

Meeting/Committee	Quality & Standards Committee
Date of meeting	4 th December 2023 at 5pm (Via Google Meet)

1 Declarations of interest and eligibility

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

2 Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting and introductions were made for Sarah Connerty (interim governance advisor) and Ian Ashman (external board reviewer)

Attendees:

Jenny Worsdale	Chair
Donna Clifford	
Heather Barnett	
Sally Gillborn	
Jason Austin	Principal/CEO
Katie Curtis	

In attendance:

Tracey Mace-Akroyd	Deputy Principal/CEO
Daniel Stanbra	Director of Adult Education and Contracts, English and Maths
Cheryl Martin	Director of Quality and Academic Standards
James Godsell	Director of Employer Partnerships and Apprenticeships
Lucy Barnwell	Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing
Mark Ryan	Vice Principal Curriculum
Ian Ashman	External Board review (observer for first part of the meeting)
Sarah Connerty	Interim governance advisor

Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Laura Reid, Director of Safeguarding and Student Support.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2023

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

Matters Arising

Item 10 – The Executive Director for CP & SP advised that the team are looking to move to PDF format – single file for papers, this had been delayed due to staffing gaps within the executive admin team. **This item is in progress and will be implemented in January 2024.**

Item 9b – Quality of Education - Adults - The Chair asked for a breakdown of the results without subcontracting to see the impact of reduced subcontracting. **The Director of Adult Education & Contracts to forward to the Chair following the meeting.**

AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2023.

4 Group SAR 2022/23 – November 2023

The Director of Quality and Academic Standards provided an overview of the SAR process and validation. The SAR scrutiny panel met on the 21 November and included link governors, SLT and an external reviewer (Associate Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning from Sunderland College). Several recommendations were made to enhance and provide further evidence on grade judgements. All updates have been made and there is the opportunity for the Committee to view the track changes. To streamline the SAR key areas such as destinations which are relevant to several sectors have been included in the impact section only. The Director of Quality and Academic Standards asked the Committee for any comments or further updates prior to recommending to the full Board on the 11 December 2023.

One governor noted that she had compared the two documents and comments from the panel have been included. The areas for improvement section has been strengthened in almost all areas.

The Chair raised suggested updates as follows:

ACTIONS:

- To include key Group and national data benchmarking in the dialogue for ease of reading, noting that full data is included in tables in the SAR
- In the Leadership and Management section to include specific actions against the underperforming areas, for example Level 1.
- Next year to provide the Committee with a marked-up version to view the changes since the SAR validation

The Director of Quality and Academic Standards agreed to review the SAR and consider the proposed updates from the Committee.

The Chair noted that the document is well done and reads very well.

The Principal/CEO reported that the actions from the SAR will be pulled together and included in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and asked when it will be ready. The Deputy Principal/CEO noted that there is a QIP in place which is included in the papers and priority areas for action are already underway. The areas for development coming out of the SAR will be included at the next Quality and Standards Committee with a draft version in place shortly. Each of the curriculum leads have their own QIP with areas for development which are already operational.

The Deputy Principal/CEO reminded governors that the Group is grading against the Ofsted framework. The Group knows there are strengths and weaknesses and are doing something about areas for improvement. The SAR gives assurance on this,

that work is underway, and this is what Ofsted found when they came in. The Group is not in the 'stretch target' position it wanted to be by year end, but the senior team firmly know where weaknesses are and can evidence what action is being taken and the impact.

RESOLVED: The Committee recommended to approve the Group SAR 2022/23- November 2023 to the Board

5 Safeguarding, Prevent and EDI

In the absence of the Director of Student Support & Safeguarding the Committee considered the detailed report and no questions were raised.

AGREED: The Committee noted the update provided.

6 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Safeguarding – feedback from the 16 November 2023 meeting

The link governor for EDI reported:

- The Investors in Diversity meetings have taken place and feedback is pending
- The EDI performance report is very good, and discussions are ongoing about the use of colour in the document
- The Single Equality scheme is useful as a report but needs to go further and will go to the Finance Group. Work is underway reviewing the actions from 2022-3 to develop the 2023-4 report. There are many examples of positive work on EDI from departments. The Estates area is looking at building work, not just around EDI in design, but also EDI while work is going on which is very important.

The link governor for safeguarding reported:

- Looked After Learners attend the Group from 17 different local authorities which presents challenges in different systems and retention with distance to travel
- Trauma informed approaches at the college campuses are comprehensively provided through staff training. This work will continue as benefits are seen in the sector with a North West college being recognised nationally with the College receiving the Queens Anniversary award for positive impact on learners
- Departments have so many examples of the work going on around safeguarding and EDI and it was a very positive meeting.

AGREED: the Committee noted the content of the update provided.

7 Applications and Enrolments 2023/23

The Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing provided an update on applications to date. Numbers for 16-18 are good even with attrition and exceed the target of 3200 by 2025. 16-18 Study Programme numbers are up by 821 at 3332 to date.

There is a need to focus on HE with a drop of 6 from 2022-23 to date and work is underway to get support on product research. Marketing has improved this year and there is a lot more targeted marketing for adults and a lot more flyers and print information as well as digital.

The area of focus is how to further improve for next year and page 3 of the report includes an employment debrief and key actions for 2024-25.

The Chair asked about HE recruitment and what the focus is on. The Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing explained that it is looking at all areas and doing a 360-degree approach to the HE offer. The Deputy Principal/CEO noted that the HE Strategy Group is working hard and receiving updates on this work. The Group is also looking at curriculum options and has started development work with Sheffield Hallam University looking at higher technical qualifications including modular to bring in a different kind of HE customer. The Group is keen to get the USP and get the curriculum right for the marketplace.

The Principal/CEO noted that the Group has applied to be a member of the Yorkshire Institute of Technology which would have the benefit of branding. The Chair noted how difficult the HE market is to get right with so many universities in the area.

The Committee thanked the Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing for the report, noting how pleasing it is to read the successes and see how well it has gone with a team approach and how hard staff are working to retain students.

AGREED: The Committee noted the content of the update provided.

8 Risk Report (including key QIP aspects and underpinning reports)

The Deputy Principal/CEO reported that the risk framework for the Committees is a work in progress with key risks and big impact items being identified for each Committee. The key risks were considered by the SLT on the 23 November 2023 and agreement was reached on the 2023/24 QIP risk ratings. Risks relevant to the Committee are as follows:

RNN Group Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24

Key of Rag Ratings:
 Green: Achieved/intended positive impact gained
 Amber: On target/achieving a positive impact
 Red: Significant concerns/not achieved

OBI/Strat plan	Headline priorities of what the RNN Group needs to do to improve/enhance further for Excellence (including Ofsted Post Inspection Action Plan)	Oct 23	Nov 23	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	End of Year Prod
RNN 1 QE23.01, 02	Ensure attendance is consistently high at all campuses and meets strategic targets of a minimum 90%										
RNN 2 QE23.01, 02, 03	Improve the quality of education and performance of the Group's Apprenticeship provision so that it is consistently good across all programmes, qualification types and levels										
RNN 3 QE23.01, 02, 03	Improve English and mathematics (E&M) performance outcomes and ensure all learners develop literacy and numeracy skills at a higher level										
RNN 4 QE23, PC23	Share the strong TLA practice and improve the Group's Quality of Education from Good towards Excellence/TEF Gold										
RNN 5 F23.05	Ensure the significant estates moves and repurposing of college buildings places minimal disruption on tutors and learners and does not negatively impact teaching and learning and the learner experience										
RNN 6 QE23.03	Deliver an exciting and challenging personal development curriculum with high levels of engagement that supports learners to advance their personal and 'power' skills beyond purely the academic										
RNN 7 QE23.03	Provide accessible and strong career guidance to help learners, including those with SEND, make informed decisions about their next steps and are better prepared for the fast-changing world of work										

The Deputy Principal/CEO provided the following updates and gave assurances that managers know where the risks are, the factors causing them, and support and interventions are in place to mitigate risk:

- Finalising the 22/23 performance outcomes for the Group's provision types**
 Bringing in the achievement rates for the 16-19 study programme and apprenticeship provision remains a risk. There are two final CAD programmes which MIS are working on which might have a 0.2% impact on study programmes.
 The current position for 2022/23 stands at 83.56% which is in line with national rates, 74.07% for 16-18s which is up on the previous year but below national rate and 89.91 for adults against 86.2% national rate. National rates for 22/23 are not yet confirmed and there is the opportunity to edit the SAR in line with national rates when available as there has been a national decline in English and maths achievement
- Ensure attendance is consistently high at all campuses and meets strategic targets of a minimum of 90%.** Attendance is a key risk and focus for the Group. A different approach has been taken this year. Last year the strategies were around interventions and incentives. This year attendance is being tackled head on. Attend to Achieve meetings commenced in September with a second round in November. The data from November shows an improvement between attendance and learners at risk. 1570 learners are receiving support, primarily around mental health and wellbeing from Student Support and Health and Wellbeing teams. The number of

referrals from staff and self-referrals is overwhelming and the SLT are closely monitoring for staff capacity. The latest attendance is 83.72% almost within the College's amber target of 84% and higher than the same period last year. The Chair asked if there are specific slots where attendance is poor. The Deputy Principal/CEO noted that changes in timetabling have caused attendance issues, particularly with more learners in the *swap don't drop* process. Colleagues have filtered all learner attendance that was 84% or below and been through line by line the 1570 learners looking at patterns of poor attendance

- **Improve English and Maths performance outcomes and ensure all learners develop literacy and numeracy skills at a higher level** – a high number of learners are joining the Group from a lower starting point in English and maths and this is a real risk area. 41.43% of learners have a grade 3 with 58.57% below a grade 3 for English and 28.43% with a grade 3 and 75.7% below a grade 3 in maths. It is a real challenge that staff are working through. An E&M working party is reviewing the structure and culture and a revised draft structure as a result of management changes is in place. The SLT is looking at the way E&M is being delivered and using assessments to streamline learners with specific topics to achieve higher grades and smaller group work to work on areas of risk. The business performance reviews continue to monitor E&M as it is a real risk area for the Group.
- **Ensuring the significant estates moves and repurposing of College buildings places minimal disruption on tutors and learners and does not negatively impact teaching and learning and the learner experience.** Estates work is being managed really well. Exec get weekly updates and campus managers are working hard with the project planners and any concerns are dealt with quickly. No risk at this point.
- **Deliver an exciting and challenging personal development curriculum with high levels of engagement that supports learners to advance their personal and 'power' skills beyond purely the academic.** The Group is still recruiting the new team for the structure put in place in September. It is taking a bit of time to settle in and for the new team to adjust with new ways of working and working with the vocational team. The aim is to get a much broader range of enrichment. Learners are already benefitting from personal development, but the breadth of an extensive offer is not yet there

AGREED: the Committee noted the content of the update provided.

9 Provision Type Business Performance Review Reports with Executive summary Mark

- a) **16-18 including High Needs** – the Vice Principal Curriculum reported that a lot of work is underway with employers and stakeholders to contribute to the design of curriculum and the skills needed to ensure students get the best experience to progress to their destination. There are a lot of opportunities for students to develop skills and behaviours and construction and E sports including drone training were highlighted as examples.
The Chair asked about the data and the VP noted that the data identifies areas of focus and concern, and this is having a clear impact already. The Chair asked for further information on the drone training and the VP noted that it has been a very positive experience for students and staff and demonstrates the work being done to create experiential horizon scanned curriculum offers to develop the workforce of the future for the jobs that are not there yet.
- b) **Adults** – the Director of Adult Education and Contracts, English and Maths took the report as read and raised a number of points. It is pleasing that the overall quality of education remain good and overall students are making progress to Level 3 to progress into HE or work. It is a strong position for adult learners in terms of tracking and provision. The Group

provides a responsive and agile offer. One example is the success of a rapid workforce response with 40 employees from Wilko who received specialist individual training and progression to interviews which was welcomed by the Bassetlaw Council and DWP. Thanks were passed to the team at North Notts who reworked capacity to support this work and the Principal/CEO noted that the work of the Group to support Wilko colleagues had been recognised by the community and shows the positive effects of people pulling together.

There is indicative assurance that the Group is on track with non-devolved, collective efforts to drive a more innovative curriculum working closely with business support teams, and actively identifying local communities and stakeholders to realise strategic priorities. This is a positive picture. On the back of the growth there are requirements on resources and work is underway to ensure the curriculum has appropriate resources to grow curriculum offer.

The Chair asked if there is an optimism for a growth in recruitment. The Director noted that there is a four-year improving position and he was more confident than in previous years for growth.

- c) **Apprentices** – the Director of Employer Partnerships and Apprenticeships reported the Group’s Apprenticeship provision has improved in all areas and demonstrates good provision in almost every area. 23/24 objectives have been shared with teams and ongoing refinements to apprenticeship teaching and learning are providing solid foundations for improved learner experience. Initial deep dives for apprenticeships have shown strong teaching and learning with early learning walks demonstrating improvements in apprenticeship delivery. The leadership and management team are setting high expectations for both staff and apprentices, a targeted drive to reduce OOF learners has seen a reduction in overall OOF numbers to 97. Predicted achievement for 23/24 is 65% and in year achievement and retention is high at 85% and 90% with all known learners predicted to achieve. Maths is proving a struggle, particularly for learners with multiple fails and an approved maths only tutor will start to work with learners on a 121 basis in the workplace to support this. The Committee thanked the Director for the reporting and work being carried out and noted the positive intervention for a targeted approach to maths support. It was welcomed to hear that the current position of learners is good.

- d) **HE** – the Director of Quality and Academic Standards noted that the world of HE is changing. Learners feel they have a good experience at the demonstrated by the National Student Survey (NSS) results and feedback from learners. A task and finish group for HE with membership including members of SLT and a HE Strategy Group with a Q&S Committee governor attending meet regularly. The Group is working with an external agency to do some focus work on the HE market in the regional context. The aim is to grow HE provision in the future.

ACTION: the full report on HE was not included in the papers and will be circulated to the Committee for information.

The Chair asked when the task and finish group will report on their findings and if this will be in time for next year’s recruitment. It was noted that it would be in time for shorter provision for 2024-25 with the impact on more traditional HE programmes in 2025-26.

The Committee asked for further details on what way the world of HE is changing. The Director of Quality and Academic Standards explained that there is more competition, some HE providers are reducing fees and changing education criteria including lowering E&M requirements, introducing a year zero with learners being able to take their levels 5 and 6 with a HEI. The

Group has a very successful Saturday Teacher Education BA in Education and Professional Development and is looking at modes of delivery to be more agile and responsive including looking at Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). The Principal/CEO added that the Lifelong Learning Entitlement from 2025¹ is being considered as part of the HE strategy.

The Director of Quality and Academic Standards noted that there is a great deal to do on the HE agenda. Delivering E&M alongside a degree and delivering the essential power skills of the learners are things that the Group does well and looking at ways to make the Group different and provide an offer that suits learners is a key priority.

e) **English and Maths** – the Director of Adult Education and Contracts, English and Maths reported that there has been some positive progress with a plus 2% on overall achievement. Headline progress was identified at the end of last year but whilst learners are more likely to achieve, they didn't make the expected level of progress. A task group has been set up with SLT colleagues present, and the group is actively reviewing the current model for E&M. As part of that progress evidence is coming through from learning walks and Attend to Achieve meetings. Patterns are emerging of the levels of classroom management, inconsistent support and levels of teaching. It has been agreed that rapid transformative change is needed, and the group is liaising with other organisations with the same challenges. There are a lot of different models in the sector and an evolutionary process has been taken looking at where we are now and addressing concerns. From January 2024 a streamed model of provision is being rolled out based on previous achievement and mock results, providing individual support where needed to help ensure learners are in appropriate provision and ensuring the right level of support and stretch and challenge to learners. The provision will move from a three-hour model of two groups to two one and a half hour models of individual support and rotating carousels with vocational linked materials. The aim is for a more dynamic approach to engage learners, ensure progress and to enable staff to manage groups. Discussions are ongoing to better review the structure for the E&M delivery teams to provide a sustainable model of delivery with more coaching and facilitated workshops and progression opportunities for staff. It is hoped that this will meet learners needs and bring new staff to the Group. The concerns about inconsistent teaching are being addressed with CPD and working closely with the Quality team to provide appropriate support, celebrate best practice and bring in inspirational external speakers.

One governor reported that the ideas sound excellent and it is clear there is a good grip on issues but how is the effectiveness of this provision being monitored and how will the Group identify which aspects are having the most impact. The Director explained that the task group is ongoing and there is a rigorous action plan, informed by learning walks by all SLT members, curriculum leads and vocational managers. There has been a 5% improvement in attendance since the presence of vocational staff in classrooms. The learning walks have identified further areas for improvement including classroom management which adds value to the process. Learning walks will be used to monitor progress and impact over the longer term. A deep dive schedule for E&M is taking place in the spring term to see the impact on learners. Attend to Achieve meetings will continue on a regular cycle. Curriculum performance reviews include E&M monitoring. Attendance at exams will give a good indicator and early mocks are planned.

¹ [Lifelong Learning Entitlement - Office for Students](#)

One governor asked if there are progress checkers for the students. The Director confirmed there are through the Century programme and offered to demo the programme to the Committee at a later date. The work is moving away from a GCSE classroom setting and is a new and innovative programme building on the learners' strengths and is an impactful model. The Deputy Principal/CEO reassured the Committee that the risk report will look at the impact from strategies including attendance, progress reviews, assessments and streaming of learners. Comms are going out to learners so they know what to expect on their programmes from January 2024. The SLT recognise how low the prior attainment and starting points of learners is and the significant risk this brings and a lot of processes have been implemented already. The model will be reviewed in the spring and summer term and edits if needed will be made for next year. The focus now is on ensuring learners pass and improve their grades.

The Director noted that there is a specific E&M QIP which is regularly updated and includes elements of the action plan.

The Committee asked if learners would retain their current timetables when the streaming takes place, and it was noted that they would and going forward there will be a strict approach to timetabling to avoid issues. The Committee asked about levels of staffing and whether there was the capacity to roll out the new processes. The Director noted that there were challenges at the start of the year because of high numbers of learners in E&M. A number of posts were not appointed to, there were departing staff and national shortages, performance and absence concerns, staff were overstretched and there is the issue of pay in FE compared to schools. The structure acknowledges the feedback from staff which enables retention of staff and opportunities for career progression. It is a highly challenging situation at the Group and nationally.

The Deputy Principal/CEO noted that there is a focus on looking at what teachers are particularly good at and focusing on those areas in recruitment. A lot of effort and promotional work to attract the right candidates is taking place and the recent pay rise will help. The focus is on taking on staff with specific areas of expertise rather than having to be everything. Some staff will be better in a coach rather than a teacher role and realigning staff to roles they are good at rather than losing them is a priority. E&M is a big risk and is being tackled head on.

The Chair thanked colleagues for the report and discussions and noted that the new approach to E&M sounds positive and innovative and the Committee are looking forward to hearing further reports.

AGREED: The Committee noted the content of the update provided.

10 Any other items of urgent business

There were no items raised.

11 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 31st January 2024 at 5.00pm

Meeting closed at 18.31

Signed _____ Chair

Date _____

