

Meeting/Committee	Quality & Standards Committee
Date of meeting	29 th September 2021 at 5pm (via Google Meet)

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	Chair
Katie Curtis	
Jason Austin	
Shirley Collier	

In attendance:

Tracey Mace-Akroyd	Deputy Principal/CEO
Maxine Bagshaw	Interim Director of Governance
Claire Godfrey	Assistant Principal
Cheryl Martin	Assistant Principal
Andrew Birch	Head of Higher Education
Sally Steadman	Director of Marketing & Learner Recruitment
Angela Bates	Assistant Principal
Dan Stanbra	Director: Adult Education and Contracts
Rebecca Blackburn	Assistant Principal

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Heather Barnett and Veronica de Bruce McCoy.

Interim Director of Governance advised that Mirella Palazzo has stepped down from the committee until the new year because of capacity challenges.

Shirley Collier was welcomed to her first meeting and round table introductions were made.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2021

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

AGREED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held 30th June 2021.

There were no matters arising.

4 Actions Progress Report

Committee were happy to note the content of the update provided.

5 Learner recruitment and enrolments

The content of the detailed report circulated in advance was reviewed and then committee were given a verbal update. Key matters noted were:

- ESFA funded numbers are not where the college anticipated and are below budget and ESFA target. Position today is 2868 which should be compared with an ESFA allocation figure of 2945.
- There are still some FLEX students to enrol and potentially there are further students on campus who have not been enrolled. Assurance was given that these are a focus.
- Access controls are to be switched on which will identify any students who don't yet have a lanyard and this will prompt enrolment if still outstanding.
- 3214 is the college budgeted target for ESFA funded learners.
- HE numbers are also below target. College is still chasing those who have not enrolled who are on site and is also running a number of campaigns including 'its not too late' and there is an open event next week.
- It is believed that a lot of students are enrolled to do A Levels at schools and Sixth Form Colleges rather than vocational subjects, because of the positive GCSE results. A similar position also applies in relation to HE and the A Level results with students opting to go to universities rather than FE HE provision.

One member of the committee asked for further details on the anticipated attrition rates and the expectation regarding day 42. The committee were advised that the numbers reported today take in to account any withdrawals already known. It was noted that, in the prior academic year there was a high withdrawal rate and the hope is that it will be less this year, particularly because of new arrangements in place including the keeping in touch whatsapp messages. Committee were given assurance that a lot of work is being done to support existing students and follow up on those who expressed an interest but haven't enrolled. Anecdotally the local and regional picture appears to be that more students are completing A Levels in Sixth Forms rather than vocational subjects. Committee were advised that the college ran a 'swap don't drop' event today. This was not attended by huge numbers which would suggest that the college has got the information, advice and guidance right. College saw a small number of new students arrive today and it is expected that this will continue for a little while. College is also expecting some careers pathway cohorts which will be in addition to the numbers provided.

Committee asked where the numbers now leave the college in terms of staffing. CEO advised that the senior team is meeting with all Curriculum Managers and Assistant Principals in the next few weeks to look at the curriculum offer and review numbers, group sizes, staffing requirements etc. Expectation is that by mid-October the senior team will really know whether the college is over staffed. Committee were given assurance that the college is being creative in terms of any vacancies that exist and is not looking to recruit to fill, except for key areas.

One member of the committee asked whether the current numbers are a surprise. CEO confirmed that they are a surprise, particularly as the college had really good early indications however they have not materialised at the expected levels.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

6 QIAP – 2020/21 completion and 21/22 plan

The Assistant Principal introduced this item and indicated that, as the QIAP is a substantial document, her intention was to assume that it had been read. She drew committee's attention to the front page which summarises the areas for improvement. Key risks identified are:

- Functional skills maths and English – she confirmed that the college is still trying to maximise achievements in this area.
- Construction achievements and, to a lesser extent, engineering.
- Apprenticeship provision is still a focus.

In terms of these risks, committee were reminded that there were no modifications or adaptations made for functional skills and therefore achievement concerns in this area are more understandable and therefore the concern really is construction.

In terms of the year end position there were a number of surprises and particularly referred to was motor vehicle. It was explained that in a recent conversation with the ESFA they have said that other colleges have seen a similar picture and therefore it looks like some sectors have been more heavily impacted because of the requirement for exams, assessments and licences to practice. Some are an emerging national picture and motor vehicle seems to be one of these.

One member of the committee noted that the decision had been taken to restructure in a number of areas because of performance concerns and they asked how soon the college will know whether the changes have had a positive impact and how governors can obtain assurance in relation to this.

Committee were advised that construction provision across all sites is subject to scrutiny and that there are frequent additional meetings which take place to regularly monitor and analyse the situation and that the same applies in relation to functional skills. One of the early indications, as a touch point, are the three progression review boards where all elements are reviewed on a learner by learner basis. At these meetings staff look at attendance, withdrawals, punctuality etc. Progression board one will be the first opportunity to assess the impact of the new structure.

College is also in the process of creating bespoke CPD for construction and engineering tutors to ensure that they are brought up to the same point. This will be through a blended approach using digital and face to face.

Curriculum performance reviews start in the second week of October and will feed in to the progression board reviews.

Deputy CEO advised that reporting has now changed, with each aspect either being RAG rated as green or red, so either it is at the required standard or it isn't. Committee were given assurance that there will be frequent communications to ensure that all managers understand the changes. The college is aiming high and will not accept anything less.

Committee were advised that there is a lot of in class focus on student progress with lots of specific questions asked to students and not just 'how are you'. Committee were advised that November will be a really clear evaluation point, in terms of where the college is and the impact of the changes made.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

7 Self-assessment and business review plans 2021/22

Assistant Principal introduced this item and drew Governor's attention to the FE quality monitoring cycle provided. This gives all of the dates and it was explained that progression boards sit alongside these. Committee were advised that there is a really clear transition between the curriculum areas, each campus and then the group. The golden thread is the deep dives throughout the year.

It was explained that the grey shaded areas relate to the SAR and quality assurance processes. They are, in the main, cyclical but remain fluid so that the college can add and do extra as required.

One member of the committee asked whether there will be a full data set to sit alongside the SAR. It was explained that, at curriculum level it will be in the position statements and committee were given assurance that every person within the organisation can access up to date data on a daily basis. Committee were given assurance that the SAR pack will be comprehensive and that the information is capable of being split in a number of different ways.

ILR final return is the last week of October and this will then allow for finalisation of the data set.

Deputy CEO indicated that the college has a new data dashboard which it will be able to share with Governors in November 2021 (Deputy CEO – November 2021).

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

8 Group data summary table and delivery report – 2020/21 year end

Committee were advised that the college is currently working hard to get to the hard close position which is on 20th October 2021. In terms of the current position, key matters noted were:

- Retention is 91.7% which is similar to prior year
- 16-18 saw a significant decline
- Attendance – a decline but this has been significantly impacted by construction over all sites. Lower attainment groups did not engage as well as others.
- Achievement overall rate is currently 78.58% and the expectation for the final position is 82%. This would be a 4% decline on the prior year.
- College is currently working through 400 aims to assess whether these learners stay on functional skills or move to GCSE
- Adult position is looking slightly better but will still see a decline
- High needs – again a decline and, in particular, has been impacted by functional skills

Staff reiterated that the issues to focus on are functional skills and construction. Deputy CEO advised that staff are undertaking some analysis in relation to the qualifications where there were no adaptations to better understand and compare nationally. It was explained that the college has a high percentage of licence to practise vocational qualifications, when compared to other colleges, who have more courses which used the teacher assessed grades process.

In terms of nationally reported data it was explained that there is a decline of 5.6% in relation to Level 1 construction and a decline of 10.7% in relation to Level 1 transport and motor vehicle.

Committee acknowledged that 2020/21 was not a normal year and therefore all agreed that it was important to better understand why the differences and the surprises.

Deputy CEO provided assurance that senior staff really know where the issues are in terms of performance, quality and staffing. It is not the intention to blame covid and the college is obtaining a clearer picture and knows what needs to be done.

One member of the committee expressed the view that it is really clear that the college has high expectations and ambitions and that the papers really articulate what the issues are and what is being done. A challenge was to look above and beyond 19/20 and 20/21 as comparisons and to really understand what the best benchmarks are. Deputy CEO confirmed that staff were having internal discussions on this which will link to setting KPIs. She confirmed that it is not the intention to go below the expected position, irrespective of the covid impact on data.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

9 Risk Report

The Deputy CEO introduced this item and confirmed that risks remain in relation to:

- Overall achievement rates in the classroom.
- Level 1 provision.
- Level 1 functional skills maths – it was more difficult to support learners through blended delivery in this area.
- Apprenticeship provision.

She advised that the enrolment process this year has taken too long for some learners. Staff completed a manual calculation in week 1 and it became clear that there was a backlog and therefore more staff were recruited to clear this. This did have an early impact on diagnostic assessments. She expressed the view that by flooding registers the college will be able to better understand the position.

Committee were reminded that the college had a provider monitoring visit by Ofsted in January and made the decision not to go for a further monitoring visit and asked to go for a full inspection instead. Committee's attention was drawn to section 8 of the report which highlights the three key actions from the visit.

Deputy CEO expressed the belief that the inspection will entirely focus upon the curriculum and the progress of learners given the unreliability of data because of covid. She confirmed that the college has made a good start and that now every week is important to be able to evidence progress.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

10 Maths and English delivery 2021/22

Committee were advised that the college has been horizon scanning in relation to both functional skills and GCSEs with a view to looking at jobs and next steps. College has taken the decision to reduce the number of students enrolled on functional skills and increase the number on GCSEs. This decision was taken following consultation with staff and an English and maths presentation was made to every learner in week 1 to allow them to make an informed choice. College has seen that more are choosing to go on to GCSE programmes. Assistant Principal expressed the view that there were a myriad of benefits to GCSEs e.g. an outcome of a grade versus a pass or fail. Staff really believe that this helps them on their journey to achieve a grade 4 or above.

In addition, college has a new approach to assessments which will support differentiated learning plans. This will enable students to fully access high quality teaching and learning and support progress.

In terms of choices there are 977 students on English GCSE which should be compared to 823 last year. In relation to Maths GCSE, the position this year is 905 and should be compared to 727 last year.

Committee were advised that the college is also able to use the 16-19 small group tuition fund to sit alongside standard Maths and English provision, this is in addition to GCSE lessons. There is circa £800k available which is £300k unused from last year and £500k for this year. The work in this area will really go towards supporting students to get higher GCSE grades.

One member of the committee referred to section 4.4 and 4.5 in the strategy and asked what the impact on learners is following the functional skills outcomes. Staff advised that, following one to one discussions with learners, there are 75 who want to continue with functional skills and 177 who have chosen GCSE this year when they had done functional skills last year. All have been assessed to ensure that they meet the criteria. It was confirmed that the Maths and English team have really worked hard to ensure that learners make the right choices and have options available.

Committee asked for an update in relation to staff recruitment for the small group sessions. Committee were advised that 11 members of staff were recruited last year and have been in place for 6 months now. It was explained that they were put to good use over the summer. The £300k unused funds from last year will exclusively go towards their salary and the £500k available for this year will enable recruitment of additional staff, which is currently underway.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

11 Apprenticeship Update

Staff advised that apprenticeship provision is definitely on a journey and expressed the view that they were starting to see early signs of improvement. Data is broadly in line with the same point in the prior year.

Committee's attention was drawn to a number of changes made, including:

- Structure of curriculum management,
- This enables closer curriculum collaboration particularly in specialisms,
- Specialist expertise will be crucial for improvements,
- A lot of work has started with staff to ensure high expectations,
- Work is ongoing with employers with regards to reiterating high expectations

It was confirmed that the college acknowledges that some apprentices have not had the experience that they should have had but that early conversations with employers this year suggests an acknowledgement of improvements.

Committee took the opportunity to congratulate staff for getting employers so engaged and they acknowledged that the report presented was really clear and transparent.

Committee asked for an update in relation to those apprentices who should have completed by 31st August 2021 but didn't. Staff advised that some were affected by the high level of demand and low availability of end point assessors. It was described as a challenge but explained that the college has a good quality team in place who can rely on their relationships with awarding organisations. It was confirmed that the college did all it could to complete as many by 31st August and continues to support those who still need to complete so that this occurs at the earliest opportunity.

In terms of future reporting, committee agreed that they would like to see the data presented in tabular form as well as the narrative. (Rebecca Blackburn, each report in 2021/22)

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

12 HE Update

Committee's attention was drawn to the detailed written report and it was explained that online enrolments have now moved on. Current position is 425 and the expectation is that this will increase. Numbers, including higher apprentices, is 449. Committee were given assurance that staff are chasing enrolments on a daily basis.

Committee were reminded that the colleges Access and Participation Plan has been submitted to OFS and a formal response is still awaited.

In relation to retention the in year and cumulative position remains strong and higher than the prior year achievement is expected to be in the 90%. Retention for learners with a disability is really positive as is the position for polar quintile 1. There is still more work to do on polar quintile 2 and BAME. College is targeting intervention to support both of these cohorts to ensure consistency.

Committee were advised that the national student survey was completed in the summer with a really positive overall satisfaction rate obtained which is 5.5% above national benchmark.

One member of the committee noted that there had been 5 withdrawals in relation to childcare provision and they asked whether any had re-enrolled. Staff expressed the view that not all of the 5 will have re-enrolled but 2 did express an interest. Governors indicated that this would be an interesting benchmark to see how many now feel that the position is more settled with less covid impact. It was agreed that re-enrolment numbers would be provided in the next report (Andrew Birch, January 2022).

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

13 Adult Education and Contracts update

Committee's attention was drawn to the detailed report and an update was given on a number of aspects, including:

- Overall position sees a marginal decline in achievements when compared to the prior year and 3 year trend. Current position is 84.4% and the prediction is 87%, although this may fall slightly because of some subcontractor outcomes.
- 40% of adults are on English and Maths aims, particularly functional skills. There are some opportunities to give them in relation to access to other qualifications.
- College continues to drive forward in terms of monitoring the quality of provision with subcontractors
- College is about to start the deep dive process which will ensure increasing rigour with subcontractors.
- Construction and engineering shows a consistent trend as reported previously
- In terms of site analysis, this gives a slightly false indication as achievement rates are influenced by the type of provision e.g. short/intense or infill in to larger aims.

Committee asked for an overview of the financial risks, specifically in relation to AEB clawback. Committee were advised that the college reached 72% of contract in 2020/21 and therefore there is a risk of clawback. College is working with the ESFA to try and minimise and manage the level of clawback and is submitting a business case to the ESFA in relation to this. It is not expected that there will be any leeway going forward and therefore the college has to ensure robust oversight and accountability in this area. It was explained that the business case is focused on geography, current financial position and the type of learning taking place. Committee were given assurance that the college will provide fully for clawback in the accounts just in case the business case submitted is not successful.

One member of the committee made reference to page 7 and the reference to 'region'. They indicated that it would be useful to know what this is and how it is measured and how it will be reported on for governors. Staff explained that one of the primary outputs is for the college to become a market leader and that, in the main, the measure of success will be consistently hitting financial targets with no risk of clawback. This will be at the same time as focusing on quality. College wants to become the default option with partners e.g. DWP and commercial and it was acknowledged that this would all help to improve progression opportunities. A challenge from the committee was that the implications of becoming a 'market leader' need to be clear.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

14 16-18 Study Programme update

The detailed written report provided was considered and an update was given on a number of areas:

- There is a lot of positivity and a real buzz around the college.
- The wow week went well with some great activities undertaken in week 1
- Staff have done a lot of walkthroughs, deep dive and an initial experience survey completed. These helped to target the swap don't drop events which had low numbers, which suggests confidence that students are on the right course.
- Start of the year is feeling really positive

- ESFA numbers are a concern but there are plans in place to help the college meet allocation
- Report lists the strategies to improve quality of education and how governors can obtain assurance
- Suitability boards are taking place next week
- Knowledge, skills and behaviour assessments are now complete and give confidence that the college really knows starting points
- College will now start to be more able to use the data to track and articulate progress.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

15 High Needs

Key matters noted were:

- College continues to self-assess as 'good' in this area.
- There were 188 learners in 20/21, the majority of whom were on EHCP plans with the local authority.
- The college has a high proportion of High Needs learners.
- They do make good progress with achievement being at 83.71% and retention 93.56%.
- Attendance does require improvement.
- No discernible age group differences.
- A decline on basic skills achievement

Chair advised that, Heather Barnett who had been unable to attend the meeting had raised a number of questions/observations, one of which was that more information could be provided in relation to destinations. It was explained that it had not been possible to finalise data in relation to this for this meeting but assurance was given that an update would be provided in the next report ([Angela Bates, January 2022](#)).

A further question is, how is progress assessed other than via achievements and outcomes data. It was explained that there are differences because of variations in how the curriculum is delivered and it was explained that there are a number of mechanisms for ensuring progress, including:

- Planners that the FLEX tutors use
- SEN support specialists who use pro monitor and progress reviews
- Suitability boards
- Progress boards

In addition, staff observe and take a view on how interactive students are. There are meet and greets every morning and walk rounds on the site. This allows staff to observe the growth and progress just by interacting with them. Over time they interact with other learners which shows a growth in confidence and independence.

College introduced a new recording methodology over the summer which was described as a collaborative solution. These students have a form period at the start of the day which sets incremental progress targets for the day and then there is form time at the end of the day to capture and record. This dovetails in to key one to one sessions.

Curriculum is focused on social and personal skills and it is now possible to capture the bitesize incremental steps. Committee were advised that the team are working really hard to get it right at the start of the year so that the college can really evidence progress in this area.

In terms of learner experience it was explained that the FLEX team are one of the best in progressing social action programmes.

A question and challenge from one member of the committee was that there was not much mention of EHCPs and the central role that they would have on the learner journey. Staff advised that not all High Needs learners are named on an EHCP and not all EHCP learners have High Needs. Assurance was given that there are conversations with the local authority regarding all aspects of support. It was explained that the college also sees varying quality regarding the EHCPs that it receives and therefore doesn't use this as the 'be all and end all' and they are only a starting point. It was confirmed that EHCP objectives are included within the new documentation and that this dovetails with what staff believe are their starting points.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

16 Safeguarding, Prevent and E&D

Key matters highlighted from the written report were:

- Safeguarding is effective
- College fully compliant with prevent duties. RNN has updated the action plans which are regularly reviewed and, as a minimum, on a monthly basis.
- Staff carry out internal QA which shows the college is fully compliant. Reviews have identified good practice.
- Policies are reviewed on at least an annual basis
- Sexual harm and sexual violence training provided to all staff. There is an action plan in place to create a culture of 'it can happen here'.
- In terms of E&D there is an emerging gender achievement gap (6%). A lot of this can be attributed to construction underperformance where there is a high percentage of males.
- In terms of 19+ learners there is a gap to be addressed in terms of those who have declared a disability. It could potentially be related to trends in relation to English and Maths. A question from the committee was to better understand what is a coincidence compared to where there is a causal link.

A challenge from the committee was where there is more work to be done in terms of analysis and particularly whether Maths and English is the influencing factor, or is the gap in place some courses more than others. A view expressed was that it may be influenced by basic skills.

Staff acknowledged that there was more data analysis required and it was confirmed that this would be reported to the EDI management meeting. A challenge from the committee was not to make sweeping statements but to really have the underpinning evidence following analysis. Committee challenged the fact that this information needs to sit alongside the adult education information provided by Dan Stanbra and what his view is. It was agreed that there would be an update report on this ([Angela Bates, January 2022](#)).

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

17 AOB

There were no items of additional business.

18 Date and time of next meeting

This was confirmed as 18th November 2021 at 5pm. Interim Director of Governance reminded that this meeting has a single agenda item which is SAR scrutiny meeting. The SAR for 2020/21 will then be approved and validated at the Q&S 1st December meeting prior to ratification by the Board on 15th December.

The meeting closed at 6.35pm

Signed _____ Chair

Date _____