

**PUBLIC MINUTES OF THE
CURRICULUM AND QUALITY COMMITTEE
28 NOVEMBER 2024**

Present:

Mr M Burgess (Principal)
Ms M James (External Governor) (C&Q Chair)
Dr H Moyes (External Governor)
Ms A Nutbrown (Staff Governor)
Mrs S Robertson (External Governor)
Ms J Stackman (Staff Governor)
Mr M Williams (External Governor)

In Attendance:

Mr D Kettlety - Director of Student Employment and Experience/DSL
Dr K Morris - Vice-Principal, Curriculum and Quality
Ms J Cosson - Governance Professional/Clerk to the Governors

Apologies:

Ms L Dance (Co-opted Member – SEND Link Governor)
Mr N Greenway (Student Governor)

Attendance: 77.8%

50/24 Opportunity for Private Business

None.

51/24 Apologies

Noted as above.

52/24 Declarations of Interest

None other than those currently recorded on the Register of Interests.

53/24 Confidentiality of Items (C)

As marked, for reasons of commercial sensitivity, for a period of two years.

54/24 Minutes of the meeting of 25 September 2024

Approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

55/24 Matters Arising from the Minutes and Actions Matrix

Members reviewed the Action Matrix and noted the status update.

56/24 Principal's Overview (C)

MB introduced a report highlighting the key themes arising from the papers.

DK will be bringing papers to the next meeting in two areas where MB would like further assurance: Work Experience and Embedding Prevent. Updates will also be provided on the Rapid Review of Defunding (the College is most concerned about Computing, Healthcare, Engineering and Early Years) and proposals to address the maths and English re-sit policy.

A Member asked what additional assurance was required regarding work placements considering Personal Development is rated good in the QIP. DK replied that 65-75% of students on programmes of study undertook placements last year but the aim is to enable 100% of 16–18-year-olds to do them. KM added that Personal Development is much broader than work placements. There will be an external review of Personal Development in the new year and it is hoped that it will be externally verified as having moved from Requires Improvement to Good.

A Staff Member noted that the College will not be able to run the T Level Construction Technical in 2025/26 and wondered if this will affect the current students going through to their second year. MB explained that the course has been run this year but the College cannot staff it for next year. However, the College will see second year students through to completion. Another Member wondered how many students this would affect and was informed approximately 10. The majority of learners are on the HNC course (employed/PT). Some are on the L3 Apprenticeship which will continue (18+).

A Member reported that their business is seeing regular requests for T Level placements in Construction and it is difficult to offer a good placement experience. They felt that the course content is too broad and understood that it must be difficult to find suitable teaching staff.

RESOLVED: The Committee noted the Principal's Update.

57/24 Annual Report on Student Outcomes 2023/24 (C)

Members reviewed the final published data outcomes for 2023/24.

Members were pleased to see that outcomes were good overall and that they were not significantly below national rates. They observed that there were some pockets of concern. There had been a drop off in core qualification achievements for specific reasons e.g., end of module tests such as in Multi Skills.

There was a detailed discussion on the issues with attendance and pass rates in maths and English. A full review will be brought to C&Q in March. The College highlighted the impact of changes to assessment on first time pass rates e.g., in Early Years.



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KM highlighted that there is work to be done on first time pass rates. Science and mass units cause the most difficulty.

There was a discussion about the difference between achievement rates and pass rates. Achievement rates are a more valuable indicator.

KM was asked to provide the definition in the tables so that Members could see the difference between pass rates and achievement rates. The key for Members to understand is the population that the percentages represent.

ACTION: KM to add numbers of students for English and maths.

Members were disappointed to note the very high (over 50%) number of learners having to re-sit both English and maths. KM clarified that a significant proportion have to re-sit one or the other. Over 1000 learners need to re-sit maths and over 900 need to re-sit English.

A Member asked when the national data for English and maths would be available, and was informed it would be available after the final ILR return. The Chair asked whether it was possible to do a like for like comparison for GCSEs and if the national rates have shown the same decline. MB answered that have now that we have now gone back to pre-COVID rates following the high rates with TAGs.

The Chair asked how the College is feeling about the maths and English position. KM replied that there have been improvements, but the rates are still not where the College wants them to be. Also, despite an improvement, the rate of 9-4 grades is still lower than national.

A Member asked if the same issues occur across both English and maths. KM replied that the fundamental issue is that learners have already failed and are reluctant to re-sit. Their motivation is generally poor. Also, many parents do not support them to re-sit as they do not see the benefit. The Chair reported that she had observed an English group where L2/L3 Motor Vehicle learners had to evaluate two Victorian texts. The students had said they could not do it. Half of them did not return to the session as they had no interest. Another Member reported that they had observed a maths group doing algebra, which is not an applied element of the course. KM agreed that GCSE is not an applied qualification but it is what the College has to work with.

MB concluded that there are more learners but fewer have achieved maths and English. If learners have not achieved a grade 4 in English and maths, there are limited alternatives. Functional Skills L2 requires a level of literacy before they are able to answer questions so the College has retained GCSEs because they are familiar to the learners.

A Member observed, as an employer, that it would be useful to know when students are struggling so that employers can try to apply English and maths so students can see the relevance of it. KM agreed and added that staff do try to



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reiterate the importance of English and maths, but can only work within the specification. There is a need to go back to basic literacy and numeracy. The Member suggested getting employers to come in to the College to explain how they can be applied to a career.

A Staff Member wondered if there was likely to be anything radical in the curriculum review regarding English and maths. KM replied not in the short term; it will take time to develop a new approach.

The Chair asked if there had been progress with closing the gap with Disadvantaged Learner achievement rates. KM answered that there had been in vocational qualifications, but there is still a gap in English and maths. It is high on the agenda but there is different set of DA learners each academic year.

The Chair concluded that, despite the challenges, there were a lot of positive results in the data.

RESOLVED: The Annual Report on Student Outcomes 2023/24 was noted.

58/24 Quality Improvement Plan Update and School RAG (C)

KM gave an overview of the progress made against the College QIP. School self-assessments and progress to date had been added but the paper did not yet include a RAG-rating of each School.

The QIP showed some very positive improvements with TLA interventions working well. Members noted the significant improvement in HSC, which is now a strong Good. There is continued concern about progress in DHNS, although some improvements were noted. Members noted the SEND Link Governor report commenting on progress in this area.

Also of concern is first time pass rates as mentioned above. The Committee discussed the difficulty in knowing where learners have lost marks in exams due to the inability to see their answers.

The Chair asked what the College wants the Committee to focus on for the year. KM suggested that two things will make a difference to achievement rates:

- Progress in Discrete High Needs - There has been some progress but there will be no external assurance in November now, unfortunately.
- Improving first time pass rates - Heads of School are stepping up to support learners to achieve e.g., using AI to generate questions.

A Member asked at what point in the year the College checks whether students know their 'what three skills' and was informed that they are expected to articulate it from the beginning. The Member reported that not a single learner in English and maths knew what their 'what three skills'. Although they had heard of them,



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they could not articulate them. KM replied that they are not used in English and maths only for vocational courses. Also, learners have not had their feedback yet.

A Staff Member asked where the requirement for summative assessment has come from and was informed from the government. EPA/and summative test requirements have increased. Michael Gove initiated it from an ideological point of view on the basis that more rigorous exams would lead to better outcomes. KM observed that some learners have an exam every fourth week. The Staff Member feels people are making decisions without having experienced an FE College. Members agreed that the policy intent was not a bad thing but that one size does not fit all and it will result in fewer qualified people. The policy does not appear to have made any difference.

The Chair noted that there are no red flags on the QIP. They noted that there has been a significant improvement in Health and Social Care and asked what one thing has had the most impact. KM answered that two things have had the most impact: teamwork and strong line management and a focus on effective teaching strategies. The Chair asked if KM could give an example. KM gave the examples of reviewing the curriculum at the end of the academic year, assessing what went well (WWW) and even better if (EBI) and reviewing study skills (learning to learn) as well as metacognition and social skills.

RESOLVED: The Quality Improvement Plan Update and School RAG was noted.

59/24 Internal/External Reviews (C)

KM presented the internal/external review programme for the year. The external assurance review of DHNS has been postponed. This will now take place early in new year.

A Staff Member asked why AM1 and BU1 have been identified for review. KM answered that the areas are chosen from the SAR Validations and mini dives. There are new staff in AM1. MB added that there are two reasons for carrying out internal/external reviews: to learn from them and to validate the College's own self-assessment. The College chooses both stronger and weaker areas for scrutiny. He confirmed that most areas will be covered over a period of time including through ongoing peer review as critical friends.

RESOLVED: Members noted the External Review Report.

60/24 Headline Progress Data including HE Partnerships Update (C)

KM provided an update on the quality and performance of the curriculum to date. She noted that it is early in academic year.



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There is a focus on maths and English attendance, which is on a par with last year but not high enough. There are no significant gaps between different learner groups at present although the College is monitoring the position with Looked After Learners.

There is an opportunity to move Behaviours and Attitudes to Outstanding but attendance will need to be improved to help with this.

A Member asked what the barriers to attendance in English and maths are and what strategies the College is employing to do improve attendance. KM replied that it is a College-wide responsibility. The College tries both a carrot and a stick approach. Vocational teams work with the English and maths team e.g., in Construction where a member of staff takes students to lessons and keeps checking on them. She cautioned that it is not just a case of being in a lesson though; the students have to engage. The College also works with parents but, as mentioned above, does not always get the support it needs from them as they do not always see the benefit of the lessons themselves. They do not consider that it is what the child came to the College to do.

A Member remarked that a lot of the learners she spoke to in the classroom told her they just missed out on a grade 4 and she wondered if that was true and if there is any relationship between what they achieved and their attendance. KM replied that some were further away from a grade 4 than they think. The College does stream where possible but the jump from grade 3 to 4 is bigger than from grade 1 to 2 and from grade 2 to 3. Those who have not achieved by Y2 L3 have basically given up. The difficulty is getting them to turn up for all exams.

Both Members who had carried out Learning Walks in English and maths commented on the cheerfulness and enthusiasm for the subject and the learners. They appreciate the support from the vocational team.

An update on the College's HE partnerships was provided. There has been positive progress as evidenced by the number of new starts and the improvements seen in the second cohort. Learners tend to be better at the theory than the application. The first results from LD are expected in summer 2025. KM will report on progress after their first assignments.

KM advised that there are challenges with EPA in Apprenticeships. A Member observed that a number of employers have been pulling programmes midway through leaving Apprentices to find another employer. This reflects the downturn in business confidence and companies being taken over. KM advised that the College tries to find other employers where possible but Apprentices are effectively employees.

A Staff Member asked if the College hires Apprentices and was informed that it does. All new teaching staff (12-14 each year) are Apprentices on the L5 Teaching Apprenticeship but that there is a cost.

Five anonymous learner case studies were provided. These will be tracked through the academic year. With reference to high needs provision, it was noted that private equity firms are flooding the market.



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RESOLVED: The Committee noted the in-year update and the actions in place.

61/24 Student Experience (C)

DK presented the latest student experience update.

Members were pleased to see an improved picture in terms of learner feedback during the latest mini dive.

Members asked about the response rates. DK informed them that approximately 900 responses were received from 16–18-year-olds in the last survey and approximately 150 Apprentices, which is an increase. There is always a good response rate from Adults.

The Committee reviewed the themes (teaching/support/learning spaces/bursary support) and noted the lack of benchmarking available.

Talkback data was reviewed and Members enquired about the learnings from complaints. DK advised that Talkback submissions were up by 15 but fewer complaint had been upheld. In answer to whether these are separate complaints, DK explained that a small number are from the same group for similar reasons but there are no persistent complainers. KM said that the College always reflects on the complaints that have not been upheld to see if anything can be done better. The main lessons learned have been around communications during the enrolment period. However, she is satisfied that these have been improved and that is why fewer complaints (such as parents believing their child should have been offered a place) have been upheld this year.

MJ confirmed that, from what she has seen, enrolment deadlines and expectations regarding attitudes and behaviour are stressed at Open Evenings.

ACTION: Members requested examples of complaints for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: Members noted the Student Experience Update.

62/24 Safeguarding Update (C)

DK provided an update on Safeguarding and PREVENT and progress with the Safeguarding Operating Plan.

Members reviewed the number and nature of the current cases. DK expects there to be a surge up to Christmas and then a tail off in the new year. The College is adjusting its wellbeing and crisis plans to reflect a sliding scale of severity.

DK reported that the recent external review of Safeguarding had confirmed the College's judgement that it is effective. My Concern and the SCR were found to be sound. MJ and JC had met with reviewer. The meeting had highlighted to MJ, as Designated Safeguarding Lead Governor, the importance of Governors receiving quantitative information in the papers and focusing on the impact of the College's



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arrangements and actions. The full report is due in Spring. A Staff Governor asked if staff will receive a copy. DK replied that a summary will be provided to Student Support and highlights will be shared with staff.

MJ further informed Members that the Safeguarding Link Governor meeting had taken place prior to this meeting. The intention is for the Safeguarding Action Plan to look like the QIP going forward.

The HE Link Governor asked whether DK will also include actions to address the OfS condition in relation to Sexual Harassment. DK confirmed that he will. He will also produce a flow chart showing the Safeguarding process.

Members discussed the rollout of the Security Emergency Response Plan. DK advised that it had been positively received and that a lockdown drill will take place before the end of term.

There have been two PREVENT referrals.

DK reported that the wearing of ID badges is an issue among learners. The College is investigating other security and identification systems. JB confirmed that there have been 60 badge reprints and 450 temporary stickers issued in Gloucester in the last two weeks.

RESOLVED: Members noted the update on Safeguarding.

63/24 Curriculum Update

KM presented an update on the implications of the outcomes of the National Curriculum Pause and Review. The Rapid Review of Defunding was also discussed. The maths and English re-sit policy was debated.

RESOLVED: The Curriculum Update was noted.

64/24 Approval of Policies

- **Examinations Policy**
- **HE Student Protection Policy**

Members reviewed the changes to the above policies.

Exams – Members were pleased to see that the use of AI had been included.

HE Student Protection Policy – The HE Link Governor commented that the risk assessment was good compared to some they had seen.

RESOLVED: The policies were approved.

65/24 Key Items for Board (C)

The Key Items report was discussed noting the risks to be added to/highlighted on the Risk Register.

Recommendations to the Board:

- HE APP - for notification to the Board.

66/24 Any Other Business

Members had been provided with a report from the SEND Link Governor, which they noted.

HM fed back from the AoC EDI network on the importance of ensuring accessibility of papers for student governors. One suggestion had been the use of AI to provide accessible summaries. There followed a discussion regarding the engagement of student governors.

The Chair noted that it was JB's last C&Q meeting as a Staff Governor. She was thanked for her contribution and replied that she had learned a lot from being on the Committee.

67/24 Date and time of next meeting

13 March 2025, Scudamore Room, Llanthony Priory, Gloucester Campus

Signed *MP James*

Date *13th March 2025*