

Approved

## EXETER COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017 in the Board Room, Hele Road, Exeter College**

#### **Present**

Dave Underwood	Chair
John Laramy	
Bindu Arjoon	
John Bunting	
Dalya Erdogan	
Chris Hoar	
Elaine Hobson	
Craig Marshall	
Martin Owen	
Emma Webber	
Silas Welsh	

#### **Apologies**

#### **Observers**

Philip Bostock  
Jo Matthews

#### **In Attendance**

Rob Bosworth	Vice Principal, Schools, Partnerships and Curriculum
Julie Skinner	Vice Principal, Standards and Student Experience
<i>Item 4.1 only</i> Tim Burnham	
<i>Items 4.2 &amp; 4.3 only</i> Jennie Hamilton	
<i>Item 4.1 only</i> Malcolm Walsh	
Barbara Sweeney	Clerk to the Corporation

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

The Chair welcomed colleagues, including those observing, to the meeting.

There were no apologies.

There were no declarations of interest

2. **Minutes**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016, as circulated, were agreed and signed by the Chair.

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### 3. **Matters arising**

#### 3.1 AS Exams

The update was received and Rob Bosworth, Vice Principal Schools Partnerships and Curriculum reminded the Committee that it had received a report on the proposed changes to A levels, with a new linear model, removing the external AS level at the end of the first year, and with a single A level exam at the end of the two year course. With the change to GCSE grades from letters to a numerical grading, but with no clear equivalent mapping, the College had agreed on the entry criteria, working with schools to communicate the College's position, and promoting aspirational targets. The College had also agreed that a 3+1 model would be adopted. This would include a programme of enrichment with three A levels, but would not preclude a fourth A level for able students.

The College had undergone extensive consultation and engagement with other colleges with whom it benchmarked to assess the appetite for adopting the linear model as opposed to retaining AS exams with the external year one examination. A significant percentage had opted to retain AS, with the philosophy of subsequently evaluating outcomes from those offering the linear model and a phased transition.

By initially offering 20% of learners the linear option, the College could manage the risk, as however robust the planning and modelling was, it was no substitute for experience. Risks included a fall in retention with the associated loss of income. By retaining AS, learners who were not likely to succeed over a two year course could achieve qualifications at the end of year one (an argument commended by the Student Governor) and that with the uncertainty over the robustness of entry grades, even with internal exams and assessments, there was risk in taking students onto a two year course with no robust assessment of ability on entry. Adopting the 20:80 model, with 80% still having AS examinations, limited the degree of exposure.

Governors expressed concern that the 20% of learners on the linear A level model were being included in a pilot study which might not be in their best interest. The Committee was assured that several subjects were already linear and that where this had already been adopted it was because it was demonstrably better for the student, with curriculum specifications written for linear A levels. However, there was no right or wrong answer to which was the better model, but the College had, after significant and robust debate, agreed to adopt the phased approach.

As an operational issue there was no requirement for Committee approval, however the Committee endorsed the decision and agreed to

**Note the update.**

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*Tim Burnham, Learning Support Manager and Malcolm Walsh, Assistant Principal, joined the meeting for item 4.1 only.*

#### 4. **Holistic**

##### 4.1 Learning Support Update

The report was received and taken as read. Tim provided a summary of the key issues using a power point presentation.

He updated the Committee on the overall delivery of cross College support and, based on the 2015-16 academic year, provided statistics to illustrate increasing demand for 1:1 support, in-class enabling support, and assessment of those requiring additional exam access arrangements. There were highly valued enablers in every level 1 class who were currently supporting 80 groups plus 85 English and maths groups.

Those who declared a need on application forms were interviewed prior to enrolling. This pre planning phase was valuable. However there was no historic data for individual learners coming from previous schools. The pressure on capacity was exacerbated by the challenging February deadline for assessment of learners on evidence of need and their normal way of working, in order to request additional support during exams.

Tim reminded Governors that Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had replaced Statements. There was an obligation to meet the needs of these learners and, currently in the second year of EHCPs, demand was rising. Annual reviews were required and there was a heavy administrative burden.

Finally, Tim updated Governors on High Needs Students. Funding, capped at £4k per student, followed the learner from special schools, and it was a requirement to track success, which, at all levels, was marginally higher than the whole college success rates.

Summarising, Tim confirmed that challenges included increased demand to support lower level needs students, often vocational learners who were required to study GCSE English and maths, and EHCP students who required significant monitoring with associated administration. There was also the requirement to gather evidence of need to submit by the deadline to manage exam access arrangements. It was key to maximise High Needs Students' claims, and to forecast resource requirements for new students, whilst working within the Devon County Council (DCC) cap of £4k for students from special schools, (although actual costs were often significantly higher). It was important to assess learners when they first applied and difficult decisions had to be made if it was inappropriate to provide a College place because of excessive resource needs.

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Whilst Malcolm confirmed the increase in demand was an unintended consequence of maths and English GCSE requirements, many of these learners would have attracted support funding anyway.

The DCC cap for funding High Needs Students appeared arbitrary and inadequate, with the risk of being open to review and the cap reduced. Other colleges in the Devon College Group had the same concerns and the group was working together with common purpose to influence negotiations with DCC over funding for High Needs Students

The Committee agreed to

**a) note the report**

**b) commend the work of the team**

**c) endorse the actions of the College in working with the Devon College Group to influence Devon County Council on the level of funding for High Needs Students.**

*Jennie Hamilton, Head of Student Experience, joined for items 4.2 and 4.3*

#### 4.2 Department of Student Experience Annual Review

The report and presentation were received and Jennie confirmed that the review was the first of the new Department, which brought together a number of cross College student support services, with the learner at its heart. Illustrating the Departmental structure, some aspects were new, such as transition, with the remit of accessing historical information to support the transition to College. There was a very proactive Department Management Group (DMG) and an effective deputy. Evidence of strong alignment of the team was through positive feedback on the staff survey, and the impact of the Department was measurable through learner outcomes and the holistic student experience.

Data showed an increase in student contacts, but also an enhanced qualitative student experience. Systems and processes were effective and of a high quality, and well embedded cross College. The service had been improved through streamlining, with evidence of improved impact.

Going forward, Mental Health and Wellbeing were key priorities. There was a whole College approach and, far from being a sticking plaster, there were initiatives, in collaboration with HR, with a real impact on wellbeing for both staff and students. Good practice was shared and there was effective partnership working to enhance resilience and mindfulness.

The Behaviour Strategy pulled together existing strands, including

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retention and attendance, into a co-ordinated strategy. This was a timely project, given the new Ofsted focus. A review of the role of the lead tutor and safeguarding roles were to effect greater cross College consistency and a more effective service.

The Committee commended the report and presentation. Was the increase in contacts due to rise in demand or greater awareness? It was likely to be due to both. Additional drop in sessions had meant that more students could be helped. But the growth in learner numbers had also contributed.

The demand for mental health issues had growth and the Department was working closely with the Student Representative Committee. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy would support delivery of the service. Suicide in young men was a growing issue and external professionals were coming to the College to support the service.

Governors challenged equality of access. Did part time learners have equal opportunity? Jennie confirmed that the service was available to all, but that for part time adult learners it was more likely to be a signposting service. The Department was working with Business Solutions to offer an enhanced service to apprentices, and the election of an Apprentice Student Representative on the Committee was a new strength. An apprentices' freshers' fayre was planned. There were weekly visits by the Department to faculties away from the city centre, such as construction and engineering.

The Committee commended the work of the Department and the report. The Safeguarding and Prevent Governor, due to retire in June 2017, said it had been a privilege to work with the team, which had taken on additional workload and provided an outstanding service.

### **The Committee noted the report.**

#### Safeguarding Policies

The following Policies were received and taken as read.

- Anti-Bullying
- Substance Misuse
- Intimate Care

Jennie confirmed that the biennial review of all Safeguarding Policies was due but, because of the volume, they would be scrutinised in batches over several meetings. The Policies for review had been streamlined to be fit for purpose, helpful and realistic. In the Anti Bullying Policy, the use of the words "young people" and "students" was not consistent and, indeed, not all students were young. This would be addressed ahead of the final

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version The use of binary gender specific words was no longer appropriate.

The Policy on Substance Misuse was supported by two associated procedures Jennie confirmed the process for specific scenarios, including those involving College students offsite. She assured the Committee that students were supported, and that there were strong relationships with community partners.

Finally the Policy on Intimate Care, whilst pertaining to a small minority, nonetheless made clear the safeguarding responsibilities of those providing care.

Subject to a number of small amendments the Committee agreed to

**Recommend the Safeguarding Policies to the Board at its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017.**

BHS

*Vote: Unanimous*

## 5. **Teaching and Learning**

### 5.1 Teaching Learning and Assessment Update

The mid-year report was received and Julie Skinner, Vice Principal, Standards and Student Experience, highlighted the key issues. There had been two internal inspections in the academic year, both achieving grade1, having been validated by external inspectors. She reminded the Committee that the new Performance Indication and Evaluation (PIE) had been introduced with a more holistic review of performance.

The new Director of Teaching and Learning was working effectively alongside her role as Head of Faculty and Julie alerted Governors to the Departmental structure.

Of the observations to date there had been a high percentage of grades 1 and 2. During the visit of colleagues from another high performing college, the party had dropped in on lesson observations and the open door culture, stretch and student engagement plus confidence to challenge, had been commended.

Governors also noted that the number of observations year to date had fallen short of previous years. The process was on going and observations were risk assessed, with the potentially stronger performers observed later in the cycle.

The Committee challenged that the PIE process involved self-evaluation but no outcomes. These were available through the Management Information Systems (MIS) and performance was tracked by other

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metrics. PIE was designed to provide a more holistic evaluation, triangulated at the end of year with outcomes to provide more than a single snap shot in time as per an observation. The aspiration was for a College with great students, not just good observations.

**The Committee noted the report.**

5.2 FE Week League Tables

The report and link to the FE Week league table was received and Julie reminded the Committee that ratings were based on four measures with a possible maximum score of 16, which the College had achieved to become the top college in the Country.

However, Julie cautioned that as the sector was changing, and new benchmarks introduced, it was not possible to be top of all. There were still areas which the College was working to improve. It was important to assess the validity and relevance of tables.

**The Committee noted the update**

5.3 Intensive Care Progress

The report, which included a progress update on each subject under scrutiny, was received and taken as read.

Julie confirmed that there was now greater focus on subjects in outpatients, with less of a light touch. Faculty Heads were invited to present to the Senior Curriculum Group (SCG) to explain action plans for improvement, usually relating to attainment and/or progression. There was increased scrutiny and rigor, with drilling down to course level.

**The Committee expressed confidence in the process and noted the report.**

5.4 Retention, Attendance and Punctuality Update

The report, showing retention and attendance by faculty and level was received and considered. In year indicators showed that retention was strong and that this bode well for outcomes, given there was normally a strong correlation.

Attendance, although slightly down on last year, had shown an upturn in January, indicating that recovery strategies were effective.

GCSE maths and English were included in the data and were likely to be masking other outcomes. It was proposed that these be stripped out in future reports.

JS

The Committee agreed that the new Senior Leadership Structure was

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working well and that the division of responsibilities had added value with an increased focus on key agendas.

**The Committee noted the report.**

**6. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

The following reports were received and noted:

6.1 Safeguarding meeting –Draft minutes from meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

6.2 E & D and British Values Steering group (EDBV) minutes

6.3 HR Update on Teaching Staff Qualifications

6.4 Internal Inspection Reports – Health Care and Public Services

6.5 Risk register

6.6 Items to take to the Board

The Committee agreed to items for the executive summary to go to the Board on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

6.6 Items for next meeting

The Committee was content that beside those items on the annual cycle of business a report from the 16-18 Student Governor on healthy food at the College should be included on the next agenda. The Head of Estates would be invited to respond and provide clarification.

BHS

An update on the Quality Strategy, included in the draft cycle of business would not be on the agenda for the next meeting as the Committee had previously agree that the Quality Strategy should be part of the Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy.

**7. Dates of next meetings**

Monday	27	March	2017
Monday	5	June	2017