

**MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON  
THURSDAY 15 JUNE 2023**

**PRESENT:**

Mark Allanson	Chair
Lillian Croston	Member
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Ram Gupta	Member
Catherine Hill OBE	Member
Andrea Machell	Member
Mark Moren	Academic Staff Governor

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Nicola Clayton	Director: Business Development and Employer Engagement
Liam Doherty	Director of Quality Innovation
Damian Stewart	Assistant Principal: Further Education
Rachel Tarplee	Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality
Sarah Horeesorun	Director of Governance
Melissa Drayson	External Governance Reviewer

It was noted that the meeting commenced at 17.00pm and was quorate.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a special welcome to Melissa Drayson who was observing the meeting as part of the External Governance Review. Also joining for the first time, was Liam Doherty the new Director of Quality Innovation.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Imaan Ijaz, HE Student Governor.

**2. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Chair advised those in attendance that should members of the Learning and Quality Committee become aware of any potential conflicts of interest, they should be disclosed at the earliest opportunity during the meeting.

**3. MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2023**

The minutes of the Learning and Quality Committee meeting held on Thursday 9 February 2023 were accepted as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee noted the updates against previous actions points.

Permission was sought by the Chair to take the Agenda Items in a different order from this point onwards as Damian Stewart had to leave to support the Open Evening. This was accepted by the Committee, though for the purpose of the minutes, these are recorded in Agenda order.

## **5. LEARNING AND QUALITY MEETING DATES, TERMS OF REFERENCE AD CALENDAR OF BUSINESS 2023/24**

The Director of Governance introduced this Item and explained that all Committees reviewed their respective Terms of Reference and Calendar of Business annually, and also planned the meeting dates for the year/s ahead.

The Terms of Reference were presented with suggested changes highlighted, including the addition of a role to monitor the delivery of the Accountability Statement.

The Calendar of Business and proposed meeting dates had been consulted on internally.

The Committee:

- (i) noted the meeting dates for 2023/24 and **APPROVED** the proposed meeting dates for 2024/25.
- (ii) **RECOMMENDED** the amendments to the Corporation Board for approval.
- (iii) **APPROVED** the Calendar of Business.

## **6. HIGHER (HE) STRATEGIC DELIVERY PLAN AND SUPPORTING ACTION PLAN:**

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality introduced this Report, the Draft Higher Education Strategic Delivery Plan and Supporting Action Plan.

The Report provided the rationale, history and process for the development of the Strategy. The associated Action Plan identified the key issues and suggested activities to address each.

The Committee welcomed the HE Strategic Delivery Plan as there was an appetite and critical need to address concerns with the HE student numbers, curriculum offer and quality.

In discussion the Committee acknowledged the sector-wide decline in HE numbers and that the College was intent on doing more to increase numbers, develop a purposeful and viable curriculum and upskill the HE lecturing and Leadership Team.

The Committee admired the bold and honest Report that identified the areas of strength and those for improvement and discussed whether the issues identified were correct. Amongst Leadership, Staffing and Training it was thought that Character and Culture change might be included to attract the best students, support them to achieve their best outcomes and ideally get a graduate level job. Intrinsicly linked to this, enhancing the Character and improving the Culture at the College would make it more attractive and credible to employers.

The Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that the College had embarked on cultural change in HE and that the quality systems successful in FE would be mirrored in HE. It was also thought beneficial to offer the same wrap-around support that FE students get to the HE students, but take it to another level and include soft skills such as people skills, critical thinking, personal and technical skills that are all valuable Graduate attributes and would make Blackburn College Graduates unique.

The need for increased employer engagement and collaboration to develop a co-created curriculum to fill local skills gaps was emphasised and acknowledged.

In summary, it was thought that the approach should be bold in its proposals, include wrap-around support/soft skills, consider the practical implications and acknowledge that this is resource intensive.

It was agreed that the HE Strategic Plan should include more information on pace, timings, how the actions will be delivered and financial implications and should come to the autumn meeting of the Committee.

**Action: Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality**

The Committee requested that a HE Strategic Plan update be a regular Agenda Item at Learning and Quality Committee meetings.

**Action: Director of Governance**

The Committee thanked the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality for the work done so far and looked forward to future updates on progress.

## **7. PROGRESS ON KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2022/23:**

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality presented the Report.

Members noted that four of the KPIs were on target, six achieved in part, one under target, and eight were not yet reportable.

A member commented that Item 9 on the attached Annex – Observation of Teaching and Learning was reported as being Not Yet Reportable and asked when this would be available? The Vice-Principal explained that the College took a wholesale approach to the Deep Dive exercise, had completed observations for nine of the Schools, and would Report, once the exercise had been completed, to the next Committee meeting. The Director of Quality and Innovation said that new software had been purchased that should make regular reporting easier for the next academic year.

**Action: Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality**

Information on Item 15 on the KPI table at Appendix A - Progression into Employment or Further Learning within 6 Months -2021/22 was not available and the Vice-Principal would establish and update for the next Committee meeting.

**Action: Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality**

Another member suggested that it would be helpful to have in year completion information for the Apprenticeships rather than wait until the end of the year.

**Action: Director of Business and Employer Engagement**

## **8. FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) STUDENT – IN YEAR PERFORMANCE:**

### **(i) FE Academic**

The Assistant Principal (FE) talked the Committee through the Report that compared 2022/23 performance against, where available, like for like data from the previous year.

The Assistant Principal (FE) reported that the last exam had taken place and that the figures in the Report were based on 'snap-shot 5' which was as close to the final picture that we could get.

Members noted that Retention had improved and that attendance at A level was 100%.

A member enquired about what was considered a High-Grade profile and was informed that this was considered as being A\* to B. It was agreed that the target of 50% High-Grade profile was not where the College wanted to be and that the ambition should be for 60% plus.

There had been concern that poor attendance would impact on exam achievement as it had done the previous year and the Principal and Chief Executive explained that there had been a whole College approach to encouraging and supporting students on exam days to increase attendance.

It was noted that attendance for maths and English had increased from the previous year and Foundation Learning had 100% attendance.

Concern was expressed regarding the projected Value-Added and a discussion followed about what could be done to help staff provide the stretch and challenge that the students needed to aspire to achieve higher grades. The Assistant Principal explained that it was important to recognise the students starting point and impart the expectation of learners to improve. There was concern that students with academic ability were not being identified and not reaching their potential, or being given unconditional offers and so not doing their best in exams. The Principal and Chief Executive added that improvements in Teaching and Learning were being made to attempt to accurately establish, through robust assessment, the starting point and identify where there were gaps. This would inform a realistic high-grade target.

The Committee noted the improvement in Progress.

(ii) Work-based Learning and Apprenticeships

The Director of Business Development and External Engagement provided the headline information.

Apprentice achievement for leavers 2022/23 was 70%, which was an increase on last year and, to date, remained 14.1% above the national rate.

104 Apprentices had completed their end-point assessment in 2022/23 with 100% achievement and an increase in higher grades. There was an increase in distinctions and those passing first time.

There were no areas of concern in attendance and Retention was 74.8%.

Achievement in Functional Skills had improved compared to last year and although the figures seem low, they were better than the national figure.

The Government Toolkit was still work in progress, but having reviewed the data available earlier that day, the College was on-track on all areas.

A member commented that Apprenticeships in the employment world was gaining kudos, and in an area of deprivation served a purpose as a viable option and route into education and employment. There followed some discussion about social mobility, work-based learning as a success, and this becoming part of the character and brand of the College.

The Committee noted the content of the Report and update and thanked the Director of Business Development and External Engagement, asking that their thanks be conveyed to the Team.

It was remarked that WBL and Apprenticeships were not doing well nationally so the good performance of the College in this area was commendable.

It was thought that it would be useful to add destination information in future Reports.

**Action: Director of Business Development and External Engagement**

(iii) Subcontracting

The Director of Business Development and External Engagement introduced this Item and explained that this was the first time that this had been reported on as a standalone Item.

Expanding on the content of the Report, the Director of Business Development and External Engagement explained that as this was a new relationship, the College were providing a lot of

support to ensure compliance and quality in Teaching and Learning delivered. There had been a Quality of Education Review and a subsequent action plan created to which the provider had engaged with and responded well.

Attendance in maths and English was a concern and the provider was adapting to the Colleges very 'hands-on' approach with the involvement of the Head of maths and English supporting them directly.

The Principal and Chief Executive added that subcontracting was considered a high-risk area and that all future Ofsted Inspections would look at subcontracting arrangements and performance. The Policy and Resources Committee also had an interest in subcontracting and the Team were ensuring that the systems and processes were in place to triangulate reporting to both.

The Committee thanked the Director of Business Development and Employer Engagement for the Report.

## **9. HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) STUDENT IN-YEAR PERFORMANCE**

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality introduced this Report informing the Committee that the look and feel of the Report had changed and sought feedback. Members thought that the Report was much improved and noted the issues around Retention, Attendance and Achievement.

There was some discussion of B3 metrics and the Chair asked that there be a session at a future meeting on understanding the B3 metrics.

**Action: Director of Governance**

The Committee thanked the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality.

## **10. FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2022/23 – PROGRESS REPORT**

The Assistant Principal (FE) introduced this Report and talked through the attachment. The activities within the plan were RAG rated and the first activity was coloured green as this had been completed. All of the other actions were amber as they were yet to be completed (dependent on exam outcomes) or still required further monitoring and would be reviewed in July 2023. This final review would ensure that any completed actions were closed and those that remained would continue to be monitored and included in the Quality Improvement Plan for 2023/24.

A member remarked upon the improvement in attendance for maths and English exams and having visited the College on exam day, commended the tremendous care from staff and asked that thanks be shared with all staff involved in the College-wide operation.

**Action: Principal and Chief Executive**

The Committee noted the content of the report.

*The Assistant Principal (FE) left the meeting by prior agreement at 17:47pm*

## **11. HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2022/23 – PROGRESS REPORT**

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality talked through this Report and attachment highlighting that the language used around B3 metrics had been updated to provide focus on specific areas.

A member asked about the staff vacancy for a HE Quality Lead and the Vice-Principal confirmed that this had been advertised and that there would be a different approach next year.

The Committee noted the content of the Reports and Appendices.

## **12. URGENT CARE COURSES- UPDATE**

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality presented the Report and informed the Committee that HE would be following the same rigorous Urgent Care process as FE from next year.

The Committee noted the challenges in retention for History and that attendance was still an issue generally.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality for the Report.

## **13. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – UPDATE**

The Committee noted that Staff Appraisal completion was above target, Cyber Awareness raising was the focus of staff development and that Staff satisfaction in Staff Development was at 100%

There had been a query as to why the Safeguarding Training was at 95% and the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality explained that the mandatory training figures had been impacted by the training for annual exam invigilators which was time consuming. Staff numbers were also skewed in that those on maternity leave or sickness absence were included in the staffing totals. The Director of Quality Innovation added that there must be a way to filter these out to give a more accurate picture.

**Action: Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality/Director of Quality Innovation**

A member asked what was the impact of the training and how was it measured and reported. This will be included in the next Report.

**Action: Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality/Director of Quality Innovation**

## **14. STUDENT VOICE COMMITTEE FEEDBACK FROM MEETING 1 FEBRUARY 2023**

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality provided verbal feedback of the recent Student Voice Committee meeting on 10 May 2023. One of the Committee members had also attended the Student Voice meeting where discussions covered such things as library opening times and library books, canteen prices and car-parking charges.

All of the points raised would be actioned and feedback provided at the next Student Voice Committee meeting.

The Vice-Principal added that the College was awaiting the results of the National Student Survey which should be released in the next few weeks.

## **15. OfS/B3 METRICS/TEF UPDATE**

The Principal and Chief Executive provided a verbal update for this Item reminding members that the College had been selected for a B3 metrics review. Evidence had been supplied as requested and that he would be following this up shortly to establish the outcome.

The TEF bid results were expected in a few weeks' time and the Principal and Chief Executive would update Governors on the outcome once received.

**16. CHAIR APPROVED MINUTES OF ACADEMIC BOARD – 24 MAY**

The minutes of the Academic Board meetings held on 24 May 2023 were noted by the Committee.

**17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no Items of Any Other Business.

**18. REVIEW OF MEETING**

The Chair thanked all members for their contribution to the meeting, the questions and good challenge that supported the detailed discussions that had taken place. The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality added that she would be presenting less at the next meeting and Liam Doherty, new Director of Quality Innovation, would be presenting more.

**19. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Learning and Quality Committee would take place on Thursday 9 November 2023 at 5.00pm in the Exchange Boardroom / via Microsoft Teams.

*19:00pm: The meeting ended.*

Signed: .....

Date: .....