

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on Zoom on Tuesday 29 June 2021, 9.30am

Membership: *Lily Lin (Chair)
 *Sotirios Adamopoulos
 *Jon Bouffler
 Rod Bristow
 *Liz Laycock
 *Eva Scott
*denotes present *Karen Spencer

In attendance Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal
 Wendy Martin, Assistant Principal
 Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal
 Kelly Edwards, Executive Director – Quality
 Maria Staines, Head of Higher Education
 Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Rod Bristow due to work commitments, Will Allanson and Becky Jones.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 16 March 2021 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes (not mentioned elsewhere on the agenda)

4.1 Quality Improvement Plan (minute 5.2 refers)

Karen Spencer reported that the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was not on the agenda for this meeting due to two reasons: time constraints within College linked to Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) and samples requested from the awarding organisations; and some outcomes are paused and embargoed therefore predicted grades cannot be shared fully at this point with the Committee and there is very little movement since the Committee's last meeting. The QIP will be closed off at the end of the academic year and will be presented at the Standards and Curriculum, Committee meeting in the Autumn Term 2021, along with the Self-Assessment Report.

4.2 English and Maths (minute 5.3 refers)

Governors were informed that this is covered in agenda item 6 – Key Performance Indicators.

4.3 Funding for COVID Testing Centre (agenda item 6 refers)

Liz Laycock asked if the College had received funding for being a COVID testing centre. Paul Whitehead confirmed that the College has been allocated approximately £22k however this funding has not yet been received.

5 Grading and Assessment Update

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received a verbal update on grading and assessment, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Paul Whitehead confirmed that all Teacher Assessed Grades were submitted by 18 June 2021, thanks to the huge cross-College effort to complete the required work. The process and timetable were set out by Paul Whitehead. Heads of Academies (HOAs) undertook sampling, evidence checking and validating grades. Every awarding organisation had a different approach which made the process more complex. Paul Whitehead confirmed that every grade was submitted on time.

The College received a sample request from the awarding organisation for GCSE English and Maths and A-Level Biology last week. The College was able to turnaround the request quickly due to the evidence-based process which had been undertaken in determining the grades originally. The samples were double checked and submitted a day earlier than requested. The sample was strong and to date, no feedback has been given by the awarding organisation to the College on the sample.

Governors were informed that the final week of Functional Skills exams took place last week and this has been a significant challenge for the College which is covered in agenda items later in this meeting.

The College continues to work with learners in practical areas in small groups or on a one-to-one basis where evidence for their qualifications is still required

Karen Spencer thanked everyone involved in the work undertaken. Vocational qualifications had been subject to external scrutiny as well as the College's own internal processes and Karen Spencer had overseen all the academic qualification processes. Specific thanks was given to the A-Level and English and Maths teams, with particular reference to Sotirios Adamopoulos, Tracy Greenall, Kirstie Craig, Mark Bellworthy and Georgina Choat. The Standards and Curriculum Committee echoed this thanks.

There have been some learning points arising from the grading and assessment processes, mainly due to the variability in marking linked specifically to using the correct terminology for each specification (e.g. Science straight marks awarded, Mathematics uses coding for types of mark, Humanities based subjects using criteria and assessment objectives). Karen Spencer reported that she was comfortable that the grades submitted were at the right standard and feedback on correct terminology was provided to each relevant academic team.

Governors were informed that the process of HoAs and Executive members working together was beneficial and the College is looking at how this can be used going forward. Kelly Edwards reported that the process will be reviewed and practice will be shared.

Liz Laycock reported that it was good to hear the processes had worked well and seconded the thanks given to staff for the incredible amount of work undertaken on grading and assessment.

Lily Lin highlighted that staff have not just been working harder but also working smarter and thanked the College's leadership team for ensuring the right strategy was in place for grading and assessment.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the grading and assessment update.

6 Key Performance Indicators

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2020/2021, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer reminded Governors that a discussion was held at the last Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting about the format of the KPIs and a more simplified version was presented to the Corporation.

Governors were informed that additional KPIs linked to the Strategic Plan's Career-Led Curriculum have been added to the KPI document.

Governors' attention was brought to English and Maths which is still a critical area for the College.

Attendance had increased in the Autumn Term up until the November GCSE resits. After this, attendance dropped and it was difficult to reengage with some learners due to the national lockdown.

The English and Maths results included in the KPIs are from the November resits as the latest results are embargoed until GCSE results day in August 2021.

Functional Skills (FS) is a significant issue for the College and nationally. TAGs could not be used this year, unlike last academic year. The FS curriculum has become harder and this year's results, particularly in Maths, have declined significantly. Next academic year, the College will only deliver GCSE Maths and not FS Maths (at level 1 and 2). The Association of Colleges (AoC) is reporting this as a national issue and the Government has confirmed that results will not be published or shared. Despite this, it is sad for the learners concerned.

Liz Laycock asked if only GCSE English will be offered next academic year instead of FS. Karen Spencer reported that the College is currently intending to deliver FS English as well as GCSE due to the content of the FS curriculum being more accessible, with on-going assessments rather than two exam papers taken in one sitting. The College will work closely with each individual at enrolment to identify the most appropriate pathway for that learner.

Liz Laycock asked if the results are not being published, would they not be used by agencies such as Ofsted. Karen Spencer reported that the Government has stated that the results will not be shared. Karen Spencer informed Governors that there is a discussion on revisiting the Ofsted framework to “re-base it” and putting all colleges on a three-year inspection cycle.

Liz Laycock asked what the impact on learners is who have not passed the FS qualifications and whether it will hinder their progression. Karen Spencer reported that the College will not stop learners progressing internally if they have not passed their FS qualifications, however it could have an impact on those looking to complete an apprenticeship. Paul Whitehead also confirmed that not getting the FS qualifications could have an impact on some learners going to university, however these are largely Access learners who have achieved better results than younger students. The College is doing what it can to support learners.

GCSEs instead of FS is an option for apprentices however there is a potential issue with the rigid dates of GCSE exams which makes it harder to plan, as apprentices start at different times throughout the year.

Jon Bouffler asked to what extent there was an impact on progression rates across the institution. Paul Whitehead reported that progression rates are strong this year and the College has not limited any learners on their FS outcomes. A considered approach based on individual circumstances is being taken by the College. There will be an increased number of learners studying English and Maths next year which will be resource intensive. The College will receive some catch-up funding however the amount of funding has not yet been confirmed by the ESFA.

Jon Bouffler asked if the problem is being passed further down the line. Karen Spencer reported that it is easier to gain grades for GCSEs than FS. Governors noted that the figures did not include adult learners and their results are significantly better. There are approximately 250 16-18 learners undertaking FS which equates to roughly 10% of the cohort. The learners are mainly clustered in Building Services who tend to progress from Level 2 to Level 3 then onto an apprenticeship, rather than a traditional higher education pathway and that once taking an apprenticeship they have been more successful in gaining the FS qualifications.

Governors noted the College’s current position on adult work, e-learning and outstanding assessments.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the KPIs.

7 Apprenticeship Report

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Apprenticeship Report, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

The report was taken as read and Governors’ attention was brought to the apprenticeship status summary table and the apprenticeship progress summary table. Governors were informed that a good number of apprentices are on track however there has been some delays and catch up is needed. There are a high number of Building Services apprentices and there is a significant workload in this area at present which is providing some challenges to manage.

Paul Whitehead informed Governors that when apprenticeships moved from Frameworks to Standards, there was a move to End Point Assessment (EPA) from an accumulation of assessment throughout the apprenticeship. EPA is a straight pass or fail at the end of the apprenticeship which needs to be booked in early and some learners will not pass the first time which will cause a delay in them achieving their apprenticeship. Due to this, learners can easily move between years which has an effect on the College's achievement rates. The College is working on the current status of all its apprenticeships and refining its processes.

Karen Spencer reported that apprentices have not been provided with any additional Government support for delayed learning during the pandemic. Apprenticeship programmes are now longer as a result of the switch from Frameworks to Standards, with the majority taking three years to complete, which means it is easy for a backlog to accumulate and the College will report on these apprentices over a long period of time.

Liz Laycock asked if there is a penalty for not reaching timely achievement targets. Karen Spencer reported that there is currently no penalty, with the minimum standards focus being on overall achievement. The issue of timely achievement could however be raised by Ofsted however the key will be the College telling the story behind the rates. It is reported that it could take five years to regain the position colleges were in pre-pandemic. Whilst there is currently little impact on funding, this will materialise in future years due to a lower number of apprenticeship starts.

Jon Bouffler asked if a completion calculation rate is applied to the College. Paul Whitehead confirmed that there is a minimum level of performance (MLP) rather than a completion calculation rate which is calculated at cohort level. The process of how the calculation works was explained by Paul Whitehead. It is impossible to predict whether the College will meet the MLP overall and it is important that the College can explain the narrative and action taken to address performance levels. At present, the College does not envisage any issues which will affect the MLP this year and if the College has any concerns over a particular apprenticeship, starts would be ceased. Karen Spencer highlighted that the completion rate, applied in HE, is possibly the same as the achievement rate and the timely completion rate is those who have achieved their apprenticeship by the expected date.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the apprenticeship report.

8 Student Voice

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on student voice, presented by Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal, and Eva Scott, Student Governor.

The report was taken as read and Governors had no questions in relation to the feedback from the Student Ambassador meetings.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew informed Governors that the learner satisfaction survey closed last Friday and provided a verbal update on the outcomes. 1,761 responses were received which equates to a 63% response rate which is lower than expected rate of 80%. There has been an increase in apprentices completing the survey.

Governors were informed that the results were positive despite there being a slight dip in overall satisfaction from 3.2 to 3.0 out of 4.

Above average scores were recorded for acting on students' views, feedback on work, onsite experience and skills and knowledge. There was a dip in satisfaction with online learning however it is recognised that students want to be learning onsite now.

Eva Scott reported that when she finished at College, it felt incomplete on the last day with no formal goodbye. Karen Spencer reported that events were being planned and then the Government announced that these could not be held. Celebratory photos on results day will be taken if Government guidance permits this, Paul Whitehead reported that it is a sad end for staff too as they could not celebrate with their students.

Governors were informed that celebration boxes are being sent out to all students this week.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on student voice.

9 Higher Education Update

9.1 Higher Education and Quality Assurance Update

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Higher Education and Quality Assurance Update, presented by Maria Staines, Head of Higher Education.

The report was taken as read. Maria Staines reported that recruitment is strong for the two new Higher Nationals for 2021/2022, with ten accepted places on Public Services and seventeen on International Travel and Tourism Management. Sport, Early Years and Business will not run in 2021/2022 due to low numbers however they will be marketed throughout the year with a view to them running in 2022/2023.

Governors noted that Awards Boards have been planned and one has already taken place.

The Semester 1 learner satisfaction results were stronger than the Semester 2 results. The main issue has been the higher apprenticeship in Engineering. The apprentices are only in College one day a week and are working the rest of the week therefore there is a challenge with the amount of work to complete. Furthermore, easier modules were studied in the first two terms. It is now getting back on track and the manager is working closely with the apprentices and their employers.

Governors were informed that contact with Anglia Ruskin University has been established.

Governors noted that progress has been slow with Turnitin due to not being onsite as much during the pandemic however this will be a big focus next term.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the higher education and quality assurance update.

9.2 OfS Reportable Events

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted that there has been no OfS reportable events since the Committee last met on 16 March 2021.

10 Curriculum Planning 2021 – 2022

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on curriculum planning 2021 – 2022, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Paul Whitehead informed Governors that the report sets out the College's approach for curriculum planning for next academic year. Each team's "year in action" has been reviewed and there is a focus on the "super 6" which is the top 6 careers which each course could lead to. Robust planning for next academic year has taken place however the College is still planning for the long term.

Enrolment and induction plans for September 2021 are similar to the processes put in place last year with some refinements being made. The processes worked well last year and this will be built on. Face-to-face enrolment and induction will focus on providing learners with what they need to start College, with data collection taking place online. Face-to-face appointments for bursary and other services will be offered rather than online appointments. Enrolment will take place in slightly larger groups than last year.

Good progress is being made by the teams in terms of timetabling and timetables are currently being entered onto the MIS system.

The College is currently aiming for a pre-COVID approach to delivery for next academic year however some aspects of learning which worked well during COVID will continue.

Government guidance is often released late therefore the College has taken a prudent approach to planning throughout the pandemic and continues to do so. This has resulted in no significant changes to approach being required once guidance has been released.

Governors noted the aspects of the report relating to personal development, behaviour and attitudes and digital learning.

Liz Laycock commented that the report was clear and informative.

Liz Laycock asked if specific reference to sexual abuse and harassment should be added into the tutorials. Paul Whitehead confirmed that this is already being planned in the tutorials. Karen Spencer reported that an internal meeting has taken place in response to an Office for Students letter and following Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges. Maria Staines reported on the work that has been undertaken to date on this which includes a review of policies with proposed amendments being suggested, looking at what can be implemented through the tutorial package, including different methods of delivery, and staff training.

Liz Laycock asked with colleges being asked to work more collaboratively, should more reference be made to this in Corporation and Committee papers. Paul Whitehead reported that this will be further developed through T-Levels, with genuine partnerships being formed with employers. Furthermore, there is more flexibility with digital technology to form partnerships with employers. Liz Laycock highlighted that whilst Governors know this is being done, it could be more explicit that the work is being done.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on curriculum planning 2021 – 2022.

11 Policies for Approval

The Standards and Curriculum received, considered and approved the following policies:

- Academic and Assessment Regulations 2021 – 2022
- Academic Appels Policy 2021 – 2022
- Academic Misconduct Policy HE/FE 2021 – 2023
- Academic Performance Policy and Procedure 2021-23
- Admissions Policy
- HE Scholarly Activity Plan
- HE Student Engagement Policy
- HE Student Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy
- HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy

12 Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business.

13 Dates of Future Meetings, Terms of Reference, Calendar of Business

The Committee received and approved the dates of future meetings, the Committee's Terms of Reference and the Calendar of Business.

Key Points From The Meeting For Corporation:

1. Key Performance Indicators

To note the current position of the KPIs for 2020/2021

2. Student Voice

To note the latest update from the learner satisfaction questionnaire.

3. Curriculum Planning 2021 – 2022

To note the actions being taken by the College in light of Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges.