

HART LEARNING GROUP

QUALITY AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Quality and Innovation Committee took place on Wednesday 21 November 2018 in the Room B103, Hitchin campus, Cambridge Road, Hitchin.

PRESENT

Vernon McClure (Chair)
Liz Calver
Lynne Ceeney

Kit Davies (Chief Executive)
Daniel King
Liz Mitchell

IN ATTENDANCE

Claire Cooper (Head of Teaching and Learning)
Nadia Hodges (Curriculum Director, Stevenage)
Gary Phillips (Executive Director of Quality, Curriculum and Organisational Development)

Kerry Pritchett (Head of Quality)
Sarah Robins (Curriculum Director, Hitchin and ECC)
Lindsey Sherring (Director, Hart Learning & Development)
Robert Dale (Company Secretary)

WELCOME

- The Chair welcomed Liz Mitchell (Vice President, R&D Pipeline Delivery, GSK) and Daniel King (Student Governor).

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Jack Tomlinson.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- The Chair briefed the new student governor about how and when to declare personal and financial interests. Having done so, no member declared any conflicting interests.

ITEM 1C: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- Some corrections to the text were required and the sign-off was therefore deferred.

ITEM 1D: MATTERS ARISING

- Actions had been completed as below:
 - Consider scheduling a Q&I teleconference to discuss the draft SAR. **Action complete.** This meeting (on 21 November) had been scheduled to discuss the draft SAR and QIP before review by the Board on 10 December.
 - Circulate staff survey data relating to Maths and English teams with comparators. **Action complete.** A paper and associated survey data had been circulated to members. This had sought to address the question as to

whether the Maths and English department was more or less satisfied than other curriculum areas. Data showed that while there were some responses showing lower than average satisfaction, there were others that showed the opposite and overall the department was 17th of 41. In relation to improving performance in this area, Governors asked:

Question: *What were other colleges doing to improve progress and outcomes for students?* The government had encouraged the creation of 21 national Centres of Excellence – one of which was Cambridge Regional College. The Group had already made contact to join this network. However, governors noted that their past contacts suggested that the department was following good practice already. Tackling underperformance in Maths and English was a national issue, and also reflected a national policy that was not directed towards contextualising these subjects for vocational courses. This meant that students whose experiences in school so far had not engaged them could not see the relevance of completing the qualifications. Daniel King agreed that from a student perspective, relevance to a future career or employment path was key.

ITEM 2: DRAFT SELF-ASSESSMENT REVIEW (SAR) 2017/18 AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP)

- The draft 2017/18 Self-Assessment Review (SAR) had been circulated; governors considered the draft section by section. The review process involved peer and governor challenge and external validation by a former HMI and Ofsted Inspector. The overall assessment was consistent with the Ofsted judgment from November 2017. It reflected continuing improvement in most KPIs, data showing a positive student experience, a portfolio of education and training aligned with local needs and high expectations of and aspirations for students. Governors agreed this reflected their experiences during learning walks and other visits to campuses.
- Areas for improvement (AFIs) were around Maths and English outcomes, the timely achievement of apprenticeship qualifications and effective management of sub-contractor performance, delivery at the ECC, improving and extending work experience and enhancing the effective use of student voice feedback to make improvements in delivery.

Leadership and Management (Good)

Question: How would the enhanced student voice be approached? The student governor was working on this supported by curriculum directors and the student services team and would come to the Board with a proposal in the New Year.

Question: Was the student voice only heard via the student governor? No. There were several routes, including student rep meetings and an active Student Forum which provided opportunities for contributions and feedback. Participation in discussions during student review weeks was encouraged and output from this was now being presented to monthly performance board meetings.

Question: Who took the lead on this? Gary Phillips would be the strategic lead, supporting Daniel King. The next step was introducing some standard themes into the student voice programme – eg Teaching and Learning, Enrichment activities, Equality and Diversity, Study Environment etc.

Teaching, learning and assessment (Good)

- Overall positive student outcomes were underpinned by high expectations set by knowledgeable and experienced tutors. AFIs related to Maths and English, delivery at the ECC, and extending opportunities to share good practice.

Question: How did the Group assess the levels of expectations set by tutors? There was a process of peer challenge across the Group, supported by regular learning walks.

Question: *What had not been happening hitherto at the ECC to ensure that expectations and aspirations were raised?* There had been some sense of 'isolation' from the rest of the Group. This had been changed by appointing new leadership and setting up closer links with other teams. There had also been issues around the quality of assessment now being addressed through mentoring and support for planning. Communicating the importance of change to staff had been important.

Question: *How and where would the impact of actions be measured?* Each mentor would discuss progress with the individual staff member; the project team would consider the overall level of progress, identify key themes and priorities to drive improvement. Each person and curriculum area needed different support.

Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare (Good)

- Strengths in this area included substantial improvement in awareness of issues arising from the government's Prevent strategy (one of the areas for improvement from the Ofsted inspection). Employer engagement and enrichment activities were strong as was student progression.
- AFIs included improving work experience to meet the higher demands from T level qualifications, enhancing student voice, improving attendance and continuing to develop the Bridge programme, which was a link between study and work.

Outcomes (Good)

- Outcomes were largely above national average, as was the 'value-added' data. AFIs include Maths and English – where outcomes were not good enough but in line with the national average for FE colleges. There was also a small minority of teaching that did not provide sufficient stretch and challenge and some small progress/achievement gaps.

Question: Would actions in the personal development, behaviour and welfare area contribute to improved outcomes? There was a growing number of students that needed additional support for mental health issues and staff were being trained to support this.

Question: Given the mixed bag of results, was the assessment genuinely Good? Given that 85% of students met or exceeded expectations – which is consistent with Ofsted guidance about 'a substantial majority' – and outcome trends remained positive, a Good assessment seemed reasonable.

Study Programmes (Good)

- A strength in this area was the substantial enrichment programme delivered to students. The well-attended programmes aligned to local needs.

Question: *Would Ofsted consider enrichment at the next inspection?* The new framework (effective after September 2019) would look for a 'broad and balanced curriculum' and a

strong enrichment programme would contribute to that assessment. On balance the new Ofsted was likely to be positive or neutral for the Group.

Adult Learning (Good)

- The paper outlined the strengths and AFIs, which governors endorsed.

Apprenticeships (Requires Improvement)

- This area had been assessed as Requires Improvement, mainly because achievement rates – particularly timely achievement rates – were below national average and needed to improve quickly. While some of this was associated with poor performance by sub-contractors, comparatively low retention rates were also an issue. A full re view of our approach was being undertaken.
- Similarly, new leadership at the ECC with apprenticeship experience was tasked with improving performance here.

Question: *Why had the Ofsted inspection judged this area to be good?* At the time of the inspection, the data had not shown the gaps that were now apparent and there was much good practice and some excellent outcomes.

Question: *How confident were SMEs about offering apprenticeships at present?* The general climate of uncertainty before March 2019 was affecting SMEs, who were least well prepared for major economic disruption. There were more detailed conversations ongoing with larger employers. The risk of a higher level of business failure was increasing and needed to be considered.

Traineeships (Outstanding)

- Ofsted had given this area an Outstanding rating and this remained valid. There were very good progression rates and employer links as well as positive learner survey data .AFIs included enhancing the learner voice approach.

High Needs (Outstanding)

- A strong area with outstanding outcomes.

Question: *Had a conscious decision been taken to aim for an Outstanding rating in this area?* The team had been extremely dedicated and governors had been supportive of the inclusiveness and employability agendas. The outcome was the result of a combination of factors some of which were hard to replicate.

Overall Effectiveness (Good)

- **The Committee agreed** that the draft SAR was a fair representation of the Group's strengths and Areas for Improvement and agreed to recommend it to the Board.

Action: Advise the Board of the views of the Q&I Committee at its meeting on 10 December 2018.

Quality Improvement Plan 2018/19

- Members discussed the Plan and asked:

Question: *Assuming these actions were implemented in full, how far would this move the Group towards an Outstanding assessment?* It was recognised that the Common Inspection Framework was changing and some changes to terminology might be applied before the next inspection. It was also appreciated that other colleges had achieved an Outstanding assessment by aiming for excellence, including excellent outcomes. Because the QIP was intended to support the delivery of improved outcomes across the Group, it would contribute to reaching the overall objective.

Question: *Would there be more impact if fewer areas were targeted?* Since there were just 10 action areas identified, this did not seem too unfocussed a plan. The priorities would be Maths and English, the ECC and timely achievement rates for apprenticeships. Staff were finding the accountability arrangements and the support put in place in previous years – such as the Path to One – valuable tools to support improvement.

Question: *How were ‘middle managers’ defined?* These were Deputy Head or Head roles. Liz Calver chaired a working group considering well-being and staff development.

Question: *What training and development was being made available?* The same group of staff were also involved in curriculum development and contacts were being made externally to learn from others and share good practice. Regional and national networks would help ensure staff and managers could see how others were making a difference in their specialist curriculum area. Governors could also benefit from training and this agenda would be given a higher priority on 2018/19.

- Governors endorsed the proposed QIP and commended staff for providing a strong set of papers, comprehensive and clear. Vernon McClure and Liz Mitchell also commented on the excellent graduation event held in the previous week which highlighted the positive impact the Group was making on lives.

- **The Committee agreed** to recommend the QIP to the Board.

Action: Advise the Board of the views of the Q&I Committee at its meeting on 10 December 2018.

ITEM 3: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The next scheduled meeting would take place on Tuesday 11 December 2018, starting at 18.30, in the Council Chamber, the Old Town Hall, Letchworth.
- However, three members indicated that they would be unable to attend on that date. An alternative date would be canvassed, but the appointment would remain in place until otherwise confirmed.

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Signed as an accurate record

Chair

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Date

ACTION LOG

Item	What	Who	When
2.	Advise the Board of the views of the Q&I Committee at its meeting on 10 December 2018.	Chair	10/12/18
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