

Meeting/Committee	Quality & Standards Committee
Date of meeting	20 th January 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
Heather Barnett	Governor
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:

Mirella Barnes
Katie Curtis

3 Minutes of the Q&S Committee meeting held on the 18th November 2020

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held 18th November 2020 were agreed as true and accurate record.

3.1 Matters Arising

Item 6 - it was noted that several apprentices had lost their position due to COVID-19 and that support was being put in place to help find alternative employment for those affected. The success of this to date was queried. It was confirmed that places have been found some but not all apprentices. Those who have gone beyond the 75 days have continued to be supported. Some apprentices have managed to find alternative employment elsewhere but are still able to complete their apprenticeships.

Item 7 – The chair raised a query relating to the 193 withdrawals and the research commissioned from J2 Research and whether there is any feedback available at this time or when we can expect to review. It was confirmed that 280 students were contacted and from this four have been reengaged. In addition to the work being carried out by J2 Research there is an internal reengagement team working with those students who have withdrawn to see if they can be supported in returning to college. Three cohorts at Rotherham and one cohort at North Notts have just commenced a career progression pathway course expected to run until February.

Action: Further update and analysis on the withdrawals and progression pathway course to be added to the agenda for the meeting in March.

4 Action Progress Report

It was noted that:

Item 1 – completed

Item 2 – completed

Item 3 – Date required

Item 4 – meeting scheduled to discuss

Item 5 – ongoing

Item 6 – Not applicable at the moment, possibly look to revisit in the future

Items 7 – ongoing

Item 8 – completed, reporting continues through safeguarding

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

5 Higher Education Self Evaluation Document (SED)

The head of higher education (HE) gave a brief overview of the self-evaluation document and drew reference to 5 key areas:

- The rapid response to COVID-19
- Effective use of industry links
- Strong engagement opportunities for students and employers
- Widening access to HE across Rotherham and Bassetlaw
- Effective monitoring of HE data, in particular retention relating to minority and disaggregated groups

The head of higher education stated that the Office for Students (OfS) expects that the SED is approved by governors.

Governor Response

The chair commented that the report reads very well. She highlighted the decrease noted to levels 4 & 5 and queried whether this would have an impact on recruitment to level 6 and 7. The head of HE stated this could have an impact but with the increase retention showing this academic year there is an expectation this will be counteracted in addition to there being new curriculum areas being made available and the expansion of health and social care to other campuses.

The chair noted that the retention data is displayed in percentages but this doesn't clearly identify the areas in size of student numbers.

Action: Head of HE to ensure that student figures are expanded to show actual numbers as well as percentages.

The chair asked about the numbers of students who actually responded to the student questionnaire as it had been noted within the report that the sample size wasn't big enough to

feed into the national NSS figures. The head of HE stated that the response had been 40% and 50% was needed. It was noted that it is only open to final year students. The chair stated it was noted that the areas which didn't perform well however these were areas that are currently or have been closed such as the library. It was stated that there has been investment in response to the questionnaire. The head of HE confirmed that close monitoring and communication is taking place to ensure that the response rate is over the 50% threshold this year. Currently the responses received are up on this time last year already.

The chair queried what is being done to encourage better retention across BAME students. The head of HE stated the student achievement coach is working with identified students to try and encourage them. It was noted that a grant of £13,000 has been received from OfS which can be used to alleviate hardship amongst students.

Finally, the chair asked how many care leavers there are which was confirmed as four students, all of whom completed their courses successfully.

TMA stated that she wanted to give assurance that whilst the response rate wasn't high enough to be included within the national data it is still able to be used across the website for marketing and communication purposes.

LL queried what the actual year on year increase is on the target set for this year of 580 HE starts and what the marketing strategies for this will be. The head of HE stated this is an additional 20 students and the stay local, study local marketing strategy is being used in addition to increasing where HE programmes are being delivered. The head of marketing stated that a more targeted approach to marketing is taking place, removing the emphasis from the UCAS deadline and placing it more on staying local.

LL queried whether there is any evidence on in year retention in business studies and whether strategies employed are having an impact. The head of HE confirmed there are improvements and this has been further aided by a better recruitment process and stringent information and guidance (IAG)

Agreed: the committee agreed to recommend to the board that the HE SED be approved.

6 Business Performance Reviews

TMA gave an overview of the completed business performance reviews and associated reports and drew reference to several key areas:

Internal audit review considered the support needed for blended learning across the organisation which included identifying staff who needed intensive support from the quality team.

Campus managers and their team have unique USPs for the campus – this is ongoing work which commenced with the visioning day and is continuing.

Areas showing concern are continuing to have intervention such as engineering, health and beauty, construction and land base students who moved from the Dinnington campus. These impacting factors relate to staff absences, recruitment difficulties and culture issues within teams.

Withdrawals increased in the autumn term. Following a data cleanses exercise it was possible to see the number of students who had been lost and those who were still in place. This information was made available following the business performance reviews and therefore the data wasn't available for assessment during that process. This will be made available to the committee during the next meeting. The information has formed part of the reengagement work

and consideration had been given to bringing students back into college for vocational programme however the latest lockdown stopped this from happening.

There are number of cross college actions to complete which were identified as:

- Ensure all actions from meetings 1 and 2 are completed (Exec/SLT)
- Finalise staff utilisation for accurate financial forecasting (ED: Finance)
- The recruitment of specific sector roles (ED: HR)
- Review the 'deep dive' judgements relating to the use of 'learners can say...' and provide further training for the Quality Team (DCEO)
- Review the accuracy and use of 'Progression and Suitability boards' that are conducted by curriculum managers and their teams (assistant principals)
- Continue to monitor the effectiveness and engagement of learners in the English and maths model during the COVID restrictions (Head of estates & management and assistance principals)

Governor Response

CB queried whether the land-based students referred to are higher needs or not. TMA confirmed that these students are not. She confirmed that the issues relate to staffing and this is being closely monitor.

The chair queried what intervention was in place for those students who declined support. AB stated that there was a system in place to place a flag on the system and to revisit throughout the year. This information is cascaded down to staff too.

The chair also asked what is being done to engage those identified as NEETs and who, externally, are RNN working with to engage them. TMA stated that there is a lot of work taking place with external groups such as the local authorities, group streams such as 16-24, regional groups, job centre plus and other relevant groups. Where students struggle on one of our programmes we work with other providers to try and support them to avoid them from becoming NEET. The ESFA have given permission for small practical groups to come onto campus to try and avoid their disengagement.

JW queried whether or not it would be useful for there to be a summary document regarding deep dives which allows governors to understand the good, the areas of action and any dates set for review with targets. Less detail and more precise analysis.

Action: TMA & Dir of Gov to consider how and when reporting on deep dives should be done.

HB raised whether or not this could be factored into link governors.

The chair noted the sensitive information contained within the reports and ask that consideration be given to the information coming to governors. Whilst it is noted that this information is relevant to staff during the business review process it may not be necessary for governors.

The chair noted the financial reporting relating to the withdrawal of students and recruitment. The chair sought clarification that this was being fed into the finance committee and that the risks owing to this were being monitored. The CEO confirmed that this is the case and that the executive work closely and meet frequently to monitor the links and risks across curriculum and finance.

7 Curriculum Performance Report

CG gave an overview of the curriculum performance report and stated the financial impact will be reported to the finance committee also. The key areas to note are:

- The Group has under recruited learners funded through EFA funding. The planned headcount target was 3088 and currently this is under target by 227 learners. The Group is also under allocation of 3002 by 141 learners. This will reduce our funding in 2021/22, which is a risk to the Group.
- Retention for young people is below this time last year by 3%. This is due to more learners leaving programmes due to various reasons, including COVID related circumstances. We also had many learners who were continued from 2019/20 and failed to return. These has had a significant impact of the group's retention figure.
- Adult recruitment is in line with the plan for this period in the year. Retention for adults is good and in line with last year at the same period.
- Enrolments to HE programmes are in line with our internal target. In year retention is good at 98%. Attendance is high at this point in the year, standing at 91.15%. This compares favourably with the last academic year, with final attendance being 87.81%.
- At the end of period 4, Overall Achievement Rates (OAR) on Apprenticeship programmes resulted in positive improvement of 5.2% on the 19/20 academic year. Retention rates are good at 84% this is currently 18.9% above NARTS and 2.89% higher than RNN performance in the same period 19/20. Timely Achievement Rates (TARs) are still poor at 8.81%, this is also below outcomes for 19/20.

Governor Response

The Chair asked whether or not there was an opportunity to deliver short online courses for Adults. CG said there are a number of distance learners who do already access short courses this way but ongoing conversations with employers are taking place and consideration was being given to what else can be offered in addition to the current offer both online and paper based. CM stated that a cohort of English and maths functional skills is being run online from February and close work is being completed with marketing to promote these courses.

HB queried about returners who were due to be coming back who didn't and asked whether the reengagement programme was also target these learners in addition to NEET learners. CG stated there were a number of learners last year who didn't complete due to not being able to complete their practical assessments. In addition, there were a number of functional skills students who were due to return on other study programmes and then they didn't return which impacted on retention. Efforts have been made to contact and discuss various options for those learners. CG noted that this has been relatively successful with c. 35-40 learners reengaged. These will be included within the EFA headcount which will assist with the lag funding in the future.

8 Safeguarding, Prevent and E&D

AB highlighted the report and stated the purpose was to assure governors that safeguarding remains effective and that students have reported that they feel safe and particularly in feeling safe online. AB drew attention to some of the changes which have been taking place such as the 10 minute take overs which considers the level of student understanding of safeguarding, PREVENT and safeguarding. The output has shown a need for further training and development. This will be revisited in March.

AB gave an update on the data available from the TogetherAll system. Currently there are 318 staff and students across the group who are registered, 149 courses have been completed and 99 self-assessments also completed.

AB reminded governors about the recent signing up to the local Operation Encompass with the police which supports students who are witness to domestic violence at home. Currently this has identified 14 student some of whom have witnessed it on one or more occasion. Support is being given in college and remotely via the safeguarding team. Training (level 3) is also being given to curriculum managers to support their understanding regarding internal referring. Bespoke county lines training is also being rolled out across the Group.

Governor Response

CB noted that there has been an increase in the Bassetlaw region on eating disorders and queried what we are able to do to identify and support this during the current pandemic. AB stated that this is something that staff are trained to be aware of ordinarily however acknowledge that it was made difficult to spot when staff and students are only able to meet online. AB stated that she would give this some thought and speak to colleagues in safeguarding to ensure that those needing support do not get missed. She reassured governors that they had a lot of knowledge and understanding amongst the team which would be shared widely.

Action: CB to report back following consideration and conversations relating to the identification of eating disorders.

9 COVID-19 Impact on the Quality Provision

TMA updated governors on the DfE requirement for there to be a statement on the college websites regarding blended learning and included a copy of the wording with the circulated report. TMA stated that it sets out clearly what is to be expected and stated that it is working as emails have been received in response.

Governor Response

HB enquired as to what strategies will be in place to support level 1 and vulnerable learners once they are back on site, especially those who have missed so much of the practical learning. TMA responded by saying that those identified as vulnerable at level 1 are coming back on campus to allow them to work securely in quiet space. The ESFA have recently granted approval for those learners who are identified as becoming NEET to come back into college one day a week to keep them engaged. This is particularly key in construction. Those needing to complete practical assessments will be able to complete all of the theory now and the practical later. HB queried whether this would work as the practical learning was needed alongside the theory. TMA acknowledged the point and stated that these difficulties are being presented to colleges across the country. TMA informed governors of certain strategies they were using such as barbering heads have been purchased for students and these can be used whilst live streaming lessons to students. CM stated that in health and social care they have put together packs of products which learners could then film themselves using. In horticulture the tutor has filmed himself outside to aid his teaching and at Rotherham in hospitality the catering department have excelled themselves in the inventive use of recording food preparation. CM stated that managers have been very pleasantly surprised as to how tutors have rose to challenge. Concern however is given to areas such as construction and engineering where it isn't as easy to adapt practical delivery. It was noted by AB however that a lot of emphasis was placed on practical delivery at the start of the autumn term in the event of there being another national lockdown. There is still a lot of practical delivery to do but at this stage enough has been done.

The CEO added that a lot of students have been involved in social action projects which has been positive for both the learners and community and this work has been able to continue over the lockdown in some areas.

10 Digital Poverty

RB drew attention to the report circulated and highlighted the following key areas to note:

- Effective distribution of digital resources is supporting large numbers of learners to access blended and remote learning – this has been increased as a result of national lockdown.
- Good planning of collection processes has supported learners to make appointments and collect equipment in a COVID-safe environment.

- Successful collaboration between business support and curriculum teams is improving learner engagement with the booking of collection appointments and keeping central access requests up to date.
- An ever-changing environment regarding lockdown restrictions impacts on the circumstances of learners and as a result the number and type of digital access requests received. As a result, management rely on 'in the moment' forecasts to make decisions regarding further spend.
- The impact of cost / investment in digital resources is growing and support is required in the FE Sector to address this.
- Teams need to focus on the short and longer-term position regarding digital resources, ensuring that orders can be placed timely and loaned equipment is returned for re-issue.

Governor Response

The chair sought clarification as to the number of laptops purchased which RB confirmed was 600 based on a prediction of learner need. The CEO added that the laptops have been leased and therefore are covered for breakdown etc.

11 Risk

TMA gave a verbal update on known risks and highlighted five risks to note:

- Blended delivery – risks relating to retention owing to digital fatigue
- Staff and student wellbeing – greater need to keep staff and students buoyant through clear communication during the pandemic
- Monitoring student progress – ensure this is captured accurately over the spring term to allow rapid response to be implemented considering the gaps and differences in knowledge
- Assessment and exams – the uncertainty and being able to respond effectively
- Ofsted – need a monitoring visit to demonstrate the progress made

Governor Response

The chair asked whether or not finance should be seen as a risk too. TMA stated that this is a risk but that this is covered by the finance committee. It was noted that retention places a risk on the finances of the college. TMA stated that this is another reason the Ofsted visit is needed as this is impacting on being able to move forward and apply for certain bids which has a financial impact. The chair noted that this must be affecting many colleges across the college and putting everything on hold due to waiting for Ofsted and wondered if this could be raised somewhere. The CEO stated that this has been raised with the ESFA as it is impacting on T-Level delivery and IoT delivery. Feedback to date is that the DfE have no plans to change this guidance.

12 Any other items of urgent business

None.

17 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 10th March 2020 at 5pm.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm

Signed _____ Chairperson

Date _____