

Meeting/Committee	Quality & Standards Committee
Date of meeting	30 th June 2021

1 Declarations of Interest and Eligibility

The Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.

2 Welcome, introduction and apologies for absence

Attendees:

Jennifer Worsdale
Veronica Bruce-McCoy
Mirella Barnes
Katie Curtis
Jason Austin
Heather Barnett

Chair

In attendance:

Janet Pryke
Tracey Mace-Akroyd
Maxine Bagshaw
Claire Godfrey
Cheryl Martin
Andrew Birch
Sally Steadman
Rebecca Ahmed
Angela Bates

Governor (Vice Chair)
Deputy Principal/CEO
Interim Director of Governance
Assistant Principal
Assistant Principal
Head of Higher Education
Executive Director of Marketing & Learner
Recruitment
English & Maths Curriculum Innovation Manager
Assistant Principal

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Lindsay Littlewood (Staff Governor), Dan Stanbra (Director: Adult Education & Contracts) Kate Noble (Executive Director Finance), Rebecca Blackburn (AP: Apps, High Level Skills and Innovation) and Leanne Adams (Contracts Manager)

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2021

The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held 12th May 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

There were no matters arising.

4 Actions Progress Report

The committee were happy to note the content of the summary provided and the Assistant Principal provided an update on predicted achievement. She referenced the paper circulated to governors on the 7th June 2021 and was then able to confirm the position as of today. Key matters noted were:

- Classroom based – there has only been a slight dip and the position is now 86.19%. If all students achieve as planned, this will mean that the college will be in line with prior year and national. Committee were advised that the position does not now tend to change before year end.
- Every learner who is predicted to fail is on a tracker and is being monitored. Committee were advised that there are still a number of students who are expected to fail in relation to basic skills.
- 16-18 provision is the significant area of risk with achievement, including Maths and English, predicted to be 79.89%
- 19+ prediction is to be above prior year and at national.

Committee were given assurance that there is still a lot happening and that staff are doing all that they can to support students, particularly in relation to functional skills.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

5 WASH

The Deputy Principal introduced this item and provided an overview with key matters discussed including:

- Courses that are planned to be provided at the centre include foundation degree in professional practice in health and social care, level 3 engineering, business management, access to HE and adult care.
- Minimum numbers have now been reviewed and the college requires at least 20 in a number of areas i.e. engineering and electrical 27, business management 28 and adult care 25. She confirmed that these do present a challenge in terms of the numbers needed to enrol. This is higher than the 15 originally envisaged.
- Provision at the centre still feels like the right thing to do in terms of the colleges civic responsibility, however there are increasing costs and therefore it is important to carefully monitor student numbers.
- Average cost per annum for use of the classrooms is £45.4k
- Provision at the centre does present an opportunity for the college to offer an increased curriculum.

One member of the committee asked what the appetite is to continue with the partnership. Deputy Principal confirmed that, if the numbers are achieved, then the provision will hit the contribution required. She confirmed that staff have been very robust in terms of their conversations with partners and the need for them to promote and really push recruitment and not simply leave it to the college.

Committee asked for a summary of the risks. Deputy Principal indicated that if the college is not part of the partnership then it cannot influence the offer and it is highly likely that they would seek another FE/HE partner as a provider, which would bring a risk of competition.

Committee asked whether the college has any idea of the likely level of interest in the curriculum offer. Deputy Principal indicated that this is not yet clear and provided assurance that student numbers in the curriculum plan are lower than reported today to build in a prudent approach. Committee were advised that in a number of areas last year there were insufficient numbers to run distinct groups and therefore they were merged. It was confirmed that if the numbers are not at the required level then the college would offer at one of its other campuses and not at WASH.

A challenge from the committee was that the provision is based upon very ambitious targets and that some look to be more achievable than others and they asked how the mix/package of the offer would work. Deputy Principal indicated that these are the courses originally discussed with the health authority and that it aligns with the RNN UCR offer/planned delivery. She advised that the college can only afford to deliver at WASH if it achieves the numbers required for each of the courses. College would only pay for the rooms it would use and there is the option to deliver at other RNN sites.

One member of the committee asked whether the college has staff resources to be able to deliver high quality courses. Deputy Principal confirmed that resources are in place and that the programmes have already been developed and are portable across the sites.

Whilst acknowledging the risks the committee felt that it would be a fabulous building and would be a real way of building aspiration. Level 3's in particular would see it as a HE progression opportunity which would be a real positive. Committee agreed that they were supportive of the continued partnership but urged staff to closely monitor the situation in September 2021, when there is greater clarity regarding student numbers and respond appropriately if the targets are not achieved.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the update provided
- b) Recommend that the Board continue to support the planned partnership.

6 Update on SAR and QIP

The Assistant Principal introduced this agenda item and indicated that the QIP as it is now only one update away from yearend is getting quite long. Key matters brought to the committee's attention were:

- The RAG ratings
- Impact assessments
- Progress on headline priorities

Committee were advised that there are two main areas of risk, which are:

- Construction provision, &
- Functional skills (basic skills) in Maths and English – she advised that despite every effort it is unlikely that the college will hit its targets and prior year outcomes.

She confirmed that the college has made good progress in a number of areas, including:

- Digital experience
- Supporting learners in relation to digital poverty
- Upskilling staff
- Robust and thorough curriculum planning process – this has now been completed and is moving to the next phase.

- Assistant Principals are all working well together.

A question and challenge from the committee was to give greater clarity on the key issues in both functional skills and construction. In relation to functional skills the key points summarised were:

- Because of covid disruptions learners were not as ready as they could have been to sit the exams
- Every learner has an intervention plan in place but the college has not been able to implement these as quickly as it would have liked
- All students have to sit an examination and there are no TAGs
- Committee were given assurance that there is lots of additional activity taking place
- Committee were advised that maths, in both functional skills and GCSEs, is starting to emerge as a national problem.
- Not as easy to develop the required skills through blended learning.
- Maths attendance has been an issue
- College made a policy decision, which was the right thing to do for learners, which was to enrol them on functional skills and not put everyone on to a GCSE course. She explained that GCSEs are slightly easier to 'scrape through' but the college does not believe that this is the right thing for the learners.

Committee asked whether it is the case that the college will see improvements over time. Committee were given assurance that it would, principally because of the new model introduced. It was explained that covid meant that the college was forced to take a blended approach which meant that it was far more difficult to push students on. Committee were advised that the impact will be seen in terms of the progress made from the starting points and not the achievements.

In relation to construction a number of issues were summarised, including:

- Because of covid the college faced a number of constraints
- Despite good roll out of digital provision and CPD staff in this area have been less swift to develop their skills
- This is a highly practical area of provision
- National lockdown did not help to support practical activities and therefore there were more student withdrawals and, those that did remain, did not have the experience that they had expected.
- 40% of withdrawals are students who have gone in to employment, which is a positive destination but does impact upon college data.
- Intervention and support was not as timely as it could have been but committee were given assurance that summer support sessions will take place.
- No ability to TAG and no adaptations made by awarding organisations despite the missed learning.

Deputy Principal indicated that issues in this area are not solely related to the quality of education and that there have been some staff performance issues across all campuses. College is now recruiting additional staff to broaden capacity and bring in fresh ideas and perspectives. New curriculum managers are now in place and are starting to make a difference.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

7 Curriculum Development and Planning

Key matters highlighted were:

- Classroom based planning has now concluded
- College is planning for growth of circa 400 ESFA learners which is not insignificant
- Committee were advised that staff are undertaking a 'reality check' process just to give assurance.
- In terms of growth, these numbers will be funded on a lagged basis therefore income is set and means a risk in relation to costs which has to be managed.
- Senior Team are testing confidence regarding growth before staffing is put in place to provide the increased provision
- In some areas the college is looking at additional marketing
- In some areas the college does not yet have the staff in place and therefore there is a smaller risk
- In relation to AEB the curriculum plan is still under review. All areas are providing for growth which is a risk. College is working to make sure that the courses are fully marketed. In terms of numbers, there is still a gap when compared to full allocation and therefore there is more to do.
- In relation to HE the college is planning for a small amount of growth i.e. 76 learners
- In relation to apprenticeship provision a review is ongoing, particularly in terms of the numbers and level of contribution. Senior team are also working to review the caseload/work load of assessors to ensure that this is right.

Assistant Principal confirmed that the college is working really hard to ensure that the curriculum in place is right for the learners.

AGREED to note the content of the update provided.

8 Update on AEB

The Deputy Principal presented this item and drew the committees attention to the detailed report prepared by Dan Stanbra. She confirmed that the report identifies the work done so far since his appointment and also identifies predicted activity and where it is believed that the core structure and curriculum needs to be reviewed. She indicated that the most significant risk identified are adults infilling in to study programme groups. College has to ensure that the quality of education is in place and that this aligns with what has been offered and promised to students.

In relation to predictions, the report suggests a slight improvement from the predictions made at the same time last year. However committee were asked to be aware that this is not against the prior yearend achievement position. The predictions last year were too high and achievements declined, therefore to provide an accurate picture of the provision comparisons will need to be made against the final achievement positions for 19/20 and 20/21.

Deputy Principal confirmed that the college is really pleased with the start he has made.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

9 Applications and Internal Planning

Key matters brought to the committees attention were:

- Application numbers are strong across the board

- Applications are still increasing steadily
- College has lots of keep warm activities taking place and planned
- 870 potential learners have been booked on to taster events next week and the aim is to increase this to 1000. Communication takes place via WhatsApp which seems to be very positively received.
- There are still some open days planned and the next HE open day will be face to face
- Marketing activity will continue in to and through the summer
- Enrolments predominantly take place online but they can be at one of the sites
- College is approximately 1000 applications up on the same point in the prior year

In relation to the split between full time and part time enrolments committee asked for further clarification. It was explained that full time students are predominantly 16-18 and that part time a mix of ages.

Committee made the observation that the numbers appear similar to the position two years ago and they asked what the outturn position was then. Committee were advised that this was approximately 2950.

CEO advised that the college has taken the decision to continue with face to face events as the guidance now allows this, however not all colleges and schools are taking the same approach.

Committee asked for an update on online enrolment and were advised that this is something the college did last year and that it has learnt from this. Committee were given assurance that each campus has the facility to enrol on site and that this is to overcome any issues that may exist in relation to digital poverty. College will enrol from 12th August and it is usual to enrol progressing learners a little earlier than this to stagger the activity required.

In relation to the numbers provided the committee asked whether the duplicates had been removed. It was explained that they have not been at this stage but will be when there is more certainty. College is undertaking more IAG to ensure that students are on the right course for them. Committee were given assurance that staff do know who the duplicates are and that, in the main, they are in construction although there are small pockets elsewhere too.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

10 Progression Data – Destinations (including surveys)

The Assistant Principal introduced this item and explained that the report explains how the college measures destinations and progression. There is a full data set for 19/20 including the intended and also the actuals which are captured via J2 research. Report also includes the current intended destinations for 20/21 learners.

In relation to 19/20 87% went in to employment, positive progression or stayed in learning and it was explained that this follows the national trend. There were therefore 13% who are unknown, took a gap year or are looking for employment.

In terms of the surveys undertaken, committee were advised that there are a number of wider research questions in relation to knowledge, skills and behaviours and that generally the position is positive in relation to these. 19/20 data shows that there were more learners that went in to employment when compared to 18/19, particularly in relation to the 16-18 cohort. Committee were advised that apprenticeship progression was very strong.

Assistant Principal advised that intended destinations are usually captured in May however, because the college was reopening its sites at that time this year, it was felt that it may be too early for some learners to be sure what their future plans would be. As a consequence, the college has been continuing to collect data and the deadline date for finalisation is Friday this week when the college will know 100% what the intended plans of students are.

Committee all agreed that it was a very positive report but were advised that there are still a high number of learners that the college couldn't contact (888) and therefore is looking to improve its knowledge, particularly capturing any change of mobile numbers. In relation to the surveys the college is looking at other options as well as J2 research.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

11 Compliments and Complaints

The Assistant Principal introduced this item and explained that it is the quality of learner experience team which oversee the processes in relation to this. Key matters noted were:

- 27% reduction in relation to complaints
- 4 investigations ongoing
- Report provides information on 58 complaints
- 50% of complaints were upheld or partially upheld which gives confidence regarding the robustness of the processes
- Highest number of complaints relate to teaching, learning and assessment at 41%, however this is down on the prior year position
- Second highest area of complaint is enrolment, exams and certification
- Usually most complaints are received in September however in this year it was March
- Number of learners commenting on their positive experience has improved

When considering the report committee were advised that the complaints in relation to safeguarding, prevent and British values were linked to two persistent complainants and that the college has had to deal with a very large number of complaints by these individuals. All of the complaints were robustly investigated and ultimately considered by a panel. In terms of lessons learned, these two individuals really challenged the colleges systems and processes and, to ensure that this doesn't happen again, the college will add in an additional step where staff can refer earlier to SLT if it looks like an issue is spiralling. A challenge from the committee was to be really clear in terms of the escalation processes.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

12 Safeguarding, Prevent and E&D

The Assistant Principal presented her comprehensive written report and key matters noted were:

- Safeguarding at the college is effective
- This is an end of year report now given the timing of the meeting
- College is fully compliant in relation to the prevent duty
- College works closely with local and regional prevent teams and they provide support via briefings, news letters and cascading.
- College regularly carries out internal QA and has audited its systems and processes in relation to all sexual abuse interventions and has made updates in year if required.
- Sexual harm and sexual violence training is provided to all staff
- Retention rates are lower this year for vulnerable learners however assurance was given that all are supported.
- College did lose four 16-18 male learners due to historic safeguarding concerns and all were linked with external support
- Robust wraparound services are in place

Committee were advised that Ofsted have published a further update in relation to sexual violence in the last two days and part of this includes a requirement to demonstrate what leaders and governors know in terms of the numbers, detail etc. Information in relation to this will be needed at the start of next inspection and therefore there is an information and training requirement.

Interim Director of Governance confirmed that there is a scheduled governor development session on the 7th September and it was agreed that this would be a topic alongside equality diversity and inclusion and a workshop on risk appetite.

CEO made the observation that the board will need to maintain strong governor links in relation to safeguarding and EDI to replace the outgoing Chair, Catherine Burn.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

13 Risk

The Deputy Principal introduced this item and summarised the current risks in a number of areas:

- Classroom based – the college needs to bring in the predicted achievements in relation to Maths and English. If they come in as predicted, the college will be at national and slightly better than prior year.
- Vocational provision is holding up well in most areas
- Apprenticeship outcomes are predicted to be just above where they were in the prior year and circa 1.1-2% higher. College needs to achieve minimum level performance at the very least and staff are working very hard in relation to this. There are a group of electrical apprentices that currently fall under the MLP and the college is working with JTL to complete any outstanding aspects.
- TAG assessment process is currently causing some challenges, in that the college has been inundated with sample requests from external awarding organisations to carry out QA. Some of these come with really tight deadlines however currently there are no anticipated problems.
- Quality of education and alignment with curriculum and skills is a risk in some areas, particularly at North Notts where the college needs to tackle some performance and staffing issues.

- Quality of education in apprenticeship provision remains a focus and the college needs to ensure that as many learners as possible complete their end point assessments by 31st July 2021.
- College needs to maintain a clear and accurate view of progress. College has been able to do this but will need to really be able to robustly evidence this from day one at inspection.
- Staff continue to work towards completing the Ofsted monitoring visit actions. Committee were reminded that one action is for governors to ensure that improvements are made and that there is improved tracking in place for apprenticeship provision.
- In relation to achievement predictions for apprentices, it was explained that as these learners have been with the college for longer their position in relation to maths and English functional skills is stronger than classroom based provision.
- Risk remains in terms of the college needing to get a grade 'good' at next inspection.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

14 Committee Review

The interim Director of Governance introduced her written report and invited the committee to reflect upon its performance for the year and identify any areas that could be improved. Committee considered the terms of reference and agreed that they had been able to discharge their responsibilities as requested by the Board. Committee discussed membership and noted that there is a requirement for three members and felt that the majority should be made up of independent governors so that, on behalf of the board, this committee is able to clearly demonstrate oversight and challenge. In terms of an update it was noted that at 3.5 the reference to 'Director of Apprenticeships' should now be an Assistant Principal role. Director of Governance confirmed that this would be updated.

Committee then considered the workplan and agreed that it was comprehensive and acknowledged the need to be flexible. It was felt that there is the potential to roll some items together at certain meeting points in the year.

Committee felt that the meeting dates were planned to align with key activities and data provision during the year.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the update provided
- b) Save for the minor update to job title identified, to recommend that the committee terms of reference roll forward in 21/22 unchanged
- c) Recommend continuing membership for 21/22
- d) Approve the workplan as presented for 21/22

15 HE Update

The Head of Higher Education presented his end of year summary and key matters noted were:

- All HE teaching has now been concluded
- Retention rate is higher than in the previous year which demonstrates that staff and students have been able to overcome a very challenging year.

- College has responded well to digital poverty and has been able to financially support via hardship funding. More is now available and will be distributed.
- Initial feedback on the year is positive and particularly that student experience has been good which is not the case for some university students. Feedback shows that learners want and need face to face teaching.
- College is committed to improving the levels of access and participation. Disability retention is very strong however the college is down on polar quintile 2 in relation to BAME, however the college does think this position will improve.
- Access and participation plan is almost approved by OFS. There is one further query that the college will respond to this week.

In general discussion it was agreed that the fees charged by the college (£6,950) are one of its strengths, in that the college is able to provide the same quality for two thirds of the cost charged at some universities.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

16 Subcontracting Report

The Deputy Principal introduced this report and referred the committee to the TRACE data. She confirmed that predicted achievement remains high, save for provision at Rotherham United Community Trust. She explained that they have really struggled to deliver community provision during lockdown and that social distancing has led to some activities being cancelled.

Lerner feedback is very positive. College continues to check and receive assurance regarding safeguarding arrangements and is confident in this area. All subcontractors have been checked against the Ofsted guidance on sexual abuse and information in relation to this is provided to all partners. Number of subcontractors is now down to nine. College has maintained CPD and has supported partners with a move to remote learning. She explained that there is a really strong working partnership in place internally.

Committee asked whether unannounced visits take place. It was confirmed that they do as part of the compliance checks and that, sitting alongside this, there are planned deep dives.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

17 Update on Apprenticeships

The report prepared was considered and the Deputy Principal confirmed that the new apprenticeship task and finish group is now established and the meetings schedule with a workplan drafted. She advised that there are some strong external appointments to the group which should provide really beneficial input.

Committee were advised that apprenticeship provision is still a focus in construction and engineering with some staff still under management interventions.

Committees attention was then drawn to the destinations survey and it was noted that the satisfaction level is high, however it was acknowledged that there is more that can be done in terms of IAG and careers information.

Committee were advised that a lot of work is currently being done in terms of the financials relating to provision and really making sure that the curriculum is the best it can be.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

18 AOB

There were no items of additional business.

19 Date and time of next meeting

This was confirmed as 29th September 2021.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

Signed _____ Chair

Date _____