



**Minutes of the meeting of the Quality and Curriculum Committee on
Wednesday 28 April 2010 at 5.00pm in Room 3F099, York College**

Present: Alison Birkinshaw
Andrew Lindsay
Lynne Marston
Andy Mendus (Chair)

In Attendance: Richard Coultas, Quality Manager
Richard Hinde, Clerk to the Governing Body
Glyn Jones, Assistant Principal 16-19 A Level
Graeme Murdoch, Deputy Principal Quality Assurance & Support (DPQA&S)
Bob Saynor, Assistant Principal Lifelong Learning and HE
Clare Wareing, Assistant Principal 14 – 19 Vocational

The meeting started at 5.05pm.

Action

10.16 Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Kevin Deadman, David Maughan Brown and Louise Lawrence Crockford. There were no declarations of interest.

10.17 Minutes of Previous Meeting – 4 March 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2010 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

10.18 Matters Arising

a) Action Summary Sheet

The action summary sheet was considered and it was noted that all matters had been actioned or were in progress.

With regard to Information, Advice & Guidance, it was **agreed** that the Committee's responsibility for this should be included in its Terms of Reference. Twice-yearly reports on Information, Advice & Guidance should also be included in the Committee's work-plan for 2010/11. An update would be provided at the next meeting. It was also queried whether future reports could, where possible, include explanations with regards to fluctuations in the numbers of student applications.

Clerk

DPQA&S

b) Any Other Matters Arising

None.

10.19 College Portfolio Development Proposals 2010/11

The Assistant Principal 14-19 Vocational presented the report providing a summary of the current influences on the vocational, adult and higher education funding streams of the College, together with the key actions being taken to respond to local, regional and national priorities and the

portfolio developments to take forward in advance of 2010/11. The key areas covered included: Foundation Learning, Diplomas, and other significant 14-19 vocational changes; 19+ Adult Responsiveness; and Higher Education.

It was noted that failure of the College to match provision to agreed priority areas or to achieve targeted learner numbers and funding would have a significant impact on the College's financial health.

With regard to Foundation Learning, it was reported that 2009/10 had seen the first phase of the transition from the National Quality Framework (NQF) to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for the College's Foundation Learning provision, which was all Entry Level and Level 1 qualifications. The College had around 90 students working towards Foundation Learning provision, and it was explained that whilst this gave a better package for students, including better equipping them to progress, it did present challenges for the College. One particular issue was the nature of multiple enrolments to a collection of qualifications and the impact that a withdrawal of a student had on the College's retention figures. The College's data management was therefore a very significant issue.

It was further explained that it was unlikely that next year the College would be able to offer any of the Level 1 qualifications that it currently offered this year. It was noted that in September 2011, key stage 4 in schools would be subject to similar changes, and this in turn might provide future opportunities for collaborative learning.

It was noted that 2009/10 was the second year of the College delivering NEETs provision and this was again proving highly successful. It was acknowledged that this NEETs work would position the College well in relation to the impending increase in the compulsory participation age.

It was explained that 2010/11 would see Key Skills disappear to be replaced by Functional Skills. The College had reviewed its infrastructure in this regard and had just recruited to the new post of Team Leader. It was acknowledged that the transition from Key to Functional Skills was potentially high risk and would have to be managed carefully.

(It was agreed to interrupt this agenda item and take agenda item 8.1 out of order.)

10.20 Internal Reviews Update

a) Key and Functional Skills

This item was treated as confidential and a separate confidential minute produced.

10.19 College Portfolio Development Proposals 2010/11 (continued) (con)

The Assistant Principal Lifelong Learning and HE presented the remainder of the report on 19+ Adult Responsive and Higher Education.

It was reported that 87% of the College's Adult Responsive delivery was priority provision. The College had been notified that its allocation for 2010/11 was being cut by 25% (against 16% nationally) and this would therefore have a significant impact on even the College's priority provision. Letters of complaint from the College and Governors had not elicited any positive response. The College was currently looking at how it could continue to offer all its priority (and other) provision for which it wasn't funded, but it was acknowledged that it was likely that this would have to be at full cost.

Discussion took place about the potential impact on the College's adult art courses and it was acknowledged that this was a very competitive area of provision. The College would be producing a specific art school brochure, with references to these courses also being made in the College's main prospectus.

It was reported that the College had over-delivered on HE in 2009/10, because it had anticipated that the figures would be based on a two year spread, which had not been the case. The College had been informed that it had over-delivered by 24 full-time new undergraduate entrants, although an appeal was in the process of being submitted. This was partly based on the fact that the claw-back on the College was being based on the full national fee rate, regardless of what the College actually charged, and because no account appeared to have been taken of the fact that some students transferred to the College from Higher York. No new courses other than progression routes were proposed for 2010/11.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

10.21 AS Module Results (January 2010)

The Assistant Principal 16-19 A-Level presented the report and explained that this was the second year of delivery for the new specification AS exams and the first for the new A2s. Since nearly all of these A2 modules (apart from Maths) differed substantially in both content and size from previous years, it was not possible to make meaningful comparisons.

It was explained that in most subjects, the number of modules per AS had been reduced from 3 to 2, making it difficult for many courses to complete a module in time for examination in January. Consequently, fewer subjects than last year had examined their students in January.

Members considered the modular results for January 2010 that had been provided and the following key concerns were noted:

- AS Chemistry (CHEM1), whilst showing a modest improvement on last year, had still produced an unacceptable number of 'U' grades. Measures had been put in place for much of the academic year to address issues around delivery style and student achievement, and further initiatives were being taken to improve performance in June exams. In particular, a full-day revision conference was being held in-house for all Chemistry students on 4 May 2010. Students were also being directed to re-sit where appropriate, and were being supported with those re-sits.
- AS Economics (ECON1) showed a very significant fall from last year, with A-B grades falling from 53% to 15%, and A-E grades dropping from 94% to 73%. Copies of some students' scripts had been requested, in order to ensure that the tutor understood the reasons for under-performance. Fresh revision techniques were being employed, and Economics lessons had been observed by the Head of Studies. Economics would remain under close scrutiny as the June exams approached.
- Several subjects (including Geography and Religious Studies) had shown a small fall in achievement at A-E grades. Heads of Division were monitoring these subjects, and others, and where appropriate were using achievement hours to target support for individual students who were underperforming. Through the reporting system, which had just been completed, parents had been updated on students' progress and made aware of specific concerns.

The following positive issues were also noted:

- AS Law (G152) showed a very encouraging improvement on last year, which demonstrated the impact of a lot of hard work which had been put in by the team. Students needing extra support had been directed to the 'Law Plus' sessions, and there had been greater sharing of good practice, standardisation and student tracking.
- A2 Psychology (PSYA3), though not having a previous year to benchmark against, showed an excellent improvement on performance in June 2009, and again reflected a lot of hard work. The Team Leader, had facilitated a much tighter team with standardised assessment, shared resources and thorough exam preparation, including a revision conference.

It was then explained that at subject level, more detailed analysis was being carried out. In some cases, students' papers were being ordered and analysed and, in many cases, the awarding body provided a higher standard of feedback than had been available previously. Members then went on to consider, as an example, the feedback from the awarding body AQA ('eAQA') on the College's comparative performance in AS Physics.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

(Glyn Jones and Clare Wareing left the meeting at 6.15pm.)

10.22 Policies/ Strategies

a) Student Discipline (Policy and Procedure)

The Deputy Principal Quality Assurance & Support (QA&S) presented the report and explained that the Policy and Procedure had previously been approved by the Committee in April 2009 but that they had been revised in light of experience and were now being re-presented for approval. The key changes proposed to the Policy and Procedure were outlined and considered by Members. A number of minor amendments were then proposed to the Policy. It was also explained that any school pupil attending the College would not be subject to this Policy but to their own school's policy. The College's work-based students were, however, subject to this College Policy and Procedure.

DPQA&S

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to approve the College's Student Discipline Policy and Procedure.

b) Student Involvement Strategy Progress Report

The Quality Manager presented the report providing a summary of the outcomes from the College's Focus Groups held with part-time adult students, International students and HE students. All issues raised were being followed up in a variety of ways which were explained.

It was also explained that the disparate nature of the information gathered had identified that a more coordinated approach, across the range of users, needed to be implemented and this was being considered. Views of current full-time 16-18 year old students were collated via Focus Groups and student surveys, which had been reported to the Committee previously.

Discussion took place about the availability of benchmarking data and members felt that the College would have to have very good reason to deviate from the Framework for Excellence (FFE) surveys so that the benchmarking data in that regard could be utilised. It was ***agreed*** that the College should look at utilising the FFE surveys as more part of a more coherent, joined-up strategy. It was explained that the College was already looking at this issue, but also noted that the FFE surveys were anonymous and that the results could therefore be somewhat bland and not capable of detailed further analysis.

DPQA&S

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

10.23 Student Attendance and Retention to Date

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report on the current position regarding overall attendance and retention for 2009/2010 to date.

It was explained that the current attendance level was 86%, against a target level of attendance of 88%.

In relation to retention, 6 lines of provision were above target, 4 lines were below target, and 1 line was at target.

The area of most concern was adults doing Level 2 and 3 courses, and this was being investigated. No new trend was currently emerging with regard to withdrawals. It was noted that the College monitored attendance and retention every week, so was in a better position than in previous years to ascertain every reason behind a student withdrawing from their course.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

(Alison Birkinshaw left the meeting at 6.55pm.)

**10.20 Internal Reviews Update (continued)
(con)**

b) Skills For Life

This item was treated as confidential and a separate confidential minute produced.

c) Business and Professional

This item was treated as confidential and a separate confidential minute produced.

10.24 Observations of Teaching & Learning 2009/10

The Quality Manager presented the report and explained that 305 (75%) observations had been carried out at the time of producing the report, although that figure had now increased to more than 320 and it was likely that by the end of the year between 360 and 370 observations would have been carried out. Not all staff had been observed, whilst some staff had been observed twice (or more).

It was also reported that the College's approach to observing Teaching and Learning was under review, with a view to changing its approach for 2010/11. This would be with the aim of revising the rationale behind the OTL process and the conclusions that could be reliably drawn from the data gathered.

Members welcomed the data that had been provided but expressed disappointment that the 100% target had not been met. However, Members also acknowledged the improvement in observation levels

relating to part-timers, and welcomed the College's review of its approach to observing Teaching & Learning. It was noted that it would be for the Committee to approve any new policy in this regard.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

10.25 FfE Update and Inspection

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report updating on the current position (both nationally and with the College) in respect of Framework for Excellence (FfE) and Cycle 3 of the Ofsted Inspection Framework.

With FfE, it was a mixed picture for the College. It was likely that the outcome for student success would improve to 'Good', but that no grade would be given for learner views, as the sample size had not been achieved. The outcomes for learner destinations and employer views were currently unknown. For its Financial Health and Management under FfE, the College had been assessed as "outstanding".

With regard to Ofsted Inspection, Members considered a summary of notes gained at a recent Association of Colleges (AoC) meeting on 13 April 2010. It was acknowledged that the new approach seemed harsher than previously, and the emphasis on Equality & Diversity was considered further.

The Chair explained that he had discussed FfE with the Chair of the Governing Body and it was ***agreed*** that a report on each element of FfE should be presented to a relevant Governing Body sub-committee with specific responsibility for that element. Members considered the individual elements and identified the sub-committee's to which the individual reports should be presented.

DPQA&S

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

10.26 Any Other Business

None.

10.27 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 16 June 2010 at 5.00pm

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Signed (Chair):

Date:

Name: