

**MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON
THURSDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2021**

PRESENT:

Mark Allanson	Chair
Kerry Baron	Member
Lillian Croston	Member
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Geoff Disley	Academic Staff Governor
Catherine Hill OBE	Member
Glenys Pashley-Crawford	Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ram Gupta	Observer
Caitlin Hollern	Students' Union President
Caroline Bracewell	Head of School: Higher Education
Nicola Clayton	Director: Business Development and External Engagement
Andrew Gadsdon	Head of Quality of Education
Chris Hepworth	Head of Quality and Standards (HE)
Andrew Pickles	Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement
Damian Stewart	Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre)
Rachel Tarplee	Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre)
Jean Tracy	Clerk to the Corporation

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

The Committee was informed that Ram Gupta would be appointed to the Board and as a member of Learning and Quality Committee at the Board meeting on 12 March 2021. Introductions were made of those present. Having been welcomed to the meeting by the Chair, Ram Gupta introduced himself to the Committee. The Chair commented that his business input to the Committee and to the Board would be welcomed.

The Chair welcomed Caitlin Hollern to the meeting. Caitlin had been elected as the Students' Union President and would be presenting reports on the Students' Union to the Committee in the future. After introductions had been made, Caitlin Hollern left the meeting.

Members of the College joined the meeting as necessary to present their papers.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

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 26 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the Learning and Quality Committee meeting held on Thursday 26 November 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record and would be signed by the Chair when able to do so (Covid-19 restrictions).

4. MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted the updates against previous actions points and was informed that the Chair and Vice Chair had met with Andrew Gadsdon to talk through the Digital Learning Walk process. All Board members would be given the opportunity to undertake Digital Learning Walks after half-term.

5. CHANGE OF DATE

As agreed by the Committee at the November 2020 meeting, the meeting in October would be moved to allow for a single agenda item meeting to review the College Self-Assessment Report. The Committee **APPROVED** the change of date of the October meeting – 21 October 2021 from 7 October 2021.

6. CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY 2020-2022

The Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement informed the Committee that following a review of Student Services, the six Careers and Employability Advisors had been realigned as part of the Student Support and Engagement Team. This had influenced the decision to review the 2018-2021 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy to create a strategy with clear intent and currency, linked to industrial standards and expectations and focused on delivering an appropriate and individualised student experience.

The Committee noted the key themes on which the strategic framework would be focussed. Information in the strategy covered the eight Gatsby benchmarks and the implementation and compliance arrangements for these. The Committee requested that the strategy document be amended to include role titles rather than actual names.

Action: Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement

With the change as noted above, the Committee **APPROVED** the Careers and Employability Strategy 2020-2022 and noted that it would receive regular assurance updates, including the implementation and compliance against the eight Gatsby benchmarks.

It was **AGREED** that Item 17 – Safeguarding Committee - Assurance Check and Terms of Reference would be taken at this point in the meeting.

17. SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

- (i) GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE CHECK**
- (ii) TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee noted the content of the report and the key messages in relation to safeguarding, including the Assurance Brief which had also been included. The revised Safeguarding Committee Terms of Reference were included for information.

The Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement covered the areas of focus of recent weeks and that these had been discussed at the Safeguarding Committee. Catherine Hill OBE, as the Safeguarding and SEND Governor Champion, confirmed that she had attended the Safeguarding Committee meeting and commented on the excellent work which was being undertaken in the College.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement and commented that safeguarding was a strong area of focus for the College, noting that there was nothing which was of concern.

The Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement left the meeting.

7. COVID-19 – COLLEGE UPDATE

As agreed by the Board at its meeting on 3 June 2020, the Report provided the Committee with an update on the impact of Covid-19 on Quality of Education, Finance and the progress on re-opening the College.

The Committee noted that the College had remained open during the current lockdown to ensure staff and students could be appropriately supported; the buildings being Harrison Centre, Saturn Centre and the University Centre. No vulnerable students were currently attending, but a number of HE students whose programme led to key roles were in College, in line with government guidelines. The Committee noted that guidance on the re-opening of colleges was expected on 22 February, though the expectation was that no return would take place before 8 March 2021. Colleges would be given 2 weeks' notice to plan the return.

Information was included in the report on the IT challenges being faced by staff and students, the provision of laptops by the College to support online home working and learning and the Lateral Flow Testing now taking place. It was noted that the DfE will require that all staff are tested twice a week and students once a week, when the College reopens.

The Chair requested that the minutes record the Committee's thanks to staff for their flexibility and hard work during lockdown. He also noted that a number of risk areas – access, laptop provision, attendance, completion of elements – would be covered later in the meeting.

In answer to a question from a Committee member, the Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that an IT Strategy was already in place and that this was being reviewed. The process for providing laptops to students was explained, noting that whilst 530 laptops had been provided to staff and students, the full picture in relation to IT poverty was not known. A particular difficulty was in the provision to ESOL learners who attended College only for short programmes. The College was aware of campaigns to rally businesses to donate devices and Ram Gupta offered his support in this area. This would be taken forward outside the meeting.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive

8. PERFORMANCE AGAINST COLLEGE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2020/21

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report which provided information on the 22 KPIs which were monitored by Learning and Quality Committee. The Committee noted that the KPI relating to GCSE Maths and English 9-4 Pass Rates was currently under target, the large number of GCSE resits being a factor. Direction of travel arrows were also now included in the Report.

9. HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) STUDENT PERFORMANCE 2020/21

(i) RETENTION, COMPLETION, ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

The Head of School: Higher Education was welcomed to the meeting to present her Report.

The Report provided the Committee with the current performance of Higher Education students for the next four years based on hybrid end year data and the historic Office for Students metrics. The Committee noted the information on the key issues and response to those issues for Office for Students and hybrid Year End Metrics. As requested by the Committee, the Report provided separate information on part-time programmes.

The College continued to focus on continuation rates, this being the biggest risk. The HE Management Team had drilled down to programme level to look at the impact on continuation rates. Timely feedback to students was being provided to enable improvements to be made in-year. Individual weekly monitoring at student level, together with the appropriate intervention, was in place.

A member of the Committee commented on the detail contained in the OfS Improvement Plan and the Self-Evaluation Document (SED) but questioned whether the necessary improvements would be made by May in order to satisfy OfS requirements. The Head of School: Higher Education replied that the current data supported an improvement in achievement but that the final figure was not yet known.

The Chair of the Committee commented that the Report was difficult to follow. Improvements had been made but there was still more to do.

In answer to a question from the Chair, further detail on the intervention process was provided. Staff were present at the intervention meetings when the details of the individual support was discussed and put in place, with best practice being shared across the area. The increased use of ProMonitor was also agreed to be helpful.

Assurance was requested and received that whilst clear actions were now being seen which were starting to have a positive impact, all staff were aware of the new systems and processes. The possible reasons for non-attendance – lack of motivation, poverty factors, fear of not being able to catch up – were noted and it was suggested that early information on employment opportunities information from employers could assist.

(ii) OFFICE FOR STUDENTS IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) presented the Report which provided an update on the College's performance on its Office for Students (OfS) Improvement Plan to address student outcomes. The Report included a summary of how the College was currently performing in relation to its internal targets and the OfS baseline metrics. The detailed information on the actions and progress against was contained in the Appendix.

It was noted that the next meeting of Learning and Quality Committee was after the May 2021 OfS two-year improvement period but that no request for information or a follow-up from OfS had been received. The Chair of the Committee commented that the College needed to show progress and strategic change to OfS and requested sight of the final documentation prior to its submission to OfS.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive/Head of School: HE/Head of Quality and Standards: HE

10. BLACKBURN COLLEGE HIGHER EDUCATION SELF-EVALUATION DOCUMENT 2020/21

The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) presented the Report which presented the Self-Evaluation Document which included an evaluation of performance against the 13 core practises of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Information on the outcomes of the 4 core practices covered in the Quality and Standards Review (October 2019) was also included in the Report.

The Report was acknowledged to be very detailed. However, the College needed to ensure that this was being proof-read and that the detail on 'responsible role/holder' should be specific to a person rather than it being a group. It was confirmed that all were up to speed with ProMonitor; the Report would be checked and amended accordingly.

Action: Head of School: HE and Head of Quality and Standards: HE

Members of the Committee were requested to forward any further comments directly.

18:20pm Kerry Baron left the meeting.

11. FE COLLEGE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2020/21

The Head of Quality of Education presented the paper which provided the Committee with an update on the actions included within the FE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2020/21. The Committee noted the continuing focus on providing high quality learning during lockdown, using what had been learnt from the previous lockdown, and targeted interventions which had been key to understanding the issues affecting quality of delivery.

The Chair commented on the positive outcomes in relation to GCSE November resit examinations and requested that information be included in future reports on the previous year's data.

Action: Head of Quality of Education

The Chair also noted the improvement in retention rates across the College. It was confirmed that the College was monitoring students' potential outcomes on an individual basis.

18:29pm the Head of Quality and Standards: HE left the meeting.

12. FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) STUDENT IN-YEAR PERFORMANCE 2020/21 – RETENTION, ATTENDANCE AND STUDENT PROGRESS

(i) ACADEMIC

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) presented the Report which provided Governors with an update on the in-year performance against set metrics, including retention, value added, attendance and engagement and quality assurance.

The Committee noted the high retention figures and the work being done to improve the value added scores. It was noted that the Snapshot 3 value added prediction was based on mock examinations and as such had been impacted by the disruption to the mocks because of lockdown. The Committee was reminded that value added was a new concept for vocational programmes and noted that the College was working to motivate curriculum staff to ensure that they had the detailed knowledge of the areas of potential impact on value added.

The Chair commented that the Report was very comprehensive and that digital poverty had also been covered earlier in the meeting.

(ii) **TECHNICAL**

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre) presented the Report which provided an update on the in-year performance against set metrics, including retention, value added, maths and English outcomes and quality assurance through Digital Learning Walks.

Retention was again noted to be high, particularly around the study programmes. The value added scores showed a better position than in the previous year across a number of areas of provision and the Committee noted that a robust plan was in place to target those areas requiring improvement.

The Chair stated that the Report was good and contained some pleasing figures. He wished to congratulate all relevant staff.

18:49pm The Assistant Principals: Teaching and Learning left the meeting.

13. URGENT CARE/QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

(i) **FE AND WBL**

The Report provided the Committee with an overview of the courses that were currently being scrutinised as part of the Urgent Care process for 2020/21. Information by course on current retention, achievement and pass rates together with the information for 2019/20 was included in the Appendix.

The Committee noted the positive figures in relation to retention and the measures in place to increase engagement with those groups whose attendance was below that expected. The work of the Performance Quality Review meetings in the monitoring of the improvement plans was also noted.

The Chair was confident that the necessary actions were now being taken, these being supported by the reports considered earlier in the meeting. He also noted that digital learning walks were proceeding at pace and congratulated the Head of Quality of Education and his team.

(ii) **HE**

The Report was presented by the Head of School: HE and provided an update on the quality improvement process approach being implemented in Higher Education. The Committee noted the programmes which were currently in the Quality Improvement Process and the range of data used in determining areas of focus.

An example of an action plan had been included in the papers and it was requested that the College look to include targets in the action plans for the future in order that staff are clear as to what the expectations are.

Action: Head of School: HE/Head of Quality and Standards: HE

18:55pm The Head of School: HE and Head of Quality of Education left the meeting.

14. WORK EXPERIENCE/PLACEMENT UPDATE RE WORK EXPERIENCE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FUND REPORT 2019/20

The Director of Business Development and External Engagement presented the Report which provided information on the work experience and external work placements being undertaken with the support of the Capacity Development Fund.

The Committee noted that the College had been on track to deliver the target for 30-hour placements and extended Industry Placements but that, as a result of the first lockdown from 23 March 2020, all placements had ceased. It was noted that the College was in the process of purchasing an online solution to provide work placements skills modules focusing on resilience, communication and team working. Employer relationships continued to be strengthened with virtual alternatives and commitment for future placements.

The College received and would continue to receive additional funding to support extended Industry Placements through the Capacity Development Fund. It had been confirmed that there would be no funding claw back, subject to being able to provide evidence under the headings as detailed in the Report.

The Director of Business Development and External Engagement, in answer to questions from those present, provided information on how the College engaged with employers to place students and on the opportunities available to gain skills via volunteering.

15. STUDENT VOICE COMMITTEE 10 FEBRUARY 2021 - FEEDBACK

The Chair of the Corporation Board provided a verbal update on the Student Voice Committee meeting which had taken place the day before. The students spoke well, were positive about their tutors, knew their targets and how to improve. A number of points had been raised, including technology, the length of sessions and opportunities to undertake handwritten pieces of work in preparation for future examinations; these would be followed up by the College.

16. CHAIR APPROVED MINUTES OF ACADEMIC BAORD – 18 JANUARY 2021

The Committee noted the Chair Approved minutes of the Academic Board meeting held on 18 January 2021, these being presented for information.

17. SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE - GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE CHECK AND COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The minutes were as recorded above.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Business.

19. REVIEW OF MEETING

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and contribution to the meeting. Ram Gupta was asked for his views on the meeting and replied that he had enjoyed the meeting; the quality of the information and data, and that the consideration given to student was exemplary.

The Principal and Chief Executive commented that the College now had a sound foundation to move forward, more work was still to be done across FE and HE but managers were focussed on working towards 'outstanding'.

20. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Learning and Quality Committee would take place on Thursday 17 June 2021 at 5.00pm via Microsoft Teams/Board room.

19:10pm: The meeting closed.

Signed: Date: