

Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Thursday 6th May 2021 at 4.30pm via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present: Katharine Clough
Alison Hodge
Suhail Rana
Neil Thomas
David Whatton (Chair)

In attendance: Rachel Corns (Assistant Principal) (items 1 – 7)
Gill Darwood (Senior Officer Corporate Governance) (SOCG)
Diana Martin (Vice Principal)
Claire Millard (Assistant Principal)
Dean Price (Standards & Performance Manager)
Carl Riding (Vice Principal Curriculum & Performance)

1 Confirmation of quorum and apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Helen Lawley.

1.2 The SOCG confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

2 Declarations of Interest

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair for 2021/22

3.1 **It was resolved** To appoint David Whatton as Chair and Katharine Clough as Vice Chair of the committee for 2021/22.

4 Minutes of previous meeting held on 9 February 2021

4.1 The minutes were confirmed as a true record for signature by the Chair.

5 Matters Arising

5.1 There were no matters arising other than those covered on the agenda.

6.1 Review of data dashboard

6.1.1 The CE&P provided an update in respect of the in year position on the current dashboard, noting that:

- *Apprenticeships* – as previously reported, enrolment numbers were down on the previous year in terms of new and continuing apprentices. Some recovery was beginning to be evident in some areas, such as Construction. Attendance was in line with previous years.
- *Full time learners* – Enrolments were up on the same point last year at 4896 learners, retention had remained high. Attendance had remained good including engagement in online sessions during lockdown. Since the return to College, the attendance and attitude of learners had been excellent.

- *A level learners* – as would be expected there was no change on the previous report, with numbers slightly up on the previous year. Attendance was exceptionally high at 97%.
- *Adults learners* – enrolments were tracking the previous year but remained behind due to the impact of Covid. January enrolment numbers had been low due to lockdown during that period. A post Easter offer had been launched with the aim of narrowing that gap but there would nevertheless continue to be a shortfall on planned numbers for the year. Attendance of learners was high.
- *Higher Education* – as previously reported, enrolments were behind last year due to Covid. This cohort had extremely high attendance levels.

6.1.2 The CE&P confirmed that there was no change to the planned financial performance as a result of these figures.

6.1.3 In respect of dashboard usage data which had been requested at the previous meeting, the CE&P presented analytics in relation to the website, showing an example report of usage on pages within the dashboard in terms of page views over the past two month period for external views. He advised that it was proposed to rerun the statistics in the Autumn term to see activity during the college's busy enrolment period. A suite of additional reports would eventually be available which would track an individual's journey through the website, for example, to identify how many visitors proceeded to submit an application.

6.1.4 He reported that it was not considered to be a particularly onerous task to maintain the dashboard, as much of the data came directly from Power BI and therefore members agreed that it was worthwhile to continue to maintain the dashboard, given the value in terms of transparency which it brought.

6.1.5 **It was resolved** To note the dashboard update.

6.2 Destinations data

6.2.1 D Martin presented the destination data for 2019/20 which was collected by the college for UCAS applications and internal progressions. In addition an external organisation was employed to do research through telephone surveys for leavers whose destination was unknown. The headline figures were noted as:

- Known destinations - 83.6%
- Positive destinations - 84.2%
- Negative destinations - 15.8% (as defined by the national categories).

6.2.2 Data provided by the external company had provided some very valuable data for example analysed by area of study, relevance of course to future career at whole college, curriculum or course level, wider skills and behaviours relating to mental health and wellbeing and this information could be filtered by department, age, gender, ethnicity, course, high needs. She explained that the aim was to drive curriculum teams towards using this data in their area to develop an action plan to address any identified issues.

6.2.3 The CE&P also noted that this data would be used to inform the work of the Equality Working Group.

- 6.2.4 The Chair asked whether the granularity of the data obtained by the external company might justify using them for all students including those for whom the College normally relied on its own destination data. D Martin agreed that this may be the case, or that the College may look to incorporate a wider range of questions of a similar nature in its own destination survey.
- 6.2.5 The CE&P showed the Colleges West Midlands website dashboard which showed destinations across all West Midlands colleges and which was publically available.
- 6.2.6 **It was resolved** To note the update on destinations for 2012/20.

7 Task and Finish Group updates

- 7.0.1 The CE&P introduced the updates from the Task and Finish Groups and explained that, as agreed at the previous committee and presented at full Corporation, for the remainder of 2021 the College was focusing considerable efforts on the delivery of seven priority Task & Finish groups.
- 7.0.2 The latest action plans from three of these groups had been chosen as a focus for feedback in this meeting. The member of SLG leading each group provided a verbal update on progress in recent weeks in relation to these actions.
- 7.1 *Delivery of outcomes for classroom based learners (including Teacher Assessed Grades)*
- 7.1.1 D Martin presented a summary of the work of this group, the focus of which was on ensuring that learners were achieving their qualifications. She explained that:
- A number of separate groups had been established to look at different cohorts..
 - There was a deadline of 18th June for submission of grades for A level and GCSE.
 - The college was in the process of developing a process for Teacher Assessed Grades for A level and GCSE programmes. The policy would be brought to full Corporation for approval on Friday 7th May.
 - Tools had been developed for tracking and monitoring learner achievements which has been a substantial task and this would also be demonstrated at the Corporation's development day.
 - A robust process had been developed for internal quality assurance of both GCSE and A levels.
 - Functional Skills and ESOL learners were expected to take exams as normal and this had put pressure on invigilation arrangements which were being supported by all College staff.
 - Bootcamps had been arranged for exam preparation as many learners did not take any exams last year and so did not feel well prepared for this situation.
 - HE learners – some programmes would be teacher assessed units and some were expected to do assessments as usual. Staff were attending all webinars arranged by awarding bodies.
 - Weekly support sessions were available for curriculum staff who were undertaking assessments.
- 7.1.2 In response to a number of questions from members, D Martin provided clarification on points of detail. In response to a question from K Clough, she explained that in

calculating Teacher Assessed Grades it was not possible to take into consideration any previous work done prior to the current year.

7.1.3 In response to a question from A Hodge she explained that A level learners had undertaken assessments in class and were more clear about the process this year than they had been last year as there has been more time to fill any gaps in evidence. She explained that there would be no ranking or algorithm this year, so students felt more confident that it would be a fair process. Staff felt that the teacher assessed grade gave the student more opportunity to show their knowledge and skills through their curiosity and questioning, rather than feeling they were being penalised for asking questions. It was felt that there was more anxiety amongst learners who did not have the option of teacher assessed grades.

7.2 *Delivery of outcomes for apprenticeship learners*

7.2.1 R Corns provided an update on the work of this group and explained that:

- The group met on a fortnightly basis and looked at each individual apprentice and any intervention needed to ensure achievement.
- It had been advised that Hair and Beauty students could now do their end point assessment with a professional discussion rather than an observation which had been well received by employers.
- Learners on a break in learning were being regularly reviewed.
- The process to provide assurance in relation to the robustness of evidence had been finalised.
- Rollover learners – anyone due to complete by 31st July could roll over to next year although every effort was made to complete them before this date.

7.2.2 C Riding noted the excellent work done by R Corns working with each curriculum area. He noted the strategic aim to move away from any underperforming sub-contract partners with the aim of completing this process by the Summer.

7.2.3 *In response to a question from the Chair, R Corns agreed to provide progression data on the number of learners progressing to a higher level apprenticeship, including those progressing onto higher levels in the IoT.*

7.3 *The recovery and growth of Adult Education*

7.3.1 C Millard provided an update on the work of this group which detailed:

- The group had reviewed and refined enrolment processes and systems in order to reduce the time taken to close down enrolments from application. Curriculum Managers were now directly managing enquiry lists for their area.
- The adult offer had been relaunched with promotion through social media.
- All curriculum areas had continued to enrol learners and use flexibilities available with WMCA.
- Digital skills curriculum was now up and running.
- ESOL and fast track functional skills courses were now running.
- Teacher training had shown a high level of interest.
- Other programmes included a successful NHS programme which had 100% job outcomes and a range of courses including programmes through Job Centre, Immigration Department, Copthorne Hotels and employability and digital skills courses for staff being made redundant at Debenhams.
- Flexible delivery models were being planned into the summer including weekend delivery from the Skills Shop and short courses.

- Work in partnership with Dudley local authority to offer fast track entry programme with progression into college programmes and career advice and guidance.
- Out of area ESFA funded offer enabled the college to reach employed learners, for example NHS and other partners.
- A sub-task and finish group was working on delivery of additional learner support to adult learners, using good practice from apprenticeship programmes.

7.3.2 In summary C Millard confirmed that the aim was to maximise income through all of these activities and reclaiming all appropriate costs. She confirmed that there was an excellent relationship with the WMCA who felt that the College was responsive to their needs and currently work was underway on planning delivery for 2021/22.

7.3.3 **It was resolved** To note the updates from the task and finish groups.

8 Teaching and Learning Matters

8.1 Teaching and learning report

8.1.1 D Price presented the Teaching and Learning report, which provided a summary of teaching and learning activity.

8.1.2 The report looked at the findings of a learner lock-down survey and identified measures the college had instigated to ensure that all learners, but particularly those learners who had 'lost ground' during lockdown, made a successful completion. The survey and subsequent identified actions included:

- How did learners feel about their lockdown experience? A summary of a student survey was provided for information.
- Addressing survey negatives. What was the College doing to address the negative survey responses?
- What was the College doing to support learners, particularly those who may have fallen behind during lock-down?
- Maintaining and measuring quality: what was the College doing to ensure that standards were maintained and that all learners achieve their desired outcome?

8.1.3 He explained that a peer buddy system was now in operation in some areas to support learners who benefited from support from fellow students. Positive student feedback had been received which was pleasing to note.

8.1.4 Internal quality assurance activities had been undertaken to support the Teacher Assessed Grade process and the staff who were involved with the process.

8.1.5 The Chair asked if there were any resource or cost implications on social distancing, for example due to the reduced capacity of classroom or workshop spaces. D Price noted that delays in assessments referred to in the report were due to lockdown rather than capacity in workshops or lack of resources. He confirmed that all assessments would be completed within the timeframe needed for their qualification.

8.1.6 The CE&P noted that the two day per week model timetable had been continued for the time being, which meant that sufficient capacity was available for the two days students were on site. C Riding noted the compacted summer term to get delivery

and assessments completed in the time available. Where practical and possible, sessions were being put in place for catch up activity. Teaching of theory was thought to be well up to date as this had been able to be covered effectively during lockdown, with the focus now moving to practical sessions.

8.1.7 The Chair explained that the Corporation would be willing to give consideration to any further support that was needed to support staff and learners at this time.

8.1.8 **It was resolved** To note the teaching and learning report.

8.2 Confidential - Compliments and complaints analysis

This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential minute.

8.3 Update on college conference

8.3.1 D Price reported that the College Conference was held on Thursday 1st April 2021 and was delivered virtually to over 630 staff in attendance. Thirty conference sessions were delivered in the morning which focused on Digital Upskilling, Mental Health and Well-being and team time was allocated for the afternoon sessions for business support and academic staff. Positive feedback was received from staff, particularly for some of the external presenters.

8.3.2 The report presented identified the positive aspects of the College hosting more virtual on-line conferences and its value and D Price noted that consideration would be given to whether to return to face to face sessions for future staff development days.

8.3.3 Members considered the pros and cons of each mode of delivery and concluded that a blended approach made sense moving forward, recognising the advantages in both modes of delivery.

8.3.4 D Price noted that there were future plans to develop a virtual platform for Continuing Professional Development.

8.3.5 **It was resolved** To note the update on the college conference.

8.4 Office for Students update /HE Student experience

8.4.1 C Riding presented a report which summarised a number of points relating to Office for Students matters.

- The staff responsibilities for HE following the college re-structure.
- Summary of guidance by the OfS of the key changes in consumer protection around value for money for courses as a result of national lockdown restrictions. The guidance instructed providers to undertake a review of compliance with consumer law and to provide assurance to the governing body of ongoing compliance.
- Summary of the OfS provider guidance issued April 2021, around harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education. The guidance although written primarily for a university campus setting was of relevance to FE providers and highlighted the need for providers to ensure that their approach was adequate and effective. In order to provide this assurance, C Riding and D Martin had reviewed the College's relevant codes, policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the

OfS guidance. It was also anticipated that Ofsted would look at this area in more detail with a heightened focus on safeguarding.

- 8.4.2 [The Chair suggested that the 7 Office for Students point 'statement of expectations' be routinely addressed within the committee's safeguarding report going forward.](#)
- 8.4.3 C Riding further reported that the National Statistical Survey (NSS) had been launched to include HE students and the closing date for student responses was 30/4/21. The return rate was 72.7% of students which was a high response rate. [Full details of the survey results would be reported to the committee at the next meeting.](#)
- 8.4.4 **It was resolved** To note the Office for Students update.

9 Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

9.1 Safeguarding and Student Conduct Report

- 9.1.1 D Martin presented the report which provided a summary of safeguarding arrangements in the college as well as updates in developments across the college. It was noted that the Corporation's lead safeguarding governor had asked for some additions to the report which had been incorporated in this report.
- 9.1.2 *Staff*
Online safeguarding and prevent training continued to be provided to new recruits and updated regularly.
- 9.1.3 *Safeguarding*
- There had been 388 referrals this reporting period.
 - 261 safeguarding concerns logged
 - 70 learners were Children in Care (CiC)
 - 28 students and their families supported through the Early Help/TAF
 - 18 learners were Children in Need (CiN)
 - 21 learners were on a Child Protection Plan (CPP)
 - 9 learners identified as "at risk" of sexual exploitation
 - 5 learners involved or "at risk" of criminal exploitation
- 9.1.4 *Discipline - Code of Conduct*
- 45 suspensions for this period
 - 3 exclusions
- 9.1.5 *Counselling*
- 257 referrals
- 9.1.6 *Ofsted Review of Safeguarding*
- Following anonymous testimonials being published on the Everyone's Invited website, Ofsted were carrying out an immediate review of schools and colleges with specific reference to sexual abuse.
 - The College would be reviewing its policies and reporting mechanisms as well as auditing any cases dealt with to ensure an appropriate response to any allegations.
 - Staff were meeting with the Police education team on the 4th May to discuss their new training packages around "Rape Culture" and "Trauma".

- 9.1.7 D Martin noted that a report on this review would be provided to the next meeting of the committee.
- 9.1.8 K Clough noted that the College dealt with issues in this area extremely effectively and generally the FE sector was ahead of many other organisations in these matters. It was pleasing to note that the College was not complacent and was taking advantage of any opportunities for improvement.
- 9.1.9 **It was resolved** To note the safeguarding and student conduct report.

10 Governance matters

10.1 Committee's Business Plan 2021/22

10.1.1 The SOCG advised that the business plan for the Committee provided an indication of business and reports which would be submitted to the meetings of the Committee scheduled for 2020/21. She noted that this was not a rigid document but was intended as a guide and would remain flexible to accommodate emerging priorities and unforeseen eventualities, which may result in additional considerations for the committee in relation to the arrangements for the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment going into the 2021/22 academic year.

10.1.2 **It was resolved** To recommend the business plan to the Corporation for approval.

11 Date of Next Meeting

11.1 15th November 2021 (TBC)

12 Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business.

The meeting closed at 18.27.

Approved by the Standards Committee at its meeting held on 15th November 2021.