



**Minutes of the meeting of the Quality and Curriculum Committee on
Wednesday 29 April 2009 at 5.00pm in Room 3F099, York College**

- Present:** Alison Birkinshaw
Kevin Deadman
Andy Mendus (Chair)
- In Attendance:** Elizabeth Fenn, Prospective FE Student Governor
Robert Grierson, Quality Assurance Manager
Richard Hinde, Clerk to the Governing Body
Glyn Jones, Assistant Principal 16 – 19 A Level
Graeme Murdoch, Deputy Principal Quality Assurance & Support (QA&S)
Bob Saynor, Assistant Principal Lifelong Learning & HE

The meeting started at 5.05pm. Elizabeth Fenn was introduced to the Committee.

Action

09.20 Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Andrew Lindsay, David Maughan- Brown, Louise Lawrence-Crockford and Clare Wareing. It was also noted that Kevin Deadman would be joining the meeting shortly. There were no declarations of interest.

09.21 Minutes of Previous Meeting – 25 February 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2009 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

09.22 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 and the College's relationship with Connexions advisers, it was reported that a College representative would be attending a meeting on the 4 June 2009 which it was hoped would be of benefit. The Principal would provide a verbal update at the next Committee meeting.

Principal

(It was agreed to defer agenda item 4.1 pending Kevin Deadman's arrival.)

09.23 Policies/Strategies

b) Student Involvement Strategy

The Deputy Principal Quality Assurance & Support (QA&S) presented the report and explained that the College's Student Involvement Strategy was now two years old and had provided the focus for the College's student involvement activities during that time. It was now proposed to

formalise the Strategy and ensure that reports in this regard, including impact assessment, were then presented to the Committee on a regular basis. It was explained that the aim of the Strategy was to ensure that the College engaged students at the right levels and across an appropriate range of activities, and that since its introduction the Strategy had provided the framework within which the College's Student Focus Groups, Student Representatives and its work with the Student Union Executive Officers operated. It was noted that there had not been any major changes to the Strategy, other than to ensure the College structure was properly reflected, although it was also noted that a new initiative this year had been the introduction of a new A-Level Progress Forum.

(Kevin Deadman joined the meeting at 5.20pm.)

It was confirmed that the scope of the Strategy did cover College support areas such as the Learning Centre Group and the Catering Group. It was also acknowledged that key to the Strategy was creating an environment where students felt free to say what they thought. This might include students actively feeding back to teachers themselves their views on teaching, or being involved in the recruitment criteria for prospective new staff.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to endorse the College's Student Involvement Strategy.

a) Student Discipline (Policy and Procedure)

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report and explained that the Policy had now been separated from the Procedure document to provide greater clarity. It was noted that in terms of the Procedure the main changes related to more active involvement by Heads of Study (which had not been present before); a clearer indication that entry to the Procedure could be at any stage; a greater emphasis on tutors dealing with lower level issues themselves; and promoting a speedier response to disciplinary issues. It was also noted that a third document had been produced that provided guidance to staff on the implementation of the Procedure.

It was queried whether the exclusion/appeals panel should include greater "student voice" representation, and discussion took place how this could be achieved.

It was agreed that the right of appeal should be limited to an appeal against exclusion and not against any lower level of sanction and that clause 2.4 of the Procedure should therefore be removed. It should also be expressly stated that the reference to "Senior Management Team" in relation to the appeal against exclusion (clause 2.6) did include the Principal. It was further agreed that clause 4 relating to "people involved in the disciplinary procedure" should make provision for some Student Union involvement. It was also felt that the Policy or Procedure should

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include a statement stating the rationale behind the documents in terms of seeking to maintain harmony for all.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to approve the College's Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure subject to inclusion of the agreed amendments.

09.24 Student Information

a) Student Attendance and Retention 2008/09

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report and explained that attendance overall was at 87%, against a target of 88% with the reasons for the lower attendance by A Level students currently being investigated. 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 Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

b) Employer Engagement: Learner Success Rates 2008/09

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report and explained that with Work Based Learning (WBL) an improvement in overall success rates of 11% on 2007/08 was projected, with significant improvements across a number of sector areas being above benchmarks. For Apprentice Frameworks 2008/09 actual overall success rates to date showed a 3% improvement on the previous year. With Advanced Apprentice Frameworks 2008/09 actual overall success rates to date showed an 11% improvement on the previous year. There were no Minimum Level of Performance (MLP) issues with the College's WBL provision.

With the College's Train to Gain provision, performance in 2008/09 to date was not showing an improvement on 2007/08. However projections showed that a slight increase on the previous year would be achieved. This was said to be a consequence of closer date monitoring and the withdrawal of learners that had become inactive.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.25 AS Module Results (January 2009)

The Assistant Principal 16-19 A-Level presented the report and explained that this January's modular exam results showed little overall improvement on last year, although comparisons were difficult given the new specifications and changes to exam entry strategy in many subjects. However, some subjects with Notices to Improve had shown significant improvement.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.26 Value Added

a) In year report

The Assistant Principal 16-19 A Level presented the report with a summary of comparisons between performance and target grades for A-Level students, which had been sent out to parents at the end of the Spring term.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

b) League Table Analysis

The Assistant Principal 16-19 A Level presented the report showing the College ranked alongside all other 16-18 providers in league tables produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Detailed consideration was given to the analysis and discussion took place about the College's approach to league table performance particularly so as actions to improve scoring in one table could lead to reduced performance in another.

Members felt that the College should continue to focus on delivering the best possible outcomes for its Students. Whilst they recognised that league tables were important in influencing public perception of the College and therefore supporting its success, members felt that the College should not modify its teaching and learning strategy simply to affect its performance in any single league table.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.27 Internal Reviews Update

a) Level 1 Programmes

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report showing progress on activities associated with the Level 1 programmes internal review. It was explained that a working group had been established to follow through the outcomes of this review. The working group consisted of middle and senior managers and tutors responsible for the delivery of Level 1 programmes, and had been chaired by the Principal. The working group was said to have generated many good ideas which were being carried forward including a tutor forum for sharing good practice, and reward schemes for highly performing students. There had also been a much greater scrutiny of data. It was explained that the College's retention and attendance levels had improved compared to the same period the previous year.

It was felt that it would be beneficial for this report to be presented at the next meeting of the Governing Body as an example of the College's quality improvement drive – illustrating the identification of a challenge and showing what measures were taken to address it.

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The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report, and agreed that it should be presented at the next meeting of the Governing Body.

b) Two year Programmes

The Quality Assurance Manager presented the report on the College's two year programmes action plan together with an update on progress.

It was explained that it was still an early stage but that good progress had been made regarding training on classroom management and also with the in-house teacher training course – 'Toolkit' was currently being redeveloped to cater for different groups. It was noted that further outcomes would be presented to the Committee in future.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

c) IT and Computing

The Deputy Principal QA&S and the Quality Assurance Manager presented the report on the College's internal review of IT and Computing which had been undertaken during the week commencing 2 February 2009. It was explained that the purpose of the internal review was to assess the standard of teaching and learning taking place within the area, across the full range of programmes offered.

It was reported that the review had identified a number of strengths including: improved overall retention and attendance on most programmes; very good teaching and learning; outstanding use of ILT; excellent assessment and verification practices; students needs being effectively met; outstanding support for fulltime learners; very good leadership and management; and effective sharing of good practice within the department and across College.

A number of areas for improvement had also been identified for which measures were being implemented to address them. These areas for improvement included: low value-added on A Levels; some ineffective management of low level classroom behaviour; limited use of Minimum Target Grades on marked work for A Level provision; some delays in capturing achievement of part time programmes; students being left alone unattended in rooms without a tutor; and Every Child Matters not being fully embedded.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.28 Observations of Teaching & Learning 2008/09

The Deputy Principal QA&S and the Quality Assurance Manager presented the report updating on the current Observation of Teaching & Learning (OTL) grade profile and outlining key strengths and areas for improvement arising from the observations.

It was reported that 278 observations had been completed, of which 78%

had been graded as good or better. There had been a slight increase in the amount of outstanding teaching observed. The best teaching had still been observed at Level 3, although there had been an increase in outstanding teaching on Level 1 courses. Observed teaching grades for full-time tutors were better than for part-time tutors.

It was queried whether the OTL scheme included all part-time staff, and explained that at this stage it only included substantial part-time staff (working more than one hour per week). Members requested that the breakdown should include all of the College's part-time staff, as Members were anxious that all staff should be supported. It was agreed that for future reports the data should be divided into full-time and part-time categories. Members also requested whether it would be possible to state the total percentage of staff who had been observed and the total percentage that had not yet been observed – as this detail was currently masked by the multiple observations that had been carried out of the same staff.

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The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.29 College Portfolio Development Proposals

The Assistant Principals presented the report providing a summary of the current influences on the main funding streams of the College and its Strategic Plan, and the key actions being taken to respond to local, regional and national priorities and the proposed portfolio developments to take forward in advance of 2009/10. The areas covered included the College's 14-19 Provision; Adult Responsiveness; Employer Engagement; and Higher Education. Members gave detailed consideration to the context and portfolio development proposals for each area. In relation to the College's International provision it was reported that a business plan had now been produced which it was proposed to include in the College's Strategic Plan going forward.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.30 Strategic Plan – 2008/09 Progress Report

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report providing a progress report relating to the Quality Assurance and Portfolio Management sections of the College's Strategic Plan. It was reported that a wide range of activities had been undertaken to date, and these activities had primarily revolved around establishing clearly differentiated strategies for each of the College's brands. It was reported that this had created clarity of purpose and direction for the College's curriculum offer and associated actions. In relation to the quality assurance agenda, it was reported that 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 now improving very well.

It was further explained that within the College each section of the

College's Strategic Plan had its own group which was responsible for driving through and monitoring progress.

Discussion also took place about how a number of absolute targets were included within the Plan but that no figures were included in the update. It was explained that it was too early in the process for specific data to be included in the update but that it was intended to include actual figures when the relevant data became available.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.31 Stakeholder Feedback – Parents' Survey 2009

The Quality Assurance Manager presented the report on the outcome of the Parents' Survey which was conducted during February and March 2009 together with a comparison of the last three years' results. It was reported that 1219 returns had been received which was the highest ever return rate achieved. Responses to 14 statements had improved; 1 had stayed the same; and 1 had gone down. Many compliments had been received about the quality of teaching staff; support for students; and professionalism of the College's staff. Whilst the key areas for concern were around timetabling; EMA payments; and communication issues.

Discussion took place about how this positive result could be built on and whether a Parents' Focus Group could be initiated. Discussion also took place about whether a press release should be issued in this regard or how the results could best be communicated.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report and agreed that the results should be presented in graph form for inclusion in a newsletter to existing parents and College applicants.

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09.32 Progress Reports on Action Plans

a) Post Ofsted Inspection

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report updating on overall progress with the actions contained within the Post Ofsted Inspection Action Plan. Progress was said to be good, particularly in relation to qualification success rates (excluding Key Skills). It was noted that whilst improvements in Key Skills success rates had been seen they were not yet at an acceptable level. 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 January 2008.

The Committee congratulated the College's management and staff on the exceptional progress made since the Ofsted inspection, and recognised in this monitoring visit.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

b) Self Assessment Report 2007/08

The Deputy Principal QA&S presented the report updating on progress with the College's Self Assessment Report (SAR) Improvement Plan. It was reported that progress against planned actions was good. Increasingly emphasis had been placed on teaching and learning-related activities and this was being taken on board by staff across the College. A more targeted approach to Internal Reviews was being used to support areas requiring improvement. Minimum Target Grades were being used with all A level students and most vocational students. Observation of Teaching & Learning outcomes were being used effectively within Teaching & Learning teams.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

c) IQER Summative Review – Action Plan

The Assistant Principal Lifelong Learning and HE presented the report on the Action Plan arising from the IQER Summative Review carried out earlier in the year. It was noted that the judgments arising out of the IQER Summative Review had been received by the Committee at its meeting on 25 February 2009. These judgements had identified many areas of good practice and had made only "desirable" recommendations, which was the lowest category possible. The Action Plan had been produced arising from this review, and it was explained that progress against this Action Plan would be considered on a regular basis by the College's HE Quality Committee and Quality Assurance Strategic Group before returning to the Committee.

The Quality & Curriculum Committee resolved to note the report.

09.33 Any Other Business

The Chair confirmed that the Quality Assurance Manager would be leaving the employment of the College on 1 June 2009 after six years and wished to record his thanks to Mr Grierson on behalf of the Committee and to wish him well for the future.

09.34 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 17 June 2009 at 5.00pm.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm.

Signed:

Chair:

Name:

Date: