HERTFORD REGIONAL COLLEGE CORPORATION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY, STANDARDS & CURRICULUM PLANNING COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2019

711   PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS

711.1 Attendance, Apologies for Absence & Membership

Membership:	Nathan Daech Green	
	Sarah King	
	Tony Medhurst	
	Philomena Shaughnessy	
	Charlotte Simmonds	
	Jan Wing	(Chair)
In Attendance:	Jayne Chaplin	(Clerk)
	Angela McLean	
	Wayne Wright	
Apologies:	Mike Carver	
Absent:	Luke Taylor	

711.2 Declarations of Interest & Confidential Items
There were no Declarations of Interest.

711.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting
The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

711.4 Matters Arising
With all matters covered on the agenda, there were no matters arising on which to report.

712 IN-YEAR PERFORMANCE MONITORING: REPORTS FOR REVIEW OR APPROVAL
712.1 Quality Improvement & Curriculum Development
712.1.1 Strategic Objectives & Curriculum Development: Update
A report was presented providing an update on the year to date position for the 2018/19 strategic objectives along with an oral update on key data changes since publication of the report and the predictions for the year-end.

After providing an overview of curriculum developments, there was consideration of:

▪   The year to date retention rate of 95.6%. Whilst noting the fall from the 97.99% reported at the last meeting, it was recognised to be 1.53% higher than the 94.37% at the same time last year and 3.41% higher than the 92.49% recorded two years ago.

▪   Year to date Attendance at 86.3% against an aspirational attendance target of 100% and expected attendance of 90%. Whilst acknowledged to be below target, it was noted to be a 3% improvement on the figure recorded for the same point in the previous year with overall attendance for 16-18 learners and adult learners the same.

After noting performance against objectives, members were advised that College outcomes, excluding English and Maths provision, were currently predicted to be at 87.9%, an improvement on the 85.93% recorded at the same time last year. After noting that the majority of curriculum areas were on track for at least good achievement this year, the data was reviewed in further detail:

- Providing confirmation that whilst it excluded sub-contractor data, performance was expected to remain consistent. Acknowledging historically, it to be good, the need was emphasised for continuous monitoring to avoid any decline in the trend. Whilst noting that the position remained the subject of review by the College, it was requested for such data to be included in future reports to ensure scrutiny by the Committee.
- Reassurance was provided of the robust nature of the risk assessment process for assessing individual student performance reporting how cumulatively, it provide an indicative achievement rate for each curriculum area, explaining how data was reviewed and confirmed before improvement was recognised.
- Observing the exception to be in the Engineering curriculum area with the expectation of lower than average outcomes reporting on the effect on learners in the first half of the year, reflective of severe problems in recruiting staff for most of the year for both Engineering and Science programmes. Reassurance was provided that the matter now been addressed with the positive impact already evident. Members concurred with this observation, sharing experience of significant positive change witnessed over successive curriculum link visits to the area.

Following review, the report was noted

712.1.2 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP): Update
The College QIP was presented showing year to date progress.

After observing discussion elsewhere on the agenda (Minute 709.1.1 refers), the year-to-date position was reviewed, noting:

- Overall progress remained good with actions still providing evidence of impact.
- In the achievement of the target for work experience the improvement from 66% to 74% since publication of the report with activity continuing.
- The one area assigned a red rating, the timeliness and overall achievement of Apprenticeship provision. After acknowledging the stretching nature of the targets and the prudent approach in the formal recording of success only when supported by evidence of results, there was further question of performance. The overall impact on performance internally was recognised with the cumulative effect of breaks in learning and small numbers not achieving; in parallel with historical issues experienced and addressed by the sub-contractor, CKAT. Questioning the likely year-end position, Management acknowledged the position to be unsatisfactory, advising members of the action focused on the achievement of outcomes at least in-line with the National Average by year-end.

Points of detail were answered and clarified as necessary following which the update was noted.

712.1.3 Teaching, Learning & Assessment: Interim Report

An overview was provided of the year-to-date position following teaching and learning observations along with a summary of specific strengths and areas for improvement highlighted, and the support strategies in place.

After observing those items considered elsewhere on the agenda (Minutes 712.1.1 and 712.1.2 refer), there was review and discussion of the effectiveness data:

▪ For classroom based observations noting 86% to be judged overall effective with an overall 91% effectiveness profile of teaching, learning and assessment across the six College TLA standards. After noting the majority of curriculum areas to performing at or above an average of 90% effective/highly effective across the six standards, questioning focussed on those curriculum areas where performance was considered not yet effective. In the context of the analysis of performance across the TLA standards, members were advised how and where data helped focus attention on improvement, which it was explained could be one or more of the TLA aspects, allowing for specific, tailored support. Whilst acknowledged to be a small area, there was particular questioning of the 40% rate in Hospitality and confirmation was welcomed of the strategies in place and reassurance of the timeliness of follow-up reviews and referral to a variety of data sources in verifying performance improvement.

▪ Noting the completion rate for first observations of Apprenticeship of 92% with 82% of observations judged to be overall effective and a profile across the six standards of 92% effective compared with 85% reported at the February meeting.

Then reviewing the Destination Excellence CPD, there was question of the extent to which it was considered the activities and events actually moved staff towards excellence. Advising members of the role of CPD as part of the overall quality improvement process, the measures used in assessing positive impact were noted to include attendance and retention rates, student satisfaction feedback and achievement data.

Following consideration, the report was noted.

712.2 Enrolment & Applications

Reporting on developments, members noted the current student numbers, the confirmed, reduced allocation for the 2019/20 academic year and the corresponding cost saving measures and structural changes introduced. Discussion then focused on 2019/20 applications and conversion rates.

Reporting on more favourable application numbers, members were advised of 1595 new applications, comparing positively when compared to the previous two years, attributed not only to the increase in the number of post 16 learners leaving schools this year but also the influence of the Communities/Schools Liaison Officer in improving school engagement with the College. After summarising the findings of the more detailed analysis of the applications data, questioning focussed on:

▪ Those areas where 16-18 applications showed a decline, noting the expectation of growth in Beauty and Construction as a consequence of greater progression rates in the current year, in contrast with continuing concern around Tourism with a more significant negative impact

anticipated as a much smaller curriculum area without high progression rates. Exploring the position further the situation was noted to be reflective of the picture nationally advising members of the closure of provision by other local providers.

- Growth areas, in particular the significant growth in Electrical. Confirming this, in part, to be due to its improved reputation, members concurred with this conclusion, sharing observations of significant positive change over successive curriculum link visits to the area.

After welcoming report of the positive picture overall for applications, members were reassured that activities that were underway to maximise the conversion of applications to enrolment numbers with the position to remain the subject of monitoring throughout the summer.

Following discussion, the report was noted.

712.3 Statutory, Policy & Compliance
Reports were received outlining arrangements regarding and confirming the College's compliance with statutory requirements, comprising:

712.3.1 Safeguarding & Prevent Update
An oral report was received from the Committee Chair summarising Safeguarding and Prevent activity for the first term of the new academic year since the last meeting

Activity to date was summarised:

- Reporting compared to the same period last year, a similar number of referrals and highlighting the reduction in emotional and psychological referrals and a 50% rise in welfare referrals for psychological/emotional issues, suggesting that whilst such issues continued to increase, referrals/self-referrals were occurring at an earlier stage and before matters became safeguarding issue.
- Questioning the criminal convictions data highlighting those studying with subcontractors that had completed course before coming to the attention of the College. After noting that the data referred to short course applicants with application details often not sent through until the end of the course, reassurance was provided regarding the processes subcontractors had in place.
- The activities and strategies for addressing safeguarding and Prevent, noting in particular the plans to roll out training to all staff on mental health over the next six months and, reflecting on comments regarding the profile of Prevent in College made by Ofsted following inspection, welcoming confirmation of and emphasis on activities planned for the October student CPD day focussing on British Values with a number of exterior speakers and groups with the aim of raising its profile.

After discussion, the update was noted.

712.3.2 Policies: Admissions
This report provides governors with the updated HRC Admissions Policy for consideration and approval.

Setting out the College arrangements for the consideration and processing of applications with fairness, without prejudice and in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation,

members were advised that the Policy, last reviewed in 2018, had been updated as part of the annual review cycle, in-line with latest guidance and good practice.

The key amendments were summarised and reviewed.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** for the Corporation:

- To **APPROVE** the updated Admissions Policy.

712.4 Committee Business

Reports were received outlining potential options regarding changes to the current governance arrangements, comprising:

712.4.1 Governance & Committee Structure

With synergies observed in the subject matter and business of the Employer & Community Engagement and Quality Standards & Curriculum Planning Committees, members considered a proposal to reduce the overall number of committees through merger of the two committees.

Having previously been the subject of discussion by the Employer & Community Engagement Committee, members were advised of the benefits experienced in reviewing the specific topics within its remit, sharing the importance its members had emphasised on maintaining such a strength.

After acknowledging the concerns highlighted, members concurred with the overall conclusion that merger would facilitate a more even distribution and strengthening of membership across the remaining committees and better ensure a consistent, integrated approach to the monitoring and review of College performance and quality improvement. It was agreed that agenda planning and the integration of the subject matter of the committees where appropriate was critical in parallel with review of the overall approach to and distribution of business across the committee structure to ensure the most effective review and monitoring of performance.

After discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** the Corporation:

- **APPROVE** the merger of the Employer & Community Engagement and Quality, Standards & Curriculum Planning Committees.

712.4.2 Performance Review & Board Effectiveness
712.4.2a Corporation Self –Assessment

Proposals were then considered regarding the introduction of a more formal Corporation performance review process, to ensure a better alignment with the principle responsibility in the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges.

After summarising the current process, members considered and discussed the rationale for the changes proposed:

- Observing the benefits to the Board and members individually and collectively in focussing on member interests, aspirations and development in the member summer vacation

meetings with the Chair of the Corporation, recognising how this would facilitate membership needs and succession planning.

- Acknowledging the importance in providing an opportunity for members to reflect and provide views on the Board's contribution to College performance once the year-end results were available in the autumn term; and for the collective views to then form the basis for a Corporation Self-Assessment Report and inform the commentary within the Leadership and Management Aspect of the College Self- Assessment Report

Questioning the timescales and format:

- Members were advised that as the Chair's meetings with members were generally scheduled during the summer vacation when the year-end results were unavailable, a second stage to the process was proposed by introducing a questionnaire for completion once results were known in the autumn term, allowing for feedback and the drafting of reports in-line with the College timescales for completion of the self-assessment process.
- It was noted that feedback through completion of an on-line questionnaire was proposed, with the latest inspection framework providing the framework for questioning.
- The value to the Board was recognised both in considering its own contribution to performance and improvement and, in-line with the College self-assessment process, in the verification of its conclusions by Management, the Quality and Standards Committee and any other external, independent verification.

After discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** the Corporation:

- **APPROVE** the changes to the Corporation Self-Assessment process.

712.4.2b Support & Guidance Requirements

Having discussed previously the nature of any further support and guidance to facilitate and expedite the College's progress in its quality improvement objectives, confirmation was welcomed of the successful Strategic College Improvement Fund bids to support the further improvement student of attendance and the delivery of English and Mathematics. It was agreed that it superseded plans considered previously and that any further requirements could be considered as and when appropriate.

The update was noted.

713 ANY OTHER BUSINESS & NEXT MEETING

713.1 Any other business

No other business was raised.

713.2 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 2 October 2019

Signed: **Date: 9 October 2019**

Jan Wing (Chair)