

Meeting/Committee	Quality & Standards Committee
Date of meeting	10 th October 2022 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, introductions and apologies for absence

Attendees:

Jenny Worsdale	Chair
Heather Barnett	
Katie Curtis	
Jason Austin	
Donna Clifford	
Carol Stanfield	

In attendance:

Tracey Mace-Akroyd	Deputy Principal/CEO
Maxine Bagshaw	Director of Governance
Cheryl Martin	Assistant Principal
Clare Godfrey	Assistant Principal
Daniel Stanbra	Director Adult Education & Contracts
Andrew Birch	Head of Higher Education
Laura Reid	Head of Student Services – Safeguarding & Student Support
Dave Cosgrove	Head of Business Intelligence and Performance
Mel Smith	Interim Director of Programmes for Young People
Lucy Barnwell	Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment
Kelly Beighton	Interim Director of High Level Skills and Innovation
Dave Smith	Interim Campus Manager - Rotherham
Keith Sanderson	Interim Campus Manager – North Notts Campus
Debra Adams	Interim Campus Manager – Dearne Valley Campus

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Veronica De Bruce McCoy and Katie Asgari.

Committee were advised that Shirley Collier has transferred committees for this academic year and will be supporting the Audit & Risk Committee rather than Quality and Standards in 2022/23.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2022

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 on 27th June 2022.

There were no matters arising.

4 Actions Progress Report

The committee were happy to note the content of the update provided and just two points were discussed:

- Line 10 – the DCEO requested clarification on the reporting format request in relation to the 'strategic link' to be made in the reports. Following discussion, it was agreed that reports, where appropriate, would make a link to the strategic indicators. It was agreed that this would be trialled in reports for the next meeting and then committee and staff can take a view on whether it is helpful. Governors all agreed that they would not wish this to be an overly burdensome request and would welcome feedback at the next meeting.
- Line 9 – committee did not feel that the request had been completely met by the item 12 report and it was therefore agreed that this information would be reported at the next meeting (**Director of AE&C, December 2022**). Committee were advised that the Subcontracting Strategy for 2022-2025 has been updated and is going for board approval next week. He confirmed that all comments and observations made by governors had been included within the updated document.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

5 Learner recruitment, marketing and enrolments 2022/23

Committee all agreed that they were happy to take the report as read and move straight in to questions. A challenge from one governor was that the information provided looks concerning i.e that student numbers are much lower than planned. She commented that this in a fact a theme that permeates throughout many of the papers for this meeting. She asked whether there has been an opportunity to reflect upon what is working and more importantly what is not working. She expressed the view that the report highlights some significant risks and therefore governors need to better understand what needs to be done differently.

Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment indicated that, in terms of activities, the group has done all of the 'usual' activities and that this sits alongside an updated strategy. She expressed the view that, to date, the campaigns have probably not been as creative as they could be. She indicated that there were a number of positives seen this year, including:

- The enrolment process up to 5th September,
- Taster sessions provided and
- The WoW week

In terms of where the group can improve, these include:

- Activities after the 5th September each year,
- Customer experience and the customer journey,
- More tours to be offered,
- Sales training for staff,
- Currently the marketing and learner recruitment team are too focused on administration rather than sales,

- The interview process – is it engaging and inspiring enough,
- How the group looks after its learners from start to finish,
- More budget to be invested to attract adult learners, and
- Smarter advertising with greater use of digital and less on print and billboards.

She expressed the view that the economy, as it is now, is not helping the group and an example given was that internal progression is down by 15%. Group has used a company called J2R to track why this might be the case. They are finding that having to go in to employment is a real need now, however the larger percentage is because students are going to other FE colleges.

Question from one member of the committee was how much research is done to ascertain the size of the student pool that exists and, in relation to internal progression, is the group researching why the 315 identified didn't progress. In relation to the latter point, committee were advised that a survey was issued however the response rate was so low it wasn't meaningful. Challenge from the committee was that the data should show trends, in terms of the levels that are and aren't progressing. This can be analysed to show if there are any particular areas where students might be leaving and choosing not to progress and an example given was Level 2 hairdressing, where learners can then go out to work and don't necessarily need a Level 3 to be able to gain employment. Staff advised that this analysis hasn't yet been undertaken and it was agreed that staff would look to work with all data available to try and really understand the underlying reasons for failing to hit targets set and expectations.

In relation to retention, committee were given assurance that the 'swap don't drop' campaigns are run internally all the time.

One committee member noted that the conversion rate reported is 53% and asked how this sits with the target. Committee were advised that the target was 65% and therefore this has not been achieved. Committee were advised that the group is supported by a company called Perlos who provide a lot of the communication support e.g. Whatsapp messages to learners, however they don't seem to be hitting the mark and, as they are quite an expensive resource, staff are reviewing the contract. It was confirmed that 53% is lower than in previous years.

One member of the committee noted that, in terms of late starters, there are 107 enrolments reported with a note that the college will continue to enrol and she therefore asked how these learners will be monitored and supported as they are likely to be a higher risk in relation to retention. Staff advised that there were a number of ways to focus in on retention, including:

- Smooth enrolment
- The extent of the offer in the WoW week
- Meticulous monitoring
- Effective parents' evenings so that influencers are involved early
- Swap don't drop activities

CEO advised that the Deputy CEO and the Executive Director Finance have undertaken full curriculum reviews and that this is by course, by level and by campus to really understand where the areas of under recruitment are. A report in relation to this will be provided as soon as it is available.

In terms of the late starters, it was confirmed that all through support is provided including attendance, mentoring, finances etc.

One governor noted that on page 3 of the report there was a comment that curriculum swaps between the campuses could be causing issues and they asked whether this is the same risk posed regarding planned 'consolidation' that had been discussed previously. It was acknowledged that a concern previously raised was learner engagement if they had to travel between campuses. CEO indicated that, given the curriculum review just completed, the senior team would now be able to assess this and also look at site efficiencies.

In terms of the report and the section titled 'risk implications' all agreed that these were concerning figures.

Committee then asked for an update on the plans for 2023/24 marketing and governors asked how proactive the group is being. Director of marketing and learner recruitment confirmed that the school engagement team are currently all out on visits and activities. She described the communication plan in place as 'more bullish'. She advised that the group is also looking at a partnership programme with key feeder schools which will be a really positive development. The recruitment and marketing campaign message has been changed and is now based around 'futures for everyone'. There was a recent careers fayre at the UCR with good school engagement. She indicated that, one school in particular has positively commented on the smoothness of the enrolment and transition process which is helping to build the groups reputation. Committee were advised that the group is also looking at taster sessions for pupils in primary schools which will be an opportunity to get them in very early.

One governor commented on the SWAT analysis provided in the presentation slides and expressed the view that it looks to be quite internally. She asked whether there is more that can be done to look at the external environment. Staff advised that this is included within the fuller strategy document and that, the power point presentation slides circulated focus in on the key areas that came up in the SWAT analysis. Governors asked how the SWAT analysis had been created i.e. the evidence base. Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment explained that she had completed some mystery shopping with both competitors and the groups own provision. Aspects considered were:

- Presentation and facilities
- Sales process
- Customer service

She indicated that the group faired well in terms of presentation, facilities and customer service but that there are opportunities to improve the sales process and that, with this, much more can be achieved. Challenge from one governor was to more fully articulate skills development within the marketing plan. A suggestion made and agreed was that the full marketing strategy would be presented to the board in a separate session so that all governors have an opportunity to comment and ask questions ([Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment, November 2022](#)).

When considering the report as a whole all agreed that the critical success factors identified need to be the focus.

In relation to the 16-18 risk identified, the CEO advised that there is a potential opportunity to deliver more with a subcontractor. This is currently being explored but staff need to complete full due diligence before this is presented as a proposal to the board.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

6 QIP – 2021/22 completion and 22/23 plan

The Assistant Principal presented her report and explained that it is based upon predicted achievement, with the final ILR submission being due in one week. She confirmed that an update report would be presented to the next meeting once the ILR position has been finalised (Assistant Principal, December 2022).

She drew committees' attention to the quality cycle circulated and explained that this lists all of the quality assurance activities planned for this academic year.

One member of the committee asked for further information in relation to the apprenticeship predicted achievement rate. It was agreed that this would be taken later in the meeting as part of agenda item 10, which is the full apprenticeship update.

In relation to English and maths, committee asked whether the group now knows the impact of the bootcamps given the GCSE results. Committee were advised that English and Maths achievement is 67.75% which is a decline in performance. National benchmarks are not yet known so this may reflect a national declining picture. Staff advised that there had been really good feedback from the bootcamp participants and that English and maths attendance at RO4 was the highest at any point in the year. Staff indicated that, it is very difficult to measure the direct impact as bootcamps are just one of a number of interventions.

One member of the committee asked whether those individuals who did not turn up for exams has had a negative impact. Staff confirmed that there was a direct negative impact. Challenge from the committee was to try and show achievement for those learners who did sit the exam i.e. strip out the impact of exam non-attenders, as this would show how well learners did when they fully participated.

Staff advised that learners who were not likely to achieve because of poor attendance were known during the year. They reminded that the group made a strategy decision in 2021/22 to inform learners of their choices and many students enrolled on to GCSE rather than functional skills and, as a consequence, were expecting a decline in achievement rates and a decline in high grades for the first year. Committee asked what the position was in terms of high grades i.e. grade 4 and above. It was confirmed that it was 17.66% in English and 10.31% in maths.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

7 Group data summary table, KPI's and delivery report – 2021/22 yearend

Committee considered the data information provided and requested that, in all future reports, the information provided is in a tabulated form rather than narrative (Head of Business Intelligence and Performance, all reports).

Committee all agreed that they were happy to take the report as read and move straight in to questions. One member of the committee noted that the percentage of 'internal applicants' was 75% and they asked how this compares to previous years. It was confirmed that the figure is usually higher at circa 90%.

One member of the committee noted that there are a reported 497 'no achievement's showing on the system' and they asked whether this will have an impact upon the data. It was explained that these are claims that are currently being processed but that, as the group already knows who is and who isn't likely to achieve, the expectation is limited change to the reported data.

One governor asked whether, in terms of the 'bigger picture', the group is on the right trajectory. Staff indicated that, for some types of provision the group is and

areas are showing increases in achievement rates, however for some cohorts there is more work to do. Challenge from the committee was to again provide a quick tabular snapshot and overview so that, in terms of trends, it is really easy to see where the group is improving, where it is static and where it is declining.

Deputy CEO indicated that, for classroom based learning for group overall, 16-19 and 19+ is going in the right direction with achievement rates improving from the final 2020/21 position. For 16-18 year olds the achievement rates may be below national, however no national rates have been published since 2019 which may mean that they don't accurately reflect the current picture. In relation to apprenticeship provision, she confirmed that achievement rates have declined and that the reasons for this are provided in the apprenticeship update later in the meeting.

AGREED to note the content of the report provided.

8 Risk report

Committee were happy to take the report as read and acknowledged that a number of the risks had been and would be discussed as part of other agenda items. Governors indicated that there were two risks which don't appear to feature in other detailed reports and they therefore asked for an update to be provided. These are in relation to:

- Recruitment of staff, and
- Subcontract with JTL.

Committee were advised that risks highlighted in relation to digital staffing have now been reduced, with the position stabilising, and therefore the resource challenges anticipated may reduce. In addition, the need to continue to work with JTL has also reduced. In relation to engineering and electrical instillation, committee were advised that a new curriculum manager is now in post and he have made a really promising start. Group is also about to make an offer regarding the CTL position. In relation to electrical instillation, staff are also due to shortly meet with an electrical company who may potentially be able to support in the interim until permanent staffing recruitment can take place. Staff advised that, for the first time in a long time, there is a full complement of engineering staff in place.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

9 Safeguarding and prevent, including equality & diversity

Committee were happy to take the report as read. One governor noted that, in the previous meeting report presented there was a reference to eight people being recruited to help provide support in terms of mental health issues and they asked what the impact of this was, in terms of resourcing and demand. The Head of Student Services advised that she had only been able to recruit to six out of the eight roles but that the six in post had been fully utilised in the first weeks to support with transition, attendance etc. She indicated that, as it is so early in the year, it is difficult to currently articulate impact, however they have been very busy. Committee were advised that September is usually quite busy in any event in terms of learner anxiety as they start the year and that the expectation is that their role will change over the year, to become more focused on the academic and less on the pastoral.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

10 Inspire programme – impact analysis

The Assistant Principal drew committees' attention to her detailed report and confirmed that the sessions were really well attended and very positive feedback provided. Overall attendance and achievement rates for the participants was higher than for those who did not attend. She indicated that, the initiative should be considered as a real success and in fact the group has submitted a Beacon Award application based upon the data and the case studies. She confirmed that progression rates for participants were also higher than non-participants.

Assistant Principal indicated that she would like to try and resource the initiative much earlier this year i.e. to start after Christmas rather than in March, as this is a known risk period in terms of retention. In terms of the positive differences, these include:

- +4.1% attendance
- +5.25% predicted achievement
- +18.95% for GCSE English and maths

Question from one governor was whether the resource invested was 'worth it' i.e. did the predicted achievement improve after the programme. Staff advised that all of the learners who were participants were considered to be 'at risk' for various reasons and therefore there is confidence that it did have a positive impact. CEO expressed the view that this is quite impressive data from a single project which should be commended. Deputy CEO advised that there are also personal case studies and reflections which are quite compelling and that these sit alongside the data. In terms of the Beacon Award application, committee were advised that the outcome will not be known until November 2023.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

11 Apprenticeship update

The Assistant Principal presented her report and key matters highlighted were:

- Group was expecting a decline in achievement rates
- A lot of robust discussions and decisions had to be taken with apprentices and employers where staff were unable to put in place educational recovery, given legacy issues
- Whilst the current national data position is not yet known, the group is expecting a performance decline
- During the year there was an inability to recruit some key staff which did lead to gaps
- The two most affected areas are in engineering and construction

In considering the report, one governor noted that a risk identified is a 'poor Ofsted outcome' and they asked how poor? Assistant Principal expressed confidence that the group can demonstrate that it has moved forward significantly from a low starting point position. Group is still self-assessing as requires improvement but can demonstrate good progress, albeit that there is an expected decline in achievement rates.

Committee acknowledged that the decision to 'clear out the legacy data' will have impacted negatively upon achievement rates in this year. Staff confirmed that there had been a need to make some culture changes and that this was for staff, learners and employers. Deputy CEO indicated that a current unknown is the use of data by Ofsted at inspection. This is something that will not be known until the planning meeting. Inspection could all be based on deep dives rather than data. She reminded that the groups last published data is a 60% achievement rate. It

was confirmed that Ofsted do have access to the groups ILR data and therefore they will know that retention has declined.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

12 HE & HLS update

Committee were happy to take the report as read. One governor asked whether the group is still seeing enquiries and enrolments. It was confirmed that these are only small numbers and that, it is likely that any further enquiries and enrolments will be limited.

One member of the committee asked for further information regarding the National Student Survey and specifically the issues in computing. It was confirmed that there were some real challenges for this course, particularly in terms of staffing which did lead to a difficult year. Recruitment for digital provision is always hard and was an issue all year. Staff confirmed that the group worked closely with Hull University and were completely transparent about the position and that the issues in this area brought down the response percentages for the whole survey. Committee were advised that TEF is based upon four years' worth of results and, as a consequence, the group remains above national.

Committee asked whether the staffing issues have now been resolved. It was confirmed that they have and that staff are now working hard to bridge any learning gaps.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

13 Adult Education and Contracts update

In terms of performance, the Director of Adult Education & Contracts confirmed that AEB provision demonstrates outstanding characteristics which should support any Ofsted grade positively. Predicted achievement is 91.7% and learner satisfaction is 93%. He advised that, almost all learners demonstrate good progress. He acknowledged however that there are always things that can be improved and confirmed that progression tracking has now been brought in to line with other areas of provision so it can be monitored more accurately.

In terms of future reporting, committee indicated that it would be helpful to breakdown achievement by levels. Staff advised that there are some variances between the levels but that they are not significant. The overall position is above the national rate which is 89%.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

14 16-18 Study Programme update

The Director of Programmes for Young People advised that staff and students are attending a simulated terror attack event at the Sheffield Arena today and confirmed that she would bring a verbal feedback update to the next meeting ([Director of Programmes for Young People, December 2022](#)).

A challenge from one member of the committee was in terms of the suggestion in the report that a decline in retention has not impacted upon progress and achievement. All agreed that this couldn't be the case. They specifically referred to the third bullet point, where retention looks to be low but then the report says

that interventions have been successful. Staff indicated that the retention at North Notts has improved but that this is not the case across all campuses and all areas of provision. Challenge from the committee was for information to be provided in a tabulated form going forward so that trend analysis is very clear (**Director of Programmes for Young People, each report**).

In general discussion, one member of the committee asked how the college will manage expectations that in future years all Level 3 results will be communicated at the same time as A Levels and Level 2 results with GCSE's. It was acknowledged that this will be a challenge for FE generally, albeit that the underlying aim of getting results out on a timely basis is the right one. It was agreed that this was something to monitor, if it does become a sector expectation.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

15 Curriculum Planning intentions 2023-2025 and 2025-2027

Deputy Principal introduced this item and confirmed that it is a report that follows on from governor discussions at the strategy day. It provides more detail and builds upon debate and also gives information on the FEC support available. She confirmed that there will be a more detailed document that is circulated to staff.

One governor asked about the extent to which the plan takes in to account the withdrawal of funding for a number of courses which is expected. Deputy CEO advised that the curriculum planning visioning day scheduled will include a lot of employer contributions regarding their skills needs and that this will then need to sit alongside funding changes. She indicated that the recent review of curriculum numbers has led to some quite challenging discussions and that these will all be factored in to the plans moving forward.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

16 T Level report

Committee were happy to take the report as read. One governor asked whether the group is starting to see student interest in T Levels. It was confirmed that it is, particularly during the open evening discussions and that, T Levels now appear on the webpage and in the course guides. One governor noted that, in the report there is a reference to a 'September 2023 review' and a proposal to reduce the target numbers. They asked for the rationale for this. Committee were advised that staff have worked with other colleges who have already provided T Levels and the consensus feedback is that they started with lower numbers than expected. This also aligns with DFE guidance. On this basis, a cautious approach has been taken to planning. Committee all agreed that it would be interesting to see when applications start to come through.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

17 Employer Engagement overview report

The Deputy CEO drew committees' attention to the report and she confirmed that there is a more detailed strategy statement scheduled for presentation to board next week.

In considering the report, a question raised was in relation to motor vehicle and governors asked what lies behind the reported position and also what are the expectations. It was explained that the automotive intent is to broaden the offer,

particularly at North Notts. This is to make use of SDF funding and also funding that has just become available via SYMCA. In terms of the longer term provision, it was explained that the aim is to align with demand which is for shorter, snappier provision. Staff confirmed that, whilst apprenticeships remains critically important and a core way to engage, staff are however seeing demand shift. The shorter offer will be an 'extra string to the bow' to meet demand.

Staff advised that apprenticeship enrolment and starts have not been halted but that the group is seeing low numbers. Group is seeing that SME's as less likely to take on apprentices now and the plan is to use advisory boards to gather intelligence in relation to this. Committee were advised that regulatory changes being considered may be having an impact in this area i.e. a proposed move to MOTs being every two years rather than each year. This would halve the revenue for some garages and, as a consequence, they are currently taking a cautious approach to apprenticeship recruitment.

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 Thursday 1st December 2022 at 5pm.

The meeting closed at 6.35pm.

Signed _____ Chair

Date _____