



CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 06 JUNE 2024 4PM TO 6PM – MAIN MINUTES

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Carol Davenport	Chair / Independent	CD	X	
David Alexander	Principal / CEO	DA	X	
Michael Wood-Williams	Independent	MWW	X	
Aneela Ali	Independent	AA	X	
Claire-Jane Rewcastle	Independent	CJR	X	
Peter Francis	Independent	PF	X	
Richard Wensley	Staff Governor	RW	X	
Will Berridge	Student Governor	WB		X
Morgan Penaluna	Student Governor	MP		X
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Presenters				
Chris Toon	Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality	CT	X	
Jeremy Cook	Deputy Principal: Finance & Resources	JC	X	
Nadine Hudspeth	Director of Brand & Learner Experience	NH	X	
Richard Ward	Head of Quality Improvement	RW	X	
Darren Heathcote	Head of Student Services and Customer Experience	DH	X	
Bev Blackstone	Safeguarding Manager	BB	X	
Suzanne Cunningham	Assistant Principal	SC	X	
Tom Bradley	Assistant Principal	TB	X	
John Deary	Assistant Principal	JD	X	
Kevin Marston	Assistant Principal	KM	X	

*Attended via Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting

CQ/205 1. Chair's Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. There was a specific welcome to PF who had joined the Board as a Corporation Governor and member of the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee. Introductions took place.

Apologies were noted from MP and WB. The Committee **agreed** that the meeting was quorate.

As it would have been their last meeting, the Committee **noted their thanks** to Student Governors for their contributions to the Committee.

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

CQ/206 2. Minutes of the last meeting dated 15 February 2024

- A) The Committee **reviewed** the main minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.
- B) The Committee **reviewed** the confidential minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

The minutes were approved.

CQ/207 3. Matters Arising / Action Log

A) Action Log

NT presented the action log noting that all actions were either not yet due or closed / completed.

The action log was noted.

B) North East Local Skills Improvement Plan (NELSIP) Draft Report

The NELSIP draft report had been circulated which provided a good summary of the progress made towards the LSIP led by the North East Automotive Alliance. Further correspondence had been received to confirm that a final version would not be published ahead of the election.

The Committee **queried** whether two LSIPs would be combined however this was to be confirmed with the College awaiting further clarity on this.

The report was noted.

CQ/208 4. Safeguarding Update

DH presented the report and highlighted the following:

- There had been an increase in safeguarding referrals compared to the same point last year. The highest number of referrals were from the College's high needs Project Choice provision, which was similar to last year.
- Using the new reporting categories available, child on child (previously known as peer on peer) concerns had increased, the majority of which related to online incidents.
- Suicidal thoughts, threats, and attempts had been identified as a cause for concern however the number of referrals was lower than in the previous year. This was a challenge across FE and HE, and additional training had been provided to the Designated and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads via Mind.
- There was a challenge around homelessness amongst learners, with Crisis attending a recent Safeguarding Steering Group meeting to provide further information regarding this. The College were supporting learners where possible.
- Positive feedback had been received from staff regarding the implementation of the Welfare and Wellbeing Team.

- The new Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Guidance had been published for September 2024 and this would be reviewed in line with the College's policies and practice.
- The College were looking to work more closely and collaboratively with other Colleges in relation to Safeguarding and prevention of / responding to concerns.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The main drivers of homelessness – it was suggested that this was typically due to crisis situations within a family home.
- The prioritisation of young people who were homeless – it was noted that there were systems in place regarding priority need and the College were working with relevant agencies to support where possible.

The Committee **requested** for future reports to include the number of referrals as well as the number of learners this related to, noting that there would be multiple referrals for some learners.

Action: DH to include learner numbers as well as number of referrals in future reports.

The Safeguarding Link Governor (MWW) noted the work of the Safeguarding Steering Group.

As an action from the last meeting, BB, Safeguarding Manager had been invited to the meeting.

DH and BB provided a presentation which covered the implementation of the Welfare and Wellbeing team and the positive impact this had on creating a more proactive approach to Safeguarding and improved working relationship with external agencies, the Local Authority and local colleges.

The Committee **noted** the improve partnership working.

BB left the meeting.

The report was noted.

CQ/209 5. Cross-College Careers Programme 2024/2025

DH presented the report which provided the Cross-College Careers Programme for 2024/2025 for approval. DH noted that only minimal amends had been made since the prior year's version and the programme was broken down by provision type as previously requested by the Committee.

The Committee approved the Cross-College Careers Programme for 2024/2025.

The report was approved.

CQ/210 6. Policies for Recommendation for Board Approval:

6.1. Admissions Policy

NH presented the Admissions Policy, noting that this had been presented to the Committee in November 2023 however the Committee sought assurance that the policy was OfS compliant ahead of recommending for approval.

Legal advice had been sought and a revised and updated policy was presented for recommendation. An updated equality impact assessment had also been carried out.

The Committee **queried** the audience of the policy, suggesting that this was more principle specific rather than a process. It was confirmed that the College had supporting documentation which sat beneath this, however this was the overarching policy.

The Committee recommended the Admissions Policy for Board approval.

Action: NT / NH to process Admissions Policy for Board approval.

6.2. Feedback and Complaints Procedure

NH presented the Feedback and Complaints Procedure, noting that this was to amalgamate a number of the College's standalone complaints policies to make the process clearer and more streamlined.

The procedure relating to staff complaints (grievances), which would remain a standalone procedure, was to be considered by the People Committee.

The Committee **queried** if learners would understand their first point of contact and whether this potential misunderstanding would prevent complaints. It was suggested that the procedure would be bolstered with additional communications via learner portal around supporting learners to make complaints and who to contact.

The Committee **noted** the importance of dealing with complaints promptly to a quick resolve.

The Committee recommended the Feedback and Complaints Policy for Board approval.

Action: NT / NH to process the Feedback and Complaints Policy for Board approval.

DH and NH left the meeting.

CQ/211 7. Horizon Scanning / Curriculum Changes for 2024/2025

DC presented the report and noted this set out a reminder of the corporate planning framework, including the pillar of business planning, and how this linked to the College's internal activities around horizon scanning to ensure the curriculum offer was based on need and responsive to the skills needs of the future. There were a number of curriculum portfolio developments for 2024/2025 and beyond, and this was backed up by local market intelligence and the outcomes of the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs).

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The need to support staff to develop new skills – it was confirmed that specialist staff were being recruited in some areas however there was also a plan to upskill staff to respond to the curriculum changes.
- The College's competitors – it was noted that competitor analysis was carried out as part of curriculum planning and was considered at a departmental level. CT noted that the duty to review covered competitor analysis however this was sometimes difficult due to the level of data available. It was noted that this work linked to the brand research which had recently been undertaken and presented to the Finance & General Purposes Committee around why learners would choose Gateshead College. The Committee **noted** that they would be interested to see how this information would filter through to Board as part of the overall Brand Strategy.
- Changing wants and needs of learners in relation to learning – it was noted that feedback following online learning due to covid was that learners preferred face to face learning.

- The breadth and depth of the horizon scanning – it was noted that this linked to regional and national priorities specific to the UK, along with ensuring feasibility and relevance. It was noted that the horizon scanning as part of this report was specific to the College’s curriculum offer however wide horizon scanning was covered as part of the risk register.

The Committee **noted** the usefulness of the report.

The report was noted.

CQ/212 8. Recruitment Update

CT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The College’s Admissions Teams were developing and improving data year on year to allow trend analysis to take place.
- *Covered under a confidential minute.*

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- An indication of the locality of those learners who had applied – There were no great differences in the demographics of potential learners however application numbers had increased. The Committee were reminded that learners were able to apply to multiple providers and therefore applications did not result in confirmed starts.

It was noted that the Marketing Team continued to create impactful campaigns with continued conversation / information with those who had applied.

- How the College were encouraging the conversion of applications – it was confirmed that this was focussed on the student experience. It was noted that the College were clear with entry requirements, and this could be a barrier for those applying who didn’t meet this. It was reiterated that growth in learner numbers wasn’t a priority for the College. The College were undertaking brand research with prospective learners and were ensuring clarity of messaging. There were various touch points in place with prospective learners to offer support.
- The impact of increased learner numbers on staffing resource –The College were due to advertise a number of vacancies to allow flexibility within the staffing resource. The College were cognisant of the need to adapt and respond quickly to learner needs and the curriculum offer.

The report was noted.

CQ/213 9. Performance Report May 2024

CT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Attendance for 16-18 had improved from last year to 87%, whilst for adults was slightly lower than last year at 86%. Attendance remained a challenge across the education sector. The College were responding to the recent attendance challenges faced within the ESOL provision and were looking at additional support and intervention for next year.
- Retention rates for 16-18 had improved by 3.8% compared to last year and were 3.3% higher than the national average. For adults, retention was similar to last year at 0.2% higher, however still 2.1% above the national average. It was thought that the improved retention was positively impacted by the College’s additional investment in mental health and wellbeing.

- The College had participated in a Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability Support (CEFSS) review, offered as part of Active Support from the FE Commissioner. The outcome was positive, with some suggestions being considered by the Executive Team. However, in considering these the College was keen to ensure that it did not simply accumulate cash and continued to invest in the college to ensure the best experience for learners.
DA highlighted he had queried how the College were being benchmarked against others within the CEFSS report, stating it was important to understand that like for like comparisons were being considered for the benchmarking to be beneficial. The FE Commissioner's Office had agreed to provide further information on the benchmarking they had referenced within the CEFSS report.

The report was noted.

CQ/214 10. Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Update

CT presented the report which provided the latest update on the Quality Improvement Plan. CT noted the level of progress made since the last meeting, with two further areas on track and one completed. CT noted that work was being undertaken to identify impact, and that this would be reviewed through the College's Self-Assessment Exercise of 2023/2024.

The report was noted.

CQ/215 11. Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment – Teacher Development

RW presented the report and noted that this set out the level of coaching in place across the College, and recent recruitment of additional Lead Practitioners resulting in the Teacher Academy being well positioned to provide enhanced cross-college support and maintain its commitment to fostering a collaborative educational environment that values staff development and learner success.

RW noted that the College continued to experiment with a range of training methods and were working with external partners to support the training offer.

The Committee **queried** if this was an iterative and ongoing support mechanism, and how success would be measured – it was confirmed that this was ongoing support to continually improve quality and to support new staff joining the College. The team were looking at how impact could be measured. Staff feedback was positive. It was agreed it was hard to measure the culture of the organisation however this would link to outcomes from the staff survey.

The report was noted.

CQ/216 12. Internal Audit Report: Student Experience

NH presented the report and noted that the area of Student Experience was internally audited and received the strongest level of assurance.

The Committee **sought assurance** of the recommendations being followed up and it was confirmed that these would be tracked through the Audit Committee.

CQ/217 13. Risk Register

JC presented the report and highlighted that only minor amends had been made since presentation at the Board in April 2024. The Executive Team continued to review the risk register, including the horizon scanning, on a regular basis. New additions to the horizon

scanning linked to changes within the landscape, and succession planning relating to senior staff and Board roles.

JC noted the work of the College's Operational Risk Management Group who continued to meet on a termly basis to discuss operational level risk.

The Committee **queried** updates relating to the College's submission to the Flexi Job Apprenticeship Agency and it was confirmed that the College were awaiting to hear the outcome of this.

The Committee **suggested** for the mitigations column on the risk register to be separated into current and future mitigations, to allow the Committee to take assurance from the controls in place and the future controls to be implemented to further treat risks. DA confirmed that recent conversations had taken place at Executive Team meetings regarding this, along with the suggestion of timescales. It was agreed that this would be factored by JC into the risk register going forward.

Action: JC to separate the mitigations column to current and future mitigations, along with timescales.

The Committee **noted** that the pace of improvement within risk management had been considerable, and this was now evidently embedded through the organisation.

CQ/218 14. Terms of Reference and Meeting Dates

NT presented the draft Board Calendar and Terms of Reference. In relation to the Terms of Reference, there were only minor suggested changes for 2024/2025 relating to reporting titles, following the Terms of Reference being re-written for 2023/2024.

The Committee **recommended** the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee Terms of Reference for Board approval.

Action: NT to process the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee Terms of Reference for Board approval.

CQ/219 15. Any Other Business

The Chair thanked report authors and the Committee for their discussion.

CQ/220 16. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 3 October 2024 at 4pm.