careers guidance outside of HE options.
- 11.7 Members concurred with the proposal that this area was judged as 'exceeding expectations'.
- 11.8 *Adult*
- Continued strong engagement with adult learners.
 - Increased engagement at higher levels.
 - 49% in STEM subjects.
 - Males achieved slightly better than females.
 - No significant differences in achievement across ethnicity or those who declared a disability.
 - Slight increase overall although slight decrease in Level 1 - linked to ESOL retention.
 - Further decrease in adults NEET after training.
 - Increase in learners into employment from SWAPs.
 - Significant increase in achievement on Access following interventions.
 - Continued increase in adults following technical pathways.
 - Growth in L3,4 and 5 and improved achievement which was meeting WMCA priorities.
- 11.9 Areas for improvement were noted as:
- Retention and achievement rates on ESOL.
 - Continued improvement of adults into employment following SWAP programmes – learners have to be employed and remain in employment for 13 weeks.
 - Continued improvement of achievement and retention on Access programmes.
 - Careers guidance on some adult programmes.
 - Progress tracking and intervention.
- 11.10 Members concurred with the proposal that this area was judged as 'meeting expectations'.
- 11.11 In relation to Access to HE learners, the Chair suggested that many health programmes at university required a values based interview which was an area where many students failed to gain a place, so it may be worth exploring with HE providers if

it was possible to build the interview into the process prior to commencing the Access programme so that learners could be offered a guaranteed place subject to completion of the course.

11.12 *Apprenticeships*

- Continued stable recruitment on apprenticeships.
- 54% of apprentices studying STEM subjects.
- There was a difference in achievement of black, mixed heritage and Asian learners compared to peers but numbers were very low so there was a need to understand the underlying causes.
- The gaps between apprentices with a disability and those without had been closed from 6% to 1.4% due to the support of personal development officers.
- Improved achievement rates and now at (or possibly above) published rate.
- Significant reduction in learners beyond end date.
- 98% of learners achieved even though some went past their end date.

11.13 Areas for improvement were noted as:

- Retention and achievement on some programmes.
- Timely achievement.
- Employer engagement and on and off the job training on some apprenticeships.
- Use of starting points.
- Achievement of Black, Mixed Heritage and Asian apprentices.

11.14 Members concurred with the proposal that this area was judged as 'meeting expectations'.

11.15 **It was resolved** to endorse the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment judgements for each key client group for 2022/23.

12 **Equality Diversity and Inclusion action plan – progress update**

12.1 K Jones advised that the College had prepared its draft equality objectives following a period of consultation with key stakeholders across the College and with groups of staff. The equality objectives would be included within the Strategic Plan and the actions to deliver these would be reported within the college operating development plan (CODP).

12.2 The proposed equality objectives were noted as:

- 1 Develop a college environment that was safe, inclusive and encourages all staff and students to be themselves, regardless of age, race, disability, faith, gender or sexuality. We unite against discrimination.
- 2 Take positive action to address the under-representation of LDD students; and to increase the proportion of female students in traditionally male dominated sectors.
- 3 Review our teaching approaches so they are tailored to the diverse needs of our student population, eliminating achievement gaps and taking opportunities to promote and celebrate our diverse population.

- 4 Take positive action to address under-representation across our staff profile at all levels of the organisation.
- 5 We will promote and celebrate cultural awareness through a broad range of EDI focused CPD and through the growth of staff, student and wider networks.

12.3 K Jones advised that staff had voted on the EDI objectives at the college conference day.

12.4 The Chair noted it was important to be able to measure success against the objectives, which K Jones advised would be undertaken through incorporating the actions from the various work streams into the College Operational Development Plan.

12.5 **It was resolved** To endorse the objectives for inclusion in the Strategic Plan.

13 **Risk register monitoring**

13.1 The CEP advised that the risk register for 2023/24 was reviewed by the Audit Committee in October. There continued to be five risks relating to the work of Standards Committee and these were the same risks as in 2022/23. Risk ratings had been reviewed and updated where necessary. The five risks were noted as:

Changes in government policy etc means that restrictions are placed on the college's strategic plans resulting in curriculum not being flexible or responsive.	9
The quality of apprenticeship provision is lower than required, this can result in apprentices not achieving their qualification	9
There is inconsistency of a quality experience across all student groups, caused by lack of access to skilled staff, resources or other factors	4
The college is unable to deliver the work experience strategy, as a result of lower than expected work placements	9
The college's response to an event falls short of statutory requirements on keeping children safe	3

13.2 Most actions were complete or on track with just two subject to delay. Both actions related to the risk regarding work placements and the owners of these actions were proactively working to get these arrangements in place

13.3 In response to a question from P Hartridge, the CEP advised that the employer engagement team would now be assigned to curriculum areas so that they worked across all key client groups for work placements, apprentices and employer focus groups. Members felt that this was a positive approach.

13.4 **It was resolved** to note the risk register update.

Teaching and Learning Matters

14 Teaching and learning update

- 14.1 D Price presented the report which outlined the progress made this academic with regards to teaching and learning. He highlighted a number of areas from the report including;
- Learner visit findings (strengths and areas for development) and what intervention had been put in place to support this process.
 - The newly implemented 360-degree quality assurance model including how it would address underperformance through a host of quality audits which would identify areas of development for curriculum teams and individual staff. Some initial audit findings (induction passport and MyPIP) and proposed actions were noted. Paul Hartridge noted that it would be helpful to provide further information to staff on how to track learners through the PIP programme.
 - The findings at a recent teaching and learning forum included a growing appetite for change, in particular, to more effectively challenge underperformance and create a heightened focus on the impact of teaching and learning on learners.
 - Highly positive data from the recent learner induction survey.
 - An outline on the recent college conference, which had a strategic plan focus.
- 14.2 Members discussed the content of the report and the potential for a differentiated approach to the development of teachers across different curriculum areas. The VP noted that a new AP for Quality would be joining the College in January which would provide an opportunity to learn from best practice elsewhere.
- 14.3 Paul Hartridge noted that staff had valued the teaching triangle approach as it provided the opportunity to observe colleagues teaching. The VP advised that this would be maintained but could be supplemented by other activities.
- 14.4 The Chair noted that staff transitioning from an industry role into teaching were more likely to succeed with a high level of support.
- 14.5 **It was resolved** to note the teaching and learning update.

15 Compliments and complaints analysis

- 15.1 The compliments and complaints report outlined the sixteen official complaints and eight compliments from Easter to October half-term 2023. Complaints were categorised into blue (minor) – 11, amber (moderate) – 5 and red (major) – 0. Each complaint was broken down into nature, status, outcome and actions taken. Complaint categories were course management (6), exams invigilation (9) and staff conduct (1). All of the complaints had been investigated and closed in accordance with college procedure. All eight compliments focused on staff support.
- 15.2 D Price answered questions from members in relation to points of detail from the report, advising that three complaints relating to maths were not linked to a specific individual but related to maths exams which involved a high number of students at that time. The CEP noted that in addition to formal complaints, the College monitored informal complaints and concerns, and that there were a number of avenues for learners to raise concerns before resorting to a formal complaints process, including through learner voice.

15.3 **It was resolved** to note the compliments and complaints analysis.

Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

16 **Confidential - Safeguarding and learner conduct report**

16.1 The VP presented the paper which provided an overview of safeguarding and learner conduct for the period 1st September 2023 to 31st October 2023. The VP highlighted key information contained in the report:

- 26 new staff, of which 21 staff completed safeguarding and prevent training within 6 weeks.
- There were 68 learners with Child in Care status.
- 17 students and their families being supported through the Early Help process/Team.
- 12 students on a Child in Need plan, a decrease of 8 from this point last year.
- Child in care Support Practitioner appointed.
- 8 young people who were at risk of criminal exploitation, 3 who were at risk of sexual exploitation and 2 who were at risk of both.
- 9 reports of child-on-child/peer on peer abuse.
- 1 learner who had been a victim of modern slavery and trafficking.
- 17 Operation Encompass (domestic violence) notifications from Dudley.
- Two staff LADO referrals leading to positions of trust meetings.
- 11 full suspensions and 6 sent home suspensions.
- The data was provided by male, female, EDI and disability.
- The counselling team were currently working with 176 people which was an increase of 23 learners and 14 staff as at the same point last year. Counselling services were being accessed by a wider range of curriculum areas with counsellors now based at Brierley Hill.
- 43 mental health first aid interventions.
- Positive relationships and cooperation with neighbourhood police.
- Swipe card door access had been successfully implemented.

16.2 The VP advised that J Stokes had raised a concern around the current Israel/Gaza conflict and the local safety officer had provided additional resources to support staff. A community safety committee had been established on which the College was represented. There had been no reports of increased hate crime in the borough as a result of the conflict.

16.3 Safeguarding arrangements, including Prevent, continued to be highly effective.

16.4 As safeguarding lead governor, V Little noted that new Prevent guidance had recently been published which may need consideration over the coming months. The VP advised that staff would undertake a mandatory CPD update on Prevent during this year.

16.5 **It was resolved** to note the safeguarding and learner conduct report.

Higher Education Matters

17 Higher Education update

17.1 S Davies presented the paper which provided members with an update on all matters relating to Higher Education (HE) at the College.

17.2 The paper included:

- An update on HE access/recruitment to date for 2023/24. There were 391 students on higher level programmes of which 181 were on OfS funded programmes.
- An update on quality matters, including Board of Studies which met half termly. This was the main vehicle to ensure high quality provision at L4 and above.
- The composition of the board of studies was being reviewed to ensure representation from all curriculum areas and members of the quality team.
- Mandatory deadlines for HE for 2023/24.
- Work to improve data collection on gender identity.
- Freedom of Speech was a requirement for all providers and there was a need to ensure that the right infrastructure and policies were in place.
- An update on the activity taking place for the Aspire to HE project working with University of Wolverhampton.
- Impact assessment of HE policies on SEND learners.
- Information on the Modular Acceleration Programme (MAP) bid.

17.3 **It was resolved** to note the Higher Education update.

18 Demonstration of PowerBi dashboard for HE metrics

18.1 S Davies provided a snapshot of the PowerBi dashboard which was currently under development and would be presented at the next committee meeting.

19 Review on impact of HE policies and practices on SEND students

19.1 This had been covered within the update provided at item 17.

Policies

20 HE Admissions Policy

20.1 S Davies advised that a review of the Higher Education Admissions Policy had been undertaken and the amended version was presented for members consideration. The changes were not substantial and related to names and updated terminology.

20.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the HE Admissions Policy to the Corporation for approval.

21 HE Access and Participation Statement

21.1 S Davies advised that the College was required to produce an Access and Participation Statement and to review this regularly. This was a regulatory requirement of the OfS and outlined the College's approach to widening participation in terms of Level 4+ provision, examining data in relation to the local socio-economic context.

21.2 As noted in the Statement, the College's student demographics were largely what would be expected given the College's location and the courses it delivered at Level 4 and above. The College was working on obtaining a greater level of destination data

and had identified POLAR4 quintiles for each student (thereby giving the College the ability to review its impact on geographic areas that had lower levels of participation in HE).

21.3 **It was resolved** to recommend the HE Access and Participation Statement to the Corporation for approval.

22 **Safeguarding Policy and Procedure**

22.1 The VP advised that the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure had undergone review following the publication of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023. No changes had been identified other than references to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023.

22.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure to the Corporation for approval.

23 **Any Other Business**

23.1 In response to a request for feedback from the Chair, members agreed that they felt that the content, frequency and length of the committee meetings was sufficient for the committee to discharge its duties effectively.

24 **Date of next meeting:**

24.1 The next meeting of the committee would be held on 5th February 2024 at 4.30pm

The meeting closed at 18.12 hours.

Approved by members at the meeting held on 5th February 2024.