

Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Monday 3rd February 2025 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 1, Broadway

Members Present: Julius Adams
Sally Cornfield
Paul Hartridge
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 Declarations of interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 Approve minutes of previous meeting held on 19th November 2024

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2024 were agreed as a true record.

5 Matters arising

- 5.1 Actions rolled forward from the previous meeting:-
Minute 8.2 - [P Noon to share draft AI Policy from Coventry University.](#)

- 5.2 There were no further matters arising from the previous meeting.

6 Update on curriculum reform/review

- 6.1 The VP advised that the DfE had published the outcome of their pause and review in January, resulting in a reprieve of 12-24 months of continued funding for a range of qualifications pending introduction of T Levels. She advised that the Onsite Construction T Level had been removed and noted that the carpentry pathway had attracted a range of higher ability learners into the construction trades. There remained an opportunity for learners to progress up to HNC/HND built environment, although this may not be an attractive route for some of these learners who may otherwise choose A level studies. The College intended to continue with the

progression gateway assessment curriculum model as shared previously. The impact of the wider curriculum assessment review would be a longer-term consideration.

6.2 In response to a question from the chair relating to the current consultation on changes to the Ofsted inspection framework, A Walker advised that the College would seek to provide its views through appropriate forums during the consultation process which would run up to 28th April. An update would be provided to all staff at the next College Conference day which would take place on 11th April.

6.3 **It was resolved** to note the update on curriculum review and reform.

Standards and Performance Matters

7 Operational Development Plan update

7.1 The CEP presented the draft College Operational Development Plan (CODP) for the coming 12 months. This draft plan took on board key actions from the Strategic Plan that related to the coming year as well as areas identified through the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment (ASIA) or other regional and national priorities. This was then supported by Quality Improvement Plans in every curriculum area and professional services team, delivered through the performance management system and monitored through the annual cycle of performance data. Once approved by Corporation, the Standards Committee would review progress of the CODP at each meeting.

7.2 Members discussed the draft plan and agreed that it represented a comprehensive plan for the year.

7.3 **It was resolved** to recommend the Operational Development Plan to the Corporation.

8 Data dashboard review

8.1 The CEP presented a live overview of the Data Dashboard, advising that this was the primary annual update of the dashboard to include a range of annual performance KPIs and other termly updates.

8.2 For each key client group, the overall scorecard had been updated, as had aspects related to the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment, including achievements, diversity and destinations. Other indicators were updated in year, such as attendance and enrolments and these were all currently in line with targets.

8.3 In addition, other cross college areas of the Dashboard had been updated including human resources, finance, health and safety and estates.

8.4 The chair noted that this public dashboard evidenced a high level of openness and transparency, which was unique in the sector.

8.5 **It was resolved** to note the dashboard update.

9 Partnerships and subcontracting report

9.1 The VP advised that partnership arrangements were previously overseen by the Finance and Estates Committee, but it had been agreed at Corporation in December 2024 that the Standards Committee would be the most appropriate monitoring forum

for this activity moving forward, given the strategic reduction in the overall value of this area and the focus on quality and standards.

- 9.2 S Davies presented the report which provided the committee with an overview of the College's current partnership arrangements in 2024/25 and the monitoring arrangements in place. She invited feedback from members on the format and content of future reports.
- 9.3 The report outlined the work undertaken through sub-contracted provision, secondment arrangements with employer partners, work with other managing agents and partners of the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology. It also provided details of the extended remit of the Partnerships team around monitoring and compliance of all partners.
- 9.4 Members noted that the report included:
- Operational arrangements for different types of partner provision, a subcontracting overview and monitoring arrangements in place.
 - Other cross college activities including an update on IoT partners.
 - A summary of all employer partners.
 - A summary of subcontracting income.
 - Niche high-value partnerships would continue to be required as more technical curricula were introduced (including within the Black Country & Marches Institute of Technology).
 - New partnerships with Higher Education Institutions were still planned to come on-board.
 - Business Partnerships team continued to provide cross college support with respect to writing and managing contracts and was working more closely with the IoT.
 - Secondments were managed, such as for the medical engineering specialism in the IoT.
- 9.5 S Davies advised that the College had achieved the sub-contracting standard in 2023 and an internal audit of this area of activity would take place in March 2025.
- 9.6 [A presentation on wider employer partnership activity would be provided at a future meeting.](#)
- 9.7 The chair noted that this represented an area of potential risk for many providers in respect of the quality of franchising, but noted that this was well controlled in the College.
- 9.8 **It was resolved** to note the partnerships and subcontracting termly monitoring report.
- 10 **Risk register monitoring**
- 10.1 The CEP presented the report which provided an update in relation to the risks relevant to Standards Committee. The risk register had been thoroughly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Group (SLG) and risks and actions had been assigned to the newly appointed senior roles, where appropriate. There had been no changes to risk appetite, gross risk or net risk scores as a result of the review.
- 10.2 Since the last report a number of actions had been completed however members were asked to note that some were now subject to delay. There were some risks that were being managed where external influences were impacting how the College was

mitigating these risks, including the plan for Alternative Provision and Level 2 and 3 qualification review.

- 10.3 The delivery of the work experience strategy was multi-faceted in that actions were being delivered by different teams. Some of these were subject to delay including the review and update of the strategy, process for recording health and safety assessments, use of pro monitor to track work experience hours and reporting to SLG. This risk continued to be a key focus given the further increase in work experience requirement for the following year.
- 10.4 The chair noted that the need for a significant increase in work experience placements had been identified as a priority by the WM mayor, however colleagues noted that this had not yet been taken forward for implementation with providers. *It was suggested that this topic could be a focus for a session at the next Strategic Development Day.*
- 10.5 *P Hartridge noted that there was a need to expand the ability to provide CSCS cards for learners going onto site and the VP agreed to follow this up outside of the meeting.*
- 10.6 In respect of the plan for Alternative Provision, the CEP advised that since the report had been written there had been further developments with plans to grow this area of provision substantially in partnership with a local multi academy trust.
- 10.7 **It was resolved** to note the risk register update.

Teaching and Learning Matters

- 11 **Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment update**
- 11.1 A Walker presented the Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment update, noting that the quality team continued to work closely with curriculum colleagues to monitor in-year metrics and support improvement. The quality team had also supported Curriculum Managers to review their provision and produce improvement plans. The quality team were supporting the teams to be able to implement identified actions fully to have a swift impact. The metrics which informed this work included student feedback and ensuring that managers were acting on that feedback. In apprenticeships there was a continued focus on supporting teams to ensure that quality indicators were being monitored in these programmes.
- 11.2 Joint activity across the College showed that TLA was typically strong. Emerging strengths were teachers' high levels of technical knowledge, learner engagement, digital technologies in some areas, links to industry, and teachers' understanding of their learners' needs. There were improvement needs in a few areas covering assessment for learning strategies, increasing student-centred activities, enhancing revision and exam preparation practices, strengthening routines for learning, and behaviour management (mainly for new teachers). Individual TLA Coach support was being provided to 53 new teachers as well as 10 teachers requiring bespoke mentoring. *A Walker agreed to follow up with P Hartridge regarding staff feedback from this process.*
- 11.3 Focus for future activities included inclusion, digital training for teachers and the use of Copilot AI for all staff. The ethical use of AI for students was being addressed through tutorial and would be further developed in this rapidly changing area. A staff research project was currently being undertaken in the creative arts area.

- 11.4 A Walker noted that at the present time retention was significantly above national rates and the comparable figure for the previous year, therefore it would be important to accurately predict learner achievements to support timely interventions.
- 11.5 In response to a question from S Cornfield regarding whether areas of concern identified in complaints aligned to known quality assurance issues, A Walker noted that whilst this was not a formal part of the process, supplementary quality assurance activities were undertaken where concerns were raised through the complaints process. In addition, student feedback informed the identification of underlying issues.
- 11.6 **It was resolved** to note the quality, teaching, learning and assessment report.
- 12 **Confidential - Compliments and complaints analysis**
This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential minute.

Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

- 13 **Confidential - Safeguarding and learner conduct report**
This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential minute.

Higher Education Matters

- 14 **Higher Education update**
- 14.1 S Davies presented the paper which provided members with an update on matters relating to Higher Education (HE) at the College. Key points from the report were noted as:
- Office for Students key deadlines. It was noted that one action noted as overdue had been delayed as a result of OfS delays, but had now been actioned.
 - Higher Education fees for 2025/26 remained unchanged, as approved by Corporation.
 - Policy updates including the announcement by the Labour Government that it would roll out the Freedom of Speech legislation, following a short pause. Further guidance from OfS was awaited. S Davies noted the concern for FE Colleges related to the disproportionate requirement of its implementation for a relatively small cohort of higher education students compared to a university.
 - IoT brand – no public announcement had yet been made by DfE on the future of IoTs. A further update would be provided to the March Corporation meeting.
 - HE Board of studies minutes were noted. J Stokes had agreed to join this board as student representative.
 - Lifelong learning loan entitlement would be implemented by January 2027.
 - Development of a new HE Strategy for the College would be undertaken during this year.
- 14.2 Members were asked to approve two updated policies:
- Student Transfer Arrangement Plan
 - Student Protection Plan
- 14.3 No significant changes had been made to these documents other than minor changes, with both having been agreed by SLG and HE Board of Studies.

14.4 In response to a question from the chair, S Davies advised that it was her understanding that the Student Transfer Arrangement Plan did not need to name a specific institution, and that in her experience, the FE sector worked collaboratively in the best interests of students when the need arose.

14.5 **It was resolved** to note the higher education update and approve the Student Transfer Arrangement Plan and Student Protection Plan.

Policies for recommendation

15 Modern slavery and human trafficking statement

15.1 K Jones presented the updated Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement, advising that under section 54 (1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 the College was required to produce a modern slavery and human trafficking statement for each financial year and have this approved by the College's Corporation. The document showed minor changes to the statement last approved by the Corporation.

15.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the modern slavery and human trafficking statement to the Corporation.

16 Updated committee terms of reference and business plan

16.1 The DCG advised that the terms of reference and business plan for the Standards Committee had been updated in-year to incorporate the change agreed by Corporation at its meeting on 10th December 2024, which was for the oversight of Partnerships and Sub-contracting arrangements to move from the Finance & Estates Committee to the Standards Committee.

16.2 With the reduction in the overall value of sub-contracting, the financial implications for the College were significantly reduced and therefore it was more appropriate for the main focus to move to quality assurance monitoring through the standards committee.

16.3 **It was resolved** to recommend the updated committee terms of reference and business plan to the Corporation.

17 Any Other Business

17.1 There were no items of other business.

18 Date of next meeting

18.1 6th May 2025

The meeting closed at 17.45 hours.

Approved by committee members at the meeting held 6th May 2025.