



**Minutes of the meeting of the Quality and Curriculum Committee on
Wednesday 17 June 2009 at 5.00pm in Room 3F099, York College**

- Present:** Alison Birkinshaw
Kevin Deadman
Andrew Lindsay
David Maughan Brown
Andy Mendus (Chair)
- In Attendance:** Elizabeth Fenn, Prospective FE Student Governor
Richard Hinde, Clerk to the Governing Body
Graeme Murdoch, Deputy Principal Quality Assurance & Support (QA&S)
Bob Saynor, Assistant Principal Lifelong Learning & HE

The meeting started at 5.05pm.

Action

09.35 Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Glyn Jones, Louise Lawrence-Crockford and Clare Wareing. There were no declarations of interest.

09.36 Minutes of Previous Meeting – 29 April 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2009 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

09.37 Matters Arising

a) Action Summary Sheet

The action summary sheet was considered and it was noted that all items had been actioned or carried forward as appropriate.

b) Any Other Matters Arising

With regard to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and the College's relationship with Connexions advisers, it was reported that Glyn Jones and Clare Wareing had attended the meeting on the 4 June 2009 as planned and this had helped to ensure that all interested parties were aware of the relevant processes to be followed. It was also noted that the City of York Council was seeking to develop consistency in relation to its approach to IAG. With regard to having equal access to potential new students, it was noted that the Common Guidance Package would play a key part in this regard, and that it was due for completion in September 2009. It was **agreed** to reschedule discussion of this item to a subsequent meeting in the autumn term.

**DPQA&S
/ Clerk**

It was also **agreed** that at the next meeting of the Committee a report should be presented showing the Internal Reviews that had been carried out to date together with proposals for which Internal Reviews were to be carried out in the new academic year.

**DPQA&S
/ Clerk**

09.38 Student Information

a) Student Attendance and Retention 2008/09

The Deputy Principal Quality Assurance & Support (QA&S) presented the report and explained that attendance overall was at 86%, against a target of 88%. It was explained that the reason for the lower attendance by block release students was that employers were keeping students at work rather than releasing them to attend the College. Retention was said to be positive across all ages and levels.

The reasons and timings of student withdrawals were considered and it was noted that there were no obvious primary causes across all categories. However for some students the impact of the economic climate – such as financial difficulties, or losing their job - had been the significant reason for their withdrawal.

The Chair wished to congratulate the team on the improvement in Level1 retention rates. This was said to be particularly significant as the College had been delivering more qualifications to more students in this area at the same time.

It was reported that Business Performance Management meetings had identified that some students had perhaps been treated too leniently in relation to their attendance and this position needed tightening up for next year. Improvements in data systems meant that the College could cross-refer poor attendance with student disciplinary data to see whether appropriate action had been taken. The College's student attendance target was 90% compared with a national average of approximately 80%.

Discussion took place in relation to the categories of withdrawal highlighted in the report and it was explained that some - such as pregnancy – were important for Every Child Matters and should therefore be retained.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

b) Employer Engagement: Student Success Rates 2008/09

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report showing the continuing improvement in Work Based Learning (WBL) and Train to Gain success rates to April 2009. By age, Apprentice Frameworks had improved by 11.91% on the previous year for 16-18 year olds, and for adults by 5.6%. Advanced Apprentice Frameworks were up 3.13% for 16-18 year olds and 7.39% for adults. By programme (using overall success rates) Apprentice Frameworks had improved by 11.21% on the previous year and Advanced Apprentice Frameworks had improved by 5.92%. There were no Minimum Level of Performance (MLP) issues with the College's WBL provision. MLP in this regard was 50% "overall success".

With the College's Train to Gain provision, the MLP was 65%. Projections for the year end showed that this would be met for all sector

subject areas. The College was projecting an overall end of year success rate in excess of 80%.

The DPQA&S also reported on data provided by the LSC which illustrated the College's improvements over recent years for Work Based Learning. This showed that the College was now performing above the national averages. The College's overall success rate was 76.2% compared to a national benchmark of 65.7%. For Apprentices, the College's success rate was 80.4% against a national benchmark of 65.7%. For Advanced Apprenticeships, the College's success rate was 70.1% against a national benchmark of 65.6%.

Members wished to record how pleased they were with these results, and wished to acknowledge the significant part played by the Assistant Principal Employer Engagement and her team in bringing about these improvements.

It was also explained that the College had concerns about the LSC's recording of Train to Gain success rates which was said to be inaccurate. The College had raised its concerns with the LSC, and the Committee supported this approach.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.39 Framework for Excellence, May 2009

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report with a summary of the first output available to providers from the Framework for Excellence (FFE). The information was currently only available to providers and only a few of the indicators would be made public this year: the learner destinations grade; qualifications success rate grade; and Ofsted grade for overall effectiveness. One of the aims of FFE was to produce a method whereby employers and students could compare providers and make an informed decision. The data would also be significant in terms of performance management and commissioning provision. However, it was explained that the methodology was flawed and that, although colleges and schools were being compared, they might not actually have been subject to the same methodology. It was not a case of comparing like with like, although a prospective student or employer would not necessarily know this. It was also noted that no account was taken of the contextual position.

There were ongoing discussions within the sector, with the LSC, about the accuracy and validity of the information produced. It was noted that the 157 Group and the Association of Colleges (AoC) were lobbying for improvements to be made. The College, like other colleges, had also asked the LSC not to publish any of the College's results until the College had checked their accuracy. No reply had yet been received.

In view of the flawed methodology of Framework For Excellence, the Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to support every effort being made at the political level to ensure that it was discontinued.

(Alison Birkinshaw left the meeting at 5.50pm.)

09.40 Strategic Plan 2008/11 – End of Year Progress Report

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report relating to the three sections of the current Strategic Plan pertinent to this Committee: Quality Assurance; Teaching and Learning; and Recruitment and Marketing. Members considered the wide range of activities that had been undertaken, and it was explained that activities to date had revolved around establishing clearly differentiated strategies for each of the College's brands. This had created clarity of purpose and direction for the College's curriculum offer and associated actions. In relation to the quality assurance agenda the main point to note was that the targeted approach adopted this year was proving to be beneficial. For example, qualifications issued with an internal Notice to Improve were improving very well. Consideration was also given to the priority items to be taken forward in to the next academic year.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.41 Strategic Plan 2009/12 – Draft Sections

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report with the draft sections of the College's Strategic Plan for 2009/10 relating to Portfolio Development; Teaching and Learning; Recruitment, Marketing and Reputational Management; Support for Learning; Quality Assurance; and Equality and Diversity.

It was reported that these sections built on the actions implemented during 2008/09. Some actions remained (because they were medium or long term); some had been removed (because they were now complete); and some were new. However, it was stressed that all of the actions should be read as a "package" of related items, and that some aspects would be updated when the College's 2008/09 outturn information was available.

Members had considered the specific sections provided and were invited to raise any comments they might have.

The relationship between the Strategic Plan and the College's operational plan was queried and explained. It was also noted that the document was very complex and queried whether there was any means of assessing the cost of producing it in terms of time spent.

Concern was expressed that not all of the stated targets were measurable and it was queried how achievement would be ascertained. It was explained that in some circumstances it was necessary to include

aspirational targets or statements which would then have a specific set of sub targets for implementation by the Senior Management Team (SMT).

It was suggested that the Curriculum Link scheme could be extended so that consideration could be given to these targets and their progress within each relevant curriculum area. This approach was strongly endorsed by the Committee.

SMT/
Clerk

It was felt that it would be useful if a list of acronyms was produced to accompany the Plan. It was also important to ensure consistency of approach with the stated target timescales, in that the date should be the target date for achievement rather than commencement. Concern was also expressed at the number of actions said to be the responsibility of the Deputy Principal QA&S.

In relation to Support For Learning, it was noted that the new Student Governor would discuss with the Student Union which actions the Student Union could possibly assist with and that this could then be discussed at a future SMT meeting.

EF

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to recommend the Governing Body to approve the draft sections of the College's Strategic Plan for 2009/10, subject to final amendment.

09.42 Quality Policy 2009/10

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report with the College's proposed Quality Policy for 2009/10 which was considered by the Committee.

It was explained that the Policy identified the range of activities undertaken by the College to achieve continuous improvement. It also reflected the College's aim of moving from Good to Outstanding, and supported the Strategic Plan targets.

The statement in the Policy that the College would "relinquish what [provision] we cannot improve" was specifically queried, and it was felt that this statement/principle required further refinement

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to approve College's Quality Policy for 2009/10, subject to final amendment.

(David Maughan Brown left the meeting at 7.00pm.)

09.43 Complaints/compliments report for 2008/09

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report showing that the number of complaints received in 2008/09 was the same as in 2007/08. However the range of complaints had changed. The main areas of complaint during the year related to Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMA); course provision not meeting the expectations of

individuals; and a small range of general service issues such as the cost of food on site, course fees, appeals against exam results, and issues involving other students. The response time for dealing with a complaint had reduced by four days. All complaints were resolved and some had led to improvements in College processes.

The number of compliments received during the year was also the same number as in 2007/08. Compliments received had been directed to teams, individuals, students and College events.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.44 Final Progress Report on Post Ofsted Inspection Action Plan

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report updating on overall progress with the actions contained within the Post Ofsted Inspection Action Plan. Members also considered the outcomes from Ofsted's recent monitoring visit to the College and noted that "significant progress" had been made by the College in 3 of the 4 areas for improvement identified in the Ofsted inspection in January 2008.

It was explained that this would be the last time that progress against this action plan was reported as all remaining actions were now included in the College's new Strategic Plan.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.45 Any Other Business

The Clerk explained that the Search & Governance Committee was currently reviewing the process relating to Committee self assessment.

09.46 Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 7.10pm.

Signed:

Chair:

Name:

Date: