

Meeting/Committee	Quality & Standards Committee
Date of meeting	10 th March 2021

1 Declarations of Interest and Eligibility

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

2 Welcome, introduction and apologies

Attendees:

Jenny Worsdale (Chair)	Governor
Veronica Bruce-McCoy	Governor
Mirella Barnes	Governor
Katie Curtis	Governor (staff)
Lindsey Littlewood	Governor (staff)
Jason Austin	Governor (Principal & CEO)

In attendance:

Tracey Mace-Akroyd	Deputy CEO/Principal
Virginia Parkes	Director of Governance
Claire Godfrey	Assistant Principal
Cheryl Martin	Assistant Principal
Angela Bates	Assistant Principal
Lisa Wilson	Director of Apprenticeships
Sally Steadman	Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment
Rebecca Blackburn	Head of Quality and Learner Experience
Leanne Adams	Contracts Manager
Andrew Birch	Head of Higher Education

Apologies for absence:

Heather Barnes
Catherine Burn

3 Minutes of the Q&S Committee meeting held on the 10th January 2021

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held 20th January 2021 were agreed as true and accurate record.

3.1 Matters Arising

None.

4 Action Progress Report

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

5 COVID-19 Update

In addition to the report circulated the DCEO/Principal gave an overview of the current status relating to COVID-19 and in particular the immediate situation of bringing learners back into college for face-to-face learning. Reference was drawn to key points raised in the report regarding the varying approaches being taken to the different student groups across the organisation in line with government guidance.

The Chair enquired as to how the first week back has gone and it was noted that overall students are very pleased to be back in. Some students needed reminding about the health and safety procedures which need to be followed such as the need for face coverings however it was noted that when challenged students were quick to comply.

CG gave an overview of the situation at the Rotherham campus and noted:

- Good attendance especially in health and social care, childcare and computing
- Positive attendance rates especially from learners who were seen as at risk due to low engagement rates during lockdown
- High levels of testing taking place during the week

CM gave an overview of Dearne Valley and stated it was a similar picture to the Rotherham campus however noted the high levels of positive behaviour and attitudes.

AB stated the situation was the same at North Notts and stated students are very pleased to be back in college. She noted that the health and well-being team are revisiting those who are exempt from wearing face coverings to update their details and confirm their situation with regards to valid exemption.

It was noted by all curriculum leaders that the first week back in college had been used as a time for tutors to get to know their students in person again despite remaining engaged throughout the lockdown period. They are determining the gaps and working on plans for catch up sessions where needed.

The Chair noted it was very positive to hear and pleasing to hear that students were coming back into college this week in large numbers.

6 Curriculum Performance Report

CG gave a brief overview of the curriculum performance report and explained that due to the pandemic the qualification achievement rates (QAR) will not be published in 2021. Despite the QAR not being published externally they are used as a formal measure by Ofsted.

In order to benchmark the Group against in-year retention and pass rates it is possible to use the MiDES Report (19/20) however this does not use achievement as a measure. The MiDES report, published by the RCU and AoC, allows colleges to upload their anonymised data (ILR) throughout the year in order to be used as benchmark for other colleges. CG stated that the data shows inconsistencies with performance across age groups, levels and the various measures. The highlights include:

- For ages 16-18 overall retention was in line with that of other colleges. For level 1 this was slightly below the average (-0.6%), level 2 in line with the average and above the average for level 3 (+0.7%)
- The pass rate for 16-18 was 0.9% behind that of other colleges identifying that although we kept students enrolled until the end of the course, fewer learners achieved compared to the national picture. Level 1 pass rate is 2.6% behind the average, which includes functional skills. This is an area that demonstrated too many students stay for the

duration of the course but then fail the course. The level 3 pass rate is 2.2% behind the average.

- Retention for 19+ students was below that of other Colleges by 1.5%. At entry level the RNN group was slightly above the average (+0.3%). The highest number of enrolments were at level 1 and level 2 and retention was below the average by 2.8% and 1.8%. Throughout 2019/20 low retention on distance learning was reported, and this is one of the contributing factors to low retention. At level 3 and 4 the Group outperforms the average.
- The pass rate for 19+ was 3.4% above that of other colleges. Pass rates at all levels exceed the GFE average.

MB stated that it would be interesting to compare this year given the differences that have been experienced. CG stated that as there will be no 19/20 data published the MiDES will provide the college with something to benchmark against, which the Chair noted was important as it is positive to look externally at what is going on in the sector.

GC also gave an overview of the in-year curriculum performance report and noted the headlines as:

- Headline retention is positive and 0.9% above the same period as last year
- Attendance, currently at 82.73%, is lower than other years and of concern especially in the largest curriculum areas of construction where engagement during lockdown has been challenging
- Punctuality is very strong at 99% but it is acknowledged that the focus has been on engagement rather than attendance with digital delivery allowing students to access learning at other times
- Recruitment, despite there being an increase on the figures reported in January with 40 new learners as part of the reengagement strategy, is still under the target of 3088 by 187 learners. This presents a risk to the Group resulting in a clawback in funding during 2021/22
- Prediction that the Group will deliver 80% of the Adult Skills Budget allocation due to reduced levels of enrolments during the pandemic. A review is currently taking place by the ESFA for 2020/21 to determine the level that they will accept for delivery, with a decision expected by April 2021.

The Chair queried when notification was given last year from the ESFA regarding clawback last year. The CEO stated that this was around May time last year but hoping for a quicker response this year. TMA confirmed that current delivery for AEB is approximately 75-76% with a hope of trying to push this closer to 80% with the option of online learning being used.

The chair noted the positive figures around retention.

CG sought clarification around the reporting and breakdowns and their usefulness in providing governors with detailed data relating to in year performance. All agreed that it is useful to see the numbers and in particular the breakdown across the curriculum areas and campuses.

7 Teaching & Learning Assessment Processes

CM gave a brief overview of the report circulated and noted the key points to highlight, stating that:

- The quality of education for most learners is good with 2/3 making good progress
- Plans in place to rapidly improve the quality of education in construction
- Quality arrangements such as deep dives have been identified as low risk during the internal audit
- Effectively supporting learners re digital poverty
- Compliance with awarding organisations is good and where it isn't good there is intervention and support in place

The Director of Governance submitted questions on behalf of HB in her absence. A query regarding what other quality assurance processes were being used in addition to deep dives. CM gave an overview of the process relating to deep dives. The DCEO/principal gave further information relating to the recent internal audit and the fact that this is carried out by an external organisation. She gave further detail regarding other QA processes are used such as learning walks, progress boards, surveys, quality and operation review meetings, business performance reviews. TMA gave assurance that it would not have been possible to achieve 'reasonable progress' during the last monitoring visit without there being sound quality assurance process in place.

VMc queried whether the quality assurance framework was something that was developed internally or something that is external. The DCEO/principal said that some of the tools used were internal and following a review after the last inspection, some tools were highlighted as not being effective. The education inspection framework is now used in conjunction with what works. This is resulting in positive results from the internal audits and the recent monitoring visit where they reviewed deep dive reports and the action taking place as a result of these.

VMc queried whether this is compared to other colleges and their quality assurance processes and framework. The DCEO/principal confirmed this is happening through different networks that senior leaders were involved with.

A further query was raised on HB's behalf regarding what needs to improve and the fact there is a focus on written feedback but queried what other feedback is being used. CM stated that verbal feedback was strong both digitally and face-to-face and particularly during practical sessions. She noted it was the quality of written feedback and the quality of feedforward that needed attention. Finally, there was a query regarding blended learning the figures relating to this as there was only a percentage increase. It was noted that moving forward the start figures and end figures would be helpful to governors to aid their understanding.

Progress against the QIP

CM stated that in addition to the report circulated the four associated QIP documents were also included for information. Attention was drawn to the key points to note:

- Impact of activity of learners
- QIPs were quickly updated to reflect the points that were raised by the monitoring visit
- Good progress in six of the areas in relation to impact on learners
- Reasonable progress is being made in other areas save for construction

VMc asked what actions are being taken to address the issues in construction. CM stated that action is already underway and was prior to the monitoring visits. Deep dives and learning walks had already identified issues and have resulted in the monitoring of tutor performance. It was noted that feedback from students is positive regarding the course however the issues lie around progress. There are staffing performance issues which have resulted in bespoke CPD programmes and intensive CPD package. In addition, the quality team have been supporting performance and have actually delivered the lesson online for tutors to observe. It was noted that whilst the construction department is not where it needs to be there is support and action in place to improve this and a willingness to tackle underperformance where needed.

The Chair asked about the action plan within the QIP and those actions not yet started being shown as green or orange and queried what this actually means. It was clarified that some actions that can't yet take place due to where they are in the academic year are noted as not yet having an impact and only those that can will be measured will be shown as making an impact.

The chair informed members that conversations had taken place since the last meeting regarding a summary for deep dives and what would be helpful for governors to see such as the good, what needs addressing, action plans, risks etc.

Action: Include deep dive summaries on the agenda for next meeting for construction and electrical and any other key areas of risk/notable good practice.

8 Update on Exams/Assessment Plans

CM gave an update on exams which have been cancelled for the majority of qualifications. A national consultation on the plans for exams and assessment took place and had an overwhelming response, especially from students. The findings and recommendations were published on 25th February and has been communicated widely to staff and student across the Group noting the difference to the plans put in place last year. Those courses resulting in a licence to practice such as childcare, construction, hairdressing continue as business as usual as the end competency test still needs to take place in order for students to achieve. Functional skills assessments will also still go ahead as normal as will City and Guild qualifications.

9 Missed Lessons – Tracking & Reporting

DCEO/principal gave a verbal update about the collective tracking and reporting that is used across the group in addition to the bespoke methods used by campus.

GC stated that during lockdown it has been less around attendance but more about engagement. Recorded lessons have meant students can attend and catch up.

CM stated that from an English & Maths perspective 15 catch up coaches had been appointed from the available COVID catch up funding who are working with learners to support them. Tutors are working to understand the barriers to learning.

AB added that they are focusing on practical lessons and how they can deliver additional sessions to get students through as well as putting interventions in place to reengage any students who are disengaged.

The DCEO/principal added that for weekly tracking and reporting the usual practice if they are missing they are contacted by telephone. AB stated that text messaging and emails are also used.

10 Apprenticeships Update

The DCEO/principal stated that the previous Director of Apprenticeships has now left the organisation and the RB will be taking up the post formally from 1st April. She gave a brief summary noting it had been discussed in detail at the extraordinary board meeting held earlier in the week. In particular it was noted about the movement in apprenticeship provision from the last inspection but it is still graded as RI. Acknowledged that it isn't yet good but progress is being made and that engineering, electrical and construction continues to be an issue. There is a prediction within the report which has been shared with the ESFA that overall achievement will remain at 70%. Learners identified on the WBL tracker have been identified as going to pass but dependent on the assessments and functional skills exam results. There are several known risks which are being addressed however apprenticeship provision is moving in the right direction.

RB stated that she is currently completing handover and states that so far it looking very promising and she is looking forward to updating governors at the next meeting.

MP queried about the apprentices made redundant and whether this impacts on figures and how do we support them. The DCEO/principal stated that the Group works quite closely with the

work force development team to consider if there are opportunities for them to be transferred. Any breaks in learning or assessment as a result of COVID are being monitored weekly through a tracker which includes the interaction with the work-based learning team. This is personally reviewed by the DCEO/principal who also identifies those at risk and the work being done support. There are some positives in that some classroom-based learners are moving across to apprenticeships in retail.

CM drew reference to the RNN QIP (item 7.3) reports on the impact on the Group's apprentices during the pandemic and comparisons to the national picture. This can be found in App. 5.

The Chair queried that wording around issues being resolved and the numbers relating to different areas and how they are performing, stating that again adding in the numbers and curriculum areas allows for greater scrutiny over the apprenticeship provision.

VMc stated the importance of getting control of the issues in engineering, construction and electrical and to be able to demonstrate this in a quantifiable way within the reports.

Action: The DCEO/Principal to discuss with RB report writing which clearly demonstrates the progress in a quantifiable way.

11 Higher Education Update

AB gave an overview of the key issues highlighted within the report and noted in particular that:

- All HE provision has followed the DfE guidance with regards to being 100% online for teaching. This has coincided with the January assessment period. Feedback on the whole has been positive.
- Interventions have been put in place to address digital poverty and the HE hardship fund. An additional grant has been received from OfS to support students.
- 'Safety Net' guidance received from validating universities and has been shared with staff and students
- Retention rates, both in-year and cumulative, remain high and improved on the year previous
- Retention rates across minority groups are on a par with the overall retention nationally however there is a dip in retention rates for BAME students

MP asked whether case study material of achievement and student destinations is being captured such as success stories, high profile jobs etc. AB confirmed that the Group has a number of good case studies which are used by the marketing team. There is an alumni portfolio which has been used and continues to be used.

The DCEO/Principal queried whether it would be useful for governors to see case studies included with the reports coming to this committee each term. It was noted that it would be useful to be updated as and when there was something to be reported on. MP stated that it builds on the narrative from the strategy day and the Group's position within the local area. SS stated it could be added to the recruitment report as an appendix looking at the operation activity. The Chair noted that for those students who are still quite young it would be also worth sharing the detail with the school they came from for their own information.

Action: SS to add destinations to the recruitment report to include operational activity and where relevant to feed the detail back to schools.

12 Learner Recruitment for 2021/22

SS gave an overview of learner recruitment and the provided summary report. In particular attention was drawn to:

- Strong recruitment in FE and HE, it is an unusual year to compare against but the data is made available as a measure
- Apprenticeship recruitment is down which is a result of meeting compliance internally and contracting issues, there have also been COVID related issues affecting numbers too
- Successful round of open events this year.

MP enquired about the success of the TV advert. SS said it was difficult to measure due to not being able to get analysis from Sky. The hit rate was successful which suggests that it was the right thing to do. ITV Hub has been used over the new year campaign. Overall there is an increase of 400 more applications. Considerations are been given to digital marketing over outside marketing and the cost benefits.

VMc enquired as to how well the Group is at attracting students outside of area. SS stated that data wasn't currently available for this however she noted that a new school liaison officer has been recruited to assist with working with new schools. SS stated that it would be possible to complete an analysis of applications by postcode and that this could be brought to the next meeting for consideration.

Action: SS to include a postcode analysis within the recruitment report for the next meeting.

MP asked whether the Group employed any apprentices itself and SS confirmed this happened across the group. There is a specific question on the staff request form as to whether the position could be an apprenticeship. It was also confirmed that the Group is a levy payer.

13 Safeguarding, Prevent and E&D

AB updated the group on the current situation regarding safeguarding across the Group, the headlines noted are:

- There are no discernible differences between the groups of learners in the protected characteristics categories. Learners signposted to Safeguarding and Wellbeing teams match the demographics of learners within the Group.
- Retention for learners identified as vulnerable is above college level at 97.1% demonstrating that support is effective. Whilst overall attendance is a concern at 75.42% learners are making good progress.
- To further enhance the checking of student knowledge and ability to articulate local context risk, the 10-minute takeover activities have been reviewed and will be repeated in March.
- Bespoke County Line Training developed to support in raising awareness of a national concern has been added to the staff training cycle.

It was also noted that immediately preceding this meeting that governors had been given a demonstration of the TogetherAll system which governors were very impressed by.

MP enquired whether the number of 93 learners that have been referred is a high number and wondered how this compared with other colleges. AB stated that there was no formal benchmark across other colleges however the Group is part of a network. It was noted that when considering the student population across the Group the percentage rate is actually quite low. The Chair commented on her experience from another college where their referral figures are much higher. AB stated that there was a training need internally as to what was a safeguarding vs welfare need/referral. The TogetherAll system was aiding with identifying mental health needs. The CEO stated that the feedback he is receiving from the principal's group is that referrals are very high externally and there is concern about the resource required to support this. It was noted that 99% learners stated that they feel safe.

Action: AB to report back on figures from other colleges on safeguarding referrals.

14 Risk including Ofsted Feedback

The DCEO/Principal stated that the risks have been summarised in the report circulated. The points to note are that the current focus is around:

- The quality of education and alignment of the curriculum to the skills that learners need to be successful remains a concern in curriculum areas such as construction, engineering and sectors hit hard by the pandemic (hair & beauty, hospitality, creative arts).
- Support for learners who return to face to face teaching from 8 March
- Learners that have recently withdrawn from their programme or do not return on the 8th March must be contacted to ascertain any barriers to resuming their education.
- Ofsted’s PMV inspection identified several priorities for action by leaders and those responsible for governance which need to be closely monitored
- Failure to achieve an Ofsted ‘Good’ grade for Overall effectiveness prevents the Group from participating or receiving financial funding for a large number of national education initiatives. These include Institute of Technologies (IoTs), T levels etc.
- Lack of participation means that the Group is not a key player in the region’s response to the White paper nor is a strategic influencer in the development of priority skills for our local residents and communities.

15 Any other items of urgent business

None.

13 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 12th May 2020 at 5pm.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm

Signed _____ Chairperson

Date _____