

Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 2, Broadway

Main outcomes

- Appointment of committee chair for 2024/25.
- Committee business plan recommended to Corporation and meeting schedule 2024/25 agreed.
- Review of Operational Development Plan 2024 noted.
- Data dashboard review of enrolments and attendance noted.
- Risk register monitoring report noted.
- Curriculum planning update for 2024/25 noted.
- Teaching and learning update noted.
- Complaints and compliments analysis noted.
- Safeguarding and learner conduct report noted.
- Higher Education update noted.
- Freedom of Speech annual report noted.

Members Present:

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

In attendance:

Rachel Corns (Assistant Principal)
Gill Darwood (Director of Corporate Governance) (DCG)
Susanne Davies (Director of IoT & Partnerships)
Lynn Glazzard (Assistant Principal)
Samantha Jocelyn-Sears (Assistant Principal)
Kathryn Jones (Director of HR)
Diana Martin (Vice Principal) (VP)
Claire Millard (Assistant Principal)
Adrian Walker (Assistant Principal)

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 Apologies for absence had been received from Dean Price.

3 Declarations of interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

- 4 **Approve minutes of previous meeting held on 5th February 2024**
- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2024 were agreed as a true record.
- 5 **Matters arising**
- 5.1 There were no matters arising from the previous meeting not covered on the agenda.
- 6 **Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair for 2024/25**
- 6.1 Paul Noon was appointed as Committee Chair for 2024/25 and [appointment of Vice Chair was deferred to the autumn term meeting](#).
- 7 **Committee business plan and meeting schedule 2024/25**
- 7.1 The DCG advised that the business plan for the Committee provided an indication of business and reports which would be submitted to the meetings of the Committee scheduled for 2024/25.
- 7.2 It was not a rigid document but was intended as a guide and would remain flexible to accommodate emerging priorities and unforeseen eventualities. The business plan also contained the proposed dates for committee meeting during 2024/25.
- 7.3 **It was resolved** to recommend the business plan for the Standards Committee for 2024/25 to the Corporation for approval.

Standards and Performance Matters

- 8 **Review of Operational Development Plan 2024**
- 8.1 The CEP presented the update on the College Operational Development Plan for 2024. He noted that no items were behind their planned completion date at this stage. A few items had been completed in line with the plan. For all other items, senior team colleagues had provided a brief update on progress.
- 8.2 In response to a question from the Chair, members of the senior leadership team explained current actions to consider the implications of AI, in particular the ethical use of the technology and the development of an AI Policy. S Jocelyn-Sears advised that the College was also exploring an opportunity for staff and students to gain a qualification in ethical practice in AI. [The Chair advised that he would be happy to share a draft of the policy currently being developed by Coventry University](#).
- 8.3 **It was resolved** to note the College Operational Development Plan for 2024.
- 9 **Data dashboard review**
- 9.1 The CEP provided an update on the live data dashboard in relation to enrolments and current attendance for each key client group:-
- *Full time 16-18 learners* - enrolments were up on the previous year with good retention for the year to date, attendance was up 1% on the previous year at 87%.
 - *A Level learners* – enrolments were up 6% on the previous year, attendance at 94% was in line with the previous year.

- *Adult learners* – enrolments were up 10% on the previous year, attendance at 87% was in line with the previous year.
- *Apprenticeships* – recruitment was down compared to the previous year by 10%, some of which was as a result of the planned withdrawal from subcontracting. This was now considered to be a steady position and the budget planned for the next year assumed no growth. Attendance was up 1% on the previous year at 90%.
- *Higher Education learners* – enrolments were down by 3% on the previous year, and attendance was also down by 3%. The reasons for this were currently being investigated.
- *High Needs learners* – numbers were currently showing at 170 with additional funding still awaited from the local authority for a further 20 learners, attendance was in line with the previous year.

9.2 N Gupta noted that this represented a very positive position. In response to a question on whether it was possible to benchmark against other West Midlands colleges, or other high performing colleges, colleagues advised that other colleges did not publish in-year data so benchmarks for current performance were not available. The Chair noted that the College measured its performance against national benchmarks at the year-end self-assessment stage. The VP noted that national achievement rates which were used for benchmarking in the annual strategic impact assessment related to the previous year. She advised that there was no national data available in respect of post 16 attendance as was the case in the school sector.

9.3 **It was resolved** to note the data dashboard review.

10 **Risk register monitoring**

10.1 The CEP advised that there were six risks requiring scrutiny by the Standards Committee. Four reflected the priorities set out in the 2024-27 strategic plan and two were included as areas for improvement from the Ofsted inspection report. The risk register showed the actions that were being taken to further mitigate the risks identified.

10.2 V Little requested an update in relation to progress in developing the work experience strategy for all learners. The VP advised that the present focus had been on T Level placements due to this being a requirement for the course. Employer engagement staff were now within S Davies' team and were focusing on work placements with additional resources allocated to this team. There was a target to increase work experience hours annually dependent on the level of course, with an initial target of 10% in the first year and further increases in subsequent years.

10.3 A discussion ensued on further strategies which might help address the demand for work placement opportunities, with a number of suggestions including engagement with the WMCA, relevant questions within the College's procurement processes and engagement with the supply chain of current employer partners. It was felt that the development of case studies to show success stories would help to promote the benefits from the employer perspective.

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

Teaching and Learning Matters

11 Curriculum planning update for 2024/25

- 11.1 The VP gave a presentation detailing the College's curriculum planning process which explained:
- The curriculum planning cycle and oversight which included curriculum planning and enrolment group meetings, data reviews to check teaching hours and staffing requirements, curriculum approval process.
 - Support provided to curriculum teams with planning tools and presentations by external parties.
 - Curriculum plan is owned at curriculum team level.
 - Curriculum teams presented their proposal for the next academic year to SLG which addressed curriculum reform, meeting skills needs, learner numbers, staffing, budget, capital requests, opportunities, threats and mitigations.
- 11.2 The VP advised that this year the presentations from CMs had been of a very high standard. She offered the opportunity for members of the committee to attend these meetings in the following year to observe the process. (Action: to be added to governor engagement activity plan for 2024/25).
- 11.3 Managers were required to prioritise their capital expenditure requests which were then prioritised by SLG against available budget, with a similar approach to additional staffing requests.
- 11.4 Curriculum contribution was targeted at 65% with monitoring at curriculum area level. Reports on performance against targets were received by the Finance and Estates Committee.
- 11.5 A number of considerations in respect of September 2024 were noted including:
- First wave of defunding – digital, early years, on-site construction and health.
 - Further roll out of T levels – animal management, fashion and textiles, media, broadcast and production, accounts, cyber-security.
 - Review of Level 1 programmes across College.
 - Revised English Language offer for adults.
 - Development of medical engineering standard for apprenticeships.
 - Introduction of performing engineering operations for adults.
 - Introduction of Level 4 early years apprenticeship.
 - Partnerships with the Code Institute (programming) and Resonance (Music Institute).
- 11.6 A report on applications to date for 2024/25 showed a strong position with an increase of 673 full time 16-18 applicants compared to the same point in the previous year and 619 individual applicants for T levels.
- 11.7 The increases in some areas would give rise to challenges in terms of physical capacity in some areas such as CAT Centre and electrical, and demand for suitable work placements for health and social care T Level learners. A number of initiatives were being developed with HEI and NHS partners to manage this challenge.

11.8 **It was resolved** to note the curriculum planning update.

12 **Teaching and learning update**

12.1 A Walker presented the teaching and learning update highlighting the following:

- 90% of teaching triangles had been completed and 74% of staff had taken part in a learning walk.
- The inclusion into classroom delivery of learning outcomes linked directly to knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) and adaptive teaching were common strengths.
- Almost all curriculum areas met the College's teaching standards, with one exceeding, and two below.
- Underperforming areas were receiving high levels of intervention and support.
- There were 27 staff who were receiving individual support from 15 areas. Many of these were new staff who might have come from a non-teaching/industry specialist background or from other providers.
- The College had invested in two new digital tools (Qwiqr and Meta Quest headsets) to assist with improving the learner experience whilst reducing staff workload.

12.2 A Walker advised that the recent College Conference had an English and maths theme, along with a focus on strategies for managing learner behaviour; staff feedback had been largely positive. P Hartridge noted that the Trauma Informed session had been highly valuable and he would have welcomed a more in depth session on this topic. L Glazzard outlined plans that were in hand to provide further in-depth development with some internal staff undertaking training to deliver to colleagues.

12.3 **It was resolved** to note the teaching and learning update.

This item is the subject of a confidential minute.

Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

14 **Safeguarding and learner conduct report**

This item is the subject of a confidential minute.

Higher Education Matters

15 **Higher Education update**

15.1 S Davies presented the Higher Education update, which provided an overview of activity taking place, including:

- Review of operational arrangements to ensure that the College continued to meet the Conditions of Registration with the Office for Students (OfS). The review had been relatively positive and it was planned to engage an external HE Advisor to ensure that the College was fully meeting OfS requirements.
- A live demonstration of the PowerBI dashboard which included the three key areas of recruitment, continuation and completion of programme. This looked at all Level 4 and above programmes, and could be broken down into curriculum areas. This tool was still under development to ensure that it met the needs of curriculum managers.
- OfS quality arrangements - there was currently no designated quality body (DQB) in place to oversee HE provision. A review was taking place currently with a report due in the summer which would look at the effectiveness of OfS.

- Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) – it was likely that the College would be required to take place in the next round (2026/27) due to learner numbers/growth. The Chair advised that this was a quality award for HE provision which may have an impact on future funding and the ability to recruit overseas students.
- Update on the Uni Connect programme. Funding was being reduced for this and this would be likely to have an impact on widening participation activities. The Chair noted that it would be important to incorporate this into curriculum change planning to ensure it was built into the policy for a particular pathway.
- Response to a letter received by the Chair of the Corporation from the OfS on Unlawful Harassment in Higher Education was noted.
- New legislation on Freedom of Speech would be included under agenda item 16.

15.2 **It was resolved** to note the higher education update.

16 **Freedom of Speech Annual Report**

16.1 S Davies presented the Freedom of Speech Annual Report. She advised that the College had a legal duty to ensure Freedom of Speech for all staff, students and wider stakeholders. The report highlighted the current position of Freedom of Speech at the College and provided assurance to Corporation that the legal obligations regarding this duty were met. It included a summary of activities that the College undertook to ensure that Freedom of Speech was protected, as well as an outline of forthcoming legislation that would impact the approach to Freedom of Speech with effect from August 2024.

16.2 Members noted the disproportionate burden for colleges in complying with this legislation as it would apply to all learners within the College. The legislation would also apply to the activities of the Students' Union.

16.3 The Chair noted that the legislation was intended to address issues for institutions who had a history of debate and was not considered to be a particular issue in most universities and colleges. He noted that it may be helpful to restate the organisation's values in order to be able to challenge inappropriate views.

16.4 **It was resolved** to note the Freedom of Speech annual report.

17 **Any Other Business**

17.1 There were no items of other business.

18 **Date of next meeting**

18.1 As per meeting schedule for 24/25 – 19th November 2024.

The meeting closed at 18.10 hours

Minutes approved at the Standards Committee meeting on 19th November 2024.