

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE**  
**held on 23 November 2016 at 9.30 am**

**<sup>1</sup>PRESENT** Mr N Hopkins (E); Mr T Jackson (P); Dr R Palmer (E); Miss A Robbins (St);  
Mr G Tabcart (S).

In attendance: Mr S Barlow, Vice Principal – Curriculum  
Mrs C James (minutes 101 to 113)  
Mr M Simmons, Deputy Principal  
Mrs S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

**APOLOGIES**

96. Apologies were received from Mr Charles.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

97. There were no interests to declare.

**MINUTES**

98. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Higher Education Fees (ref. minute 41/16)

99. The Deputy Principal confirmed that the Higher Education (HE) fees of £9,250 pa for 2017/18 had been confirmed by OFFA (the Office for Fair Access).

External Speaker Policy (ref. minute 60/16)

100. The Deputy Principal confirmed that the revised Safeguarding Policy, including the new external speaker procedures, had been issued to staff. The College's approach was that the process of recording speakers should be proportionate to the potential risks.

**HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE**

101. The Committee had received the report of the Head of Faculty – Higher Education on the current trends in recruitment and performance for the HE provision at the College and the HEFCE quality assurance statement which the Board of Governors had delegated authority to the Committee to approve.

102. Key points included:

- that the 'Meets UK Expectations' received from the QAA in the 2013/14 had resulted in a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Year 1 award.
- The University Board of Studies showed confidence in the academic and quality standards of the College as well as the College's approach to enhancement of learning opportunities for the students.

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<sup>1</sup> (C) = Co-opted; (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (S) = Staff; (St) = Student

- HE Retention and Achievement data continued to demonstrate a quality student experience with no courses giving cause for concern.
  - National Student Survey results had shown a reduction from the previous year (94%) to 88%, however this remained positive as compared to the FEC sector average of 80%.
  - The University response to the College’s 2015/16 Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review (ASQER) stated “pleased to report that the outcomes for students and the reports from the external examiners confirm that standards have been maintained overall” and “common themes from the eleven external examiners include positive comments relating to the robust assessments, the innovative and often applied nature of assessment and the high quality of feedback provided to students.”
103. The Committee discussed the challenges around recruitment, including in relation to international students, and levels of investment that are required to support the growth to at least 500 students which the HE Strategy aspired to achieve. Initiatives included introducing a new access to HE course on the Sparsholt campus, increasing Level 6 top ups, enhanced marketing and communications, and more work to improve progression of FE students at the College to HE.
104. The Head of Faculty confirmed that the College restructure and emergence of a Faculty of Higher Education the previous year had resulted in improved cross-curricula activities and more efficient options for curriculum delivery. The research base within the Faculty of Higher Education continued to attract new industry partners and national press coverage which should enhance the reputation of HE provision at the College. The College had also build a stronger relationship with the University of Portsmouth.
105. The Committee noted the management’s decision to move the collection of destinations data in-house and to ensure that the classification of graduate jobs was correct and relevant evidence provided so that the data properly acknowledged those progressing to good quality jobs within the land-based sector. This was important because of the emphasis on this data in the new TEF framework.
106. Members sought an explanation of the declining trend over three years reported for the percentages of first class honours degrees in two specialisms and asked that any such apparent declines be explained in the commentary of future reports. The Head of Faculty noted that the figures reflected the fact that in one area there had been a very small number of graduates.
107. Responding to a question about the low level student satisfaction amongst one cohort of students (Conservation and Wildlife), the Head of Faculty gave more background to the summary in the report, explaining that this related to some historic matters which had all now apparently been satisfactorily addressed and improvements were expected in future ratings by students and would be monitored going forward.
108. The Student Governor noted that students could find the timing of feedback questionnaires difficult because of pressure of exams and suggested that this could sometimes influence the feedback given.
109. The Chair welcomed the reported high number of HE academic staff who had gained recognition, or were on the path to do so, at higher levels of teaching and qualifications, including Fellowships, Masters and PhDs.

110. The Committee agreed that the College continued to provide a high quality HE academic and student experience, evidenced by both internal and external indicators, progression to employment and verified by the University of Portsmouth (validating collaborative partner) and Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).
111. The Head of Faculty invited Committee members to attend future Board of Studies meetings (with Portsmouth University) and internal ASQER meetings with the course teams in order to observe the quality and performance management processes at first hand.
112. **Resolved** - that the Accounting Officer, on behalf of the Board of Governors, sign the annual return to HEFCE to confirm that:
- The Committee, on behalf of the Board of Governors, had received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. This included evidence from the provider's own periodic review processes, which fully involved students and included embedded external peer or professional review.
  - The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes were, to the best of the Committee's knowledge, robust and appropriate.
  - The standards of awards for which the Board of Governors was responsible had been appropriately maintained.
113. The Principal reported that the Department for Education had issued a letter of non-objection to the College introducing the designation of University Centre Sparsholt for its HE offer.

## **FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE**

### Self-Assessment Report

114. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal, Curriculum, on FE Success Rates, including the performance against the Quality Improvement Targets identified in the 2014/15 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and a headline analysis of the strengths and Areas for Improvement as identified in the 2015/16 SAR.
115. The Vice Principal, Curriculum, noted that the Executive Summary of the 2015/16 SAR presented to the Committee aimed to improve the clarity of information provided, with greater consistency between data reporting and headline outcomes. The Committee welcomed the new format.
116. The SAR indicated that the College continued to provide a Good, or better, standard of education for most learners and the headline Achievement rate had improved and continued to compare well to the sector. The report highlighted a number of high performing areas where outcomes were very strong and with robust evidence of good quality teaching, effective student support and an excellent use of learning resources. However, there remained a small number of areas on both campuses which required improvement. The Curriculum Delivery and Quality Strategy had been implemented and, at this early stage, management were pleased with the progress being made, against a number of challenges.
117. The Committee asked how management approached areas which continued to be assessed as requiring improvement year on year and the Vice Principal, Curriculum,

explained that the actions and timescales varied and that closing areas due to ongoing quality concerns was not ruled out.

118. The Committee also questioned what actions were required in order for the College to assess itself as Outstanding (in the context of the Ofsted definition of this) and also questioned the reasons behind some of the areas that required improved performance.
119. The Vice Principal, Curriculum, gave a presentation on FE performance indicators, including value-added national comparators for A Levels, which were very good, and for BTECs in, mainly, non-land-based vocational qualifications, which are, mostly, not good.
120. Members discussed the challenges of delivering GCSE English and Maths, including moving more of the D grades to C grades, and comparisons with national rates. Management recognised that the results across Levels 1 and 2, which included GCSE, needed to be better and that the teaching of Maths needed to improve, particularly given the challenges for learners, such as having low levels of English comprehension.
121. The Committee recognised management's commitment to addressing areas of provision which required further improvement and the success of the teams involved in increasing Achievement rates and focusing on the quality of the learner experience.
122. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the Self-Assessment Report.

#### Curriculum Delivery & Quality Improvement Strategy

123. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal, Curriculum on progress with the plans for the delivery, monitoring and improvement of the College curriculum.
124. The Vice Principal, Curriculum confirmed that, having concluded the SAR, the SLT believed that the Strategy continued to provide an appropriate response to the areas for improvement identified in the SAR.
125. The Committee noted the summary of progress against key actions was in line with the discussions of the previous agenda item and that the reporting against the Strategy and the QIP would be brought together going forward.

#### **COLLEGE HEALTHCHECK**

126. The Vice Principal, Curriculum, noted that it was too early in the year to provide trend and RAG indicators for the Quality key performance measures. Members did not have any comments on any matters in Healthcheck report (no 08/2016) not covered on the agenda.

#### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLAN**

127. The Committee had received the report of the Clerk which set out an annual forward business plan for the Committee in 2016/17.
128. The Clerk explained that, in addition to the regular reports included in the forward business plan, there might be additional reports brought forward by management in relation to new developments or to areas of assurance requested by the Committee as a result of its scrutiny work. The proposed agenda structure positioned the Healthcheck report after the FE and HE quality and performance reports to give more context to the RAG ratings.
129. The Vice Principal, Curriculum, explained that, as previously reported, there was an overlap between the previous progress reports on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

and areas covered by the new Curriculum Delivery & Quality Improvement Strategy. He therefore proposed merging the progress reports in a single termly report.

130. The Deputy Principal proposed the draft plan be revised to note that the OFFA Access Agreement would be presented direct to the Board of Governors because of the timescales involved.
131. **Resolved** – that the Committee’s annual forward business plan for 2016/17 be approved with the revisions noted to the QIP reporting and the OFFA Access Agreement.
132. The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.