

**MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON  
THURSDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2022**

**PRESENT:**

Mark Allanson	Chair
Lillian Croston	Member
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Catherine Hill OBE	Member
Mark Moren	Academic Staff Governor
Jade Wellings *	HE Student Governor

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Caroline Bracewell	Head of School: Higher Education
Nicola Clayton	Director: Business Development and External Engagement
Andrew Gadsdon	Head of Quality of Education
Emma Goodley	Assistant Principal: Student Support and Experience
Chris Hepworth	Head of Quality and Standards (HE)
Damian Stewart	Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre)
Jean Tracy	Clerk to the Corporation

\* indicates attendance via Microsoft Teams

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

The Head of Quality of Education and Head of Quality of Standards (HE) joined the meeting as necessary to present their papers.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Ram Gupta.

**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 2 DECEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the Learning and Quality Committee meeting held on Thursday 2 December 2021 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. There were no other matters arising.

## **5. SINGLE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2020/21 FINAL UPDATE INC. SINGLE EQUALITY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

The Report provided a final update on the key points of information on the Single Equality Action Plan 2020/21. The Committee noted the information provided against the five Learner Equality Objectives (also known as EDIMs – Equality and Diversity Impact Measures) and that all five had been achieved. Of the six Workforce Impact Measures, five had been achieved and there had been a very small improvement for the age-rated objective. The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic) informed the Committee that since the Report had been prepared, an ‘under 20’ employee had started at the College.

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic) highlighted some of the key issues/latest information:

- Female learners now made up 52% of the student population (from 53%)
- The one percentage point decrease in learners from widening participation backgrounds might appear to be insignificant, but was not so in a deprived area such as the College served
- There had been a 0.5% point increase in those learners not wishing to disclose their faith; more research was required to understand why this was the case
- Young and part-time learners in HE had increased dramatically to 17% from 6% in the previous year; in part because of the availability and acceptability of part-time learning

In answer to a question from a member of the Committee it was confirmed that reference to the new national tables related to the qualifications table. The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic) was asked to include this in the Equality and Diversity Report in order to provide clarification.

**Action: Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic)**

The Committee was informed that the section on the National Living Wage 2020 was to be removed as being commercially sensitive.

The College was asked to check the wording on Page 33 – Points 4 and 5 of the Equality and Diversity Report as their appeared to be a mis-match and to check and correct for typos.

**Action: Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic)**

The Chair of the Committee commented that the Report was good and that he had been impressed with the number of areas which had been looked at with quality in mind.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Single Equality Action Plan and the Single Equality Committee Annual Report (Equality and Diversity Report).

## **6. OFSTED INSPECTION UPDATE**

As the final Ofsted report had not yet been received, it was noted that this item and the associated minutes (in italics) would be classed as ‘Confidential – Not for publication’.

## **7. COLLEGE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – 2021/22 PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Report provided information on the College’s current position against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2021/22. The Committee noted that benchmarking data had not been published due to Covid-19. It was confirmed that at this stage, four were on target, 2 on target in part, one was under target and that twelve were not yet reportable. The Committee was informed of the huge drive in the College to follow up on attendance. Retention was noted to be high in comparison to previous years and those ‘at risk’ were being managed.

The Principal was asked whether there were notable themes regarding attendance. It was confirmed that the biggest challenge was in relation to maths and English resit students but the impact of Covid in terms of mental health and maturity issues was also noted and was being closely monitored.

## **8. FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) STUDENT IN-YEAR PERFORMANCE 2021/22 – RETENTION, ATTENDANCE AND STUDENT PROGRESS**

### **(i) ACADEMIC**

The Report provided Governors with an update on the in-year performance against set metrics, including retention, value added, attendance and engagement and quality assurance.

As requested at the last meeting, and in addition to the number of withdrawals at subject level, information on the actual numbers of students who had withdrawn had been included. The Committee also noted the information regarding key issues – high retention, attendance in line with the previous year and particularly good in Science, Engineering and Business and for maths and English; and High Needs. The Committee was informed that whilst the Snapshot 3 data looked of concern, it provided the Assistant Principal with information on where particular focus was needed, on which students were in need of intervention and would then be monitored and tracked to ensure that they started to make the expected progress.

### **(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 for the Technical Centre. The Committee also noted the information provided which included the expected achievement outcome, the improvement in Access to HE provision in terms of retention and an increase in student numbers, and High Needs.

In answer to a question from a member of the Committee, it was confirmed that all GCSE November resit maths/English students who had not achieved Grade 4 would be entered for the summer examinations. The learning points from the November resit were included in the Report and noted by the Committee. The College was asked if it had enough staff in that area. Whilst this was the case, the performance issues of some staff were noted and that the necessary actions were being taken to bring about improvements, including the involvement of the Quality Team.

### **(iii) WORK BASED LEARNING**

The Report provided the Committee with an update on Apprenticeship performance for 2021/22 to date.

The Committee noted that Apprenticeship achievement to date and attendance had both been impacted by Covid. The College was asked if figures for end-point assessment comparators was available; the College overall achievement was higher but not all programmes had different grades, some being only pass/fail, to enable such a comparison.

The Committee received information on the areas of growth – such as construction – and those where Covid had caused particular difficulties – such as Childcare. The Committee also noted that the Level 5 Leadership and Management standard was now out and was being delivered by the College.

*The Head of Quality of Education joined the meeting.*

## **9. FE COLLEGE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2021/22**

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 2021/22. As requested by the Committee at the previous meeting, the heading had been amended to "Impact" (from "Progress Update"). The Committee was informed that further work on the Digital Strategy was needed and that deep dives in English and maths were currently being undertaken.

At the request of the Committee, the Head of Quality of Education provided information on the percentage of staff English and maths staff who needed support, it being noted that action would then be taken to ensure that the whole team were developed to ensure a cohesive unit. The Principal and Chief Executive also commented on the need for greater consistency across the whole of the College.

It was **AGREED** that Items 12 (i) and (ii) would be taken next.

## **12. URGENT CARE/PROGRAMME IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

### **(i) FE**

The Report provided the Committee with an overview of the courses that were currently being scrutinised as part of the Urgent Care process for 2021/22 and included detail on their progress in and impact of improving key metrics.

The Committee was informed that some courses which had not responded to the interventions put in place had been removed from the curriculum portfolio.

The Committee noted the information provided on the main issues. Attendance on the majority of courses within the Urgent Care process had not shown the required improvement and thus more robust actions were to be put in place. The Committee noted the improvement in Alps and that retention was good across the majority of courses.

The Chair of the Committee expressed concern that Covid had impacted on student maturity and thus it would prove more challenging to address issues such as poor attendance. The Head of Quality of Education informed the Committee that the College was working to understand the issues which were resulting in poor attendance, noting that feedback on teaching and learning was good. The work of the Progress and Attendance Monitors was also noted to have had a positive impact on attendance.

A member of the Committee commented on the number of courses which had been in the Urgent Care process for a number of years, and asked what was required in order for them to be removed.

### **(ii) HE**

The Report provided an overview of the HE programmes that were currently being scrutinised as part of the College Programme Improvement Plan (PIP) for 2021/22. PIP Action Plans were being put in place for each course. The Committee noted the information provided on the key issues, including information on the key actions which were being closely scrutinised during the Performance and Quality Reviews (PQR).

The Head of Quality of Education informed the Committee that the improved use of the submission tracker was having a real impact - staff had a better understanding of their students' current performance, making it easier for Heads of Schools to deal with any issues. Whilst the better tracking had resulted in an increase in the number of 'at risk' students being included in the HE Quality Improvement Plan, this was seen as a positive within the HE Centre as it enabled action to be taken to improve the position.

In answer to a question from a member of the Committee, the Assistant Principal: Higher Education confirmed that the majority staff were now working better as a team, were owning the data and that there had been a positive change of culture. However, it was confirmed that this was not the case across the Centre as a whole, and that there was real resistance in some areas which was being addressed by the College.

It was confirmed that the College was looking at the new Office for Students (OfS) metric requirements which would come into effect from September 2022, and in particular that relating to continuation, and that all staff would be made aware of the impact of these. The Chair of the Committee commented that the OfS would want to see progress and that the Board fully supported the College in its continued drive to improve but wished to see more urgent progress.

*The Head of Quality and Standards: Higher Education joined the meeting.*

#### **10. HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) STUDENT PERFORMANCE 2021/22 – RETENTION, ATTENDANCE AND STUDENT PROGRESS INCLUDING REFERENCE TO OFS INITIAL AND ONGOING CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION UPDATE**

The Committee considered the Report which provided an update on progress against the key performance indicators, including the Office for Students' (OfS) B3 metrics and completion of the improvement plan. The Committee was informed that a desk-based analysis of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) would take place, providing an opportunity for the APP to be rewritten.

Attendance remained a key focus of the QPR and Quality Summits in order to improve engagement and outcomes. The National Student Survey outcomes for 2020/21, the performance against the sector average and previous years was noted, together with the key themes and trends.

#### **11. HE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2021/22**

The Committee thanked the Head of Quality of Education for the changes made to the Report at its request, noting that the College must continue to report on the impact of the actions being taken.

The College was asked to provide information in relation to the target of increasing the number of progressing students from FE onto Blackburn University Centre courses.

**Action: Head of Quality of Education**

*Post Meeting Update: There were currently 68 applications (70 in the previous year) from students currently on Level 3 programmes – 6 who had applied to only the University Centre, and 60 who had applied to the University Centre and another institution.*

A discussion took place on the careers support offered both whilst a student was enrolled at the College and also after graduation. The Chair of the Committee offered to share information on the process at his institution with the Assistant Principal: Student Support and Experience. The Clerk would forward the required contact details to the Assistant Principal.<sup>1</sup>

*18:45pm The Head of Quality of Education and Head of Quality: Higher Education left the meeting.*

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<sup>1</sup> Completed 14 Feb 2022

### **13. CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY 2020-2022 AND GATSBY BENCHMARKS PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Assistant Principal: Student Support and Experience was welcomed to her first Learning and Quality Committee meeting.

The Report provided the Committee with an update on progress against the Careers and Employability Strategy and the Gatsby benchmarks. In light of additional guidance, the current strategy was being amended in order to ensure clear intent and currency, linked to industrial standards and expectations which would focus on the lived experience of students. The themes of the strategic framework were included in the Report and it was noted that the revised strategy, including an action plan, would be brought to the Committee for approval at its next meeting. It was confirmed that this would include HE, T-levels, etc.

**Action: Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement**

Noting that the College had achieved all of the Gatsby benchmarks, a member of the Committee asked for information on how the College had evidenced achievement. The Assistant Principal: Student Support and Experience explained how the proper and relevant careers and advice was delivered and confirmed that alumni were invited into the College to talk to students. The College was now looking to provide additional resources in HE, the focus previously having been on achieving the Gatsby benchmarks.

The Chair of the Committee commented positively on the rag-rating used in the Assurance Brief.

### **14. STUDENT VOICE COMMITTEE** **(i) 2 FEBRUARY 2022 – FEEDBACK**

The Principal and Chief Executive provided feedback on the discussions which had taken place at the Student Voice Committee meeting.

The comments had been largely very positive – students were aware that they were making progress and could articulate how they knew; good feedback had been provided on staff teaching and support; students felt safe on campus and had a good understanding of Prevent and radicalisation. Whilst the students were aware of the enrichment activities offered, it was agreed that further action was needed to increase involvement and awareness of what was available.

The HE Student Governor had attended the meeting and concurred with the comments made. It had been requested that the College also look at how to increase involvement in the student voice process, including a wider cross section of student cohort.

### **15. CHAIR APPROVED MINUTES OF ACADEMIC BOARD – 18 JANUARY 2022**

The Committee noted the Chair Approved minutes of the Academic Board meeting held on 18 January 2022, these being presented for information.

### **16. SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE REPORT**

The Report which provided a summary assurance in relation to safeguarding arrangements, noting that Catherine Hill OBE attended the Safeguarding Committee meetings in her role as Safeguarding/SEND Governor Champion.

The College continued to prioritise safeguarding arrangements for students across all aspects of provision and effective internal structures and processes supported statutory expectations and positive external agency interventions. The Committee noted the key messages and the Safeguarding Assurance Brief and Care Experienced Young People and Counselling Assurance Brief (both as provided in the Supporting Papers).

**17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Committee that a paper on T-levels would be brought to the next learning and Quality Committee meeting.

There were no other items of Any Other Business.

**18. REVIEW OF MEETING**

The Chair thanked all members for their contribution to the meeting and the details discussions which had taken place.

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

The next meeting of the Learning and Quality Committee would take place on Thursday 16 June 2022 at 5.00pm via Microsoft Teams/Harrison Centre Board room.

*19:10pm: The meeting ended.*

Signed: .....

Date: .....