

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HE PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2021

Present

Angela Briggs	Governor
Ruth Brook	Governor
Luke Cantrill	HE Student Governor
Emma Kirk	Staff Governor
Mick Lochran	Governor
Andrea Ward	Governor (Teams)

The quorum for the meeting was five Members (at least 3 external).

In attendance

Jo Garrison	Director of Governance / Clerk to the Corporation
Alan Girvin	Director of HE
Adam Hewitt	Director of Business and Community Integration and Employability
Debbie Jensen	Director of Academic Administration and Quality Assurance
Sharon Smith	Principal / Deputy CEO
Karen Robson	Assistant Principal HE-Designate (Observing)

The meeting was held North Lindsey College and commenced at 17:34pm.

Item	Minute	Action
1	Apologies	
	Apologies were received from S Littlemore and T Burton.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
	Members should declare any personal or financial obligation, allegiance or loyalty which would in any way affect decisions in relation to the subjects under discussion.	
3	Minutes of a meeting of the HE Performance & Quality Committee held on [date] and any matters arising	
	The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair. All actions have been completed.	
		<i>E Kirk arrived at 17:38pm</i>
4	Review of Committee 2020/21	
	The DoG advised members that R Ecclestone, the previous Vice Chair of the committee, had withdrawn from the board. R Brook has agreed to complete her second year of term as Chair and it was presented to members that an expression of interest had been received from A Ward for the Vice Chair position. Members were asked to approve the Vice Chair position.	
	Members were asked to review the terms of reference and cycle of business and consider if the HEPQ committee met its objectives for 2020/21. Members agreed objectives had been met. S Smith advised members that the Freedom of Information policy was still in consultation and will be circulated upon completion.	

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	<p>Resolution: A Ward was unanimously appointed as Vice Chair of the HEPQ committee.</p>	
5	<p>Recruitment Report</p>	
	<p>Members were informed the HE offer 2021 has been more challenging. Overall recruitment is below the original budget target by 389, and below the revised budget target by 163. The financial implication is a shortfall against the revised budget target of £631k. The shortfall doesn't include the negative impact of any early withdrawals or suspensions of students nor any further withdrawals in year.</p>	
	<p>A financial reconciliation is taking place to triangulate enrolments with SLC applications and invoices for those self-funding to inform the financial forecast at group level but a shortfall of approximately £800k is anticipated. Costs will also be analysed to make any savings to pay and non-pay budgets for HE.</p>	
	<p>These outcomes should be considered in the context of the pandemic, which severely hindered opportunities for in-person recruitment, which is usually a significant driver for applications, especially at UCNL and given the higher proportion of mature applicants. It has highlighted the importance of enhancing the online applicant information across HE. It can also be considered alongside national information suggesting that a significant number of other FE-based HE providers have seen their HE numbers decline. A Hewitt raised the need to consider the digital platforms and ensure we operate in different spaces in the future.</p>	
	<p>A Briggs enquired if it is anticipated post-pandemic to return to recruitment as previous years. This is unknown and unlikely. Face to face recruitment and word of mouth is tested to build confidence with potential students and that still requires heavy investment to recover. Lockdown has not enabled that interactive approach and valuable discussions in the community lost. S Smith informed members that the Recruitment Strategy will reinvigorate entry and progression in HE for L4 and L5 students. However, the impact will remain present for a few years. Work with the Finance Director will be undertaken.</p>	
	<p>A Hewitt added the recruitment of 18 year olds will increase due to the demographic trends and older cohorts of students. Stating the need to operate differently in those spaces. mature students like the blend of learning on-line and don't necessarily consider the local area. There is a need to ensure we compete in the marketplace in ways that haven't been done so before. That needs to be a wider recruitment strategy and we are currently underperforming in digital and web presence. This this is an area for development and engagement.</p>	
	<p>Members discussed the need to track qualifications with more enriched data Pro Suite where data of enrolment and recruitment is captured needs to integrate and be more efficient to monitor and manage HE provisions. This will help build and triangulate the evaluation of FE and HE students.</p>	
	<p>M Lochran raised the curve in HE provisions and that we are a little late due to the pandemic, however market intelligence informs us there are over 30,000 individuals across the two areas that require level 4 and above qualifications to secure the regional average. Local economies require people with higher level skills on the need to look at the curriculum as a marketplace to ensure the development of curriculum evolves with the right provision for the marketplace.</p>	
	<p>R Brook enquired if the right discussions were taking place relating to IAG with HE students. A Hewitt confirmed discussions are taking place however work needs to be done to track and monitor HE outcomes. There is a need to raise aspirations and graduate outcomes to ensure we meet the OfS requirements. It was recognised the need to look</p>	

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at the external priorities through the group's website to see what potential candidates' vision and aspirations are. It was also noted by E Kirk that the FE website needs to be easier to use and navigate. The group's collation of data needs to capture applications, offers and conversions to see an accurate pipeline. S Smith suggested new approaches in curriculum planning to take the group to another level and consider careers not courses. A planned Marketing away day will focus on formulating the marketing strategy with market intelligence and targeting in a digital format moving forward. Curriculum planning will review trends and applications to conversion rates and how financial contribution will review additional costs.

S Smith also assured members that investment through the South Yorkshire IoT would include a significant investment to the HE offers, delivering the right curriculum with the right equipment, the right technical support, the right teachers to create a strong strategy.

R Brook enquired about the early childhood provision in Northern Ireland and asked if this is something the group will continue to deliver moving forward. A Girvin informed members that this programme has been discontinued on technicalities of the provision. He suggested it would warrant further discussion as a working model for the curriculum strategy.

6 Draft HE Self-Evaluation Document and QIP

The Self-Evaluation Document provided the Committee with a summative review of HE performance for 2020/21 and an indication of some key actions being taken in 2021/22 in response to performance outcomes.

A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) will be developed for approval at Academic Board and for presentation to the Corporation Board on 13th December. The QIP will monitor areas for improvement identified in this report and implement enhancement initiatives that take deliberate steps to improve the quality of the learning experience and outcomes for students.

The SED seeks to provide assurance to the Committee that the performance of HE programmes in 20/21 has been effectively monitored and evaluated against the expectations of the regulatory framework for HE.

A Girvin informed members that the key reference point for providing assurance of academic standards and the quality of the student experience is the 'B Conditions' relating to quality and standards in the Office for Students' general ongoing conditions of registration. The key reference point for providing assurance of successful outcomes for students is the Office for Students' Condition B3: baselines for student outcomes indicators.

Covid had a significant impact on the student learning experience during 20/21. Despite this, academic externality provides assurance that threshold academic standards are consistent with the framework for HE Qualifications (FHEQ) and the achievements of students are comparable with those in other UK institutions. However, quantitative data provides evidence of a detrimental impact on student performance, particularly in relation to student completion and continuation data which is a key measure of successful student outcomes for the OfS.

Overall completion data may be of concern to the OfS when measured against key baseline indicators relating to successful student outcomes and the quality of the student experience.

A Girvin presented the draught Self-Evaluation document which has significantly moved forward since last year and will provide a performance report for Doncaster and UCNL at

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a strategic level, not operational data. The data is the aggregation and focus of curriculum performance detail. It will also be a mapping reference of OfS indicators to be undertaken and there are challenges to achieve this. It will track continuation and outcomes data against the OfS definitions not HE and needs to capture and analyse student outcomes and student characteristics which are mapped against the B conditions which are the focus of the OfS.

Discussion continued with regards to a student's first year full time programme and the classification of return after 14 days back on programme as a key continuation measure. Reconciliation continues from the October ILR return to ensure the accuracy of the data. Graduate outcomes require registry to provide the data. A Girvin informed members there will be activity to map core practice of the qualification code, qualifications and the expertise of HE staff, as ongoing improvements for reporting.

There was recognition and openness that there are concerns around the student outcomes not being where the Group should be and this is a baseline measure for the OfS, splitting the indicators for full time and part time level of qualifications, 1st degree or PGCE hold different indicators and levels of study. The RAG rating of concern can be different than the OfS mechanisms and M Lochran recognised this is where DN Colleges Group is an FE College delivering HE provision. The Group is not a small University that is measured differently. There is a current decline of 78% achievement to a target of 85% expectation. Governors were reassured that the data outcomes will be analysed into categories and identify the areas for concern.

There is significant activity around the student journey, student population and a focus on the recruitment strategy and the most effective interventions to support students. There will continue to be more enhanced monitoring and intervention to challenge completion rates and test to robustness by examination of teaching, quality of resources to gain and develop a wider understanding. Integrate the action plan and programme in place for a systematic approach.

A Briggs asked if there was cause for concern and how enhanced monitoring of OfS condition would example this? A Girvin explained if something was failing significantly this would trigger OfS intervention, such as a full-scale review. Members were assured the current position is the Group falls into may be a cause for concern and qualification levels/PGCEs are not performing in full time courses, yet comparison shows they are at DC and not at UCNL. This will be explored to ensure best practice across both sites. The action plan will address and move forward to ensure alignment. There is an understanding of the challenges and particular programmes that are a concern which are being addressed.

A Briggs praised the team for the strength of the document presented by A Girvin and the openness with governors to understand the underlying issues and how they are being addressed.

Members were advised three areas to be monitored are:

- Academic standard assurance
- Quantitative challenge to ensure satisfaction
- Need for registry constraints to provide full reports that are designed to capture OfS requirements

S Smith informed members now the Chief Information Officer is in place, there are significant improvements to the data that will continue to develop. Members asked if BAME information can be added to the report.

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	<p>A Hewitt advised members the HE Survey will be launched after Christmas and this will provide a richness of intelligence to strength the curriculum structure. A Briggs praised the ICO for the improvements to data and how far this has progressed over the Summer. A Briggs informed member that the CIO has been asked to join the F&R Committee to provide a regular Digital and Information update and to request a robust HE update as part of the next meeting.</p>	ML
	<p>S Smith discussed with members the long term requirement of a data dashboard that can be built around the OfS requirements and their language to ensure the right data is captured and readily available.</p>	
	<p>R Brook discussed the need for more expertise in HE IAG which was noted and recognised by SLT members as an area for development.</p>	
	<p>A Briggs raised the continual need to ensure the student voice is represented and the responsiveness to capture that. A Girvin discussed the difficulties in trying to capture that rich information with qualitative data but an area that is being further developed. Members discussed FE has a Student Parliament and recognised there is a HE Student Society which also captures the Student voice.</p>	
	<p>A Ward enquired about the qualitative OfS data and the disconnect of fees and value for money and the assurance required to obtain the right balance. The voice of students, employers is essential within the data and not to lose sight within the evaluation of what OfS require. A Ward also raised the need to ensure the judgements are critical to evaluate and to capture good or not good for a baseline standard. A Girvin agreed with A Ward and assured members this is the next stage to match the B Conditions of the OfS and map across the quality and standards to evaluate against this with the OfS scope. The level of evaluation will have been recorded in the initial registration with the OfS which the group will have endorsed.</p>	
7	Higher Education Strategic Priorities (including Employer Participation)	
	<p>S Smith updated members of the Higher Education Strategic Priorities. The Strategic Development Plan has not had a complete rewrite and members were assured that the plan will evolve over the academic year. Detailed areas for development and target outcomes will be monitored. The intention will be to provide a progress update on actions and actions now necessary in 2021 /22 will be presented. Members were asked to agree that the paper provides an appropriate overview on the Group’s strategic priorities and to agree that these need to be ongoing priorities for Higher Education during 2021-22. Members gave a verbal endorsement to the Strategic Development Plan.</p>	
8	OfS Report – progress against action plan	
	<p>The report provided members with an update on some of the Conditions of Registration which are the subject of national policy focus, open for consultation, or relate to compliance. The report also provides an update on the OfS ILR Audit.</p>	
	<p>Members were informed the Group continue to review and respond to existing and emerging OfS guidance, consultations, expectations, and conditions, to monitor compliance, develop our approach, and meet the responsibilities to students.</p>	
	<p>S Smith advised member that M Lochran is the Accounting Officer, but alerts and actions are led by S Smith. Assurance was provided by S Smith that this activity is a weekly objective to ensure all regulatory requirements are monitored and met. Policies have been updated and created where there is an OfS expectation to the conditions. The Audit recommendations are progressing and the OfS confirmed their approval of progress</p>	

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made. S Smith informed members there will be a further audit but it is not yet clear if this will be a desktop exercise or physical.

9 Curriculum Mapping

M Lochran presented the executive summary to members:

- Significant changes in the national policy context will be a catalyst for curriculum change with an emphasis on employer led, technical training at L4/5.
- Anticipated changes include modularisation with learning taken place over a longer period, removal of poor provision – delivery and outcomes, changes in the funding model.
- College's provision is currently split relatively equally between non-priority (widening participation) provision, job related provision and technical provision.
- The majority of 'widening participation' provision is full time and at L6 whilst most of the technical training is currently part time and at L4/5.
- Key opportunities are emerging from investment in decarbonisation, the Humber Free Port, and the recognition of the need to reform Health and Social Care.
- There is a need to adapt the delivery curriculum model to allow modularisation of the provision.
- Priority curriculum development areas include Renewables, Engineering, Construction, Health & Care and Digital.
- Employers need to be more systematically involved in the development and delivery of the curriculum.
- Clear pathways need to be developed from local L3 providers to full time provision in priority areas.
- While the College needs to maintain provision that widens participation, development will focus on growing provision with clear links to employment (Health & Social Care, Education/Childcare and Business/Leadership) and particularly technical skills (Engineering, Digital, Construction, Science) at L4/5

M Lochran advised members this is the whole national agenda and there is uncertainty, and the summary is discretionary and looking at the provision at this stage. Full time is dominated by wider participation, enabling and priority areas. Full time and widening participation looks at L6 but it is more likely to focus on L4 and L5 and very little underway for part time, however trends show a three way split to the three main priorities. Health, Engineering, Construction and Digital are not as presented as they could be for L6.

There is a need to increase technical provision and full time job L6 provision but M Lochran advised a steer needs to come directly from Government as their focus remain around L4 and L5. The question was explored and discussed do we operate as small University or an FE College with HE provision and what the technical aspirations of HE provision to measure successful widening participation. It was recognised that we provide priority area provision with good student outcomes. However the debate provision v priority.

Health is strong across the region's priorities and digital is behind in both FE and HE delivery. It was recognised the need to attract staff and grow the ambition to progress positively. A Girvin did suggest that the data can skew data as 47% of students study L4 and L5 qualifications, and a need to measure accurately to consider L6 to bachelor's degree or vocational outcomes. Members all agree DN Colleges is quite unique as most FE colleges do not have 2,500 HE Students and there is a reliance on widening participation numbers with higher level skills, consider social mobility and the cost of delivering L4 and L5 qualifications in college, where a University focus is L6.

A Briggs recognised with SLT members that this is an interesting challenge and the flip side of morale belief to fulfil local needs and concentration on L4 and L5 against a large

