

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at Harlow College on Thursday 13 March 2025, 9.30am

Membership: *Rod Bristow (Chair)
 Caroline Betts
 *Vic Goddard
 *Arthur Hall-Jackson
 *Stephen Isherwood
 *Ayub Khan
 *Karen Spencer
 *Michael Travers

*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
 Julien Sample, Executive Director – Business Development
 Viv Kimeng, Head of Academy
 Laura Moore, Head of Academy
 Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Caroline Betts due to work commitments.

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 27 November 2024 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 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 significant developments have been made this year, particularly with the creation of the Student Futures Team and the integration of the Grofar career platform which has had positive engagement from staff and students. The Grofar system is focused on setting, monitoring and evaluating learning goals through the 1-2-1 tutorial process. Measuring the impact of tutorials needs to be undertaken. The College has a two-year timeline to fully embed Grofar and is on target to achieve this.

Governors noted that the recording of employability activities needs to be improved, with additional training and support being put in place for teaching staff and that work experience is currently below target. This is mainly due to prioritising the 149 T-Level placements that are required by the College's T-Level students.

A Governor asked how hard it is to secure T-Level placements. Simon Boyce reported that it is a challenge however once relationships are established with employers, placements are often offered year on year and the College has a particularly good relationship with the hospital who offer a number of clinical placements. Simon Boyce reported that the College's work experience and placement figures are in line with the national picture. Karen Spencer reported that the College has developed good relationships with the NHS and has a history of strong relationships with employers in the childcare sector. Business is the next area to focus on developing relationships with employers. The difficulty in finding placements highlights that the College made the right decision to withdraw some of the trade area T-Levels.

A Governor asked how Bodyswaps is connecting with the work of the Digital Team. Kelly Edwards reported that the Digital Team is working alongside the Student Futures Team with a focus on preparing students with employability skills. A Governor asked about wider skills development, not necessarily linked to information, advice and guidance, such as how to develop a holistic individual, including skills such as teamwork and communication. Simon Boyce reported that a pilot project is being delivered with the Choices Team, which includes a programme of modules to build some of these skills, including undertaking mock interviews.

A Governor congratulated Simon and his team for achieving the Matrix accreditation and asked what areas for development were identified. Simon Boyce reported that there were very minor and they were struggling to find areas for development. They are keen for the College to apply for whole-College accreditation.

Vic Goddard reported that he had attended his first Safeguarding Committee meeting in his role as Link Governor. Youth workers were mentioned a lot at the meeting and asked what the College's plans were as the youth workers were originally a trial. Karen Spencer reported that it is the College's intention to make them permanent and they are working well so far. Positive noticing has also

been introduced this academic year and this is having a positive impact on student behaviour.

A Governor asked when the student satisfaction data will be available. Laura Wedgbury-Glew highlighted that the Autumn survey results are included in agenda item 5.2 – Study Programmes and that the Summer survey will be undertaken in May. It was suggested that a question on youth workers could be included.

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

5.2 Study Programmes

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

Governors noted that the KPIs are currently on track.

Governors were informed that there is a continued focus on retention and the EDI sub-group is looking to close the achievement gap, particularly for those without an EHCP compared to those with one. Governors noted that the highest declared learning need is dyslexia. Achievement and retention are closely linked – if a student is retained and attends, they are more likely to achieve. Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that some students are turning down exam concessions they have had in the past and this is being looked into to establish the reasons why and if the support is still required.

An attendance monitoring pilot is taking place with three teams with attendance issues. This appears to be having a positive impact, with positive engagement with the parents, as well as with the students.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are being included in schemes of work and this work is being started with a small group of students.

Governors noted that management changes have resulted in improvements in engagement with employers.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew highlighted that satisfaction with tutorials has risen for the first time in three years and that a high number of students are involved in a number of different focus groups across the College.

A Governor asked if there is any variability across teams when looking at student satisfaction and whether the data is broken down by team and examined. Becky Jones reported that there is very little variability in student satisfaction however the data is looked at team by team. The biggest variation is in the uptake of enrichment activities – this is sometimes due to a barrier with the curriculum and sometimes due to the wording and language used to promote the activities.

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

5.3 Adult Education

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

Wendy Martin reported that the overall adult achievement on long programmes is predicted to increase by 8% compared to last year's figures, with achievement on short programmes predicted to be above 80%. Governors noted that there have been particular improvements on the Accountancy and Access to HE programmes.

The flagging processes are being looked at due to the issue of the adult start dates not being at the start of the academic year.

There is positive feedback from learners which is particularly pleasing due to the large number of learners that the College is delivering too. A Governor suggested adding in questions on barriers to employment in the student survey as it would be useful for the College to understand what the barriers are.

Significant improvements have been made to the Level 4 Counselling programme, with 100% of full-time learners having passed all exams and now just have to complete their placement hours. The part-time cohort are all on track to achieve.

The collection of adult destination data is an area for improvement which is being addressed.

Governors were informed that Access to HE has seen a five-year decline in learner numbers however this is a national issue. Access courses are seeing a decline in numbers due to universities recruiting onto Foundation Level courses. Becky Jones reported that Access students are not eligible for maintenance loans therefore the majority have to work as well as study however those studying on Foundation Level courses are eligible for these loans. It is anticipated that Access numbers will grow again due to changes in funding and the tightening of regulations.

A Governor asked if there was a way to deliver the Access programmes more flexibly. Karen Spencer reported that there has been tried and Becky Jones reported that the main issue is money due to the cost of living increases.

A Governor asked about trends in demand for adult learning. Wendy Martin reported that Counselling is the most popular course, however construction and trades courses are popular part-time adult evening courses. This is partly due to landlords wanting to do their own repairs, people wanting to be able to do odd jobs around the house, some wanting a new career and some wanting to upskill. A Governor asked if this has changed over time and Wendy Martin confirmed that this is a consistent picture.

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

5.4 Apprenticeships

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

Kirstie Craig reported that the achievement rate is now 52% and a good indication that the College is on track to achieve the achievement KPI.

Governors were informed that the two Apprenticeship Co-ordinators have been undertaking a significant amount of work on progress reviews, particularly in terms of improving quality. The template has been redesigned and training has been delivered to staff to ensure that the key areas of focus are skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Continued work is being undertaken on teaching and learning, with a particular focus on sequential learning and ensuring the schemes of work are of good quality and integrate skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Kirstie Craig reported that there has been a recent change in the funding rules around English and maths. Previously only apprentices who had an EHCP were entitled to the English and maths exemption, however this has been widened to include those with disabilities and learning difficulties. Learners who are 19+ at the start of their apprenticeship are now also exempt. Currently this equates to 11 19+ apprentices enrolled onto English who are now entitled to an exemption and 30 who are enrolled onto maths. It was noted that some of those who are exempt have achieved Functional Skills qualifications.

A Governor asked if it was the right decision to remove the learners from English and maths if they were exempt. Kirstie Craig reported that it is not always the right decision and the College ideally wants to encourage all learners to achieve the English and maths qualifications however for some learners the English and maths element is the only barrier preventing them from achieving their apprenticeship. The College is working through the processes as this has only just been announced by Government. The guidance states that it is the learner and employer who will make the choice about studying English and maths however the College will always encourage it. Three employers have already stated that they want their apprentices to continue with English and maths.

A Governor asked if the issues raised by Ofsted are being addressed and if the College is confident in moving forward. Kirstie Craig reported that these are a focus of the team. It was hoped that quality checks on schemes of work would happen quicker however the team undertaking these checks have high standards and there is also a focus on embedding the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The team is working closely with the Digital and Quality Team. There are a number of new staff so processes will take some time to fully embed.

A Governor highlighted that the KPIs are all green and asked if the College was confident that this position would continue. Kirstie Craig reported that the KPIs present accurate predictions as much as possible and things are moving forward positively. There have been positive changes in staffing and there is now a full complement of assessors.

A Governor asked if the College delivers any Level 7 apprenticeships and Kirstie Craig confirmed that it does not.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on apprenticeships.

5.5 Maths and English

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

Viv Kimeng reported that predicted achievement rates have improved since the report was written, with predicted achievement for maths at 82.7% and English 81.6%, highlighting that the College is on track to achieve and surpass these KPIs.

Significant work on attendance has been undertaken and there is a better rapport with students and staff.

Governors noted that it is not possible to produce in-class progress data at this point in the year. Topic-based assessments are undertaken which identifies strengths and weaknesses however progress predictions can only be produced when mocks are undertaken.

Governors were informed that the structure of teaching will be looked at for next academic year. The team is conscious of over-assessing and ensuring there is enough time to cover the whole scheme of work.

The College saw good success rates at the November resits, with the College being above the national benchmark. Furthermore, the January results for the Level 1 Awards show good progress.

There is focus on moving English from the lower progress quartile to the median quartile and maths from the median quartile to the upper quartile.

A Governor reported that secondary schools have tried everything they can for the students to achieve grade 4 in English and maths before they attend College therefore it is remarkable for the College to achieve the results it does, irrespective of the national picture. There is a high level of scrutiny in Essex and Harlow and the College is left with the students which the schools were unable to get to achieve a grade 4. They are often reluctant learners who struggle with English and maths. Another Governor reported that it is a big achievement for those who achieve a grade 4 in College and it is a good outcome for them. Viv Kimeng reported that feedback from these students is that it is life-changing for them.

Karen Spencer reported that the reporting in quartiles does not recognise the profile of the students. In Essex, students do worse in English and have lower grades on entry when accessing post-16 provision.

A Governor highlighted that the College's current ranking in the quartiles is not great and asked if there is anything that can be learnt from this. Karen Spencer reported that the quartiles include sixth form colleges therefore the student profile will be different and the data is not comparing like with like. For example, sixth form colleges have mainly A-Level students. Karen Spencer reported that institutions tend to have better results in one subject than the other and this is often dependent on the local school systems.

Kelly Edwards reported that deep dives are highlighting quick formative assessment methods to help capture student progress and that there is a positive classroom environment, with less than ten students not attending their English and maths lessons.

A Governor asked if there is an opportunity to reach students prior to them starting College. Karen Spencer reported that the issue is capacity and recruitment of teachers. To meet the Government demand, the College will need more English and maths teachers and at present it is not attractive to become teachers.

A Governor highlighted that it is impossible to solve the system divide between schools and further education and then asked about the gender split. Viv Kimeng reported that it is approximately a 50:50 split. Kirstie Craig reported the following:

Qualification	Female predicted achievement	Male predicted achievement
English Functional Skills	61%	66%
English GCSE	67.7%	67.4%
Maths Functional Skills	57%	73.8%
Maths GCSE	70%	70%

A Governor asked how this compares to national data. Karen Spencer reported that the national data is not always broken down like this however there is some information contained in the MIDES report. The biggest correlation is the course, with A-Level and science students performing the best, with construction and trade areas performing the worst.

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

5.6 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 all the KPIs are on track for the ones that are set for in-year and that there is a lot of EDI work going on in the background. Work is being undertaken on retention for those with a disability or learning difficulty without an EHCP and the College is continuing to work to reduce this gap.

Governors noted that there is also a focus on apprenticeship data. The College is still in a discovery phase with the data however the College needs to be more analytical with the data before taking action.

The achievement gaps for bursary learners and other socio-economic factors is another aspect which is being focused on. The College is looking at how it shapes its Bursary Policy going forward, looking at the uptake and the impact it is having. Karen Spencer reported that bursary funding and free school meals funding does not cover the College's costs and a focus group of students should be involved when the College is looking at its Bursary Policy. Paul Whitehead reported that there is a need to promote and better understand the other things the College has in place to support learners, such as free breakfasts. Free school meal learners get £6 per day and there is a need to look at the choice and what is available for £6.

Arthur Hall-Jackson reported that travel is expensive for all learners and therefore there is not much motivation for them to attend College if it is just for English and / or maths revision sessions. Becky Jones asked if he thought there would be a better uptake if these sessions were provided on Teams. A Governor asked if part of the answer was a more flexible way of delivering, particularly English and maths. Karen Spencer reported that the Government will not allow main English and maths delivery to be online and that it is required to be face-to-face.

Karen Spencer reported that the help with the cost of travel needs to be promoted as part of the College's marketing work, especially for students at STAC who are entitled to an 80% travel subsidy from MAG, with the other 20% being met by bursary funding for those who are eligible. Paul Whitehead reported that the travel costs are based on the number of days learners attend College each week. Revision days are nuances and the process for dealing with these needs to be explored further.

A Governor asked if the cancellation of some of the Uttlesford bus routes are causing problems for students. Arthur Hall-Jackson reported that travelling from Epping or London is difficult with options being limited. Simon Boyce reported that some of the cancelled services are being picked up by other providers however the College's current agreement for subsidised student travel is with Arriva and it is unclear if such an arrangement will be agreed with the new providers.

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

5.7 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 she and a colleague had presented Bodyswaps at Digifest as Harlow College is the highest user of Bodyswaps in the country. In addition, the College has presented Teachermatic, an AI tool, at the Association of Colleges' teaching and learning conference. The College is being asked to share its embedding of English and maths as other colleges in Essex do not have a good process in place.

Kelly Edwards reported that she had been the lead assessor for the Association of Colleges' Beacon Award sponsored by JISC for the use of technology. This involved observing a number of lessons in different colleges and emphasised what a good job Harlow College is doing.

Governors were informed that deep dives are now focusing on teaching, learning and assessment, including the use of Showbie as a learner management and feedback system, behaviour management, challenge, engagement and formative assessment. Bespoke feedback is given to each team and actions arising from these form part of the team's self-assessment. The team's strengths and areas for development are triangulated in lessons with their self-assessment and on Showbie.

Kelly Edwards reported that the walkthrough process has been updated with a lot of judgments having been refined and made more challenging, with what is being asked for being made more specific. There will be a decline in the number of "met" judgements however the College is comfortable with this and that Governors should be assured by this.

A Governor reported that the changes to the walkthrough judgments are good and asked if there is a correlation which can be shown between good learner outcomes and good walkthrough judgments. Kelly Edwards reported that the walkthrough cycle runs from November to May and a further update will be available at the June Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting. Becky Jones reported that team healthchecks look at the walkthrough profile and the current predicted data. Paul Whitehead highlighted that attendance, retention, achievement, walkthroughs and value added data all correlates.

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

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.

Governors noted that the KPIs had been largely covered in agenda items 5.1 – 5.7 above.

Governors' attention was brought to KPI 8.4 – safeguarding risk assessments for new staff starters. The Committee was informed that these risk assessments are put in place when there are delays in DBS checks. There have been eleven staff to date starting on a risk assessment however there is currently only one member of staff on one.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the KPIs.

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.

Governors' attention was brought to the one red rated action which requires more analysis of the vulnerable learners that leave the College.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the QIP.

6 Ofsted Update

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received an update on Ofsted, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Becky Jones reported that the draft proposal for changes to Ofsted inspections is in the consultation phase. A five-point scale is proposed and all key judgements will be graded against this scale, with the exception of meeting skills' needs which will continue to be a three-point scale and safeguarding which will either be "met" or "not met". There will be no single overall grade for overall effectiveness.

The evaluation areas against which judgements will be made were highlighted along with the proposed criteria for evaluation.

Karen Spencer reported that the biggest difference is the greater focus on achievement and data and the rest does not look too different. A Governor reported that they will be looking carefully at the leadership of teaching. Karen Spencer reported that the College's digital approach to teaching and learning is well integrated across the College therefore evidencing the leadership of teaching should be straight forward.

A Governor asked how achievement would be measured and Karen Spencer reported that this would be by examining pass rates, retention rates and achievement rates however there is an issue with type of provision not being weighted. All the detail will be contained with the handbook and contextualising provision would be really beneficial.

A Governor highlighted that there is a need to focus on what is right for the learners and another Governor reported that the key is leadership and governance – if providers get this right, everything else flows from this.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the Ofsted update.

7 Higher Education

7.1 Higher Education Update, Quality Assurance Report and OfS Regulatory Requirements

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Higher Education Update, Quality Assurance Report and OfS Regulatory Requirements, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Rod Bristow declared an interest in this agenda item due to his connection with College Online.

Becky Jones introduced Laura Moore, the Head of Academy who oversees higher education and who had contributed to the report.

Governors were informed that two additional higher national courses will run from September 2025, one in Psychology and Counselling, with twelve expressions of interest to date, and one in Leadership and Management, with eight expressions to date.

Becky Jones reported that the appointment of a HE Outreach Officer is proving to be successful. They have been promoting the College's HE offer internally and this is now widening out in the community.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the Higher Education Update, Quality Assurance Report and OfS Regulatory Requirements.

7.2 OfS Reportable Events

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted that there has been no OfS reportable events since the Committee last met on 27 November 2024.

8 Meeting Local Skills' Needs

The Standards and Curriculum received and considered the report on Meeting Local Skills' Needs, presented by Julien Sample, Executive Director – Business Development.

Julien Sample highlighted that the College is continuing to make a strong contribution to meeting skills' needs. The College's long-term approach is working with employers in shaping the curriculum and addressing skills' needs day to day in the curriculum teams. The College's short-term approach has been to meet employers' needs through funding, such as the Strategic Development Fund and the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF). These funds have come to an end and the next iteration of these are expected however there is currently no details or timescales. Local Skills Improvement Plans have been given verbal confirmation that their funding will continue.

A Governor asked about the impact of devolution. Karen Spencer reported that the Adult Skills Fund will be devolved to Essex however Harlow faces challenges due to

sitting on the edge of Hertfordshire and the political boundaries because of the way funding is issued. The College does not receive funding for all the work with learners at Stansted Academy who are London residents due to restraints in the GLA contract along with no growth funding being allocated. It is envisaged that Essex devolution will not be embedded until 2028 and it is likely things will get more complicated at first. Julien Sample reported that the College has a good relationship with Essex County Council and they have provided funding to continue the revenue elements of the LSIF projects, for the Renewable Energy Centre, the Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Centre, the pilot enrichment project and equipment for engineering. Julien Sample reported that the College continues to look for funding to continue projects.

A Governor highlighted that devolution and changes to local government are two separate issues and that relationships need to be built.

The Standards and Curriculum noted the report on Meeting Local Skills' Needs.

9 Admissions Policy

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

Governors noted that the Admissions Policy had been strengthened due to the high number of applications the College is receiving. The College has been oversubscribed for its 16-18 provision for two consecutive years and had waiting lists. The language around ordering priorities has been tightened up and partner schools have been added in as a priority. A Governor reported that they were grateful for the inclusion of partner schools.

The proposed changes include not disadvantaging those who are waiting for a criminal conviction risk assessment or those who experience a delay with their EHCP.

The Standards and Curriculum approved the Admissions Policy.

10 Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business.

11 Dates of Future Meetings

Summer Term	Thursday 19 June 2025	9.30am
	<i>Onsite at Harlow College</i>	

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.