

Meeting/Committee	Quality & Standards Committee
Date of meeting	30 th September 2020

1 Declarations of Interest and Eligibility

The Chair requested Governors declare any interests at the appropriate time during the meeting.

None declared.

2 Welcome, introduction and apologies

Attendees:

Catherine Witherington (Chair)
Catherine Burn
Mirella Barnes
Veronica Bruce-McCoy
Lindsey Littlewood
Katie Curtis
Jason Austin

Principal & CEO

In attendance:

Tracey Mace-Akroyd
Claire Godfrey
Cheryl Martin
Angela Bates
Andy Birch
Lisa Wilson
Sally Steadman
Rebecca Blackburn
Rebecca Ahmed
Catherine Mollart

Deputy CEO/Principal
AP for Curriculum Planning, Performance & Delivery
AP for Quality & Learner Experience
AP Student Support & Safeguarding
Head of Higher Education
Director of Apprenticeships
Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment
Head of Quality & Learner Experience
English & Maths Curriculum Innovation Manager
Head of Corporate Services

Apologies for absence

Virginia Parkes

Director of Governance

3 Minutes of the Q&S Committee meeting held on the 23rd June 2020

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held 23rd June 2020 were agreed as true and accurate record.

4 Action Progress Report

No further actions as part of the progress report that are not covered under the Agenda.

5 Learner Enrolments 2020/21

The Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment gave an update on the current figures. For 16 – 18 learners there are 3013 recorded enrolments. There are still 27 applicants to progress. This is higher than the target set. Since GCSE results day there have been 996 of which 671 were 16-18 year-old applications.

The CEO asked governors to be mindful that whilst the figures are positive there could be some adjustment to this with withdrawals.

The Chair asked if there is capacity to take further enrolments and The Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment confirmed that the college will accept applications up until October half term. The college is still receiving in excess of 90 applications per week. These could be from learners at other institutions.

The Chair stated that it was important to remain flexible in order to accommodate people's changing circumstances especially given the current pandemic.

KC raised the point about enrolling students to half term and asked whether this has been communicated to departments as she is aware that some teaching staff have stated their courses are full. The Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment confirmed this was communicated to the curriculum leads. The Deputy Principal stated that there has been conversation with some academic staff and that this could be further communicated. She reassured the group that where individual learners join a course late then there will be additional support and catch up sessions offered. In addition, where there is a viable number of learners wishing to join and start a new group then this will be done also. Blended learning offers a lot more flexibility to options such as this.

The AP for Curriculum Planning, Performance & Delivery stated that following half term a careers pathway programme is run as part of the offering to NEET students and this sometimes can generate new enrolments to the college. This can result in up to 20 new learners being enrolled.

The Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment also confirmed that during the day (30th September) there had been a 'swap don't drop' session run across campuses too. Feedback on this to follow.

The CEO noted and praised staff within the group who have been working very hard on enrolments over the past month especially in the challenging circumstances.

HE enrolments currently stand at 513 against a target of 522. There will be an increase to this figure with the addition of some apprenticeships. There are an additional 46 applications which confirmed their offer but who have yet to enrol. Communication will be made with these applicants over the next few days to confirm whether they are still intending on taking up their offer. Currently there are 2291 19+ students enrolled against an annual target of 5935. This is deemed positive as enrolments for 19+ students take place throughout the year. With regards to apprenticeships there are 86 ready to commence against a target of 303. Processing issues have caused some issues however this is deemed to be on track. The Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment confirmed they are working with employers to ensure advantage is being taken of government schemes such as the kick start programme.

The Chair queried whether there are issues around certain parts of the curriculum. The Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment that she felt all aspects of the curriculum were doing well. Engineering and construction weren't as high as hoped for however land management has performed very well and think this is attributed to the marketing which took place regarding this curriculum area.

The Deputy Principal stated that in order to give a true reflection enrolment needed to be completed. It was acknowledged that there are some spikes and areas such as health are up. Sport is down at Dearne Valley but has increased at NNC.

6 Leaners return to site – lessons learned and analysis

The Head of Quality & Learner Experience stated that several steps have been made into supporting students with their individual digital needs. Learners return to site has been positive overall with a small number of behavioural issues noted. There is still some work to be done to ensure that all students are included and not excluded due to digital challenges.

The Chair stated that after her visit to site in September she was impressed about the adherence to the measures put in place and expressed her thanks for the hard work from colleagues in completing the safety measures.

7 QIAP – 2019/20 Completion and 2020/21 Plan

The AP for Quality & Learner Experience drew reference to the reports circulated and asked members to note that they are still in the process of analysing achievement data in terms of assessment grades so it isn't the finalised report yet. That said good progress has been made to the headline priorities which were set this time last year in addition to good progress being made against the action plan which has been implemented throughout the year. The most significant progress that has been made is regarding fully implementing the EIF along with the COVID guidelines required by government to implement. As a result, the quality of education across the RNN group is improving.

The Chair raised a query regarding inspection during 2020/21 and what was expected throughout this year. The Deputy Principal confirmed that Ofsted are only conducting interim visits during the autumn term which is not the monitoring visit expected by RNN Group. These visits are based on three questions, two of which are based around leaders and managers and the changes which have been implemented to ensure the quality of education continues. The third question is around safeguarding. Its possible that RNN group could be subject to a visit such as this however the monitoring visits are due to resume in January '21 and therefore we continue to prepare for this.

The CEO asked members to be aware that the current issues regarding IT for learners, especially those affected by digital poverty, may impact on the quality of education and outcomes. Whilst the college is in the process of procuring and distributing devices to students and teachers there are concerns about possible delays owing to ensuring the devices have appropriate safeguarding software and technological support.

The Head of Quality & Learner Experience stated that 515 learners have been identified as those suffering from digital poverty and as such analysis is being undertaken to determine their requirements and the level of support required. Support is being hampered by the lead times from IT companies supplying devices which is being felt across the sector.

KC raised the point that the 515 are 16-18 learners and queried whether there would be support for adult learners which The Head of Quality & Learner Experience stated there would be. The CEO stated this was a relevant point given that the recent government announcements regarding level 3 courses for adult learners. The Director of Apprenticeships stated that as part of the digital strategy group the figure also includes those apprenticeships. The AP for Quality & Learner Experience added that there has been greater collaboration across teams within the college such as IT, Quality and MIS to overcome some of the barriers that students have been facing regarding access which has resulted in these barriers being removed.

Action: The Chair to send email regarding free IT equipment.

8 Self-Assessment and Business Review Plans

The Deputy Principal gave an update regarding the SAR validation process on the 9th November prior to the next Q&S committee meeting at which recommendations will be made to the board in December. The Deputy Principal gave assurances to the committee that the SAR will give the same amount of rigour around performance and impact as has been given over the past 12 months in addition to introducing business reviews around the campus provision and the provision types for HE and apprenticeships. The business reviews will commence at the beginning of October and therefore further reporting will be available at the forthcoming meetings.

The Chair asked about peer assessments and whether there is any element of the SAR which is subject to an external peer assessment. The Deputy Principal confirmed this was the case and stated that consideration was also being given to student and employer assessment.

9 Data Summary Table and Delivery Report

The AP for Curriculum Planning, Performance & Delivery drew reference to the report circulated and gave an overview of the headlines. It was stated that the achievement for classroom based is not yet finalised. It is aimed to be completed by mid-October. This will include last minute achievements. COVID has had some impact on some awarding body claims which has resulted in some unknowns at the moment.

The retention figures for 16-18 and 19+ are covered in the report. As the report states there are 1491 claims and 1536 continuing students to finalise. The final data will be available on 23rd October.

The Chair asked how this year has been impacted by COVID and The AP for Curriculum Planning, Performance & Delivery stated it had been dependent on the nature of the course and that some courses still required an element of practical learning and assessment to take place and this had been difficult given the restrictions in place. This has resulted in the college being slightly behind where it could be. The Exams office has had a lot of additional work to do in response to the issues and guidance about centre assessment grades and results that were announced in the summer.

The AP for Quality & Learner Experience stated there had been over 70 appeals for the GCSE exams and the centre assessment grades (CAGs) and given that students could only appeal against the process not the grade none of these were upheld. We currently have 500 functional skills qualifications that haven't been put onto the system as achieved. This will include a mixture of non-achievers, roll overs and those who have achieved. These qualifications are being added to the system by the exams office but it is just taking time. Pearson/Btec qualifications appear to be slightly higher than anticipated. The Deputy Principal stated there are predictions available however caution should be applied when viewing these. The predications state that outturn of the overall college for classroom based should be 88% which would be a 2.8% increase on last year. This will be covered during the SAR validation process. There are a number of increases which are felt to be realistic improvements.

10 Apprenticeship

The Director of Apprenticeships discussed the four main points raised in the report the first being that the provision for apprenticeships at RNN still remains at 'requires improvement'. The Apprenticeship provision has made good progress in improving the quality of education although it is not yet consistently good with two vocational areas in intervention; Engineering and Electrical.

General performance is showing that the overall achievement rates are positive and that they currently stand just below the national achievement rates tables (NARTs) at 63%. The minimum levels of performance (MLP) are predicted to be within 40% tolerance at 29.9%. The Director of Apprenticeships stated the final point was regarding the financial management for the area requires closer scrutiny by the operational leaders and managers to bring about improved financial contribution and financial stability. The Chair queried the point about the financial scrutiny and ask what work was being done and the impact this was having. The Director of Apprenticeships stated that currently there is limited financial knowledge and experience in analysing the accounts and there is a desire to broadened their understanding so they can fully understand the financial implications of curriculum design.

The CEO raised the point regarding MLP and the need to not slip past the 40% tolerance level. He asked what level of assurance could be given regarding this. The Director of Apprenticeships stated that the figures were based on what they are aware of and it was felt that they are robust at this time.

The Deputy Principal stated that close scrutiny is taken placing at all levels. It is an ever-changing situation at the moment for example it was thought that Aston apprentice learners would achieve their results but now it is confirmed that some now won't. Whilst we have made around 7% improvements on overall achievement rates on a year on year basis our focus also needs to look more closely on our timely achievements and is one of the reasons why consideration is being given to the length of programmes. The Deputy Principal stated they are confident the quality of education is better for apprentices however work is needed to be done to ensure they start and finish their programmes on time and this presents a risk. The focus now needs to be on the timings, MLP and progressing apprentices' learning; so not just on completion but getting them through in a timely manner.

The Chair asked for confirmation regarding around the number of subcontracted learners which was stated to be just 11 learners. The Director of Apprenticeships stated that every individual within the MLP is being monitored to ensure they are being offered as much assurance as can be given. Assessment is also been given so that individual needs are met to ensure they complete. The Deputy Principal stated overall apprenticeships still stand at requires improvement, and will do on the SAR, however there has been in year progress which has had a positive impact on the quality of education; issues surround the timings.

11 HE Performance – 2019/20 Year End

Head of Higher Education gave a brief summary of the impact of COVID-19 on HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment within the Group and the contingencies that were put in place towards the end of 2019/20. The proactive response from HE teaching teams during COVID-19 restrictions has meant that all HE teaching and assessments, complied with directive from validating bodies and universities and were completed within normal time constraints.

The distance learning techniques employed and supportive approach from teaching teams, has ensured that retention rates are higher than for previous years, while predicted achievement and pass rates have not been adversely affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Although the feedback provided from the National Student Survey was positive and an improvement on the previous year, the participation rate did not exceed the 50% threshold, to enable the data to be published externally.

Despite predictions that COVID-19 would have implications for 2020/21 HE recruitment, enrolment does not seem to have had any negative impact at this stage, with enrolments very close to the targets set.

Head of Higher Education stated that this demonstrates a very positive picture overall with a possible improvement on the year previous overall despite the constraints and issues presented by COVID-19.

The Chair clarified that the October half term deadline also applies to HE students especially given the issues being faced by students who have gone into student accommodation and are now being locked down. A discussion was had around the opportunities this may present to the college in accepting applications from students who return home and around the marketing that is and could be done around this.

The CEO asked if it possible to apportion any improvements to enrolment figures on the marketing campaigns that have been run in the past 12 months to which it was thought that some could.

CB drew attention to the National Student Survey (NSS) participation level and the point that it did not achieve 50% and that this was deemed to have a negative impact reputationally. CB queried what the targeted support and targeted approach noted would actually consist of. The Head of Higher Education stated that there is a currently a vacancy for a HE Achievement Coach who would be tasked with going into lessons to encourage participation. It was felt that lockdown had impacted on participation along with students not identifying with the RNN brand over the UCR. The Head of Higher Education stated that in future there was going to be more work done around setting the questions and consideration given to the information sent out in advance to eliminate confusion around branding. The target for satisfaction moving forward will be set at 85% which is a 3% increase on this year's figures. The national rate is 82%.

12 Bridge Court Worksop Update

The Deputy Principal referred to the prepared report and floor plan to provide clear guidance about the opportunities and risks from collaborative engagement with Bassetlaw District Council and the Bridge Court project. Since the report was circulated there has been some update regarding the University of Derby. RNN Group feel that the proposals for the building are right for the residents of Worksop and something that RNN should be a part of however it does present risk in term of competition. There was a concern around the number of courses Bassetlaw council had asked the University of Derby to deliver however it would appear this was done to encourage conversations. The Deputy Principal and Head of Higher Education are meeting next week to discuss what can feasibly be offered and delivered by RNN. There are difficulties in forging the collaborative partnership between the universities however The Deputy Principal stated that there is a firm belief that RNN can develop a progression route from our Worksop campus, develop core skills at levels 2 & 3 to allow for progression routes, courses such as a foundation degree in health and care, apprenticeships in care practitioner etc. Overall it offers a lot of potential for RNN in Worksop. There is no available information yet regarding the service fee for using the building however the risk should be noted in terms of competition from other HE providers in the area. Renovation work is due to start in December for completion by March 22. The Deputy Principal stated she is seeking an agreement in principle at this stage.

CB stated that she felt RNN have to be involved in discussions however lessons needed to be learned regarding the difficulties encountered in collaborative partnerships as seen with the Retford Post 16 centre; that said by March 2022 RNN's provision should be so robust that external parties will not be in a position to compete.

The Chair agreed and stated it was very important for progression routes as well as those additional qualifications at both higher and lower levels. In addition, linking into employer routes and the wider agenda on employment is equally important. The Deputy Principal stated that it would provide an opportunity for access to HE provision to grow across the group.

Resolved: Governors agreed to give an agreement in principle to enter into a collaboration with

Bassetlaw District Council to deliver education and training from the Bridge Court Centre.

13 Risk Report

The Deputy Principal gave a verbal update which included the previously mentioned risks regarding timely achievement rates and MLP for apprenticeships. Currently achievements are being pulled together and there are some management issues surrounding staffing. There are curriculum concerns regarding engineering, visual arts and construction at Rotherham, as well as electrical at North Notts. Although land-based courses at Dearne Valley were a risk, early indications are positive. The department is settling well with all students now moved however for the time being it is still categorised as a risk. There are risks regarding digital overload with the additional reliance upon technology for the blended learning approach. An audit is currently being conducted at tutor level to identify which staff need the most urgent support in terms of blended learning. There are some risks being impacted by timescales and the extraordinary circumstances currently being experienced

14 English and Maths Delivery 20/21

The English & Maths Curriculum Innovation Manager introduced the paper circulated about the new maths and English blended learning model which includes a highly personalised learning approach to assess gaps in knowledge that will inform the learner's individual learning plan (ILP). The intent is to deliver a blended curriculum through a variety of personalised learning activities based in large bespoke MEZos (Maths and English Zones) on each campus. This style of curriculum is intended to increase engagement, encourage and support independence and improve knowledge, skills and behaviours.

The new Maths and English blended curriculum model is in place, with different learning activities rotated during a session including whole group teaching, mastery sessions and independent learning both online and paper based.

It should be acknowledged that whilst the intent of the new model is to encourage learners to be independent, for some learners the development of these behaviours may take longer and the model is designed to be used flexibly to ensure the needs are met for each learner.

The Chair noted the infancy of the new model and queried how long it has been in place and when and how its expected impact can be measured. The English & Maths Curriculum Innovation Manager confirmed it started on 1st September and checkpoints have been put in place to assess impact along the way with three 'deep dives' by the quality team scheduled for before Christmas. In addition, learner voice will be key in feeding back on the success of the model. It is not being treated as a one size fits all and recognition is being given to the varying needs of learners along with support for tutors.

The Deputy Principal stated that this has been a collaboration with English and maths department and there has been a body of work completed to support staff development in the delivery of this new 'bold' programme.

15 Safeguarding, Prevent, and E&D – Exceptions Report

The AP for Student Support & Safeguarding stated that in addition to the paper circulated she wanted to reassure the committee and wider board that safeguarding is effective and that learners feel safe as well as learners being supported around their well-being. The measures taken during the lockdown have been included in the report especially in terms of mental health and well-being such as the purchasing of access to 'Whitewall' in addition to other software to protect students. Key areas remain to be mental health as well as the others identified in the report. Work is continuing on action plans, PREVENT, as well as continuously sharing information

regarding risk with staff, students and now with parents via a parent newsletter; there are lots of different communication methods being employed in order to provide information and support. The AP for Student Support & Safeguarding asked if governors could please ensure they complete the training on keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) that has been circulated via email from MetaCompliance.

Action: Director of Governance to ensure governors complete the KCSIE training as requested.

CB informed the committee of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire health watch which stated that self-harming was increasing within Bassetlaw which has been particularly high during the pandemic. CB stated that whilst this has been identified within the report for students there isn't a support network for parents and feels this is something that needs to be addressed quickly. The AP for Student Support & Safeguarding stated that Laura Reid who is the Head of Student Support was focussing on matters such as this and that this is definitely something she can work on moving forward. CB stated the urgent need for this to be addressed in Bassetlaw due to the lack of provisions currently available.

Action: The AP for Student Support & Safeguarding to speak with Laura Reid regarding issues relating to self harming and in particular within Bassetlaw.

The CEO queried the issues for young carers and in particular under achievement. The AP for Student Support & Safeguarding said it wasn't possible at this stage to comment on this as it is difficult to identify young carers and so they are not always visible early on. Again, this is something that Laura Reid is working on across all the campuses.

RB stated that training was taking place with progress tutors regarding the sensitivities and approach need for young carers and looked after children to ensure they feel confident in working with these students.

The Chair asked what communication is available to notify students of the support available to them. The AP for Student Support & Safeguarding confirmed that there are various means such as the student portal which has different section to sign post, progress tutors also deliver communication, promotions through the portal and posters around college and other specialist staff will promote the services available. Its also about staff being aware that certain behaviours could be an indication of underlying issues.

The Deputy Principal asked whether there is a targeted campaign for carers or care leavers to raise awareness of the support available and to promote the various channels available. The AP for Student Support & Safeguarding stated that the June Bacon, Designated Lead, has a separate section on the student portal to promote this area. The AP for Student Support & Safeguarding stated she would investigate this further and report back.

16 Any other items of urgent business

None.

17 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 18th November 2020 at 5pm.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

Signed _____ Chair

Date _____