

**Minutes of the  
Quality, Standards and Achievement Committee  
Thursday 10 March 2022  
Tower Board Room Bedford**

**Present:** Sharon De Leonardis (Chair)  
Melissa Peacock  
Ian Pryce  
Raj Randhawa  
Sheila Selwood  
Allan Schofield  
Abigail Stevens

**In attendance:** Georgina Ager (Vice Principal)  
Toby Clark (Director of Young People)  
John Guiney (Head of Quality)  
Em Lowe (Vice Principal)  
Alex Mortby (Director of HE)  
Rachel Nicol (Director of Governance & Clerk to the Corporation)(Minutes)  
Nina Sharp (Director of Progression pathways)  
Charle Whewell (Head of HE)  
Petra Williams (Director of Quality Improvement, Learning, Teaching and Assessment ("QILTA"))

**QSA/1/22 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Richard Dimbleby and Luisa Vecchio. Sharon De Leonardis chaired the meeting in the absence of Richard Dimbleby.

**QSA/2/22 Declarations of Interest**

Sharon De Leonardis is a Patron of Phoenix Academy (relevant to Partnership review).

There were no other declarations of interest from those present relevant to the matters on the agenda.

**QSA/3/22 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**QSA/4/22 English and maths achievement gaps**

The Director of Progression pathways gave a presentation on English and maths achievement with a particular focus on achievement gaps from an EDI perspective.

No significant achievement gaps were identified on ethnicity and gender but the lowest pass rates were for those learners who did not provide any information on ethnicity. Gaps in other categories measured were all within a 4% difference.

Achievement and retention for black students was above the overall achievement and retention for the College and on an upward trajectory.

The presentation looked at gaps for students with high needs, looked after children, those with learning difficulties and disabilities (“LDD”) and those on free school meals.

The most significant gaps, for LDD, high needs and looked after students compared to other students was attributed to a lack of engagement with on line learning during the pandemic and access to IT equipment. Gaps were greater in achievement of functional skills qualifications where there had been no adjustment to assessment requirements in the same way there had been for GCSEs.

Actions for 2021-2022 were outlined including use of catch up funding, one to one and small group provision and close work with Educational Healthcare Plan (“EHCP”) coordinators.

The Committee discussed whether there are any staffing gaps remaining for support of students requiring additional help. Recruitment challenges and the national shortage of teaching assistants was referenced. The overall achievement levels across the College were discussed.

Attendance has been referenced on other papers and it was confirmed to still be a challenge for English and maths. The College is working with multiple agencies and implementing reduced timetables to support students with anxieties returning after the pandemic. A correlation between attendance and achievement for Maths and english in particular has been identified. Actions being taken to address attendance gaps and ensure access to the curriculum are in place.

The Director of Progression Pathways was thanked and left the meeting.

### **The update was noted**

#### **QSA/5/22      Academic Risk**

The Vice Principal responsible for Quality presented the paper.

Progress made was reported as anticipated and anonymous reporting is in place for concerns to be raised in respect of discrimination.

Performance of new or growing areas was noted to be positive with a thematic review of T levels planned by Ofsted.

Partnership relationship developments were outlined and assurance given that the focus is on the student experience.

The November resit results were outlined and exams had not been graded in line with the practice in the summer as had been expected.

Bedford Public Health has confirmed that Covid rates for the area are now in line with the rest of the country. The current advice to staff and students is not to attend when unwell.

The Committee questioned the decision not to take forward the NEET (Not in education employment or training) re-engagement programme and sought assurance on arrangements in place. The College works with Princes Trust and other providers to ensure there is appropriate provision or referral systems in place for students.

The ability to recruit staff in the current market and national picture was discussed. Work is being carried out on job families to ensure alignment across the Group and appropriate risk management.

### **The report was noted**

#### **QSA/6/22 Curriculum planning and study programme update**

The Director of Young People provided an outline of the process for planning the curriculum including: the guiding principles, design, development of a product list, review of the approach to study programmes and model for scrutiny.

The process is centred around curriculum areas leading on design with cross Group collaboration between Heads.

The models are currently being costed.

The Committee supported the approach being taken and sought assurance on the controls in place to ensure implementation of models once agreed. It was confirmed that review meetings and contingency planning is in place but with the emphasis on giving areas more autonomy for Heads within the guidance. The Committee welcomed the greater emphasis placed on ascertaining local needs as well on the attention paid to different learning styles.

The transition to T levels was discussed. It was considered that although numbers are increasing there is still progress to be made with ensuring the offer is understood. Current students are very positive about the experience and work to provide better information on the nature of T levels is taking place with schools.

*The Director of Young People was thanked for the report and left the meeting.*

## **The report was noted**

### **QSA/7/22      Learning, teaching and assessment strategy update**

The Director of Quality Improvement, Learning, Teaching and Assessment gave a presentation on progress in learning, teaching and assessment and current areas of focus including:

- Priorities for 2021-2022 for closing learning gaps post pandemic, further develop of assessment techniques, sequencing of learning, links between strategies and destinations and staff development
- Focus for teachers in terms of setting manageable expectations for students and embedding of subjects outside the main area of study,
- Current progress made and positive improvement across strands
- Mechanisms and measures to support the quality of education

The Committee discussed the use of the learner journey and flexibility to reduce anxiety for some students.

Anecdotal evidence from the student and staff governors provided insight into the approach to assessment and impact of balancing continual assessment, exams and work placements.

The Committee reiterated the importance of communication and dissemination of strategies across the Group to ensure appropriate knowledge sharing.

## **The update was noted**

### **QSA/8/22      Quality Improvement plan monitoring report**

The Director of QILTA presented the report and drew the Committee's attention to the current progress and priorities, outlining areas of focus including:

-Communication around high needs students, effectiveness and impact of performance monitoring reviews, increased engagement of students on Maths and English and work on high grades, tracking of enhancement and embedding of safeguarding awareness in curriculum areas.

-Positive progress on participation in competitions, timely achievement on short courses and on workload management was highlighted.

The Committee remained concerned that staff work load will be impacted by vacancies and this continues to be monitored. The Employee Assist Programme has been extended to help support staff and their families.

**The report was noted.**

#### **QSA/9/22 HE SED 2020-2021 and QIP 2021-2022**

The Director of HE provided an overview of the self evaluation for 2020-2021 with strengths highlighted on continuation and achievement and use of technology in learning.

The gap on continuation rates identified in the National Student Survey (“NSS”) is reducing. The Office of Independent Adjudicators had assessed a complaint during the year, minor recommendations had been implemented but positive comments also noted.

The Committee explored challenges with a local partner, noted the action plan in place to address issues and supported the move to specialist providers which was noted as a popular approach for colleges. Enhanced communication with students has led to quicker resolutions to some issues.

Increased resource in HE, through the appointment of a Head of HE has assisted in the management of relationships.

Previous NSS scores and progress made around Library facilities and resources and course management was outlined. Contracts with partners were amended to enable greater access to resources. Assessment and feedback was noted to have poorer scores nationally.

Black students have a non continuation gap of 3%. It was confirmed that the sample size is low, always under 10 but that the position is being tracked and personalised interventions are in place.

**The HE SED was noted.**

The Head of HE presented the Quality Improvement Plan and highlighted:

- Developments and plans in terms of partnership arrangements, both challenges and opportunities.
- Focus on teaching, learning and assessment and establishment of an HE Advanced Practitioner network.
- Assessment and feedback, focus on timeliness of marking and need to challenge university partners, ensuring feedback received from external partners is fed back to relevant internal departments.
- Study skills work shops being developed and positive feedback from departments engaging with it.
- Student voice and positive engagement through student services, course level participation and student representatives. The Committee sought assurance on the avenues for communication and feedback including the “You said we

did” feedback. Course handbooks are provided and training given to representatives. Student representatives

It was understood that centrally student services are evolving to bring different groups of students together with 2 students participating in the commission for racial injustice.

### **The report was noted**

#### **QSA/10/22 Access and Participation plan annual report**

The Director of HE presented the Annual Report including positive progress in the use of the hardship fund and engagement with schools but with challenges remaining in terms of the level of activity.

Further work is being done to look at different measures of engagement, including completion of work as well as attendance.

The report outlined plans to increase access and participation including collection of data for different groups, personalised interventions, monitoring of refugees and impact on continuation. Potential for increased progression from the 6th form is also being reviewed.

Performance is above current Office for Students (“OfS”) benchmarks but with potential for benchmarks to be reviewed by the OfS.

The Committee discussed access to funds for groups with lower continuation rates. Groups had been contacted with details of support available and interventions put in place.

The Committee discussed the liaison between the HE team and the Bedford Sixth Form including activity taking place in terms of presentations and access to taster sessions.

### **The report was noted**

#### **QSA/11/22 External partners / subcontractors quality assurance report**

The report had been provided by the Director of Adult and Community Learning.

The Vice Principal responsible for the area attended to answer questions.

The Committee discussed the challenges with one provider including curriculum area management, the resource required to oversee the partnership and communication.

The College noted greater success where specialist individuals are in place to manage contracts. No proposals were made for new 16-18 partnerships but assurance given that where they are taken on in future consideration will be given to ensuring sufficient expertise is in place.

Other partnerships were noted to require review to see if they are financially sustainable

The Committee discussed implications for students and quality assurance around partnership provision.

**The report was noted.**

### **QSA/12/22 Stakeholder feedback**

The Head of Quality presented the report and drew the Committee's attention to:

- Survey scores in terms of feeling safe and positive results, particularly compared to other colleges.
- Areas for development, including whether students feel challenged with promotion of activities and interventions in place
- HE, results of internal survey in November and December and positive trajectory with improved scores on learning resources outlined as evidencing the overall impact of work done.

The student governor provided feedback on the survey experience generally at the College.

The Committee discussed proposals and options for more social spaces and plans as part of the Tower block refurbishment. Challenges around space at different campuses, and opportunities created by more working from home, were discussed.

The Committee questioned whether there is intelligence on gender differentials in terms of students feeling safe and this will be looked at for future reports.

The Committee noted that the Head of Quality is leaving the College at the end of the month and thanked him for his hard work.

**The report was noted**

### **QSA/13/22 Professional Development**

The Director of QILTA and the Head of Quality provided an update on professional development across the Group. This included training of new staff, success of

toolkits and development of a rich catalogue of online learning to take account of rolling starts.

The Risk It concept was explained for newer members, staff can choose training they require in consultation with their line manager and reflections on learning are shared. There has been a positive take up despite the programme not being mandatory and examples of impact were given. The team are continuing to work on identifying and implementing changes to the process to ensure links in themes are made, staff have capacity to engage and development is enhanced. Management skills were confirmed as included as part of the Risk It programme.

**The report was noted**

#### **QSA/14/22 Quality dashboard and academic performance**

The report was presented and highlights given.

The Committee questioned Adult attendance and the position being below target, what the impact is for adults and any differences with 16 to 18 learners.

It was agreed that further thought will be given to reviewing the relevance of the target on attendance for adults.

**The report was noted.**

#### **QSA/15/22 HE -compliance review with Competition & Markets Authority requirements and Office of independent Adjudicator**

An assurance report was provided to the Committee in respect of the College's compliance with the Competition & Markets Authority requirements and outcomes of the one complaint to the Office of Independent Adjudicators.

**The Committee noted the report**

An internal audit on compliance with the Competition & Markets Authority requirements concluded with only one amber or red recommendation around the accuracy of website content and this is being resolved.

The complaint to the OIA has been resolved.

**The report was noted**

#### **QSA/16/22 Teaching excellence framework**

The paper presented by the Director of HE set out details of the Office for Students' proposed teaching Excellence Framework, the potential impact on the College and work being done, particularly in looking at progression.



Assurance was given that the Director and Vice Principal are involved in key groups shaping the consultation and will also submit comments.

### **The report was noted**

#### **QSA/58/21 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting on 25 November 2021 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **QSA/59/21 Next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 7 June 2022 at 3.30pm