

Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday 19th November 2024 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 2, Broadway

Main outcomes

- Appointment of Vice Chair of Committee for 2024/25.
- Terms of reference for standards committee recommended to Corporation.
- Standards Committee's Annual Report 2023/24 approved.
- Dashboard in-year update on enrolments and attendance noted.
- Operational Development Plan update noted.
- Update on Annual Strategic Impact Assessment 2023/24 initial grading endorsed.
- Update on apprenticeships noted.
- Risk register update noted.
- Quality, teaching, learning and assessment report noted.
- Compliments and complaints update noted.
- Confidential safeguarding and learner conduct report noted.
- Higher education update noted.
- HE Admissions Policy, HE Access and Participation Statement, Safeguarding Policy and Procedure recommended to Corporation.

Members Present: Julius Adams
Sally Cornfield
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 were received from Nirmal Gupta.

3 Appointment of Vice Chair 2024/25

3.1 The DCG advised that Julius Adams had agreed to take the role of committee vice chair.

3.2 **It was resolved** to appoint Julius Adams as Vice Chair of Standards Committee for 2024/25.

4 **Declarations of interest**

4.1 P Noon declared an interest in relation to item 16 as an employee of Coventry University.

5 **Approve minutes of previous meeting held on 5th May 2024**

5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5th May 2024 were agreed as a true record.

6 **Matters arising**

6.1 Minute 8.2 - P Noon to share draft AI Policy from Coventry University. A Walker advised that he had attended a recent event on this topic at Coventry University and had made contact with university colleagues in relation to AI.

6.2 Minute 11.2 - The DCG advised that a copy of all of the dates for business planning pitches in 2024/25 had been added to the meeting papers. This included a wide range of dates and members were invited to indicate any meetings which they would like to observe so that calendar invitations could be sent.

6.3 There were no further matters arising from the previous meeting not covered on the agenda.

7 **Standards Committee Terms of Reference 2024/25**

7.1 The DCG presented the terms of reference for the Standards Committee which were reviewed annually to ensure that the committee was fulfilling its role in line with latest guidance and best practice.

7.2 The terms of reference had been updated for 2024/25 and any changes marked with 'tracked changes'. The key changes proposed were:

- The introductory paragraph had been reworded to reflect the structure of the current Strategic Plan and Operational Development Plan, which had moved away from the 'Key Client Group' structure.
- In relation to the duties of the committee:
 - o A bullet point had been added to reference the requirement to annually review the Accountability Agreement and the College's contribution to meeting skills needs.
 - o A bullet point had been removed which referenced oversight of marketing activity, as this had been incorporated within bullet point (3).
 - o A bullet point had been removed which referenced the College's Careers Education, Advice and Guidance Strategy, as this was overseen directly by the Corporation and the lead Governor for Careers did not sit on the standards committee.

7.3 **It was resolved** to recommend the terms of reference to the Corporation for approval.

8 **Standards Committee's Annual Report for 2023/24**

- 8.1 The DCG presented the report which summarised the work undertaken by the Standards Committee in 2023/24. Once approved by members the report would be placed in the document library of Convene for access by all Corporation members.
- 8.2 Committee members were requested to consider and agree the report for posting in the document library of Convene for the information and assurance of all members of the Corporation.
- 8.3 **It was resolved** to approve the Standards Committee's Annual Report 2023/24.

Standards and Performance Matters

9 **Data dashboard review**

- 9.1 The CEP advised that two elements of the dashboard had been updated in-year for each Key Client Group.
- 9.2 *Full time 16-18 learners*
- Enrolments increased by circa 250 above previous year and in excess of funded numbers. Some curriculum areas had to be capped as a result of limitations of available facilities. This was a particular issue at CAT Centre and options to address this were being considered.
 - Direct links were noted between student numbers in specific curriculum areas and the job market.
 - Funding was based on previous year (lagged funding), therefore with year-on-year increases, the College was never fully funded for the current year. It was not yet confirmed whether in-year growth funding would be paid in the current year.
 - Attendance was strong at 92.3% and above the previous year.
- 9.3 *A Level learners*
- Enrolments at 557 were increased on the previous year.
 - Attendance was high and consistent.
- 9.4 *Adult learners*
- Enrolments at 2,165 showed a strong start to the year and ahead of the previous year. Enrolments would continue throughout the year.
 - Funding was paid on a monthly profile based on actual learners and the Combined Authority were currently considering moving to a three-year funding allocation rather than the current one-year allocation which would support longer term planning. The allocation was fixed but colleges were able to request additional funding should they exceed the allocation.
 - Attendance was high at 92.7%.
- 9.5 *Apprenticeships*
- Enrolments were down compared to the previous year which was part of a planned strategy related to a reduction in sub-contracting.
 - Timely achievements were improved.
 - Attendance was improved on the previous year at just over 90%.

- 9.6 *Higher Skills*
- Reduction in enrolments in line with a move away from traditional delivery modes to higher apprenticeships and adult education funding or through HE partners.
 - Detail on the performance of partners was reported through the Finance and Estates Committee’s termly partnerships report, and through the board of TTPL in relation to IoT activities.
 - Attendance was high.
- 9.7 *High Needs*
- Enrolments were on target against the fixed funding allocation from the local authority.
 - Attendance is high and up on previous year.
- 9.8 The Chair noted the high level of transparency which the dashboard provided which was unique in the sector.
- 9.9 The CEP advised that other developments were planned to continually refine the dashboard including more detailed estates and sustainability reporting.
- 9.10 In response to a question from V Little, the CEP advised that destinations would be updated on the next dashboard update when data collection would have been completed.
- 9.11 **It was resolved** to note the dashboard update.
- 10 **Operational Development Plan update**
- 10.1 The CEP advised that the College Operational Development Plan identified the key actions from the Strategic Plan or 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. There were three actions which were noted as overdue as either the scope of the action had changed, or the work was now planned to continue beyond its original planned end date. The CEP provided further detail on each of these actions.
- 10.3 The current plan would continue until December 2024. 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 related to 2025 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 **It was resolved** to note the Operational Development Plan update.

11 **Annual Strategic Impact Assessment 2023/24 (ASIA)**

- 11.1 The VP introduced a presentation which provided an assessment of each key client group in respect of their performance aligned to the measures included on the balanced scorecard which were participation, diversity, achievement, satisfaction, destinations, regional impact and financial contribution. This culminated in an overall assessment of either 'below expectations', 'meeting expectations' or 'exceeding expectations' and was intended to provide a more holistic view than the Ofsted single word judgement.
- 11.2 A Walker provided an overview by key client group detailing its performance, strengths and areas for improvement. Data included destinations, overall achievement, diversity and an analysis of the headcount by level of deprivation.
- 11.3 *Full time 16-18 learners*
- 51% of learners were in the bottom two deciles for disadvantage by postcode in the country. Further analysis was currently being produced which would analyse performance of these disadvantaged learners in comparison to that of their peers and this would be included in the ASIA for the first time.
 - Achievements were showing a three year upward trend and this was contrary to national trends where achievement rates had risen and then fallen due to the inflation of grades seen during the pandemic.
- 11.4 Strengths were noted as:
- Strong participation.
 - Strong financial contribution.
 - Achievement on vocational technical qualifications increased across all levels.
 - GCSE maths and English achievement increased.
 - Functional Skills achievement high.
 - Positive destinations at 93.3% compared to a local authority average of 63%.
 - Strong student satisfaction.
- 11.5 Areas for improvement were noted as:
- Achievement rates and/or attainment in a minority of areas.
 - Achievement of high grades.
 - Close the gap between English and maths attendance and main programme.
 - Work placements for 16-18.
 - Marking and development of English and maths in vocational/technical classes.
- 11.6 Balanced scorecard judgements:-
- Participation, destinations and financial performance moved to 'exceeding expectations'.
 - Other measures remained the same as previously.
- 11.7 Members concurred with the proposal that this area was judged as 'exceeding expectations'.
- 11.8 P Hartridge noted that the availability of a sufficient number of work placements would be a serious issue going forward, particularly in his area of work. The CEP noted that this was a national issue and he outlined a range of actions both at

College, regional and national level to address this. S Cornfield highlighted the importance of ensuring that a positive narrative was provided to employers about the benefits of engaging with this activity. S Davies noted there would be an opportunity to heighten awareness during the forthcoming T Level Awareness week. Members noted the benefit of asking potential suppliers about their engagement with work placement activity as part of the procurement process.

- 11.9 *A level learners*
Strengths were noted as:
- Achievements above national rates
 - High grades improved
 - High proportion of learners within deprivation categories
 - 98.6% positive destinations
 - High student satisfaction
- 11.10 Areas for improvement were noted as:
- Achievement gap between white learners and Asian, black and mixed heritage learners. Reasons for this were being further investigated.
 - High grades and retention in some subjects as identified by detailed analysis
 - Careers guidance outside of HE.
- 11.11 Balanced scorecard judgements:-
- No changes and above expectations
 - Financial contribution lower than technical subjects due to higher taught hours.
- 11.12 Members concurred with the assessment that this area was judged as ‘exceeding expectations’.
- 11.13 *Adults*
- Deprivation at 57% within the top two deciles.
- 11.14 Strengths were noted as:
- 3 year upward trend on achievements but just below national.
 - Participation increased.
 - Achievements increased year on year.
 - Positive destinations, of which 44.3% go into sustained employment.
 - Student satisfaction very strong.
- 11.15 Areas for improvement:
- Close the gap for learners with a declared disability.
 - Achievement rates on ESOL (high number of level I programmes).
 - Access to HE programme achievement.
 - Destinations for level I adults (78.1%). Positive destinations for many learners did not fall into set categories as this may relate to improving English to enable access to services/community and supporting children rather than an intention to gain paid employment.
 - Increase employment for unemployed learners.

- 11.16 Balanced scorecard judgements:
- Participation moved up to ‘exceeding expectations’
 - Financial moved up to ‘meeting expectations’.
 - Other areas remained unchanged.
- 11.17 Members concurred with the assessment that this area was ‘meeting expectations’ at the high end of the range.
- 11.18 *Apprenticeships*
- Achievement rate of 60.7% against national rate of 57%.
 - 97% pass rate (of those learners who stay on programme).
 - Timely achievement was now more efficiently managed.
 - Gender headcount was 71% male due to a lot of apprenticeships being in traditionally male roles.
 - Deprivation was lower for this cohort, possibly linked to employment.
 - Improving picture but further room for improvement.
- 11.19 Strengths were noted as:
- 3 year upward trend in achievements
 - Strong satisfaction
 - 97% pass rate
 - Strong industry standard knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- 11.20 Areas for improvement were noted as:
- Retention and timely achievement in some areas.
 - Employer engagement and on and off the job training coordination
 - Achievement gap between male and female – female dominated programmes achievement was higher.
 - Mixed heritage achievement.
- 11.21 Balanced scorecard judgements:
- Satisfaction moves to above
 - All other areas remained unchanged.
- 11.22 Members concurred with the assessment that this area remained at ‘meeting expectations’.
- 11.23 *High Needs*
- Strengths were noted as:
- Achievement rates for learners in receipt of high needs funding were largely in line with those who were not.
 - Positive destinations were strong at 78.5%. DfE destination data categories did not recognised progression to independent living or voluntary work as positive destinations for these learners.
- 11.24 Areas for improvement were noted as:
- Target setting to be more aspirational
 - Recording of destinations to reflect positive destinations of independent living and voluntary work.

- Further improve achievement rates on English and maths.
- 11.25 Members concurred with the assessment that this area remained at ‘meeting expectations’.
- 11.26 *Higher skills*
This category included higher apprenticeships, HND and any other level 4% programmes.
- 11.27 Strengths were noted as:
- Achievement at 94%.
 - High level of positive destinations.
- 11.28 Areas for improvement were noted as:
- Retention and/or achievement on some programmes.
- 11.29 Members concurred with the assessment that this area remained at ‘meeting expectations’.
- 11.30 R Corns provided a presentation which outlined the challenges for apprenticeship provision, which noted:
- All risk sat with the college, not the employer.
 - Availability of suitable qualified staff for some areas (although the College’s provision was fully staffed at present).
 - Challenge of maintaining achievement due to retention over the life of a long duration programme.
 - Top 3 reasons for lack of retention were job loss, change of job and health reasons.
 - Businesses were not recruiting in current climate (impact also of increase in NI)
 - Complex apprenticeship onboarding process.
 - Lack of aspiration by employers.
 - Limited availability of End Point Assessments which had to be booked with accredited external organisations.
- 11.31 C Millard provided a presentation which outlined the opportunities for apprenticeship provision, which noted:
- Introduction and development of employer advisory boards and RAG rating businesses – identifying strong and committed employers.
 - DfE current projects – EPA flexibilities, enabling the College to to own end point assessments.
 - Commercial opportunity for EPA centres in some sectors and could rent out spaces to other providers.
 - Consider current offer and repurpose staff to support T Level delivery
 - Increase progression opportunities – apprentices able to claim Universal Credit whilst completing introductory programme.
 - Growth and skills levy – flexibility to spend levy on shorter courses.
 - DFE running a pilot to reduce complexity of onboarding process.

- 11.32 The Chair noted that the Government were defunding qualifications at level 7 to focus on lower level qualifications which should present an opportunity.
- 11.33 **It was resolved** to note the update on the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment 2023/24 and the overview of apprenticeships.
- 12 **Risk register monitoring**
- 12.1 The CEP advised that the full College Risk Register was reviewed in detail at Audit Committee, however the extract provided an update in relation to the risks relevant to Standards Committee.
- 12.2 The College continued to proactively deliver the risk management strategy. The senior leadership group revised and updated the risk plan regularly with reports being provided to all sub-committees and the Corporation. The risk register had been updated for the new academic year to reflect the College's approach to a range of external factors. There was one new risk linked to Standards due to the delay in funding of Alternative Provision (AP) in the Dudley Borough. There was some positive progress on this recently, with Dudley Academies Trust receiving confirmation of their AP funding. Other risks had been updated and actions to mitigate these had been refreshed.
- 12.3 **It was resolved** to note the risk register update.

Teaching and Learning Matters

- 13 **Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment update**
- 13.1 A Walker presented the Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Update, noting that the College had strengthened its approach to quality improvement for the student experience providing greater rigour in addition to continuing with teaching triangles. This had led to a restructure of the Quality and Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA) team. A key driver to the change, was to fully delineate roles for improvement as well as provide a focused role for digital skills development.
- 13.2 Initial joint activity across 19 curriculum areas showed that TLA across the College was typically strong. Emerging strengths were teachers' high levels of technical knowledge and use of questioning. There were improvement needs in a few areas covering assessment for learning strategies, increasing the use of student-centred activities so that higher attainment was encouraged, and enhancing the use of revision and exam preparation practices. Furthermore, individual TLA Coach support was being provided to 42 new teachers as well as 10 teachers requiring bespoke mentoring.
- 13.3 The quality team had identified courses/areas at-risk and were working with them on a more formal basis. This was enabling the managers and teaching teams to fully understand their areas for improvement and understand the actions needed to address those root causes. The quality team were supporting the teams to be able to implement these actions fully to have a swift impact.
- 13.4 The new Digital Learning Coach was now delivering CPD so that all teachers were trained on the use of CoPilot (AI), MyViewboard, and a select range of apps which

could be used to enhance TLA. Additionally, the College had been approved as a Microsoft Incubator School/College. This would contribute to upskilling staff and students across the Microsoft products.

13.5 **It was resolved** to note the quality, teaching, learning and assessment report.

14 **Confidential - Compliments and complaints analysis**

This item is the subject of a confidential minute.

Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

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

This item is the subject of a confidential minute.

Higher Education Matters

16 **Higher Education update**

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

16.2 Key points were noted as:

- Learner numbers for HE programmes were at 459 for 2024/25 across a range of programmes and subject areas.
- All HE staff involved in HE delivery were brought together through the HE Board of Studies which covered policy, teaching and learning, and research ethics.

16.3 A number of policy updates were noted:

- Lifelong Learning Entitlement roll out had been delayed by one year. It was expected to be made available for applicants from September 2025 for courses starting from January 2026.
- Freedom of Speech legislation had been paused. Full roll out of the Act had been expected from 1 August 2024 but the new Labour Government had paused the roll out to further take stock of the legislation. It was noted that the proposed legislation would have a disproportionate impact on colleges.
- The introduction of Technical Excellence Colleges had been announced – these had similarities to the current Institutes of Technology but further detail was awaited.
- The Government had announced an increase in maximum HE fees that could be charged to learners from 2025/26. There was a rise of 3.1% (full-time programmes) and 3% (part-time programmes) on the fee cap. The College charged under the fee cap so was not directly impacted by this increase but it would be taken into consideration when fees were next reviewed.
- Teaching Excellence Framework – the College was currently under the threshold required for registration but would continue to monitor this position.

16.4 The College continued to be compliant with Office for Students (OfS) conditions of registration. The level of compliance had been RAG rated and had raised no areas of concern.

16.5 In response to a question from P Hartridge, S Davies advised that the breakdown of students included some students who were infilling into combined programmes and so did not represent class sizes.

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

Policies for recommendation

17 HE Admissions Policy

17.1 S Davies presented the HE Admissions Policy which was intended to provide a policy and procedural framework within which admissions decision-making was characterised by transparency, fairness and consistency. The existing policy had been updated to accurately reflect current practices, although no material changes had been made.

17.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the HE Admissions Policy to the Corporation.

18 HE Access and Participation Statement

18.1 S Davies advised that as an Office for Students (OfS) registered Higher Education (HE) institution, the College was required to update and publish its Access and Participation Statement on an annual basis (Condition A2 of the Conditions of Registration).

18.2 The statement set out the College's commitment to supporting access and participation in Higher Education by students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups. Coventry University not University of Coventry.

18.3 **It was resolved** to recommend the HE Access and Participation Statement to the Corporation.

19 Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

19.1 The VP presented the updated Safeguarding Policy and Procedure, highlighting the key changes:

- References to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023' updated to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024' and links updated.
- 'Radicalisation' in some contexts changed to 'drawn in terrorism'.
- 'Preventing Radicalisation' changed to 'Preventing Children and at risk Adults becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism'
- Changes in definitions relating to extremism.

19.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure to the Corporation.

20 Any Other Business

20.1 There were no items of other business.

21 Date of next meeting

21.1 3rd February 2025

The meeting closed at 18.23 hours.

Approved by members of the standards committee on 3rd February 2025.