



CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 12 MAY 2022

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17 February 2022
Author: Clerk
Action: Approve
Status: Open

Present: Sarah Stewart (SS – Interim Chair)
David Alexander (DA – Principal and CEO)
Carol Davenport (CD)
Michael Wood-Williams (MWW)

In attendance: Deni Chambers (DC – Assistant Principal)
Darren Heathcote (DH – Head of Student Services and Customer Experience)
Kevin Marston (KM – Assistant Principal)
Andrew Robson (AR – Assistant Principal)
Chris Toon (CT – Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality)
Ivan Jepson (IJ – Director of Business Development & Planning)
Richard Ward (RW – Head of Quality Improvement)
Claire Bellerby (CB – Head of Jewish Academies and Interim Head of Automotive and Engineering)
Sally Cooper (SC – Clerk)

CQ/82 Appointment of Interim Chair

The Clerk advised the Committee that, following the retirement of the former Chair of the Committee, and pending the recruitment and appointment of a new Chair (for which work was currently ongoing), the Committee should appoint a governor to chair the Committee on an interim basis.

The Committee members agreed to the proposal that the Chair of Governors, SS, be appointed Chair of the Committee on an interim basis, pending the completion of the ongoing recruitment process.

Chair's Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest

SS welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Aneela Ali.

There were no conflicts of interest declared. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the meeting.

CQ/83 Minutes of the last meeting dated 25 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 25 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

CQ/84 Matters Arising / Action Log

The action log was noted.

CQ/85 Safeguarding Update

The report was presented by DH.

It was noted that MWW is the College Governor with particular oversight for safeguarding so was present at the meeting for this item.

DH noted that an internal audit review of safeguarding took place the previous week. Initial indications from the internal auditors were that the findings were positive and the outcome report was expected to be received soon.

MWW noted that, from his involvement and experience in the College safeguarding approach from a strategic perspective, he has assurance in the arrangements, and the safeguarding update report presented further demonstrates that the safeguarding practices and culture at the College is excellent.

CD commented that it was helpful for Governors to have the level of detail set out in the report, to provide oversight and receive assurance.

In response to a question from the Chair relating to EDI, DH noted that work remained ongoing to ensure everyone across the College has the confidence to come forward with any safeguarding concerns.

The report was noted.

MWW left the meeting at 10.15am

CQ/86 Curriculum Planning – Engineering

The report was presented by KM. The accompanying business planning presentation was presented by CB.

In response to a question from the Chair, CT confirmed that this presentation was representative of one of a number of presentations the Executive Team receive each year from different departments as part of the curriculum planning and budget setting process. KM confirmed that emerging themes also fed into various aspects of the process, both in the immediate term and in longer-term future investment proposals.

In relation to the presentation, the Chair noted the risk in any disparity between industry priorities and LEP priorities, with CT noting that the College was working with employers to ensure their needs were understood and to encourage them to invest in workforce in a sustainable way. This was an important aspect of ensuring industry sectors are provided with the appropriate skills in their workforce.

In relation to future T Level provision, KM confirmed that the College has secured **THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION** capital investment, in order to support this provision.

In response to a question from CD in relation to primary school teacher engagement, CB confirmed that this was a good idea that she would look to take forward, noting the benefit of CD's experience and expertise in this area.

In response to a question from CD in relation to employment of assessors and potential employer routes, KM confirmed this is something that is being explored in the automotive sector. In particular, there is a shortage of bus and coach teachers and JM has been talking to **THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION**, to upskill some of their employees to be able to join the College as teachers on a casual basis. The Chair noted that recruitment issues meant that the College would have to respond to this challenge in new and innovative ways.

In response to a question from the Chair in relation to the Executive Team's perception of recruitment challenges, DA confirmed that they had been discussing this general recruitment challenge including with the ESFA and FEC, and there were not easy solutions to this. A variety of approaches were needed to attract people. A long-term strategy was also important to support this, with appropriate resources being dedicated to this.

DC noted the College's work in involving service managers to present collective challenges to be able to consider and address these at a cross-College level where possible.

The report was noted.

CB left the meeting at 10.45

CQ/87 Teaching, Learning and Assessment – Projects

The report was presented by RW.

The Chair noted that it was very positive to see the progress that has been made in the area of PSD.

In response to a question from CD, CT confirmed that the College's learning facilitators were not curriculum teachers, but their role was to support learner progress as well as deliver a tutorial programme with a broad set of skills. CT noted the value in this differentiation between learning facilitators and curriculum teachers, to support delivery of PSD in an age-appropriate and contextualised way. However, the learning facilitators do sit within a particular curriculum area, in order to help contextualise the provision. DC also confirmed the intention to bring in external speakers across a broader range of areas, to further support PSD provision.

IJ noted that Citizens Advice Gateshead would be delivering a financial wellbeing programme to some learners.

In relation to Digital, in response to a question from the Chair, RW confirmed that the strategies and innovation developed as a result of the pandemic were positively impacting people's engagement with Digital, with individuals more willing to develop and utilise innovative solutions.

In response to a question from the Chair in relation to funding, RW confirmed the College was hoping to be able to utilise existing funding for this area. This work would also feed into the College's digital strategy and associated investment.

In response to a question from CD, RW confirmed that the Council are the project leads for the project which aims to develop the digital skills of College staff and there is a

collaborative aspect to support the sharing of best practice. The Council is looking to engage with regional hubs and one of the legacies of the project will be increased collaboration.

DA noted that this was a very positive piece of work, and a key aspect was to embed the development of digital skills across all areas of the College, with a key challenge being the ability to ensure continued investment in this area.

The report was noted.

CQ/88 Quality Improvement Plan

The report was presented by AR.

In relation to the E&T target, the Chair noted the challenges discussed earlier in the meeting in recruiting additional staff, and questioned whether this was impacting delivery. CT confirmed that this delivery was part of core timetabled activity, rather than part of the catch up fund, and the challenges are particular to this year due to Covid. This was believed to be a nationwide issue, because of the legacy impact of Covid on learners.

In relation to the first Apprenticeships target, the Chair asked whether issues of resilience were also relevant to apprenticeship delivery. AR confirmed that this was relevant as timely achievement was still being impacted by Covid and post-Covid factors. CT noted that the impact of Covid on apprenticeships was more nuanced than that in E&T provision, for a range of reasons.

In relation to the second Apprenticeship target, DC confirmed that there has been a high rate of feedback from apprentices and employers from a recent induction survey. This was useful as it validated to the College what was already believed and helps ensure apprentice voice and employer voice is fully taken into account. It was noted that some themes from the survey, such as the bureaucracy of apprenticeship enrolment, was not entirely within the College's control, although work was nevertheless ongoing to improve this.

The Chair noted the importance of the College continuing to focus on apprenticeships, with this informing future agendas. CD requested information about the induction survey. DA suggested that it would be beneficial to provide a detailed update on the work the College was undertaking in relation to apprenticeship provision and the continuous improvements being made in this area at the next Committee meeting. The Committee agreed this.

The report was noted and the Committee agreed that a detailed update on the work the College was undertaking in relation to apprenticeships be provided at the next meeting.

CQ/89 DfE Digital Bootcamps

The report was presented by DC.

In response to a question from the Chair, DC confirmed that the College would be able to claim the actual amount of the contract achieved up to March 2022, and there was then a potential further **THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION** of funding available through an extension awarded to March 2023, however the balance of the initial **THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION** contract could not be carried forward past March 2022.

DC noted that of the bootcamp providers, the College was one of the only consortiums.

DC noted that around 50% of the bootcamp's participants were from out of region, which the DfE had confirmed was permissible. The College was still able to offer a guaranteed interview to learners out of region due to the College's relationships with national employers.

DC confirmed the intention to bid for future phases of bootcamp funding, noting the need to carefully assess the profitability of different areas, and the skills the College was able to effectively deliver, in light of the College's capacity. CT noted that the College was also trying to ensure that it was focussing on sectors in which it has good relationships with employers, to help ensure a guaranteed job interview. The Chair also noted the importance of ensuring that delivery of the bootcamps did not compromise the quality of provision in other areas.

In relation to out of region working, DC noted that the growth in teaching and learning remotely meant that the College has seen staff who are able to obtain jobs out of region on a remote-working basis, but likewise recruiting students out of region could lead to their relocation to the North East in the event of a successful job interview, bringing relevant skills into the region in line with the LEP's agenda.

THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION. DA also noted the range of exciting opportunities available to the College through the wave three funding.

In response to a question from CD about choosing the consortium partners, DC confirmed that these partners were selected on the basis of which organisations were interested in joining, following an initial call out to a broad range of potential partners.

The report was noted.

CQ/90 Higher Education – Self Assessment

The report was presented by AR.

The Chair commented that she found it very helpful to understand the context of the College's HE provision and where the College was positioned in terms of its HE delivery, to meet particular learner needs in specific sectors where the College could make a difference.

In response to a question from the Chair, AR confirmed that HE learner numbers were fairly stable, although noted that the College was seeing more of a trend towards higher apprenticeships, rather than traditional taught provision. The College was able to blend its delivery to support both types of learner.

AR confirmed that the awarding body for its HE provision was **THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION** and similar organisations, whilst the foundation degree in health and social care was run in collaboration with Sunderland University.

CT noted the importance of generating more higher apprenticeship opportunities for students, to ensure that students have choice in their destinations.

In relation to a question from CD relating to the national student survey (NSS), CT confirmed that some levels of response were quite low because of the nature of the survey questions and the College's provision. The College interrogates these responses and is able to ensure that there are no underlying material issues. AR noted that there are also a very narrow set of learners that are in scope for the NSS, but the College nevertheless works with learners regularly to obtain feedback and address any issues.

In response to a question from the Chair, DA confirmed that the College was providing these courses to ensure it is meeting local needs. In the short term there are no intentions to stop this provision, however the College will continue to focus on learner needs and employer needs, to support enrolment onto the most appropriate courses. The key was to keep the learner as the focus in supporting their progression to the most appropriate routes.

The report was noted.

CQ/91 2021/22 Year to Date Performance – Education and Training

The report was presented by AR.

The Chair noted that, from the information available, it appeared the College's outcomes would be largely in line with previous years, which was encouraging. CT noted that this was contingent on improving attendance rates, in order to help ensure that students were able to fully perform.

The report was noted.

CQ/92 2021/22 Year to Date Performance – Apprenticeships

The report was presented by AR.

The Chair noted that the report shows that Apprenticeships continue to be a key area of concern and focus. DA noted that the College is improving what the College is doing in this regard, and this would be a further area of focus at the next committee meeting.

The report was noted.

CQ/93 Risk Register

The report was presented by CT.

The Chair noted that Ofsted inspection continues to be a key area of focus for the College.

The Chair questioned whether, in light of the Committee's discussions in relation to the long-term impact of Covid on learners, this risk should be re-assessed. It was agreed that the Executive Team would give this consideration.

In relation to the ongoing risks around Apprenticeships, the following meeting would discuss the broader mitigations in place in more detail.

DA noted that the risks around recruitment discussed at the meeting should also be fully reflected in the register.

The report was noted.

CQ/94 Review of Committee Terms of Reference

The report was presented by SC.

The Chair noted that in light of the incoming Chair, it would be appropriate for the new Chair to be involved in future review.

The report was noted.

CQ/95 Any other business

The Chair noted that the Committee KPIs should be brought to the next Committee meeting.

There was no other business.

CQ/96 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 12 May 2022 at 10.00am.