

Minutes of the Curriculum and Quality committee held on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Present: Emma Jarman (Chair)  
Carole Kitching, Monica Lawson, David Panes, Tim Thurston

With: Lynne Plested, Vice Principal Higher Education and Curriculum  
Pat Denham, Interim Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality  
Jane Davison, Assistant Principal Lifestyle and Society (minutes 67 – 69 only)  
Tracy Scaife, Head of Governance

67. Apologies for absence – received from Simon Cove and Mary Prince. The Chair welcomed Tim Thurston to his first meeting of the committee and Jane Davison, Assistant Principal Lifestyle and Society who is attending to give a presentation on her faculty.

68. Disclosures of interests – none received.

69. Lifestyle and Society Faculty – presentation by Jane Davidson, Assistant Principal Lifestyle and Society – received and noted.

The meeting noted the structure of the Faculty and key headlines. Predicted achievement for 2021/22 is 85.7%, a dip from the 88.4% actual achievement in 2020/21 and needs to be a focus, retention is good at 91.4%.

Hair and Beauty and Catering have both been assessed as grade 3. Performance within Hair and Beauty continues to be poor. There have been significant staffing issues for the hairdressing courses and this has caused many problems. This needs to be stabilised and restructuring is needed in some areas. Recruitment for the Food and Beverage course has been low and will be dropped from the course offer next year. There is a need to look at recruitment and progression for catering.

Health and Social Care and Sport have also been assessed as grade 3. Staffing issues have also been experienced within Health and Social Care and the Team is being supported to make improvements. There are also currently a high number of students with mental health issues and some safeguarding issues with Level 2 students.

Apprenticeship provision has seen growth in all areas but numbers are still low. Health and Social Care numbers have increased massively but the picture for catering and hair and beauty is not so good

With regard to HE provision, the Level 4 and Level 5 Sport courses each only have 3 students this year, less than originally enrolled and this will affect achievement data. The Level 4 course will possibly not run next year due to consistently low numbers. Travel and tourism at Level 4 and Level 5 is recruiting well. A newly introduced Level 4 advanced beauty therapy course is also recruiting well this year. It is believed that the college is the only one within the area to offer a beauty course at this level and this is a unique selling point for the college.

A Level 6 BSc in Health and Social Care is due to start in September. Other new courses include a Level 4 course in Animal Care and an Apprenticeship in Veterinary Practice. There has been significant growth within the Animal Care courses this year.

The Faculty is fully engaged with the Future Talent Forums in some areas but work needs to be done to fully engage in others.

Attendance across the faculty in Maths and English is poor and is a concern.

Good positive feedback has been received from HE learners, and the Faculty is looking at how it can improve in those areas fed back as not being so good.

Attendance across the Faculty is the main priority at present. Also the recruitment of skilled staff and preparing for Ofsted. The Curriculum Managers are working on a strategic plan to increase salon and restaurant income.

FE learner feedback has been good with very little negative comment. Students generally find their lecturers supportive and helpful. HE learner feedback has also been good. Some suggestions for improvements will be actioned.

The Faculty has nominated students to the BTEC Awards from both the Lifestyle and Society areas. One of the Faculty's students has been selected to promote T levels nationally.

The main focus of the Faculty remains on improving attendance both through the main programme and Maths and English. Various ways of improving this are being looked at including the review of timetabling, increased contact with parents, newly worded letters to students about their non-attendance. Other focus areas are preparing for Ofsted inspection, recruitment of skilled and experienced staff to stabilise some curriculum areas.

There is currently a lot of anxiety and mental health issues amongst students. Staff are doing what they can to support them.

Going forward the Faculty needs some reshaping and there will be a look at those courses that aren't running well, and consideration to remove them from the curriculum offer. Consideration also must be given to what courses are required outside of college by employers and community and the Faculty must make sure that its course offer is meeting those needs.

The Chair thanked Jane for her very informative presentation.

70. Minutes of the last meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 and matters arising – minutes agreed as a correct record.

Matters arising raised as follows:

(a) 55(c) Minute 51 Terms of Reference of the Curriculum and Quality committee – the Head of Governance advised that the exercise to regularise the committee terms of reference had now been handed over to her and she will endeavour to present a final version of the committee terms of reference to the next meeting.

***ACTION:*** TS to present final version of committee ToRs to the next meeting.

(b) 61 Equality and Diversity Inclusion Strategic Committee (EDISC) Report – the meeting noted that the Director of Student Services is preparing this report and it will be presented to the next meeting of the committee.

***ACTION:*** TY to present EDISC report to next meeting

71. Risk management update – considered under the next item.

72. Vice-Principal update report – joint report by Interim Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality and Vice Principal Curriculum and Higher Education received and noted.

(a) Risk management – it was noted that attendance is a big priority at the current time. The possible reasons for low attendance and the strategies being used to improve attendance were also noted. A slight improvement in attendance was seen prior to half term. Work is ongoing with those students with 0-20% attendance. At this time there are 71 such students. Recent lockdowns appear to have had a significant effect on students with some struggling to come back into the college. Parents often have empathy with this. There are also a number of students reducing their study programme.

There has been an underspend of AEB funding but the college is likely to fully utilise the allocation by the end of the academic year. A task and finish group involving key managers has met to identify and promote a curriculum offer to further engage adults for 2021/22. A decision has been made to increase the offer of courses relating to mental health awareness, health and social care, Maths and English functional skills and digital/IT updating.

(b) Student Voice – noted that learner voice for students currently on study programmes is underway for this academic year. The HE survey template used adopts the same topic headings as in the National Student Survey (NSS). The outcomes from both FE and HE returns were noted. These will be used to help form the curriculum offer. The NSS opened for New College Swindon students on 17<sup>th</sup> January and the current response rate is 34.67%, lower than the response rate for the same point last year. A 50% response rate is required for publication. The College has contracted with QDP going forwards to provide FE student surveys which can be benchmarked.

(c) Performance/Predicted Achievement Rate (PAR) – the second PAR cycle has been completed. There are particular concerns with regard to entry level/Level 1 courses and this is under review to ensure an increased focus on support for high needs learners. Lecturers who teach on these courses are very keen to find ways in which to improve achievement. A small task and finish group is being set up for this purpose. Monica Lawson offered to join the group. The college is keen to expand pathways from entry level courses to Level 1 courses. The PAR for these courses is currently very low.

With regard to adult learners, the main challenge is retention. There is a need to look at what opportunities there are to reengage them. The task and finish group for this area will continue to meet. The Adult Learning Centre is a huge source of intelligence to the college. There is the potential to increase ESOL courses, the college currently has a waiting list for these courses.

Level 3 16-18 A Level mock exams will be taking place during the next two weeks. There is a lot of anxiety amongst students, many of whom have not sat any major exams and will need considerable support. The mock exams will be held under strict exam conditions.

With regard to personal development, the meeting commented that this is not just about skills and now could be a good time to review the curriculum. Preparation for self-employment is an area that could be looked as there is likely to be increase in this area.

(d) Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Since the previous meeting there has been a greater focus on CPD for teaching and curriculum support staff, aligned to themes reported back from staff teams. The meeting noted the various CPD activities that have taken place. Earlier in the month a cross college CPD day was held with the theme of 'One College' and this was particularly successful in bringing the two campuses together.

(e) Teaching and Learning – the college currently has 271 staff who require an observation. To date 89 observations have been undertaken with 82 of these meeting expectations. It was noted that the college is currently short of coaches due to staff vacancies.

The Chair asked for a more in-depth look into teaching learning to be included in the next Vice Principals report to the committee to include a correlation with outcomes, what the focus is, where good practice is etc. to enable the committee to obtain a sense of where the real strengths of the college are.

***ACTION:*** PD/LP to include in-depth look into teaching and learning in next report

The Chair thanked the Interim Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality and the Vice Principal HE and Curriculum for the comprehensive report.

(f) Risk Register – noted that the risks presented includes only those risks related to the Curriculum and Quality committee. The Chair asked if in future the risks could be colour coded in line with the coloured risk grid approved by the Corporation when considering risk appetite.

***ACTION:*** PD/LP to include risk grid included in future reports.

Individual risks noted as follows:

- Risk reference E1 - curriculum planning commenced in January/February 2022 rather than October 2021 but is now back on schedule and should be completed on time.
- Risk reference E2 – the college has registered for T Level development in Animal Management and this should be completed by 14<sup>th</sup> March
- Risk reference E3 – concerns as to how the committee can be assured by the senior team that the PAR reporting now being received is more accurate than previous. This area is now being monitored more closely and better reporting has been introduced for retention. There are questions as to whether the data received last year was correctly triangulated with ProAchieve. Difficulties were experienced last year while trying to integrate the different systems used by the two campuses with data not being accurately captured through the systems. Data is now being looked and used to intervene more proactively and being used to form actions. The forthcoming mock exams will give a clearer idea of progress for exam courses. All data will be closely monitored and intervention will take place when necessary.
- Risk reference E5 – 16-18 retention is currently 90.5%. 71 students are being checked for low attendance.
- Risk reference E7 – there will be separate quality plans and Curriculum Managers will be supported by the Assistant Principals.
- Risk reference E8 – New College formerly used Progress Coaches but the former Swindon College did not have them in place. Recruitment is ongoing.
- Risk reference G1 – there is focus on updating people on changes and an increased focus on training for sexual violence.

73. Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020/21 and 2021/22 and HE Quality Improvement Plan update – Quality Improvement Plans relating to academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22 received and noted.

**RESOLUTION:** that the Corporation be recommended to sign off the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020/21

**ACTION:** PD to present QIP 2020/21 to Corporation 08.03.2022.

With regard to the QIP 2021/22, it was noted that the three main risk areas are what should be focussed on over the next 3-4 months. These are attendance, achievement and within that, achievement leading to progression and destinations. The latter can be used to further inform recruitment and set the college as the number one provider for FE in Swindon and the local area. Internal progression depends heavily on internal marketing and needs to be promoted to students early in the academic year. There is still work to be done regarding attendance and the PAR exercise has identified areas of concern. Staff want to do their best to support learners and it is important to ensure that they are supported in this. Focus needs to be on individual learners and a learning plan to get them to the next step. There are priority areas in the document and further priorities within those priority areas. Some areas have been carried forward from the previous year as little progress had been made on them.

Concerns were raised that the document feels broad and unachievable. The meeting was advised that the document is broad but it also shows Ofsted that the college has not forgotten any areas. It is also more comprehensive than previously and is very transactional and outcome based. Concerns were raised that it needed more transformational aspects i.e. what is the college doing to overcome student fears, what culture does the college want to achieve. The meeting was advised that operating planning is in place to capture actions and these reach across the whole organisation.

It was suggested that at the next meeting a presentation be made to the committee on the work of the well-being team throughout the year together with a look at the softer side of the student experience at the college.

With regard to future planning it was suggested that the college should be talking to those coming in to the college rather than those leaving to find out what they want possibly through a focus group. Using a different approach might be beneficial. There needs to be more focus on the community facing aspects of engagement, more parental involvement and engagement as a priority right from the start of the learners contact with the college. The Principal advised that there has been a review of the college application process and one of the main points to come out of this is engagement with parents at the point of enrolment.

**RESOLUTION:** that the Corporation be recommended to approve the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2021/22

**ACTION:** PD to present QIP 2021/22 to Corporation 08.03.2022.

With regard to the HE QIP update it was noted that the two main risks are recruitment and retention, the latter of which is being closely monitored. More work is being done on internal progression and with schools liaison. The college is now getting in to schools more and this gives the opportunity to highlight the HE and T Level offer available. It is difficult to know at present the impact that this is having.

The access plan has been improved and now needs to be implemented. There are still major concerns around data particularly in light of the complexity of historic partner data and a full piece of work is being

carried out on the quality code. 5% of providers are selected at random for external review and this could happen at any time.

The new college website is still being scoped. There are currently some mismatches of information with regard to HE courses and these need to be corrected as soon as possible.

Overall it is felt that performance across HE is on track and slightly better than the previous year.

74. Curriculum planning and strategy – update received from Vice Principal Curriculum and HE and the Interim Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality.

The meeting noted that the curriculum planning exercise commenced slightly later than previously agreed but is now progressing well and should be completed on time. An exercise will be undertaken to decide what courses remain in the offer and what is removed, delivery methods, which awarding bodies to use etc. Consideration is also given to how the offer meets local needs and what tutorials will look like.

Accuracy and an understanding of data is important. The Curriculum Managers are inputting directly into the forecast and some additional levels of checking have been put in this year. The plan needs to be checked off against proposed budgets and will be signed off line by line. This is a big time investment but it should lead to more accurate curriculum planning and give a direction on the staffing required. New guidance on study programmes issued recently has been taken into account. This additional 40 hours per student can be used to cover enrichment as well as direct teaching. The final sign off of the plan will take place by 25<sup>th</sup> March and it will then be passed to the Deputy Principal Finance and Resources and his team for budgeting.

Managers will be held to account for the delivery of the plan through the QFPR system. If the plans are not accurate it will be difficult to hold that accountability so it is vital that they are as accurate as possible.

75. Any other business – none.

76. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022 at 4.00pm

77. Confidential minutes of last meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 and matters arising – agreed.