

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 11 February 2016 at 9.00 am

¹PRESENT Mr B Holm (S); Mr J Charles (C); Mr N Hopkins OBE (E); Mr T Jackson (P);
Dr R Palmer (E).

In attendance: Mr S Barlow, Vice Principal – Curriculum
Mr M Simmons, Deputy Principal
Mrs S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES & MEMBERSHIP

1. Apologies were received from Mrs Carrell and Miss Robbins. The Committee welcome Dr Palmer to his first meeting as a member of the Committee.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. A declaration of interests were made by Mr Hopkins in relation to his role as an adviser to the Sixth Form Colleges Commissioner in the Area Based Reviews.

MINUTES

3. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Self-Assessment Report (ref. minute 115/15)

4. The 2014/15 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) had been approved by the Board of Governors and published on the College website.

Additional Learning Support (ref. minute 126/15)

5. The Deputy Principal confirmed that the review of roles and responsibilities within the curriculum and Additional Learning Support (ALS) teams was in progress. The Committee agreed this did not require the consideration by the Committee

COLLEGE HEALTHCHECK

6. Members queried matters in Healthcheck report no. 2016/01 not covered on the agenda, discussing the latest analysis of HE application numbers year on year and reasons underlying the English and Maths attendance figures in Sports & Equine.

RISK MANAGEMENT

7. The Chair of the Committee reminded members that the Committee had a role in supporting the Board to satisfy itself that the College's risks were being actively managed, with appropriate controls in place, and that these were working effectively for the activities of the College which came under the Committee's terms of reference.

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

LEARNER SUCCESS

8. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal, Curriculum on in-year performance information for both FE, HE and Apprenticeships learners and plans for in-year monitoring, and improvement, of the learner experience.
9. The Vice Principal, Curriculum reported that performance at both FE and HE remained on a positive track, and the data demonstrated that the newly structured management and delivery teams were proving effective in maintaining the quality of the learner experience.
10. The new reporting of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement was enabling the Vice Principal, Curriculum, the Heads of Faculty and broader Quality teams to further improve the speed with which interventions were made to ensure that the quality of the learner experience improves.
11. During a detailed discussion of the in-year performance data, members sought clarification of reasons behind the attendance figures for English & Maths and variation between programmes. It was noted that the retention by Equality & Diversity Impact Measure (EDIM) analysis now included students defined as having “High Needs” and that retention was also high for learners receiving free meals. The retention figures for learners classified as C4C (Cause for Concern) Risk Level was also very good, reflecting the impact of new Pastoral tutors and their links with the more established Student Support teams that operate on both campuses.
12. Responding to a question about a limited number of “red” ratings in the learner survey results, the Vice Principal, Curriculum confirmed that these did not reflect any major concerns. There had been specific, temporary issues in individual areas which had been addressed, such as staff vacancies/absence in Animal Management. It was noted that the results from the FE Parental Survey were very good, other than regarding public transport where the College continued to work with the bus companies to meet the learners’ requirements where possible and had taken rigorous action to address poor behaviour during travel.
13. The Vice Principal, Curriculum summarised new developments to further education colleges league performance tables for ‘academic’ and ‘general’ (not impacting on Technical qualifications including land-based) subjects, due to be published in early 2017. A report on the developments would be brought to the Committee.
14. Members discussed the role of Landex in relation to the land-based curriculum and to developing a value-added framework. The Deputy Principal attested that Landex’s strengths included sharing curriculum best practice and providing peer challenge to support the quality of provision.

QUALITY STRATEGY

15. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal, Curriculum setting out progress with the 2015/16 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and updates on in-year Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement activity. The annexed QIP progress report was tabled at the meeting and members were invited to raise any queries to College management via the Clerk, for these to be addressed at the following meeting.
16. In summary, the Vice Principal, Curriculum reported good progress against the objectives identified in the QIP and in those curriculum areas that had been identified a requiring improvement in the 2014/15 SAR, with improvements in the quality of teaching, learning

and assessment, whilst maintaining the efficiency gains targeted through the budget setting process.

17. Members questioned how any poor performance by members of academic staff was identified and addressed and sought assurance that an example from 2014/15 of teaching performance leading to poor results would not be repeated. The Vice Principal, Curriculum explained that changes to TALO (teaching and learning observations) and to support for teachers had led to more effective and consistent oversight of standards. For example, teaching observations were undertaken in the first month of the term, with follow up coaching and observations arranged as required. Observations were not graded but a new skills matrix had been introduced to assess the effectiveness of teaching in order to inform the development plans for members of staff. Further work was needed to ensure all observers had the appropriate skills and College management were planning CPD to involve more sharing of best practice.
18. Asked about the views of staff to this approach, the Staff Governor explained that, in his experience, there was a general acknowledgement of the positive approach to staff development and quality standards but that there could also be some resistance due to other pressures on the individual's time.
19. Members welcomed the culture of continuous improvement and stressed the need to clearly link effective staff development to the impact on learners and outcomes. Members also noted the reported developments to support independent learning, recognising as well that students with particular needs required additional support.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

20. The Committee had received the published Ofsted report on Sparsholt College Hampshire's residential provision which had been rated as "Outstanding" overall and in relation to the outcomes for learners, quality of service, safeguarding and effectiveness of leadership and management. The extent of the designation of 'Outstanding' on every aspect of this report was commented upon very favourably.
21. The review had been comprehensive and the report provided detailed evidence of high standards of residential provision, including residential learners achieving at better rates than their non-residential peers and excellent arrangements to ensure that residential learners are safe.
22. There were two relatively minor recommendations in relation to smoking rules and meal budgeting. In response to the issue identified by some residential learners of rules being broken in relation to smoking outside residential houses, the Principal reported that the issue was being kept under review. At the current time, College management had decided not to ban smoking on campus or install outside smoking shelters as these might encourage smoking and either action would require extensive enforcement.
23. The Committee commended the report and asked the Deputy Principal to pass on the Committee's gratitude and congratulations to the teams involved.

HIGHER EDUCATION FEES

24. The Committee had received the report of the Deputy Principal on Higher Education Fees to be included in the OFFA Agreement for 2017/18.
25. Members supported the proposal to increase fees by £400 to £9,000 as being in line with the expectations of prospective students across the HE sector. It was noted that research indicated that fees were not a significant factor in determining choice of university, although it was recognised that the College recruited a greater proportion of entrants from postcodes classified as more disadvantaged in 2015 UCAS research.
26. College management proposed to continue the policy of including a £200 per annum cash contribution (cashback) in the £9,000 fee which would be committed on behalf of the HE students during the year (where appropriate), for example to pay for Vet Nurse RCVS registration fees or accumulate over three years as a cash contribution to a High-Value Study Tour of similar. The cash contribution was not refundable to students during or at the end of the course.
27. Members discussed the use of incentives generally in terms of promoting higher education, noting that offering a benefit direct to the student was a wide spread and apparently successful practice.
28. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve that the April 2016 OFFA agreement includes a fee rise of £400 to £9,000, including the policy for a £200 cash contribution.

HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNER PERFORMANCE

29. The Committee had received the report of the Head of Faculty – Higher Education on progress against the action plan arising from the Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review (ASQER) of High Education provision at the College.
30. Good progress had been made to date with most of the actions defined within the ASQER and additional actions had been identified as the year had evolved.
31. In relation to student recruitment, the Committee discussed actions being undertaken to support the progression of FE learners to HE courses at the College, alongside providing advice and guidance on all other options. Members also discussed the impact on recruitment to different subject areas of the local demographics and of the increase in offers from other colleges following removal of the national cap on HE enrolments (per institution) which was in place until Autumn 2015.
32. The Committee agreed that the lack of progress in receiving data through the University of Portsmouth dashboard was disappointing.
33. It was noted that the Green Paper published in November 2015 would be likely to have a considerable impact on HE and the HE landscape in future with potentially the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) being of most significance. The Head of Faculty had reported that, in its current proposed format, the College was well placed to satisfy the requirement and achieve TEF status but that it was currently unclear whether there would be a cost benefit associated with TEF validation. The Principal confirmed that Landex had responded to the Green Paper.
34. The meeting closed at 12.30 pm.