

Further Education Corporation

Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee

Monday 7th March 2022

MINUTES

Date and timings:	18.00 to 20.20	
Location	Luker Road, Southend Campus	
Present (Governors):	Rick Olver (Committee Chair) Denise Brown (Principal and Chief Executive) Gerry Bender Jo McGee (Staff Governor – academic) Sue Saxton Gwynn Williams	
Clerk	Melissa Drayson	
In attendance	Phil Briscoe: Interim Vice Principal, Curriculum FE and HE Brad Brooks: Assistant Principal Student Experience Nicky Kelly: Assistant Principal Curriculum Operations Jayne Sheehan: Vice Principal, Curriculum Performance and Growth. Colin Bladen-Kopacz: Dean of HE (Item 4) Karen Fox: Head of Additional Learner Support (Item 3.2)	
Apologies for absence	Anthony Murray (FE Student Governor) – did not attend Matt Twitchett: Director of Performance and Standards	
Quorum (4)	The meeting was quorate throughout	
Item		Action lead
0.	Briefing: Logistics <i>Presentation by Mark Bentley, Operations Director, Logistics</i> Governors were taken through the presentation that had been circulated previously. This covered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The personnel in the Logistics team • Current Logistics provision, including that the College was part of the Trailblazer, and the first provider in the country, to offer Level 2 LGV apprenticeships. The L3 Freight Forwarding apprenticeship was particularly successful. It was confirmed that all apprenticeships were on Standards rather than the old Frameworks. 	

- An overview of the national contract with Tesco

The risks to delivery were noted as:

- LGV Apprenticeships & Bootcamp: Dependency of DVSA testing availability.
- HGV Bootcamp: Learner capability and behaviour traits.
- Freight Forwarding Apprenticeships: Candidate availability.
- Growth Ambitions: Labour Market challenges to recruit both candidates and instructors.
- Client Dependent: Tesco Logistics dominate provision.
- Ageing departmental profile.
- Past End Point Dates: DVSA, evidence gathering from client etc.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the provisions was currently targeted at adults over 24, due to minimum age LGV license restrictions. There might be scope to develop C1 license courses for younger learners.

The diversity of the learner profile was also queried. The Bootcamps were very white male dominated, although the Tesco programme had more of a drive to recruit female students and those from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

The Committee thanked Mark Bentley for an informative and positive presentation.

1. Preliminary items

1.1 Welcome to new members and apologies for absence

It was noted that the new FE Student Governor, Anthony Murray, was expected to attend but was not present. There were no other apologies for absence from governors. Apologies were noted from Matt Twitchett (Director of Performance) and Jane Belcher (Head of Safeguarding)

1.2 Declarations of interests

There were no new declarations of interest. Previously declared interests were brought forward.

1.3 Urgent other business.

The Principal raised one item of confidential other business. This would be discussed at the end of the meeting without staff present.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

2.1 Minutes on 8th November 2021

The minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record.

2.2 Matters Arising

Actions completed and covered on the agenda were noted.

It was reported that action 5.1 relating to reporting English and Maths outcomes by department, was being addressed but was too early to report.

3. Safeguarding and SEND

3.1 Safeguarding Termly Report

Supporting paper presented by the AP, Student Experience

The paper covered the year to date. Key headlines were:

- A 50% increase in terms of students declaring safeguarding and wellbeing needs compared to the same point last year. Many of these related to mental health issues stemming from lockdown, but could also reflect higher levels of awareness of the service as evidenced in the 'welcome to College' survey. The increase had placed a lot of strain on the service.
- Overall, 20% of the student cohort had had some sort of contact with the service. As previously reported, numbers were proportionally lower from Luckyn Lane where the student cohort was predominantly male. A specialist student adviser had been placed there and work was still underway to establish reasons for low referrals.
- Referrals of care-experienced and vulnerable students had increased by 12%
- There had also been an increase in unaccompanied asylum seekers. The college not only was committed to fulfilling its statutory duties as part of a multi-agency approach, but aspired to be a beacon of good practice in terms of providing wraparound support, enrichment, behaviour support, and addressing cultural differences

Governors once again stressed the need for adequate support for staff. It was confirmed that a range of support measures were in place including training in providing a trauma-informed approach to dealing with a range of more extreme and aggressive behaviours that had arising since lockdown was lifted.

There was discussion of the types of behaviour being witnessed, and the underlying reasons for it, including loss of social and relationship development in Years 10 and 11; unsupportive or disrupted home lives including aggression or a lack of boundaries and social media. The Behaviour Policy would be revisited to support staff in understanding and dealing with student behaviour challenges appropriately.

An update was provided on the recommendations from the Ofsted monitoring visit. This was positive overall but highlighted the need to strengthen learner awareness of dangers in the community (contextual safeguarding, and learner understanding of peer on peer abuse and appropriate behaviours. Staff development was in place on these areas.

Staffing levels in the Student Support services were a risk. There were currently two vacancies and a further member of staff was due to leave. Staff recruitment was challenging, possibly due to levels of pay.

3.2 SEND Annual Report 2020-21

Supporting paper by the Head of Additional Learning Support

Governors noted that the college was dealing with an increase in Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and Annual Reviews against a

staffing shortfall in additional support. There were currently 255 learners requiring additional support along with 39 consultations for the current year and 35 so far for 2022-23.

It was reported that the 16-18 Study Programme did not always provide space in timetables to accommodate additional learning inputs. Microsoft Teams had, however, been an effective tool for capturing learners at different campuses at the same time.

There was a focus on addressing support for Adult Skills budget funded learners, in order to close the achievement gap.

Work was underway to maximise the claims for High Needs funding from the local authority as it had been found that the college was under-charging. Any additional funds received could be used for staffing costs.

The team was on-track for supporting learners with GCSEs in the summer.

A High Needs internal audit had been undertaken. This went well but did highlight the need for a more robust database. The team was looking at practice at other colleges.

AGREED: That an update on staff vacancies and recruitment across all departments should be brought to the Board.

4. Higher Education Update

4.1 Higher Education KPIs report

Supporting papers by the Dean of Higher Education

Ten targets had been set across the categories of access, success and progression.

Neither of the two 'access' targets had been achieved – enrolments by BAME students, and those from areas of high socio-economic deprivation.. This was considered to be primarily due to the impact of the pandemic on the HE and jobs market.

All but two of the six success targets had been achieved; the two that had not also related to students from BAME backgrounds. More targeted data and monitoring was in place aimed at specific improvements.

Progression rates were difficult to assess due to a lack of comparative data from the Office for Students (OfS). These would be reported at a later date.

The OfS was currently consulting on extending a standard set of KPIs across all HE provision, including unregulated L4, 5 and 6 course. HE Institutions could expect to meet 120+ KPIs in future.

4.2 HE Access Agreement

The Access Agreement set out where access funds were being allocated. All projects were on track in terms of expenditure. This included research into barriers of access and achievement for BAME students.

4.3 HE Student Recruitment Plans 2022-23

Overall applications for 2022-23 were healthy. The HE department was working closely with Marketing to develop further face-to face and interactive campaigns. There was also a drive to increase internal progression. Governors noted the dependance on clearing in September to achieve numbers and asked what was being done to secure student applications before clearing. It was reported that the pressure of competition from universities due to the pandemic, and Teacher Assessed Grade inflation, was now likely to ease.

5. Quality and the Learner Experience

5.1 Current Learners Performance against KPIs

Supporting paper presented by the VPs Curriculum and Quality

There was discussion of the RAG-rated report on the achievement of quality KPIs. It was noted that achievement would not be known until the year end, so predictions were made using the proxy measures of attendance and retention.

Predicted achievement was RAG rated green in all areas except 16-18. This was due to low attendance in several areas. Management was working hard to re-engage at-risk students but it was expected that retention would decline as a result.

Governors observed that there had been much discussion of attendance, but strategies to date did not appear to be having the desired impact.

Apprenticeships were now RAG green in terms of achievement outcomes although this would be monitored closely in the light of the previous year's underachievement due to the impact of Covid.

English and Maths and Engineering and Construction were the main areas of risk to overall 16-18 achievement. Achievement was particularly poor in English and Maths at 75%. Rapid intervention work was being extended to sustain improvements. Governors asked whether it was too late in the year to make a significant change and asked whether consideration was being given to reviewing the teaching model for English and Maths. It was agreed that more needed to be done to engender an integrated whole college approach to teaching English and Maths, that encourage joint working between departments.

Governors also encouraged greater use of safety net actions for learners that emphasised incremental progress by learners, rather than allowing them to 'fail'.

AGREED: That an update on English and Maths would be brought to the May meeting.

5.2 Quality Improvement Plan Monitoring

Presented by the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality

Progress against the QIP was noted. This reflected previous discussions in highlighting concerns primarily around English and Maths and attendance.

5.3 Engineering and Construction QIP

Supporting paper presented by the Assistant Principal Performance

It was noted that the 'current' picture was based on February figures. There was some improvement in retention in all areas except Motor Vehicle, although a note of caution was given because of the higher levels of learners with poor attendance. Predicted achievement was, therefore, showing as red. As previously discussed, there was a significant drive to improve attendance.

There was discussion that there were still staff who were not completing registers on time, particularly for off-site activities. This was being dealt with through performance management.

Measures to improve tracking and monitoring were making slow progress. Quality assurance meetings were being held every two weeks by the Quality Manager to encourage timely processes, including internal verification and lesson observations.

It was noted that lesson observations were reporting 47% Good or Outstanding Teaching and Learning. This would be monitored closely and triangulated with other assessment tools. The department had recently recruited 18 new staff, most of whom had no teaching qualifications. Despite a targeted staff recruitment campaign, there were still 19 vacancies.

On a positive note, a member of the Carpentry team had recently been presented with a Royal Society technical teaching award. Governors asked that their congratulations be passed onto the member of staff in question.

Governors confirmed that their concerns had been answered honestly and thoroughly, and looked forward to hearing more about the impact of measures being taken on student achievement and compliance.

AGREED: That the Engineering and Construction QIP would continue to be a standalone item at committee meetings.

5.4 Apprenticeships

Paper presented by the VP Curriculum Performance and Growth

Governors noted and discussed headlines from the report:

Work was still focused on moving learners who had passed their end date through to completion. Most of these were within Engineering and Construction and Building Services

The Financial impact of End Point Assessment (EPA) completion was forecast to come through in Quarters 3 and 4 of the year. The biggest risk areas were through where an External Quality Assessor was needed to verify the EPA, due to shortages of EQAs in some areas.

The aim was to have no carry-in apprentices in 2022-23

In terms of new starts, half were Tesco apprenticeships. Recruitment to non-Tesco apprenticeships were lagging behind. This demonstrated the risk of over-reliance on one partner and the need to diversify.

A number of new qualification standards were being developed for introduction in 2022-23.

It was also reported that, as part of the curriculum planning process, the balance between study programmes and apprenticeships in some areas was being reviewed, including those where staff recruitment was a particularly high risk.

AGREED: That there would be a focused discussion on the 2022-23 curriculum plan at the next Curriculum Meeting.

5.5 Learner Destinations 2020-21

Supporting paper by the VP Curriculum

Governors noted the Ofsted focus on learner progression. The College logged intended destinations, but management sought Committee endorsement for a piece of work to validate actual destinations. There was discussion of how the definition of a positive destination might vary according to the age of the learner.

There had been an improvement, over the previous four years, in positive destinations and internal progression, but there was still a need to improve progression into college HE provision. There was also a need to remove any barriers to internal progression for 16-18 and adult students, including English and Maths.

AGREED: That an update on the validation of the destinations of 2022 leavers would be brought back to the Committee as part of the 2022-23 schedule of business.

5.6 Annual Complaints and Compliments Report

Supporting paper by the VP Curriculum

There had been a decrease in the number of complaints compared with the previous year, to pre-pandemic levels. However, more were being upheld. Most of the complaints related to learner experience, with some correlation with at-risk areas of the curriculum.

In response to governors' questions, it was confirmed that there were no complaints relating to discrimination.

The Complaints Policy and Procedure was brought to the Committee for information as it was due for review. It was considered that the college operated a transparent complaints process, which was being used well.

6. Results of the Matrix re-accreditation

Matrix accreditation was important to the College as a condition of funding. The re-accreditation report had been a resounding endorsement of the work being done by staff. No areas of concern had been identified, but there were some areas of development that were focused on further improving the service.

The Committee asked that its thanks and congratulations on an excellent outcome be passed back to the staff team.

7. Quality Cycle and Committee Business

Supporting paper presented by the Clerk

The Committee revisited the action from the January SAR validation panel, to address the timing of the SAR/QIP production cycle and ensure that these dovetailed with Committee meeting dates.

AGREED: That a governor/SLT sub-group be set up to review the cycle of business and bring recommendations to the May meeting.

8. Governor links feedback

Supporting paper by the Clerk

The number of link visits that had taken place, and the positive and rich feedback they had produced, was commended. It was considered that reviewing the role at Board level had been extremely helpful.

9. Academic Board report

Supporting papers for information

Governors commented that this had been a helpful report, especially in terms of understanding the latest position on T Levels.

10. Forthcoming Events

11. Other business

A confidential item was raised by the Principal and Chief Executive. Staff Governors and staff in attendance left the meeting. A separate minute was taken.

Governors were informed that a short-notice external quality review had been commissioned for the week commencing 21st March. This was to provide an independent assessment of progress on the Quality Improvement Plan, particularly with regard to concerns about English and Maths, in-year student progress and end of year achievement. The review would mirror the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, which would familiarise staff with the approach in preparation for an inspection.

Initial outcomes would be reported to the Board on 28th March.

The meeting finished at 20.20

Signed.....Dated.....