

EXETER COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 27th April 2015 in the Board Room,
Hele Road, Exeter College**

Present Emma Webber Chair
Dave Underwood
John Bunting
Elaine Hobson
From item 4.1 Rachel Hutchinson
James Jefferson
Craig Marshall
Mark Overton
Martin Owen
Cameron Seymour
To item 8.7 Tim Tamblyn

Observers
From item 4.1 Philip Bostock

Apologies Richard Atkins

In Attendance Barbara Sweeney Clerk to the Corporation
John Laramy Vice Principal
Item 4.1 only Martina Esser
Item 4.2 only Julie Skinner
Item 5 only Emily Packer
Item 6 only Sarah O'Shea
Item 6 only Jennie Hamilton
Item 7 only Gemma Noble

1. **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest.** Action

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting. She particularly welcomed Cameron Seymour to his first meeting of the Committee, and Rachel Hutchinson, who was also attending her first meeting, and which she would join later following a meeting of the Heads of the City Secondary Schools with the Principal and Chair.

Apologies were received.

Philip Bostock attended as an observer.

There were no declarations of interest

2. **Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2015, as circulated, were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. **Matters arising**

- 3.1 Quality and Resources Review Update

The update was received and John Laramy, Vice Principal, confirmed that the reviews had gone well and that a Governor from Business Services had attended a session. There was good consistency across faculties and key issues included the English and Maths programmes and changes to the BTEC assessment. The next reviews were scheduled for 16th, 18th and 19th June 2015.

- 3.2 HE Update

The update was received and John reminded the Committee that at its last meeting there had been a discussion on the lack of national benchmarking data. The former HE Link Governor had requested information and the College had developed a number of internal metrics.

Since the last meeting, the College had undergone a three day external QAA Higher Education Review inspection, which was interview and desk based, with no observations or tours of the College campus. Although the 19+ Student Governor had been heavily involved during interviews, without experiencing the soul of the College, judgements were based on audit trails and written evidence and the College culture of responsiveness rather than detailed minute taking meant that it was challenging to predict the outcome of the inspection, which would be known on 7th May 2015.

Inspectors' decisions had to be unanimous, and with one of the inspectors experienced in HE in FE, it was hoped that decisions would be moderated, given the different systems and processes from a Higher Education Institution (HEI). The grading was not the same as for Ofsted and the outcomes less high profile. However, given the focus on growth in HE, a poor outcome would be disappointing. Action plans would be developed following recommendations.

The HE team had worked hard preparing for, and during the inspection and was commended by the Committee, which requested a further update at the next meeting.

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- 3.3 Apprenticeships

The update was received and John confirmed that the College was on

track to achieve the targets set by the Committee in December 2014. There had been an increase in learners and growth funding had been sought, with a decision due in June 2015. Success in classroom based provision had increased in levels 2 and 3. However there were some areas of concern which were under detailed investigation. The Committee noted that although there was a national decline in apprenticeship success rates, the College was bucking the trend.

3.4 HE Governor

The Chair reminded the Committee that the Board has agreed to appoint a HE link Governor. The former HE Governor had tendered his resignation from the Board with immediate effect on 13 March 2015 for personal reasons. The Committee, on which the former HE Link Governor sat, recommended that the role should be filled by a Governor with a professional university background, were the Board to appoint another Governor from Exeter University, and would defer making a recommendation until such a decision had been made.

There were no other matters which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda

4. **Quality Assurance**

Martina Esser, Quality Manager, joined the meeting for item 4.1 only

4.1 On-course Student Survey

The report was received and Martina highlighted the key issues. Participation had increased, with regular reminders to learners and remote access to the survey. The report highlighted areas where responses had fallen by 2% or more and indicated that whilst positive responses had fallen, there was inconsistency in many of the responses such as learner support and tutor feedback. In order to provide historical data in the lead up to Ofsted in 2014, questions had remained unchanged and much of the language was ambiguous and no longer relevant.

The report provided explanation for individual results, and the introduction of English and Maths to level 2 and changes to assessment for BTEC, where teachers were no longer permitted to provide feedback, had had significant impact. Those students who had experienced the different systems would rate accordingly.

Turning to the free text on teaching and learning, the Committee noted specific areas where comments were negative. Criteria highly valued by inspectors did not always suit all learner styles and comments would reflect this. It may be beneficial to include in future surveys questions to assess preferred learning styles, although this might impact on the length of the survey. Nevertheless, despite its flaws, the survey was beneficial to

enable managers to drill down to individual courses and triangulate with other indicators such as success rates and observations.

The Committee agreed that trends would be monitored following future surveys to satisfy Governors that negative issues were being addressed. The Committee agreed to

BHS

Note the report.

Julie Skinner, Assistant Principal, joined the meeting for item 4.2 only

4.2 Aplus Quality Update

The report was received and taken as read and Julie highlighted key issues. She confirmed that once the contract was novated into the College, Aplus came under her responsibility and that the priority was to make courses viable. Efficiencies were important whilst also embedding provision into College culture, particularly the strong emphasis on teaching and learning. Some success rates were handicapped by historical data, such as timely success in level 4, but there was progress. There was a balance between viability through efficiencies, and success through quality, but there was a forecast profit for the year and the faculty was now included in all the College's quality systems.

Julie confirmed that business support, such as marketing, was now provided by the College and external marketing was mainly through sponsorship to increase brand awareness.

The Committee commended the hard work. There was compelling evidence of provision being turned around, and whilst it had always been acknowledged that this would take time, good progress had been made.

The Committee noted the report

5. **Teaching and Learning**

Emily Packer, Progression and Employability Leader, joined the meeting for item 5.1 only

5.1 Progression:

- Internal, HE, Reach and Vocational
- AAB destinations

The report was received and Emily confirmed that there had been a significant increase in events to encourage use of the service including mock interviews and careers workshops. This had been effective and resulted in an increase from circa 700 engagements in 2013/14 to circa 1700 year to date. There had been an increase in UCAS applications and the College had placed 10% of students over the national average, which

was attributed to the team's one to one support for applicants, including reviewing all personal statements.

Turning to destinations, Emily confirmed that many students were choosing local universities because of their successful delivery of popular subjects such as nursing, sociology and psychology. Careers advice was important to achieve realistic expectations, rather than students making choices influenced by the media. The service was also being used to support appropriate applications, so reducing reliance on the clearing process.

Emily confirmed that many employers were increasing management programmes for FE leavers to achieve ownership of career development of their employees. Examples included the retail sector, utilities and the MoD.

Governors challenged internal progression within apprenticeships. The Progression and Employability team was working with Business Solutions to improve outcomes, which were not currently strong. The Committee also asked why staying on targets had been reduced. As a relatively new metric, it was difficult to assess an appropriate target until trends emerged. However there was no doubt that external progression was stronger. Initiatives such as the EXPO week were addressing this.

The Committee noted the impact of the new team and agreed to

Note the report

Sarah O'Shea Head of Safeguarding Tutoring Enrichment and Welfare (STEW) and Jennie Hamilton, Deputy Head of STEW, joined the meeting for item 6 only

6. Holistic

- 6.1 Safeguarding Tutoring, Enrichment and Welfare (STEW) annual review
The report was received and Sarah highlighted key issues. There was now an expectation from parents and carers that they should attend tutorial evenings. She confirmed that the student survey responses reflected the need to refine the tutorial process and return to a more prescriptive programme, specifying mandatory topics and those which could be optional.

There was a 70% increase in counselling at no additional cost due to the introduction of fifteen minute drop in sessions in addition to the full 45 minute consultations. There was also a signposting service to refer learners on to the appropriate agencies.

Sarah highlighted the changes in guaranteed bursaries, which were now managed by the College rather than centrally. Students in receipt of Non-

Guaranteed Bursaries had increased, whilst those in receipt of the Guaranteed Bursary, which was accessed by care leavers, had fallen as a result of few receiving income support. The Committee considered young carers, and how they were identified and supported. Was there good intelligence coming from previous institutions? Sarah confirmed that there was information on transition forms for learners in the Exeter area.

The appointment of the new student experience leader had had a marked impact on the development of the enrichment agenda, with new programmes added including information advice and guidance on progression and careers and a volunteering group. The ambiguity of the term "enrichment" had led to unreliable responses in the student survey, and no longer reflected non-compulsory curriculum, but was now part of programmes of study.

The Committee noted the report

6.2 Prevent Strategy

The report was received and Jennie reminded the Committee that although radicalisation had always been on the safeguarding agenda, the College had been working hard to make sure that it met the new statutory *Prevent* duty, which was introduced as part of the government's Counter-Terrorism and Security Act. This required the College to have procedures in place to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. The Act would receive Royal Assent in the summer, but in readiness the College had developed an action plan, training schedule and draft strategy which would require Board approval. Partnerships with police and community agencies were in place and had been effective during the first incident at the College, which had been picked up quickly and acted upon. As a consequence, police had provided training for students in the College.

Governors considered whether there were effective transition intelligence between secondary schools and the College. Whilst varied, the process was for the College to meet with the Child Protection Officers (CPOs) at the schools and with whom there were good relationships. The potential to collaborate with partners such as the University and hospitals was considered. There could be economies of scale in such services as multi-faith chaplaincies. Sarah confirmed that multi-faith chaplains acted as a triage service.

Jennie confirmed that there would be a requirement to have a dedicated Prevent Governor. As part of the safeguarding agenda it was proposed that the current Safeguarding Governor take on the role. This would be a Board appointment and the recommendation would be considered at the Search and Governance meeting on 11th May 2015.

BHS

Concluding, Jennie confirmed that there would be training for all Board members at the July Board, but that there was an invitation to join the

College Leadership Team away day for the full four hour training. Those interested were invited to contact the Clerk.

The Committee noted the report.

7. Human Resources

Gemma Noble, Head of HR, *joined the meeting for item 7 only*

7.1 Policies for Approval:

- Flexible Working Policy
- Pensions Policy
- Family Friendly Policy
- Recruitment and Selection

The report was received and Gemma confirmed that the Committee was invited to approve two new policies and there were two amendments to previously approved policies. The Clerk reminded the Committee that it approved HR Policies on behalf of the Board.

The Pensions Policy and Flexible Working Policy were new and Gemma highlighted key elements of each. She confirmed that the College did not anticipate any financial implications and that both followed standard documentation and had been through the Trade Unions.

The Committee agreed

- a) to approve the Pensions Policy**
- b) to approve the Flexible Working Policy**

The Recruitment and Selection Policy included amendments which strengthened processes for safeguarding and child protection. The Family Friendly Policy's changes were due to amendments in employment legislation and were mandatory. The Committee agreed that it should consider and approve amendments to Policies made outside of the scheduled review programme, to ensure that the content of all HR Policies was scrutinised by the Committee. BHS/GN

The Committee agreed to

Approve the amendments to the Recruitment and Selection Policy and to the Family Friendly Policy

8. Minutes/ reports for information

The following reports were received and **noted**:

- 8.1 Safeguarding meeting - Draft Minutes, 6th March 2015
- 8.2 Equality Objectives Scheme meeting – Draft Minutes, 18th March 2015

8.3 Intensive Care Progress

John confirmed that the intensive care process was working well and updated the Committee on the progress of subjects under review.

8.4 QIP update

John confirmed the Quality Improvement Plan was on target. He also updated the Committee on data for grade 1 colleges which showed that quality metrics such as success rates dropped for a significant number following inspection. This College was bucking the trend with success rates sustained. The Committee requested a report at its next meeting.

BHS

8.5 Retention Attendance and Punctuality Update

Data was strong despite the negative impact of compulsory English and maths to level 2.

8.6 HR Update on Teaching Staff Qualifications

8.7 Internal Inspection Reports

- Construction
- Media and Performing Arts

Internal inspections were carried out by external Ofsted Inspectors. In most cases self-assessment grades were ratified by the inspectors, but in the case of Media and Performing Arts, Inspectors had graded the faculty outstanding, above the grade 2 self-assessment. Whilst a snapshot in time, the 61% outstanding observations was nevertheless unprecedented.

Governors were assured that there had been good internal communication of the Faculty's success and the Committee commended the Head of Faculty

8.8 E4L minutes

The Chair of E4L confirmed that the annual conference was scheduled for 1st July 2015 and would be a more interactive session discussing the implications of the General Election outcome. Maintaining these effective partnerships within the City was important but often challenging.

8.9 Risk register

The updated risk register, mapped to the Quality and Standards Committee, was received and the mitigating factors for a new risk were considered. The risk had been added to the register as a result of external factors which the Senior Leadership Team was monitoring.

9. **Dates of Next meetings**

Monday 8th June 2015