

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at Harlow College on Tuesday 14 March 2023, 9.30am

Membership: Jon Bouffler
*Rod Bristow (Chair)
*Hannah Cheesman
*John Godley
*Stephen Isherwood
*Liz Laycock
*Karen Spencer

*denotes present

In attendance Becky Jones, Vice-Principal
Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal
Kirstie Craig, Assistant Principal
Wendy Martin, Assistant Principal
Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal
Kelly Edwards, Executive Director – Quality
Simon Boyce, Executive Director – Student Services
Viv Kimeng, Head of Academy
Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Jon Bouffler.

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 23 November 2022 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

There were no matters arising.

5 Key Performance Indicators and Quality Improvement Plan

5.1 Study Programmes

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Study Programmes, presented by Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal.

Governors were informed that the report outlines the current position for Study Programmes and that the main key focus is around retention. A retention task force has been set up to focus on retaining every student. The group is looking at data for trends and patterns and the main factors for students withdrawing from College are gaining employment and mental health, which is becoming an increasing factor. The College is contacting students who are not attending and trying to re-engage with them. This process began with Functional Skills English and has seen some success.

A Governor asked if there was any commonality between the students reporting mental health as their reason for withdrawal. Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that it is mainly due to anxiety and students are reporting that they feel they cannot cope with College because of their mental health.

Students have reported that a particular time for anxiety is around their first exam and Student Ambassadors are reporting that students are saying that they do not feel prepared enough for exams.

A Governor highlighted that mental health and anxiety, particularly mental health anxiety, has been raised at the Safeguarding Committee and it is recognised that staff can play an important role in helping to reduce this anxiety.

Karen Spencer reported that schools are also reporting exam anxiety as an issue they are dealing with, however their current students have less exam anxiety than in previous few years. The students the College has currently are likely to be those with the most exam anxiety due to them having missed exams during Covid. Karen Spencer reported that it is not possible to replicate the full mock exams for all courses offered as there would be no teaching. The benefit of doing something like this needs to outweigh the impact on student experience.

A Governor reported that they are encouraged by the approach taken by the College and they are satisfied that the College is doing the right thing.

A Governor asked how the College is articulating its strategy with dealing with mental health. Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that this is done via tutorials, mental health first aiders and the good relationship between students and staff.

A Governor highlighted that no-one wants students with anxiety and that anxiety has a physical consequence on retention. It is well reported in higher education that there are students with suicidal thoughts and asked if this was the same in further education. Karen Spencer reported that this is an issue however colleges have better strategies in place to deal with this and colleges are a lot further down the line with their thinking around this compared to universities.

A Governor reported that they are confident the College has the right strategies in place and another Governor reported that the College is being proactive, providing a holistic approach and is doing the best it can do.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew highlighted the pleasing student survey results, with an 84% overall completion rate and an 87% completion rate for Study

Programmes. The survey highlighted that the College is strong on tutorials with a much higher score in the survey than in previous years.

Hannah Cheesman, Student Governor, reported on Student Ambassador activities, which are focusing on running the College's food bank programme and ensuring tutorials are on topics relevant to the students and from a student's perspective, such as eating disorders.

A Governor asked how destinations are measured and how they are judged to be in a relevant job. Paul Whitehead reported that a subjective judgment is made based on the data. Firstly, it will be looked to see the student has gained employment and secondly, if they have, is it employment in a sector relevant – a judgement made by the delivery teams. The College could put a lot of resource into this however there is a question over how much it would inform practice.

A Governor highlighted the 60% securing relevant sector employment and asked how many secured employment as it would be useful to know the bigger picture. A Governor also asked if the 92% data collected would include those who are NEET. Paul Whitehead confirmed the data does include those who are NEET and it was agreed that some more commentary with the data would be useful in future reports.

A Governor highlighted the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) section of the report and that the last column reports progress and impact however very little is being seen on impact in the column. It was agreed that impact should be added into this column of the QIP.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Study Programmes.

5.2 Adult Education

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Adult Education, presented by Wendy Martin, Assistant Principal.

Wendy Martin highlighted the e-learning achievement rate which is set to improve this year compared to last year, there are new strategies in place for learner recruitment and on-programme monitoring and there has been an improvement in retention of 19+ learners on long courses.

The adult Functional Skills achievement rate was predicted to be 52.8% however there was an issue with the flagging / risk rating of the learners. This issue has now been resolved and the new predicted achievement rate is 87.5%.

There is an improved process for gathering destination data for learners on employability courses, which is measured at eight weeks post completion of the course. In 2021-2022 27% destination data was collected whereas in 2022-2023 the current rate is 58.3%.

The part-time ESOL adult provision has been a key highlight with courses being delivered at Bright Futures, the College's town centre training centre which

works with unemployed adults to upskill them to get them into employment. The job centres are reporting that many of the ESOL learners do not have the language skills to progress straight into work therefore the College has put the part-time adult ESOL provision in place, with a view to these learners progressing onto employability courses once they have completed the ESOL course. The first cohort on the ESOL course had a 100% achievement rate in the reading exam and the second cohort has just commenced.

A Governor reported that the College does an incredibly good and important job at serving the needs of the community and asked whether there is a need to look and think holistically at the impact of learner destinations. Karen Spencer reported that there is some Government data available however this was not published during Covid. A longitudinal picture would be beneficial however this is something the College cannot easily do itself. The College does however undertake a three month and a six-month review. Paul Whitehead reported that Government data is being put into a dashboard however the data is a year out of date. Despite this, the College uses it as a reference point. Karen Spencer reported that the picture is complex and that the national data includes learners at all levels and therefore the data needs to be drilled down further in order for it to be most useful to colleges. Wendy Martin reported that the College is not comparable with the national rates as the College works predominately with the long-term unemployed who are furthest away from entering the labour market. Governors were informed that the College cannot afford to put more staff resource into destinations than it currently has.

A Governor asked if the College comes under the same regime as higher education. Karen Spencer reported that it does for prescribed higher education only and not for any of its other provision.

A Governor requested to have a breakdown of the number of ESOL learners who have moved out of the area which has impacted on retention and achievement rates in future reports.

A Governor asked about the consistency and recording of attendance and destinations. Wendy Martin reported this is due to the nature of the programmes and the processes the College has are different rather than there been a lack of recording.

A Governor asked about the issue with Level 2 Functional Skills. Karen Spencer reported that the most recent national rate was 20.9% and Wendy Martin reported that the data was based on the non-completion of the flagging and new students who have started have not yet been risk rated / flagged. Governors were informed that learners are flagged red, amber or green based on whether they are predicted to achieve.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Adult Education.

5.3 Apprenticeships

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Apprenticeships, presented by Kirstie Craig, Assistant Principal.

Governors were informed that the College is focusing on achievement. The current rate is 43% and the predicted end of year is 61%. Based on current data, the College is on target to achieve the 61%.

Apprenticeships are still being monitored closely by the College, particularly in electrical and engineering as these areas are slightly below where the College would expect them to be at this stage in the year. Engineering are predicting a 54% achievement rate and electrical a 59% achievement rate. These predictions are being scrutinised to ensure that they are accurate and achievable. There have been some staffing issues which has made it slightly harder to make accurate predictions.

There is a focus on progress review completion rates and where there has been an increase in the completion rate, there is now a focus on the quality of the reviews.

Good progress is being made with Functional Skills achievement and the centralised approach has improved the quality of this. The College is looking to be involved in a pilot scheme around alternative evidence and flexibility of evidence in respect of Maths and English criteria for apprenticeships.

There are improved methods of reporting data and flagging which makes it easier to get an overview of the College's current position and systems are being developed in line with the Accountability Framework. Data is gathered in exit reviews to determine if apprentices are still employed in the sector, if they have gained promotion post-completion of the apprenticeship and if they are remaining with their current employer. Basic analysis of the data on promotions indicates that those with a trade apprenticeship are more likely to gain a promotion than those with a business apprenticeship. A Governor asked if those with a business apprenticeship are still being employed. Kirstie Craig reported that they are however they are not getting promoted. Karen Spencer reported that business apprentices are often entry-level posts, with some offering similar pay to an administrator, where they are trained to do the job. Trade apprentices, however, are being trained to progress to next the level in their field. Opportunities for business apprentices to move into team leading roles could be a possibility.

A Governor highlighted that the report was positive and demonstrates the positive impact the work being undertaken by the College on apprenticeships is having.

A Governor asked if it is only a requirement for apprentices to attempt Functional Skills. Kirstie Craig reported that apprentices have to achieve Level 1 Functional Skills and have to attempt Level 2.

A Governor asked what the end date was for the ESFA's enhanced monitoring of apprenticeships. Paul Whitehead reported that draft achievement rates have been published however the College has raised some queries with the rates with the ESFA. A significant improvement in apprenticeships has been demonstrated however once the data has been finalised, the ESFA will review

the College again and decide if the monitoring will continue. A Governor asked could the College be graded as good by Ofsted if it was still in monitoring. Paul Whitehead confirmed that it can be and that the enhanced monitoring the College is subject to is the lowest level of ESFA monitoring.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Apprenticeships.

5.4 Maths and English

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Maths and English, presented by Viv Kimeng, Head of Academy.

Governors were informed that there is increased anxiety amongst all learners. Maths and English are exam-based qualifications and those who are still studying these at College often have had a negative experience of these subjects at school and have been classed as fails.

The College has been reviewing its systems and processes. A decision was taken not to enter all students into the November resits and students could choose whether they wanted to take the resit in November. Better results were seen due to this approach and attendance after the resits did not decrease as much as it has done in previous years.

There are significant improvements with 16 – 18 Functional Skills predictions for this year. There has also been a positive movement in Functional Skills overall compared to previous years. Diagnostic assessments are being completed and revision sessions offered, with learners only undertaking the exams when they are ready to do so. The Level 1 Award in Number and Measure has also seen a significant improvement.

Attendance is still an issue and measures are being put in place to address this. Two teams have trialled Maths and English lessons at 3pm. Learners will be studying their main programme from 1.30pm, then Maths and English staff go into their classes at 3pm to deliver Maths and English. This is working well at present.

A Maths and English attendance officer is being recruited and new Maths and English teachers are being recruited so that class sizes can be reduced and students can be worked with more closely, thus having a positive impact on them.

Karen Spencer reported that the fundamental issues are attendance and non-engagement. Despite all the action being taken by the College, only a 1% improvement has been seen. The same issues are being reported nationally, everyone is working collectively to address the same issue.

A Governor asked what the national rates are. Karen Spencer reported that the College is in line with national rates. Although there is no published data, most colleges are reporting 65% - 70%. Attendance also depends on the cohort of learners as those studying A-Levels but resitting Maths or English have a much higher attendance rate than those in trade areas.

A Governor highlighted that passing Maths and English is not required for them to gain their vocational qualification therefore why would they see a need to take Maths and English if they have already failed them.

A Governor reported that the College needs to continue doing everything it is currently doing.

A Governor reported that attendance and retention on Study Programmes is good and asked if the problem lies with embedding Maths and English in the Study Programmes. Karen Spencer reported that this is not the issue and it is the curriculum which is the wrong. It is currently unclear what the Maths for All scheme of learners up to age 18 will look like. There is a need for a proper review of post-16 Maths and English qualifications to include GCSE and Functional Skills.

Viv Kimeng reported that universities are offering vocational students unconditional offers therefore these learners do not see the value of attending Maths and English classes. Karen Spencer reported that some employers are saying they require their employees to have Maths and English and some are not.

A Governor asked if Maths and English have been removed from T-Levels. Karen Spencer reported that these learners still need to study Maths and English if they do not have a Grade 4 or above however it is not a mandatory exit requirement of T-Levels and it is hoped that this will become the case with apprenticeships.

A Governor reported that the College is doing everything it can and they could not think of anything more the College could do. It was acknowledged that resources are tight however improvements are being slowly made.

Karen Spencer reported that the College's Maths results are strong compared to the national average and English results are just a couple of points below.

Karen Spencer thanked Viv Kimeng and her team for the excellent work that they have undertaken as part of the Centre for Excellence in Maths project.

A Governor asked about how learning is tracked and how the College monitors how much learning is taking place. Becky Jones reported that formative assessment takes place in every lesson before the learners leave and Viv Kimeng reported that an online platform is used which shows progress and gives out praise.

A Governor asked about the grading of teaching, learning and assessment. It was agreed that the grades should be replaced with "good" or "outstanding".

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Maths and English.

5.5 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs)

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs), presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Paul Whitehead reported that there has been an increase in the number of learners on bursary and free school meals and an increase in care leavers and looked after children. This is mainly due to the increase in ESOL enrolments. Predicted achievement rates show an improvement in all these areas.

The amount of money bursary learners receive has been increased by the College and access to bursary has widened. Some learners are not accessing the money they are entitled to and there is a focus on identifying what the barriers to this are. It is hoped that the actions being taken will increase retention and outcomes for these learners.

The College's Supported Education academy is engaging well with stakeholders, such as support workers and parents, with coffee mornings being hosted at the College.

The biggest challenge is staffing and resource is being allocated as best it can be. The College's strategy is not to hand hold these learners, however they are supported throughout their time at College to become more independent.

Karen Spencer reported that all schools are struggling with staffing and a Governor asked if volunteers were used. Karen Spencer reported that some support workers started as volunteers and suggested that Rainbow Services be approached to see if they have any volunteers the College could use.

Paul Whitehead reported that the College is looking at longer-term strategies and flexible staffing models. The College is fortunate to have retained the staff it currently has and is reassuring staff that more resource will be coming.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on SEND and EDIMs.

5.6 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Learning, Teaching and Assessment, presented by Kelly Edwards, Executive Director – Quality.

Kelly Edwards reported that walkthroughs are taking place from January to May for each area of the College's provision. Currently 90% of walkthroughs have judgements of "best practice", "met" or "not seen today". The Learning Co-ordinator is focusing on improving the quality of walkthroughs and making them more meaningful for staff.

Embedding of Maths and English is a key focus. The Quality Team has produced a guide on this and it is a focus on staff development days. The guide is to help make Maths and English part of everyday lesson planning and helping for it to be recognised more by observers. Bespoke sessions on this are being offered to staff. There is a requirement to embed Maths and English and the College has simplified its processes and put this into the lesson plan. The bar has been raised on what the College is asking the staff to do. It was acknowledged that it will take time for improvements to be seen.

Karen Spencer reported that at a recent conference she attended, a college reported on an initiative of students teaching Maths and English staff part of their main programme. This has helped with improving attendance and motivation and helped staff to better understand how Maths and English can be embedded in main programmes. Harlow College has applied to be part of a wider piece of research linked to this.

All teams have had a deep dive and Governors' attention was brought to the summary of the results of these in the report. Kelly Edwards reported that the teams that were part of the pilots in May have shown progress being made between the pilot and their second deep dive in October. Improvements have been made and the increase in the teams' ability to describe the intent, implementation and impact was vast. Deep dives will continue to be important going forward with areas of best practice and areas for improvement being logged and monitored.

As part of the IQA processes and checks, formative and summative assessment is being asked to be shown by all teams. EHCPs are being looked at to ensure that they are being used effectively and to ensure standardisation across the College.

A Governor asked if the walkthroughs or deep dives feed into performance evaluation. Kelly Edwards reported that they feed into team healthchecks, self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans.

A Governor highlighted that only 22% of walkthroughs have been completed to date therefore it would be naïve to think that the College's overall position was good based on this data alone. It was clarified that the view on good learning, teaching and assessment was based on wider data, including deep dives, self-assessment, student feedback and Power of 3. It was agreed that it would be useful to have numbers in the report as well as percentages. Paul Whitehead reported that the timing of the report meant that only a low number of walkthroughs have been completed and the data provides an important indicator at an early point of the walkthrough cycle of where the College is currently at, allowing the College to react quickly to any early issues identified.

A Governor reported that it is important to be addressing improvements for the current cohort of learners by identifying any issues early and putting in place measures where appropriate. Karen Spencer reported that there is a lot going on in the College which is not reported on in the papers and confirmed that walkthroughs provide feedback for individuals to improve their practice.

A Governor asked how this links into the Power of 3. Kelly Edwards confirmed that the walkthroughs feed into the Power of 3. Becky Jones reported that walkthroughs are at individual staff member level and where criteria is judged not to have been met, this then feeds into the Power of 3 process.

A Governor reported that whilst teaching is incredibly important, learning should matter the most and asked of ways the College collects information on learning. Karen Spencer reported that this is part of the flagging process and is recorded on Pro-Monitor. Predicted success rates are also part of this and information on learning is included in other individual reports presented to the Committee. A Governor asked if a paragraph on student learning and student progress could be included in future reports.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

5.7 Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes, presented by Simon Boyce, Executive Director – Student Services.

Simon Boyce reported that the tutorial programme has had a positive impact and the key focus now is on the recruitment of tutorial coaches to better support the delivery and quality of tutorials. A self-assessment survey has been conducted with the Personal Development Coaches to identify knowledge and confidence gaps and outcomes will form the basis of a targeted coaching programme.

Wednesday afternoon enrichment activities continue and this is being built on to grow participation.

The College is looking to grow engagement with the food bank across the whole College. Hannah Cheesman reported that this being promoted to students in each area for them to take back and share with their learners.

There is good participation with schools in terms of careers, advice and guidance and there is an increase in 16-18 applications for next academic year compared to this time last year.

The moving on process has commenced and learners are being supported in identifying their options going forward. Where required 1-2-1 support is being offered to learners.

The College is organising a career fair next month with most of the local secondary schools being involved.

A Governor asked if the Baker clause is having an impact on the level of engagement with schools. Simon Boyce reported that it has and that schools are asking for support to achieve the required six interventions per student.

A Governor asked if there were any trends in the behaviour issues. Paul Whitehead reported that the numbers have increased back to pre-Covid levels however there are some incidents that involve a group of students. Any themes arising from the incidents are addressed across College. A Governor confirmed that where necessary, themes are addressed at the Safeguarding Committee.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes.

5.8 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the KPIs for 2022-23, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted that the KPIs had been covered in agenda items 5.1 – 5.7 above.

5.9 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the QIP, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted that the QIP had been covered in agenda items 5.1 – 5.7 above.

6 Higher Education

6.1 OfS Regulatory Requirements

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on OfS regulatory requirements, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Governors were informed that the report provides a regulatory update to give Governors' assurance on what the College is doing to comply with OfS regulatory requirements.

Becky Jones reported that the College's Student Protection Plan was approved by the OfS and is published on the College's website.

A Governor asked how many higher education learners the College currently has. Becky Jones reported that the College has one full time learner and two higher apprentices, however the College will be expanding its provision as part of the Institute of Technology. The College has gained approval for Healthcare Practice and Computing for England courses as part of the Institute of Technology.

Governors were informed that the College is fully compliant with all OfS regulatory requirements and that the College is not participating in the Teaching Excellence Framework as it does not meet the threshold for participating.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on OfS regulatory requirements.

6.2 OfS Reportable Events

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted that there has been no OfS reportable events since the Committee last met on 23 November 2022.

7 Admissions Policy

The Standards and Curriculum received and considered the Admissions Policy, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Paul Whitehead reported that there are a couple of proposed minor amendments to the policy, including changes in responsibilities, learner disclosure of criminal records and details on course changes or closures.

The Standards and Curriculum approved the Admissions Policy, with the amendments outlined above.

8 Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business.

9 Dates of Future Meetings

Summer Term	Thursday 15 June 2023 <i>Onsite at Harlow College</i>	9.30am
-------------	--	--------

Key Points From The Meeting For Corporation:

1. Item 1 – Key Performance Indicators

To receive and note the current position.

2. Item 2 – Quality Improvement Plan

To receive and note the current position.