

**MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON
THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2020**

PRESENT:

Mark Allanson	Chair
Lillian Croston	Member
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Catherine Hill OBE	Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andrew Gadsdon	Head of Quality and Standards (FE and WBL)
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.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Geoff Disley and Glenys Pashley-Crawford.

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 18 JUNE 2020

The minutes of the Learning and Quality Committee meeting held on Thursday 18 June 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate record and these would be signed by the Chair when able to do so (Covid-19 restrictions).

4. MATTERS ARISING

The update on actions from previous meetings was noted.

The Committee was informed that an Open Evening was being held and thus the College managers would join the meeting to present their items.

5. 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 continued to make plans for a full delivery in line with Government guidelines and that all staff and students had been on site since 7 September 2020. The College continued to reinforce the Government's guidance in relation to face coverings, social distancing and the use of hand sanitiser when entering College buildings. The College was working with the BwD Education Response Unit to obtain answers to specific questions relating to FE in view of the contradictory information that was being received from the Public Health England unit.

Information on the current positive cases of Covid-19 and those who had been required to self-isolate was provided in the Report.

Information on the financial impact and that on recruitment was also covered in the Report. Recruitment to FE was above target but HE was c. 100 short. The Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that recruitment to FE and HE would continue until October half term. Recruitment to Apprenticeships was significantly lower than the last academic year, however, it was anticipated that the Apprenticeship uptake would improve throughout the year.

The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Committee that Ofsted inspectors had been in College for the past 2 days as part of an Interim Visit. The purpose of the visit was to look as to how leaders had coped during the lockdown, this being tested at an operational level. Safeguarding had also been considered during the visit. Informal feedback was that it had come across very strongly to the inspectors that senior managers and leaders had worked well together to ensure that students succeeded and that since lockdown, the right practices were in place to ensure student safety. It was noted that modifications to the curriculum had been made to reflect the changes due to lockdown.

The Chair asked about the implications of the visit. The Principal and Chief Executive replied that the notes from the Interim Visit would be available during a full Ofsted inspection and thus a positive outcome had been vital; this had been achieved.

17:15pm Andrew Gadsdon joined the meeting.

The Principal and Chief Executive then talked through the latest learner performance information, as per the paper that had been circulated earlier that day. In addition to the information as at 29 September 2020, the paper included actual achievement data for 2017/18 and 2018/19 for 16-18, 19+ and overall FE, for High Needs students, Apprenticeships and Higher Education. Whilst there were c. 330 results still to be finalised, the information on HE related to the finalised position.

The Principal and Chief Executive referred to the HE achievement rate for 2019/20 which he agreed was very poor and need to be remedied immediately. He informed the Committee that the Executive Dean had left the College and that a review of and changes to the HE staffing structure would be made. This would be aligned to the FE quality model.

The performance in FE and particularly in Apprenticeships was applauded, a member of the Committee commenting that the Apprenticeship timely achievement rate would compare very favourably to national figures.

The Chair commented on the upward 3-year trend and questioned as to how much was because of the centre assessed grades (CAGs) and whether it could be sustained. The Principal and Chief Executive replied that the College had benefited from CAGs regarding GCSE Maths and English results and that the challenge for the College in the current year was to build on the core vocational programmes to make sure that English and maths students received the right experience in order to improve their grade profile. The Chair was content that the College was being honest about the impact of CAGs on overall performance.

6. PERFORMANCE AGAINST COLLEGE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

(i) 2019/20 PRE-FINALISATION

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report. Information on the current progress against the 24 key performance indicators (KPIs) monitored by Learning and Quality Committee was considered. The Committee noted the explanation and reasons for those which were under target and the actions being taken by the College.

A further report would be presented to the Committee when all outstanding results had been received.

A member of the Committee questioned whether the College was looking to present information on student progress differently, as the present system was felt to need clarity. The Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that this was the case.

(ii) 2020/21 PROPOSED TARGETS

The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Committee that once the results for 2019/20 had been finalised, he would wish to review the proposed 2020/21 targets. He described the information provided at a previous college and was mindful that the targets should be meaningful.

A member of the Committee commented that it was difficult for Governors to judge whether a student was progressing or whether it was the case that staff were not inputting the data. The Principal and Chief Executive agreed and stated that he would want to be able to understand and be confident that the College was advancing; were students attending, progressing, being retained, achieving through the year and at the year-end, and did they go on to employment or further training. He would want to see KPIs around these. The Chair of the Corporation Board also commented that it had been useful to see information over 3 years, as had been provided in the Principal and Chief Executive's tabled paper.

A written question from a member of the Committee related to whether the KPIs being proposed were sufficiently aspirational.

The Chair referred to the KPI report and asked for this to be reviewed and amended, whilst taking into account the comments made, particularly with regard to aspirational standards. He asked that the Principal and Chief Executive consider this and report back to the Committee.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive

7. FE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN – 2020/21

The Head of Quality and Standards (FE and WBL) presented the paper which provided the Committee with a first draft of the FE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2020/21. The QIP reflected the College's position at the end of the last academic year and included actions rolled over from last year's QIP. It was noted that whilst many issues had begun to be addressed during last year's Quality cycle, in some cases the final impact could not be fully ascertained or attributed to the specific action because of the Covid-19 lockdown. The QIP for the current academic year was shorter and more focussed than previously and reflected the distance travelled by the vast majority of the College provision.

The Head of Quality and Standards (FE and WBL) explained the ALPs system and it was **AGREED** that the 2020/21 target for ALPs for both vocational and A level programmes would be set at 3. The QIP would be amended to reflect this change.

Action: Head of Quality and Standards (FE and WBL)

The Committee questioned whether quality from an online perspective should be included in the QIP; this was **AGREED**. The Chair of the Corporation Board requested that arrangements be

made for her to view online learning; this would be arranged by the Head of Quality and Standards (FE and WBL).

Action: Head of Quality and Standards (FE and WBL)

A member of the Committee had requested more detail in terms of the number of staff and students impacted by the "small amount of teaching and learning" in English and maths, Construction and Engineering that required improvement. Information was also requested on how the number of courses in urgent care compared with previous years and on the number of courses which were carried forward from the previous year.

Action: Head of Quality and Standards (FE and WBL)

17:50pm Rachel Tarplee and Damian Stewart joined the meeting.

8. FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) STUDENT IN-YEAR PERFORMANCE 2019/20 – RETENTION, ATTENDANCE AND STUDENT PROGRESS

(i) ACADEMIC

The Report provided Governors with the top-level dissection of the current performance of students against, where available, like-for-like data from the last academic year. The Committee was informed that 120 results had yet to be finalised.

The Committee was reminded of the events over the summer in relation to examination results. The paper covered A level subject information by pass rate and achievement rate, together with the national rate for 2018/19, this being the latest available information.

The College was asked whether the 100% pass rates could be sustained in the next year. The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) provided detail on the robust processes in place, Initial Advice and Guidance (IAG) for example, to ensure that students enrolled to the A Level programme had the capability of achieving at least Grade E.

In terms of value added, the draft ALPs score was 4, a move from 8 in the previous year. It was noted that the Committee had requested the ALPs target for 2020/21 be set at 3.

The Committee was concerned at the poor retention and asked what steps which were being taken to address this. The Assistance Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) replied that the Centre had been prioritising retention over the last year. There had been a large drop in numbers following the July mock examinations and thus the timing of the mocks had been changed. The Centre was also looking to ensure that students leaving the A level programme were transferred internally, where appropriate, and following full IAG.

The Chair of the Corporation Board referred to the comment from Ofsted on the lack of high grades and asked what was being done to effect improvements. The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Academic Centre) referred to the improvement in the ALPs score which indicated that students were achieving above the target grades and also to the fact that students enrolling to the College were not those who were capable of achieving the high grades. In response to a request from the Chair of the Corporation Board, information on student destinations would be provided.

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

The Chair acknowledged the improvement in the ALPs score and the work of the staff involved.

The Committee noted the information provided in the Report on enrolments, retention, progress and high needs students in the current year, the numbers of staff and students affected by positive confirmed cases of COVID-19 and the priorities for the area for 2020/21.

(ii) TECHNICAL

The Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning (Technical Centre) presented the Report which provided an overview of the outcomes for 2019/20 and on the current position for 2020/21 in relation to enrolments, progress, English and maths, and the main areas of focus for 2020/21.

The Committee offered its congratulations on the pass rate, retention and achievement in the area, noting that the online distance learning had been received positively by the students. The College was asked to reflect on this to ensure that learning was delivered in such a way as to be embraced by the students. The Committee noted the small number of adult learners who had been identified as being at risk and which were being closely monitored by the Centre.

The Chair commented on the excellent progress and offered his congratulations to the staff involved, particularly in relation to the impact of Covid-19.

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

9. URGENT CARE COURSES

(i) FE AND WBL

The Committee considered the Report which provided a final update on the FE courses that had been scrutinised as part of the College Urgent Care process for 2019/20. This included information on the improvements in retention, pass rates and achievement; an indication that the process was having an impact.

The Committee noted the information on the Urgent Care courses for 2020/21 and that courses included in the 2019/20 process would continue to be reviewed to ensure that improvements were sustained.

The College was asked to explain the criteria used when a decision was taken on whether a course should be moved out of Urgent Care. It was noted that courses would be included where three of the 7 criteria were 'hit'. The course would need to make the necessary improvements against these in order to be removed from the Urgent Care process.

The Chair thanked the Head of Quality and Standards (FE and WBL) for his Report.

18:22pm The Head of Quality and Standards (FE and WBL) left the meeting.

10. HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) STUDENT PERFORMANCE 2019/20

(i) RETENTION, COMPLETION, ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report which covered information on in-year performance in HE.

The Committee was informed of the two Quality Summit meetings which had been held with the Heads of School at which the continued poor achievement rates had again been discussed. The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Committee that he would be undertaking a full review of the management structure of Higher Education and that the quality systems and processes would be aligned with the FE model. Student Achievement would be the top priority going forward.

The Chair asked for the Committee's view on what the College was doing, on the HE strategy and whether the College should be looking at opportunities for the future – degree level apprenticeships, for example – and on what was the purpose and raison d'être for doing HE. All members agreed that a full strategic review should be undertaken. Whilst this review

should not be rushed, the Committee was mindful of the students who were currently studying and on the need to make the necessary improvements.

It was **AGREED** that the Principal and Chief Executive would prepare a scoping paper on HE at Blackburn College over the next 5 – 10 years which would include policy, engagement with employers, the quality angle, market research, what products should be delivered, delivery methods and with whom the College should engage.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive

(ii) OFS - IMPROVEMENT PLAN – PROGRESS UPDATE – AUGUST 2020

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 HE student outcomes. The Plan required the College to deliver a material improvement in student outcomes in relation to five areas. In order to meet the required level of student outcomes, improvements were required in Information, advice and guidance, Induction process, Support mechanisms, Quality of teaching, learning and assessment and Careers advice and progression.

The Report included a summary of how the College was currently performing in relation to its internal targets and the OfS baseline metrics. The areas in which performance was below the internal target and the OfS baseline were noted by the Committee.

Members of the Committee challenged the Head of Quality and Standards (HE) on the way in which students were supported and on the effectiveness of the pastoral support process. The Principal and Chief Executive stated that HE teaching staff needed to take ownership of the whole student experience to ensure achievement rates improved. The need to quickly improve the induction process and to provide formative support and monitoring was highlighted by the Chair of the Committee

It was requested that the Head of Quality and Standards (HE) review and amend the Improvement Plan in order to provide the Committee with information on the intended and actual impact of the Plan. Specific targets needed to be included. The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) was also asked discuss further with the Principal and Chief Executive in order that the Plan be put into hard practice.

Action: Head of Quality and Standards (HE)

It was **AGREED** that the agenda items would be taken out of order, the minutes being recorded in the order taken.

12. ANNUAL REVIEW OF OFS REPORTABLE EVENTS

The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) informed the meeting that the reporting of the change of Chair of the Corporation Board had been the only OfS reportable event during the 2019/20 academic year.

17. HIGHER EDUCATION VALIDATION SCHEDULE 2021/22

The Report provided information on the proposed schedule of validations and revalidations for 2021/22 and was noted by the Committee.

18. ACADEMIC REGULATIONS – AMENDMENTS/UPDATES

The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) confirmed that no amendments/updates were being proposed at this time to the current Academic Regulations.

19. ACADEMIC STAFF APPROVALS REPORT FOR LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

The Report on the process and outcomes of Lancaster University's approval of staff was provided for information.

18:56pm The Head of Quality and Standards (HE) left the meeting

11. SURVEYS

(i) NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) 2020

The Report provided the Committee with an overview of the University Centre's performance in the National Student Survey (NSS). Overall, the results were positive in comparison to the previous year's performance, it being noted that overall satisfaction was now 1 percentage point above the national average.

The Committee considered those NSS scores which needed significant improvement. Feedback provided to students was noted to require improvement to require improvement on most courses.

13. ACADEMIC BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report which concentrated on the discharge of Academic Board's duties as laid out in its Terms of Reference. Having considered the Report, the Committee was satisfied that these duties had been discharged.

14. QUALITY OF EDUCATION STRATEGY – STRATEGY FOR 2020/21

The Report provided an update to the Quality of Education Strategy in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Online quality assessment approaches and processes had been put in place to ensure the College continued to robustly monitor the Quality of Education experience for all students.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the changes at Point 6.2. The College was also asked for clarification on Point 4 (page 3) and it was agreed that 'Reward' would be changed to 'Recognise'.

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

15. STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

- **STRATEGY FOR 2020/21**
- **END-YEAR EVALUATION AND IMPACT FOR 2019/20**

The Principal and Chief Executive informed the Committee that no changes were being proposed at that time and that the Students' Union President role had been reviewed and amended in order to provide an effective model.

16. CAREERS STRATEGY PROPOSED CHANGES AND GATSBY BENCHMARKS PROGRESS UPDATE

The Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement, who now had responsibility for the careers team, provided an update on the Careers Strategy and the Gatsby benchmarks. He had met with the Careers Strategy Governor Champion – Learning and Quality Committee Chair – and it was noted that a member of the Committee had also recently attended a webinar on Gatsby/careers.

Information on the proposed scope of the revised Careers and Employability Strategy 2020-2022 was contained in the Report and considered by the Committee. The Report also covered the benchmark summary, the priority focus for the Autumn term and the summary action plan relating to the Gatsby benchmarks. The Committee was informed that the College Careers Champions now worked directly with the curriculum staff and that all Gatsby benchmarks would be achieved by the end of November/early December of the current year.

It was noted that a final draft would be presented to the Committee at its meeting in November 2020.

The Committee were pleased with the progress made, the Chair commenting that he had been impressed with the work now being undertaken by the Assistant Principal: Student Support and Engagement and the Assistant Student Services Manager, Vicky Wilding.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Business.

18. REVIEW OF MEETING

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and contribution to the meeting. The meeting had been positive and evidenced the Committee's challenge of College staff.

19. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Learning and Quality Committee would take place on Thursday 26 November 2020 at 5.00pm via Microsoft Teams/Board room.

19:16pm: The meeting closed.

Signed:

Date: