

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 9 February 2017 at 9.30 am

¹PRESENT Mr N Hopkins (E); Mr T Jackson (P); Dr R Palmer (E); Mr G Tabcart (S).

In attendance: Mrs C James (minutes 20 to 41)
Mr M Simmons, Deputy Principal
Mrs S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES & MEMBERSHIP

1. Apologies were received from Miss Robbins.
2. Following the resignation of Mr Charles as a co-opted member of the Committee, the Chair recorded the gratitude of the Committee, and on behalf of the Board of Governors, to Mr Charles for his contribution to the work of the Committee.
3. The Committee also recorded thanks to Mr Tabcart for his service as a member of the Committee, ahead of his leaving the College.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

4. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

5. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Higher Education Recruitment (ref. minute 102/16)

6. The Deputy Principal reported that national recruitment figures for Higher Education (HE) sector had now been published and that these showed an overall decline in HE enrolments with considerable variations between providers.

FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

FE In-Year Performance

7. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal, Curriculum, on the current progress of FE and apprenticeship learners and plans for in-year monitoring, and improvement, of the learner experience.
8. The performance data showed that FE provisions was on a positive track and that, for the significant majority of the College provision, the quality of the learner experience was being effectively maintained or improved. The report drew on performance data, the Autumn term Learner Survey, qualitative Learner Voice activity and a residential survey, as well as a programme of external reviews.
9. It was noted that a trial of a new electronic process for parental surveys had not be successful and that a redesigned paper-based survey would be reintroduced. The

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

Committee discussed the challenges of achieving a high return for parental surveys and techniques used to reach parents and encourage feedback.

10. Although the external reviews had highlighted significant strengths, there had also been some weaknesses identified in specific curriculum areas around teaching practices and additional actions had been implemented by College management to address these.
11. The Committee sought to establish the size and significance of the concerns identified and the Deputy Principal confirmed that, while the number of people involved was relatively small, the issues identified were not acceptable at any level. The Deputy Principal also outlined the actions being taken by management, including use of an external reviewer, to ensure evidence of expected practices being carried out by teaching staff. It was noted that details were also reported in the Quality Improvement Plan following on the meeting agenda.
12. Discussing the approach to lesson planning, the Staff Governor suggested additional checks by Heads of Faculties and Curriculum Leaders across the year. The Principal noted that there was a balance to be achieved between routine checking and delegated responsibilities, recognising the professionalism of the individual teachers.
13. The Committee welcomed the improvement in retention year on year and the continuing positive impact of the Pastoral Tutors and student support teams.
14. The Committee noted that while the Learner surveys indicated very positive results overall, there were a small number of areas with lower rates of return and the Principal confirmed there was continuing focus on improvements.
15. Members discussed the results of the Learner Survey in relation to the use of the College's IT and social media systems. The Staff Governor confirmed that WAMedu was a useful communication tool between staff and students but that students were sometimes discouraged from using it by the volume of messages. The Deputy Principal confirmed that there had been actions taken to reduce central messaging and reminded the Committee that WAMedu also had the benefit of having safeguarding controls in place. In terms of Moodle, it was reported that the ways in which teachers used the platform varied across the College and that the management's ILT group regularly reviewed the analytics.
16. Responding to questions about the attendance by study programme component data, the Principal confirmed that actions were underway to address lower attendance for English and Maths in some areas. The Deputy Principal reported that there were some signs of improvement in Hair & Beauty and, in the first year since staffing and curriculum changes, Construction was now travelling in the right direction.

Curriculum Delivery & Quality Improvement

17. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal, Curriculum, on progress with the Curriculum Delivery and Quality Improvement Strategy, including the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).
18. Good progress with the Strategy was reported, with the majority of actions either fully on-track or having made reasonable progress. However, the report highlighted that there were actions at risk of not being fully implemented, or not being fully effective, as there continued to be a demand for allocating some additional resources to auditing of practice, coaching of staff and development of online resources.

19. Members discussed the challenge of having limited resources, noting that this was common across many colleges, and the importance of identifying the desired outcomes and then a range of ways through which to support staff. The Deputy Principal agreed that it was necessary to focus first on the essential activities in the QIP and to decide where to direct additional resources to have the most impact.
20. Questioned as to whether, where innovative and successful ways of teaching were developed, these were shared around the College, it was explained that there were various routes in place to communicate good practice, including through CPD showcases. The Teaching Improvement team had been augmented and redeployed and, where excellence was identified, staff would be supported to take this forward.

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

21. The Committee had received the report of the Head of Faculty – Higher Education on in-year HE performance, including performance data, the Autumn term Learner Survey, feedback from the MSc Exam Board and external examiner report and progress against the ASQER actions.
22. The current levels of retention and attendance indicated that the performance of the HE curriculum was not at risk. A consistent approach to student management, unit delivery and assessment continued to be developed within the HE faculty and the report confirmed that student feedback was used to improve and develop the HE provision.
23. Asked by a member about whether the lower attendance rates in Ecology & Conversation suggested any concerns, the Head of Faculty explained the challenges for some of the 2017/18 intake and the support that was being provided.
24. The Learner Survey had indicated a high satisfaction from the first year cohort of their teaching and assessment but less satisfaction with the induction week. Asked about the low response rate at Andover College, the Head of Faculty explained that this was the first year of a new HE course and that the survey might require more promotion in future years.
25. The Committee discussed the first year's induction week and whether the feedback was linked to relevance of the activities. It was noted that the HE Student Council had been consulted on the approach and that only the first day was generic with the remainder of the week linked directly to the student's course and including some interesting activities. The Head of Faculty explained that there was also a "study coach" system in place during the year, employing second and third years to help support first years.
26. Referring to recruitment and applications, the Head of Faculty reported that the College had worked hard to ensure timely responses and that earlier actions to encourage applications from other colleges would be backed up by visits by the Marketing team.
27. The majority of Access to HE students had applied to progress to HE at Sparsholt. Members noted the way in which the Access to HE programme was structured to give students a broad experience and to avoid overlap with the first year of an HE course.
28. The Committee noted the good progress in HE performance and the Head of Faculty commended the HE team for their motivation and expertise.

Teaching Excellence Framework

29. The Committee had received the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2017 report which was submitted by the College on 26 January 2017 and would be assessed against various metrics and the College given a rating of Bronze, Silver and Gold.
30. The Head of Faculty explained the complex assessment system for awarding the different ratings and that College management's view was that the College should achieve a Silver grade, the main limiting factor to a Gold grade being the income profile of land-based graduates. It was noted that the TEF was voluntary and not all colleges across the UK had decided to submit a report. There would be an opportunity to reapply annually.
31. The Committee welcomed the evidence provided in the report, including achievement linked to POLAR data. The Head of Faculty noted that HEFCE intended to add an added value metric to the assessment in future years.
32. Asked about the apparent decline in graduate level/skilled employment, the Head of Faculty explained that College management was not satisfied that its graduate career paths were adequately recognised and had therefore provided examples of positive employment routes in the report. The Principal reported that this issue was also being pursued through central political lobbying by land-based HE providers.
33. The Committee commended the report to the Board and asked that it be circulated to members of the Board for information.

HEFCE

34. The Head of Faculty reported that the letter issued by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on 6 February provided an updated version of the agreement on institutional delegation (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2017/CL032017/>). The small changes to the agreement reflected the new operating model for quality assessment for the providers that HEFCE funds and the most recent consumer rights legislation. The operation of the agreement had also been extended from 31 July 2017 until such time as, subject to the will of Parliament, the current Higher Education and Research Bill comes fully into effect.
35. It was noted that the agreement included a section on governance arrangements which, although unchanged, included statements as to how HEFCE would engage with the governing body.
36. The Committee noted receipt of the agreement and agreed to bring it to the attention of the Board of Governors.

COLLEGE POLICIES

37. The Committee had received a report on the outcome of reviews of the HE Quality Enhancement Policy, the HE Student Charter, the HE Student Engagement Policy and the HE Scholarly Activity Policy.
38. The Committee noted that the four HE policies had been reviewed and were considered to be fit for purpose, with no changes were recommended at this time other than updating job titles.
39. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve that the following policies be reissued with the minor updates proposed:

- HE Quality Enhancement Policy
 - HE Student Charter
 - HE Student Engagement Policy
 - HE Scholarly Activity Policy
40. The Committee noted that the Social Media Policy had been updated to reflect the current usage of social media platforms by the College and the adoption of social media activities by learners and staff. The section on Social Media in Relation to Staff had been strengthened to support safeguarding of staff and learners. A number of minor errors were highlighted for correction.
41. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the updated Social Media Policy.

COLLEGE HEALTHCHECK

42. Members did not have any comments on any matters in Healthcheck report (no 01/2017) which had not already been covered on the agenda.
43. The meeting concluded at 12.00 pm.