

Minutes



Meeting	Quality and Standards Committee		
Date	Wednesday 20 March 2024	Time	17:00
Venue	Google Meet		

Attendees:	Jenny Worsdale (Chair); Katie Asgari; Jason Austin; Heather Barnett; Donna Clifford; Sally Gillborn; Daniel Gregory; Aimee Wilson
In attendance:	Tracey Mace-Akroyd (Deputy Principal/CEO); Lucy Barnwell (Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing); James Godsell (Director of Business Development and Apprenticeships); Cheryl Martin (Director of Quality and Academic Standards); Laura Reid (Director of Safeguarding and Student Support); Mark Ryan (Vice Principal Curriculum); Dan Stanbra (Director of Adult Education and Contracts and English and Maths); Sarah Connerty (interim governance advisor and minute taker)

		Action
1.	Declaration of interests in any item on the agenda There were no declarations received.	
2.	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting and the new student governor to his first Quality and Standards Committee. Apologies were received from Katie Asgari and Sally Gillborn.	
3.	Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2024 RESOLVED: The minutes from the meeting held on 31 January 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.	
4.	Actions outstanding and matters arising from the minutes Action 1 – single PDF for quality reports – the interim governance advisor will follow up and this can be removed from the actions. Action 2 – NSS survey results – results will be available in August/September. The Director of Quality and Academic Standards noted that responses are 8% above last year and there is a positive upward trend in engagement from learners. Action 3 – adjustment to the Prevent action plan to be shared with governors – this is completed and included on the agenda at item 5. Action 4 – Further data around low applications at DVC and destinations – data and feedback from the surveys are included on the agenda at item 4.1. The Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing provided an overview of the feedback which included learners not feeling as happy as they could be, this mostly related to the offer and price of food, staff not speaking to students in a way they would hope, lack of progression and cancelled courses. All comments have been fed back to the VP Curriculum for further review and action. There were only limited responses, particularly in the non-buyer survey which was put out twice. The survey does not provide any concrete reasons around why learners are not applying to DVC. Since the survey has been issued numbers have started to increase. Action 5 – CEIAG strategy has been updated – this has been completed and is on the agenda at item 7	

	<p>Action 6 – Quality of Education reports to include risks and improvement areas – this has been completed and is on the agenda at item 9</p> <p>Action 7 - E&M reporting to include an update against the E&M task group action plan – this is included on the agenda at item 9</p>	
5.	<p>Safeguarding and Prevent</p> <p>The Director of Safeguarding and Student Support provided an update and the Committee considered the report and adjustments to the action plan. The action plan is updated every second month. Key points discussed included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding processes continue to be effective • The Group achieved re accreditation for the Investors in Diversity Award and the Committee congratulated colleagues on this achievement which is assuring to have in place with the numbers of people needing help going up every month • The team are mapping activities around safeguarding; campus managers are involved and there is positive learner feedback • There are some amendments to the Prevent guidance which the team will share across the Group and review any further CPD needs. Prevent training is delivered through the HR team so it is agile in responding to any updates. For assurance it was noted that the Prevent agenda has not changed. (DC arrives: 18:07) <p>The Chair thanked the Director of Safeguarding and Student Support and her team for the helpful reporting and work with students and staff.</p>	
6.	<p>Applications and Enrolments 2024/25</p> <p>The Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing provided an update. There are no significant changes since the last report in January 2024. 16-18 applications continue to be strong. HE applications continue to be a negative. The <u>My Time</u> campaign was launched on the 6 March 2024 which is about engaging learners of all ages. There is a focus on HE in the campaign which is about - <i>It's never too late to learn. Never too late to consider furthering my education, my learning, myself. It's my time to learn, to succeed and push myself. It's my time now to develop my career and for that I need to consider a degree which I never thought I could do; in fact never thought a person like me should do.</i></p> <p>There is a push on T Levels and HTQs. T Level applications stand at 346, a real improvement from last year. Funding has been received to promote HTQs and this work is starting now with an aim to get lots more applications in by 30 June 2024. There was a discussion about the T Level brand which seems to be getting traction. The Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing reported that the Marketing team are on the ball with promoting but it does take a while for campaigns to come to fruition and HTQs are new and need to be rolled out so communities can understand the technical qualification.</p> <p>The Marketing team are promoting the Group across the region in various publications including the Rotherham Advertiser which has a campaign in every week for four weeks. It is about elevating the University College Rotherham profile to the community.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal and CEO reported that a small pot of funding has been received in recognition of the Group's profile of high needs and this was welcomed.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing for an informative report.</p>	
7.	<p>Careers Educational Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) update and CEIAG Strategy</p> <p>The VP Curriculum noted that the Group has a strategy of intent, implementation and impact for CEIAG to support the progression of all students and apprentices into next steps and destinations.</p> <p>The strategy has been reviewed by the Board and SLT, including the Director of Adult Education and Contracts, to ensure it includes all learners and the language reflects all students within the Group and their socio-economic backgrounds.</p>	

	<p>The Group has been asked to be part of a CEIAG thematic review by Ofsted linked to demographics around the learner journey and details are being finalised.</p> <p>In relation to the work around Gatsby benchmarking there have been significant improvements with several strategies, software being introduced, employer platforms and a successful Careers Week at campuses.</p> <p>The Committee asked if the strategy covers subcontracting and it was noted that that sits within 16-18s in terms of Rotherham United.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the VP Curriculum for all the work on the CEIAG Strategy and for including the feedback from governors.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Risk Report (including key Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) aspects and underpinning reports)</p> <p>The Deputy Principal and CEO updated on the QIP. Since the report the RO7 return has been completed and attendance has gone up in all categories which is very positive. There is generally a dip in attendance at this point of the year. The new strategies are working and staff across all teams including vocational and E&M are involved together. Predictions will be ready next week. Attendance remains red and a risk because it has not hit the 90% target but it is going up and continues to improve.</p> <p>There has been a focus on strengths and the spotlight for this month is on Rotherham campus. Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music degree students collaborating with Rotherham Minster to support the Social Supermarket charity. The afternoon show will feature a range of artists • The Wharncliffe Restaurant continues to find more ways to work sustainably • Construction apprentices are helping to support victims of the recent Catcliffe floods supporting residents of uninsured properties with repairs <p>The Chair noted that it is good to hear the good news stories as it demonstrates that the work being done is having a positive impact.</p> <p>Leaders and managers continue to work at pace to enhance the quality of education and performance. Risks are continuing to decrease and there is positive action.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Quality of Education Reports</p> <p>(i) 16-18 (including High Needs)</p> <p>The VP Curriculum reported that attendance is improving and is over 2% better than this time last year. There are high levels of attendance within T Levels and Digital at Rotherham. At NNC campus digital attendance has dropped solely due to one student which has affected the percentage due to low numbers.</p> <p>Retention has fallen slightly. This is due to identifying and withdrawing learners at an earlier stage through the Attend to Achieve sessions.</p> <p>There is a single tracking space which will be regularly tracked by the VP Curriculum and the Director of Quality and Academic Standards and March predictions will give a more accurate picture. The previous retention summary reports show that the Group held onto students to keep trying to engage them and retention started to decline in early May and June. This year it feels in a much better position, a big decline is not anticipated and data is more accurate. Course team leaders (CTLs) can use the tracking to see where learners are at and can identify learners requiring support. The CTLs and E&M leads have been communicating and there is an accountability that these are your learners, this is your responsibility and there is a duty to care and guide individuals.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that making the decision earlier in the year makes sense and will lead to an improvement in attendance and a focus on learners achieving.</p> <p>The VP Curriculum explained that there is catch up funding to support students in their curriculum and funds can be utilised to support mental health issues, and support with interventions.</p>	

E&M has been an integral part of Attend to Achieve meetings. At the start of the year there were challenges of staffing and large classes in E&M so staff were not attending. Vocational and E&M staff are now attending and there is positive collaboration and feedback which has contributed to the increase in E&M attendance.

The DP and CEO assured the Committee that learners that are unable to achieve the programme they are on are supported to get on short career pathway programmes with a view to enrolling on a new course for September. There are real efforts to re-engage learners and not let them go NEET, although this is not always a success. The Committee noted that this was important and good to hear.

(ii) Adults (including subcontracting)

The Director of Adult Education and Contracts reported that retention remains strong and is marginally above last year. The same culture has been introduced with data cleansing and there is a much higher proportion of adult education than in previous years. Attendance remains an area for improvement and is included in the QIP. It remains in line with last year. Predictions are reflecting a positive picture and are indicative of a positive trend. There are some areas of concern with Counselling which is being investigated and may affect the Level 4 19+ programme classroom activity. These risks are being mitigated.

A lot of work has been undertaken around personal development so adults get a broad range of activities with a focus on part time students. Twilight sessions are a new activity and this seems to be working successfully as an addition to the largely online sessions which support adults with their other commitments.

Deep dives have been positive including subcontracting. Any areas of concern have an appropriate responsive action. There is rigorous monitoring and evidence and tracking for subcontracting.

Financial performance is on track to realise financial targets. This is due to a lot of work from the Director of Campuses, VP Curriculum and colleagues from all areas of the Group. There is an increased internal focus and the Group is successfully growing activity. There are areas for improvement but overall there is a positive trend of qualitative and financial outcomes.

The Chair asked about the tables and rag rating. The Director of Adult Education and Contracts noted that the full document contains detailed actions and the version for the Committee includes a summary at headline level. The full report is available for colleagues if they would like to see further detail.

The Committee asked if there should be a concern around the red rated areas of the report. It was noted these are in relation to attendance. There are some positive emerging trends but it does not hit the ambitious target of 95% which was introduced to support moving from good to outstanding. The Committee questioned whether the QIP target is too ambitious and realistically what could be expected for adults who have other commitments and priorities alongside their studies. **ACTION:** The Director of Adult Education and Contracts to discuss the 95% attendance target with colleagues and bring back to the Committee.

The DP and CEO noted that the Group rag rating for attendance is amber as the target is 90%. This is an area for discussion as part of the whole strategic KPIs.

The Committee asked how many adults attend the personal development programme. It was noted that this depends on the opportunities as they are optional sessions. For the twilight session the numbers are low at around 40. On the online platforms there is no formal registration but learners are monitored through Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour (KSB) development and this has a high degree of progress with a 97% rate of progression. Most course content has personal development sessions because KSB are essential for adult progress.

(iii) Apprentices

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The Director of Business Development and Apprenticeships reported that the team are currently working towards getting the bulk of remaining learners (232 learners) to the next stages. 159 are expected to achieve and are being enrolled on end point assessments and attending boot camps. Additional training is being put in place for staff on end point assessment and the Group are engaged with other end point assessors to support the change to a City & Guild end point assessment for engineering learners.

Where learners need more support staff are available to provide additional hours and staff are being moved between sites to support.

Overall it is a good picture and there is a tracker for end point assessment learners who are making their way through. There have been seven fails, including four from joinery, and these are all rebooked with one passing today. There are no areas of concern and it is around minor errors. Staff are moving assessments to different environments to provide more space so learners feel more comfortable when being assessed and staff are listening to feedback and bringing in changes to support learners.

OOF numbers continue to decline.

Predicted achievement has risen 14% to 65% for 2023-4.

With remaining learners there are decision to make. Some are predicted to withdrawal and some have already withdrawn. Learners who are predicted to achieve will carry on and it is about looking at how much resource is put in for learners to continue.

Next year's profile does not have an increase but funding has increased with a £250k uplift in apprenticeships which demonstrates more profitability. Planning is being put in place with curriculum.

One governor asked about the change of awarding organisations for end point assessments and whether this is usual and allowed. The Director of Business Development and Apprenticeships explained that the organisations usually used have a cut-off point of 17 May 2024 and will then go into the next academic year which is not ideal for some learners. City & Guilds are able to pick up a small number of learners from engineering and joinery.

This is not usual and last year the Group was chasing through June and July to schedule learners in so this year the awarding organisations are trying to forward plan and guarantee dates. The lack of flexibility this brings is a problem and the Group need more choice.

One governor noted that C&G would be more expensive and would be following a different assessment objective (AO) structure. It was confirmed this is the case and teaching is taking place in the boot camps to support the changes and the overall structure of the EPA will be the same. It was noted that some of the students the change will apply to are out of funding. The Committee agreed that it is not ideal for students to wait until next academic year. The Director of Business Development and Apprenticeships explained that a lot of work goes into putting learners into an environment similar to end point assessments and the biggest challenge is getting learners confident and waiting for a further three or four months will be a challenge to re-engage. With the changes in the quals all learners need to do their end point assessments to gain their qualification.

A lot of work is going on with the Apprenticeship Working Group.

Predictions are looking positive and this year apprenticeships have been looked at line by line. All risks are accounted for and thorough work is being done with the assessors.

NNC has the same number of starts as last year, Rotherham has a slight increase and overall, there is growth in apprenticeships.

The DP and CEO reported on a letter received from the SFA on apprenticeship accountability. A couple of categories had been rated as amber and the outcome was Requires Improvement. The letter states that no interventions will be put in place and it is recognised that QAR data has improved and is an improving trend with a 65% prediction. The SFA will continue to monitor the data. It was agreed that this is positive news and the Chair noted that the whole progress with apprenticeships is very impressive.

It was noted that processes put in place include the apprenticeship team and T&L team working very closely with Quality on a bespoke programme of CPD with work-based tutors and staff have embraced this with open arms preparing T&L sessions and using technologies and AI to prepare learners for end point assessments. The work in tandem with T&L has made it a success.

(iv) HE

The Director of Quality and Academic Standards gave the Committee a good news story on Taleb Cherif one of our Foundation Degree Graphic Design Students who has won a Sheffield Hallam University Inspirational Student Award 2024 in the category of Inspirational Individual. It is a first time one of our HE students has won and is a significant win for the Group and will be promoted by Marketing.

Curriculum planning is underway and the HE Strategy Group met last week to look at the new provision planned for September.

Retention is 80.83% and has dropped slightly. The main contributing factor is the decrease in enrolments. Almost all withdrawals occur within the first or second year of a two- and three-year programme.

HE Strategy – the HE research project is well underway. The end date is being pushed back by two weeks as some parts of the research have taken longer and all elements need to be completed well. The Chair asked if there are early indications of a way forward and a strategy. It was noted that there are areas for focus for the future and increasing the visibility of the University Centre Rotherham. It was agreed to stop saying UCR.

The blending of FE and HE in the Group is being looked at with a plan to pull them apart and create a brand elevation.

Careers and raising aspirations of learners in regards to HE is another area of focus with links to learners' careers and where they are at level 3. There is an Open event on Wednesday 24 April.

There was a discussion about branding and visibility and it was noted that another college locally had a similar issue. The word university was put on a sign at the end of the drive and it was agreed that this strategy does help while being mindful of the rules from OfS around wording.

The Group has recruited a Schools Liaisons Officer with the sole focus on HE promotion, going into schools and sixth forms and working with colleagues on events going forward. There was assurance to the Committee that there is a real focus on the HE offering and the wonderful building that is the University Centre Rotherham. The strategy will also be looking at NNC and Bridge Skills Hub and the higher skills opportunities. The Bridge Skills hub is a beautiful building and elevates the HE offering and it will be included in the future plans for the HE offering and journey.

(v) English & Maths

The Director of Adult Education and Contracts reported that E&M continues to be Requires Improvement. Attendance is a concern but data is above last year's attendance rates and in year positive progression for attendance can be seen.

The new model is a contributing factor and work by colleagues at Attend to Achieve meetings, collaborative work and rigorous monitoring of data.

This has led to a dip in retention because the team are on top of the data much earlier in the year. That will level out and will reflect cleaner data at the end of the year.

Other actions include continuing to seek to recruit new staff and the Group are continuing to struggle to recruit high quality staff and retention is an ongoing concern. There has been some success in recruiting agency staff to permanent positions who have enjoyed their time and have applied. The strategy to grow our own E&M staff going forward is being supported by the recruitment of permanent coaching roles.

	<p>A task group is in place to address the new funding changes in E&M with three hours face to face teaching for English and four hours for maths. The task force has identified and is exploring areas to implement and timetabling and recruitment of staff will start imminently. It is a positive place in terms of trajectory.</p> <p>The DP and CEO noted that she has been collaborating with a number of colleges who are experiencing similar attendance issues in E&M which gives the issues at the Group context. The Committee asked if modelling on the new funding changes have been done and it was noted that the business case went to the task force this morning with indicative costs. There is an agreement to explore the utilisation of vocational teams for hybrid maths delivery from vocational specialists. It will be a project-based approach with a maths specialist working closely with vocational teams and sessions delivered into vocational areas. It is hoped this will improve the perceived view of maths and mitigate costs with utilisation opportunities. The new model requires further work and will come back to the Committee for update. It is the most cost effective of the options considered but this is not the reasoning for taking it forward.</p> <p>The Chair asked if the Group has considered growing its own E&M staff through the apprenticeship model. It was reported that there is a significant shortage of people seeking to secure permanent staffing and there is a high attrition rate, some issues around quality and a spike in performance management and support required. Shorter and fractional posts are even more difficult to secure buy in and appeal.</p> <p>The permanent coaching model is focusing on graduates looking to progress.</p> <p>It was agreed that although E&M is still RI there has been significant positive progression and a recognition that the first part of the year was a poor situation for E&M but that things have moved forward massively since then. It is still not good under Ofsted terminology but it is progressing and improving and this should be included in reporting.</p> <p>The KPI around Maths will be for all students to develop their maths skills to a high level, regardless of what grade they have.</p>	
10.	<p>Curriculum Planning Update</p> <p>The VP Curriculum reported that since the paper there has been lots of activity with round two curriculum planning sessions at NNC yesterday and DVC and Rotherham tomorrow. Each campus has delivered round one of curriculum planning and actions have been implemented to provide support and ensure the curriculum for all areas is broad, meets local and regional needs, is discussed with employers, staff and students and includes external local market intelligence (LMI) to give strong consultation for an ambitious curriculum. The Group will continually engage with stakeholders to shape the curriculum. (Presentations available post meeting).</p> <p>This supports staff to become more knowledgeable so learners are equipped to move to the next level of learning. T levels have increased triangulation to applications. There is always a T Level foundation course as well as a T Level to support progression. Specialist staff, the ETF, AoC and awarding bodies are all used to develop the curriculum. Learners will develop their Maths, English and science to be more equipped to manage assessments and go out to placements. There are lots of learners who are not ready to go out to placements and this work will allow that to happen.</p> <p>Programmes are aligned so if a student moves location they will be able to transfer successfully over which is a real positive. It has taken time for staff to understand and be confident with preparations taking place since October and it has been embraced.</p> <p>Hair and beauty was planned as a T Level and has reverted back to C&G. Hair and Beauty at DVC is being redeployed to Rotherham campus and staffing at DVC is being repurposed within the Group.</p> <p>There is a consistent approach to FLEX and Horizons across each campus which has been developed and delivered by Directors of Campus and Curriculum Managers.</p>	

	<p>Within Health facilities are being utilised at University Centre Rotherham and the specialist space at DVC where there is strong experience and highly skilled staff.</p> <p>The forecast tool continues to be developed and instilled and developed through the curriculum framework. There have been significant improvements for exam costs and there is a much clearer picture of where we are.</p> <p>There was a discussion about contributions, group sizes and efficiencies. The current forecast tools does not give the granular detail but there is an indicative number of 18.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the current position around curriculum reforms where some programmes will not be ready until 2026. Last minute curriculum planning is underway to ensure learners have an appropriate course. There are some risks around potential clawback from under recruiting to HTQs and there is a risk plan in place which will sit with Directors of campuses. Money provided for specialist equipment is a risk with the delay to quals and flexible solutions. Both risks will be looked and shared with Finance and Resources Committee.</p> <p>The Committee asked if 18 plus class sizes are ambitious and it was noted that study programmes have over 19 learners. Within workshop environments two workshops can come together for the theory aspects to create efficiencies. Staff are encouraged to create efficiencies where they are relevant.</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>QE Strategic KPIs/Indicators- draft 2024/25</p> <p>The proposed KPIs are a result of the discussions at the Board strategy day and further conversations with SLT and CMT. The feedback differs immensely and the overwhelming message is that the Group wants to have an incremental improvement and this is reflected in the KPIs. It is about setting targets that can be achieved for this year and ensure that quality keeps on improving, providing simple and evidence-based targets for staff performance reviews and being mindful and referring to benchmarks. For future years it is expected that benchmarks will be included.</p> <p>Proposed KPIs for 2023-24 are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overall self-assessment for 2023/24 to be at least Good 2. High quality improving performance outcomes (QAR) 3. High quality teaching, learning and assessment is a daily exercise 4. Improved student readiness to progress/improved progression outcomes 5. Improved stakeholder satisfaction <p>An additional student survey will also be introduced – the FREDIE learner Equity and Well-being (Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement).</p> <p>AGREED: The Committee recommended to approve the KPIs to the Board subject to some final revisions from colleagues. It was noted that the purpose of the strategy day was to give governors the opportunity to contribute to the KPIs and this has been achieved. The Group has an experienced team who need to be content with the KPIs and assured that they can be applied across the organisation and will measure impact. The KPIs include all the areas of quality that the Committee would expect.</p> <p>It was agreed that it is a transition year and the Group will keep going forward and consider its position for 2024-5 and review KPIs if it needs to through the year.</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group – ACTION: it was agreed to convene one final meeting and include the DfE letter of assurance. Going forward any concerns will be raised at the Q&S Committee with an option to reconvene the group.</p> <p>Governor engagement – ACTION: governors will be invited to join colleagues on learning walks as a pilot to look at engagement and impact and a full programme will be rolled out next year including the opportunity to join deep dives. An ambitious CPD programme for staff launches after Easter with bite size training sessions in the run up to an all staff CPD day in July. Governors are invited to join in any sessions of interest which will include AI.</p>	<p>Gov advisor /Dir Business Dev and App</p> <p>Gov advisor/ DP</p>

13.	Date of next meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tuesday 7 May 2024 – suggestion to keep as a holding date in case of exceptional items/support for accountability statement• Monday 24 June 2024 All at 17.00	
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Meeting closed. 18.49