

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13 March 2017

Membership:

- * Sotirios Adamopoulos
- * Jon Bouffler
- * Chris Christofides (Chair)
- Luke Jones
- * Liz Laycock
- * Myrtle Prodger
- * Karen Spencer

**denotes present*

In attendance

- L Turner, Deputy Principal
- B Jones, Assistant Principal
- D Sheridan, Clerk to the Corporation
- R Lucas, Deputy Clerk to the Corporation

567 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from L Jones.

568 Declarations of Interest

J Bouffler declared an interest in agenda item 574 – Higher Education and any other matters relating to Anglia Ruskin University.

569 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 22 November 2016 were agreed and approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

570 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

571 Harlow College Quality Improvement Plan

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on the Harlow College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), presented by L Turner, Deputy Principal.

Governors noted that the QIP has been colour-coded, with green highlighting those areas that had been broadly achieved, orange where good progress is being made and the measures in black are those that will be achieved at the end of the academic year.

Each area of the QIP and progress made to date was discussed and Governors noted the following:

- Apprenticeships:
 - Systems are working well and very detailed tracking is in place that feeds into an apprenticeship dashboard.
 - Apprentices are challenged to undertake the next level in English and maths if they have achieved the required level for their framework.
 - More work is needed to be undertaken with employer forums.
 - Standard procedures have been put in place to ensure that delivery and quality is more consistent across the College.
 - Recruitment targets have been set for teams.
 - The College's biggest focus is currently the move from frameworks to standards which come into force in May 2017.
 - It was noted that training for employers, including Prevent training, needs to be added into the QIP.
 - Governors asked how significant is the issue of learners being at risk of losing their job. L Turner provided some background to this and some examples of when this could happen to learners.
- English and Maths:
 - This area was covered later in the meeting under agenda item 572.
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment:
 - Quality processes and the College's coaching programme are going well.
 - Staff who are not existing teachers have been recruited in particular areas therefore, in some cases, more intensive support is needed when these members of staff first start at the College.
 - Personal development plans are in place for all staff.
 - Teams have their own dashboard resulting from team reviews and they are categorised into gold, silver and bronze. This promotes healthy competition between teams.
 - E-learning is going well.
- Employability and Progression:
 - Weekly workshops are taking place for those seeking an apprenticeship.
 - Curriculum plans have been approved and 3 new HNC/Ds in Engineering, Early Years and Computer Game Design have been approved.
 - Higher apprenticeship pathways in IT and Business Administration have been developed.
 - Unloc have delivered industry days to over 150 students and other enterprise activities have been planned.
- Curriculum Development:
 - A curriculum planning conference took place in January 2017.
 - The College is maintaining a focus on priorities of the LEP, the local authorities and employers to ensure that the curriculum is fit for purpose.
 - The College is working to the new apprenticeship standards.
- E-Strategy Efficiency and Effectiveness:
 - A suite of quality dashboards have been developed.
 - A new print solution has been implemented and to date the College's paper orders have halved.
 - I-pads continue to be well-received and well-used. The College has been approached to be an Apple Distinguished School, which would be the first college to be giving this title. C Christofides stated that this endorsement is well-deserved.
 - There has been good feedback in the student survey on the use on i-pads and students feel confident in the use of technology. There has been a noticeable impact on staff too.

- Meeting the Needs of Learners with High Needs:
 - The College has secured over £1m of high needs funding.
 - New staff have been recruited to support these learners.
 - Essex County Council has a strong focus on the outcomes for these learners and their destinations.
- Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare:
 - Attendance is currently lower than at this time last year, however work is being done on this.
 - Tutorials are being focused on to ensure that they are effective.
 - The College deals with any issues as they emerge and ensures that they are addressed in the most appropriate way.
 - The College is leading on a Prevent project funded by the Home Office.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the update on the Harlow College Quality Improvement Plan.

572 Maths and English Improvement Plans

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Maths and English Improvement Plans, presented by L Turner, Deputy Principal.

L Turner reminded Governors that English and maths remains the College's strongest focus. There are central English and maths teams in the College and the English team has recently been further divided and been split into an English and an ESOL team as the challenges were too great for one manager to undertake.

Much work has been undertaken on timetables and ensuring that learners attend classes. There is still an issue with attendance amongst some learners, however this mirrors the national data. The College is looking at more creative ways to engage with learners. The most successful learners are generally Level 3 learners undertaking extended diploma pathways or studying A-Levels. Those studying more practical subjects are struggling more. Four English members of staff and one maths member of staff are undertaking a retain and retrain programme which provides individual mentoring and training and this is being well-received.

Governors were reminded that if learners do not study English and maths, the College does not receive the funding for their main qualification. Governors expressed that an alternative pathway for some learners would be more appropriate. It was noted, however, that learners could still achieve their vocational qualification even if they fail their English and maths. The worst case scenario for them would be that it would block their progression if higher education institutes or employers required them to have English and maths at grade C or above.

Functional Skills is delivered by the vocational teams and predictions are currently on track. The biggest concern remains GCSE English. Governors asked if the predicted 19% pass rate is likely to increase. L Turner explained the rates system used by staff and that the predicted rates are constantly changing. C Christofides asked if the predicted rates were close to national rates. Last year the rates were 19% for English and 22% for maths. K Spencer highlighted that the College under-predicted maths last year however English predictions were overly optimistic. L Turner is attending staff meetings and is ensuring that the lead is being taken from the A-Level teachers.

Following the new syllabus is presenting the College with challenges and learning is

starting from a much lower base.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the update on Maths and English Improvement Plans.

573 GCSE Reforms

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on the GCSE Reforms and Technical Qualifications, presented by K Spencer, Principal.

The Principal reported that a new grading structure for GCSEs has been introduced with a grade from 1 to 9, 1 being the lowest and 9 the highest. This year only English and maths that will be graded this way. Governors noted that there is more graduation for the high grades and less for the low grades. A grade 5 is classed as a good pass and a grade 4 as a pass. The impact on GCSE results is not yet known.

The Principal reported that there is a lot of uncertainty. If students who historically would have achieved a grade D or E now achieve a grade 3, there will be significantly more students taking results. This figure could increase even further if students need to achieve a good pass. The FE sector is waiting for the condition of funding to be published and this could then change. There is uncertainty around the entrance criteria higher education institutes will require and this was confirmed by J Bouffler. However J Bouffler highlighted that there is competition to recruit learners to higher education so this might not be as big an issue as originally thought,

L Laycock asked if the College is informing employers of the changes. K Spencer reported that this will happen later in the year as the College needs to see what happens this summer. C Christofides highlighted that there is work to do with employers, students and parents. Governors asked if policy concerns are being fed back and K Spencer confirmed that they are.

M Prodger proposed that these reforms should be reported at the Corporation meeting on 16 March 2017 and that all Governors should receive a copy of the leaflet highlighting the reforms.

The Principal reported that from September new technical qualifications are being introduced and the majority of College teams have moved over to them. A recommendation from the Sainsbury Review, accepted by Government, was the development of a Skills Plan. There will be a rationalisation of qualifications and fifteen routes are planned to follow specific career pathways, some of which will be delivered through apprenticeships. Applied general qualifications will be the academic route. It is recognised that there will be some specific challenges for particular subjects.

The Government is setting up employer panels to advise on curriculum and it is expected that the apprenticeship reforms will merge towards these technical routes. This work will be overseen by the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education. Learners will need to make a decision of whether to take an academic or technical route. All routes will have more exams however some will be sat at different times of the year.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the update on GCSE reforms and technical qualifications.

574 Higher Education

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on higher education, presented by L Turner, Deputy Principal and B Jones, Assistant Principal.

Governors were informed that all department Boards for Semester One had taken place and that the College had received the report.

Module Evaluation Surveys (MES) have been carried out by students for each module and the response rate has increased significantly. The average score this year is 8.1 out of 10, which is a significant improvement from last year. The College is awaiting data for the results from ARU.

The National Student Survey (NSS) needs more promotion internally. Currently there is an 83% completion rate for students studying HNC/Ds and a 70% completion for ARU students. The Engineering completion rate currently sits at 20%, however there are only twelve students in the cohort.

The College is making good progress with its HNC and HND provision.

Due to there being no recommendations or conditions from last year's BTEC Quality Monitoring Report (QMR), there will be no monitoring visit this year. A date has been set for an external examiner to visit the College for each HNC/D that the College delivers.

An Annual Monitoring Report was submitted to Pearson in November 2016 and a successful annual monitoring took place with ARU in December 2016.

In December 2016, the College was informed that ARU would no longer be continuing with the existing franchise for higher education and the College is ensuring that there is a smooth transition for these learners. The College is looking for an alternative offer for well-recruiting programmes, such as Early Years and Engineering. The College is also developing new HNC/Ds such as computer games design. The College will continue to work with ARU on top-ups to ensure progression routes for all learners.

Governors were reminded that a quality timetable was produced as a result of the self-assessment day in October 2016 as Governors had requested to have an overview of the quality processes and timeframes.

Governors noted that HEFCE had confirmed that there are satisfied with the College's quality and processes at present.

575 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

576 Dates of Future Meetings

Summer Term	Tuesday 04 July 2017	8.30 am
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