

HART LEARNING GROUP

QUALITY AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Quality and Innovation Committee took place on Tuesday 2 October 2018 in the Council Chamber, the Old Town Hall, The Broadway, Letchworth.

PRESENT

Vernon McClure (Chair)
Liz Calver
Lynne Ceeney

Kit Davies (Chief Executive)
Jack Tomlinson

IN ATTENDANCE

Nadia Hodges
Kerry Pritchett (Head of Quality)
Sarah Robins

Lindsey Sherring (Director, Hart Learning
& Development)
Robert Dale (Company Secretary)

WELCOME

- The Chair welcomed Liz Calver, who had been elected to the Group Board as the staff governor. He also advised members that Liz Mitchell (Vice President, R&D Pipeline Delivery, GSK) had also joined the Board as a new governor but was unable to be present at this meeting. Finally, a new student governor had been elected on 28 September. Daniel King would join the Committee at its next meeting in December 2018.

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Liz Mitchell.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- None.

ITEM 1C: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- The minutes were agreed and signed as an accurate record of proceedings.

ITEM 1D: MATTERS ARISING

- Actions had been completed as below:
 - Schedule Deep Dive – Adult Programmes – for October 2018. **Action under way.** We have agreed to postpone this discussion until the next meeting (December 2018) because of the substantial agenda at this meeting.
 - Circulate appointments for the academic year 2018/19. **Action complete.** Appointments had been sent including the date, time and location in the subject line.

ITEM 2: NHC PERFORMANCE UPDATE

- Members discussed the report, noting in particular:
 - Recruitment to 16-18 full-time study programmes was going well, with 1,925 students joining NHC and a further 200 traineeship recruits forecast, against a combined recruitment forecast of 2,054. It was possible that the target might be exceeded marginally, though this was unlikely to affect income for 2018/19.
 - Outcomes for 2017/18 were similar to those for the previous year, with 16-18 outcomes mostly showing improvements. This was a satisfactory outcome and consistent with a self-assessment of Good. Maths & English and the ECC remained self-assessed as Requires Improvement.
 - A good start had been made to 2018/19, despite the big financial challenge. Staff were continuing to improve teaching, learning and assessment.
 - A recommendation from the FE Commissioner's team was expected to relate to improving 16-18 outcomes and monitoring progress towards this closely.
- Members asked:

Question: *Could the Stevenage recruitment target have been higher?* The target had included a 'stretch' element and this would be reviewed for the next year's recruitment.

Question: *Did recruitment data include adult programmes?* Only full-time study programmes were covered; part-time programmes such as those leading to professional qualifications or relating to employability were not included in this measure.

Question: *What had the University of Hertfordshire done to impact college recruitment to foundation degree programmes?* It had lowered its entry criteria without notice to other consortium members (the four Hertfordshire colleges). This meant that students who might have taken a college-based programme accredited by the University went into the University's intake directly. All four colleges were jointly approaching the University to make their concerns known. The HE team was examining how it could continue to provide choice for students wishing to study for professional or similar qualifications.

Question: *How did recruitment this year compare to 2017/18?* The year-end 2017/18 cohort had been c1,700. We expected to lose a proportion of this year's intake in the first few weeks, but were committed to integrity in recruitment, ensuring that students were doing what was right for them.

Question: *What was being done to address curriculum areas that had under-recruited?* There were different reasons for the individual courses. For example, Y1 Acting, though below target, was up on the previous year. Y1 and Y2 groups were being combined to make a viable cohort. For Y2 Media, the low recruitment had been affected by poor teaching in Y1. Students had passed the first year but had chosen not to continue.

Question: *Where there were teaching vacancies, how were these being addressed?* IT recruitment had been completed and a new teacher was starting on 15 October. The other two areas of recruitment were for teachers that had not yet left, but would do so later this term. These were progressing.

Question: *Was the Head of Business Studies satisfied with her new team?* The team was starting to work well together, with some newer and some more experienced staff.

ITEM 3: HART L&D PERFORMANCE UPDATE

- Members considered the paper and noted the following key points:
- The key performance measures for apprenticeships were the Overall Achievement (OA) and Timely Achievement (TA) rates. Because performance of our remaining sub-contractors was poor compared with direct delivery, the Group's OA and TA rates were below average; the picture changed when looking at direct delivery only.
- No sub-contracted apprentices had been taken on since before 1 May 2017, and the number of sub-contractors had been cut by two thirds (to eight) since 2015/16.

Question: *Were the sub-contracts being completed?* Yes. Learners were being progressed to the point of achievement as far and as quickly as possible. It was anticipated that between 200 and 300 learners would remain on programme into 2018/19.

Question: *Did the sub-contracts come to an end on a set date or when all learners with that sub-contractor achieved?* There was no set termination date. Learners were monitored to assess how near they were to finishing and what progress they were making.

Question: *What were the criteria for taking learners back from a contract and completing programmes in house?* There were several factors to consider including the amount of progress being made and the location of the learner in relation to North Hertfordshire. The team was confident that those still with sub-contractors were making sufficient progress, albeit not as fast as desired.

Question: *Were there any penalties for bringing learners in house?* Apart from the cost of delivery, if the sub-contractor was not meeting contractual obligations, there were none.

- Direct delivery staff had received additional training and agreements had been signed with providers for end point assessment (EPA) delivery. This was a new requirement – an end test that learners had to pass before receiving their qualification. The first cohort of learners had gone through this process with a high success rate; a larger group would go through in January 2019. This would give information about how well learners were prepared.

Question: *How good was management information?* This was much improved; more consistent and available sooner. There was a robust data dashboard and improved risk register which had been implemented during 2017/18. This was now being used in the monthly performance board meetings and analysis was available down to lecturer level.

Question: *Was there a pipeline of clients?* Yes. A several conversations were ongoing, and the Hart L&D sales strategy had been refreshed. The current focus was an area of sixty miles around Stevenage where many major businesses were based, as well as local SMEs. New clients were starting learner cohorts in line with or larger than forecast.

Question: *How confident could governors be about recruitment forecasts?* The plan had 45% of starts profiled in Q1; we were 45 learners ahead of target and next month was expected to be the largest recruitment month yet. The team was not complacent and knew it needed to seek new clients as well as start learners. The sales team had improved its performance and shortened the time from client engagement to learner start, but there was still work to do.

Question: *Would we know by the December meeting how many sub-contractor learners would carry forward into 2018/19?* Yes and we would have a better understanding of the forecast achievement rate by then.

ITEM 4: 2017/18 SELF-ASSESSMENT UPDATE

- The SAR process had been completed and the report was being drafted. It would be signed-off by members before the Board meeting on 10 December 2018.

Action: Consider scheduling a Q&I teleconference to discuss the draft SAR.

- Key strengths and areas for improvement had been identified. The latter were:
 - Continuing to improve Maths and English outcomes;
 - Ensuring the ECC improved teaching and learning and student outcomes;
 - Boosting timely achievement rates for apprenticeships;
 - Enhancing work experience, taking account of new demands from T-levels;
 - Improving Student Voice arrangements;
 - Further improving achievement rates for 16-18 students.

Question: *To what extent were Ofsted judgments from November 2017 undermined by feedback from the FE Commissioner's visit?* The Ofsted report remains the official assessment in terms of student outcomes, and official published data placed the college in the top quartile nationally for outcomes and progress. The Commissioner's team saw that despite the financial challenges facing the Group, student progress and outcomes were strong and we very much hoped that this would come across in their report.

- The draft 2018/19 QIP was being prepared to pick up on the key areas for improvement and actions carried forward from 2017/18. Some highlighted strengths were the quality of course team leadership and the strong sense of ownership of the curriculum, which was driving success, and the improved awareness and understanding among students about Prevent.

Question: *How was underperformance at the ECC being addressed?* A range of actions was under way, including a greater pastoral presence for students, greater visibility of senior management, some physical changes to the staff environment, and action to address underperformance among some staff. This would include performance management, training and other actions as required.

Question: *Should stronger action have been taken to deal with individual issues sooner?* Possibly. Nonetheless, action had been taken to improve staff underperformance that had substantially reduced the scale of the challenge in 2018/19. Great strides had been made in 2017/18, such as improving relationships with Awarding Bodies.

Question: *How could governors be assured that there was a consistent approach to managing staff and that standards and expectations were the same across the Group?* One of Sarah Robins' responsibilities would be ensuring that managers did the job they were expected to do, and not to try to cover gaps elsewhere. Some might need support with the basics; scaffolding and resources and training where needed. For others, occasional guidance might be all that was required.

ITEM 5: 2017/18 STAFF SURVEY ANALYSIS

- The staff survey had been conducted by an external provider which meant that there was national benchmarking available. Overall, the outcome was positive, with

variations between different campuses and departments. Data had been shared with managers to inform their planning. Members asked:

Question: *Could remuneration and equipment concerns be addressed?* Not in the short term. Equipment spend was focussed on areas of most need; third party support had been gained for individual projects – such as the LEP investment in a Mac suite for Art and Design programmes.

- Despite the challenges in 2017/18, Hart L&D results were not the lowest across the Group. Action taken since the survey had been conducted had improved team morale and the benefits of the restructure carried out last year were being seen.

Question: *Could comparative data show if Maths and English staff had different attitudes to other teams?* That level of analysis was available.

Action: Circulate staff survey data relating to Maths and English teams with comparators.

Question: *What could be done to make staff feel appreciated without costing money?* Many small gestures already happened – fruit bowls, ice-creams, cake days. Members felt that staff be encouraged to maintain a good work/life balance and not, for example, be dealing with emails in the evening.

Question: *Could more frequent (shorter?) surveys be carried out to find out how the ECC team is progressing?* This would be considered.

Question: *Could more use be made of the ‘you said, we did’ approach with staff?* This was in place with students and should be applied to conversations with staff as well.

ITEM 6: 2017/18 LAST IMPRESSIONS SURVEY ANALYSIS

- Results from the ‘Last Impressions’ survey of student perceptions at the end of the academic year were substantially similar to those from the ‘First Impressions’ survey at the start of the year. Both surveys removed the neutral response option, forcing either a positive or a negative response. So there was an increase in negative responses, but in all but one cases, this was outweighed by the increase in positive responses. The exception related to the Bridge programme. In response, the Bridge programme had been refined to a standard core, with curriculum areas adding bespoke and contextualised elements to make it relevant to their students.
- More students responded compared with 2016/17; the aim was to reach 90%+. Given the breadth of participation, data could be regarded as valid and was being used to inform curriculum self-assessment reviews and quality improvement plans.
- One surprise was the low response to the question about enrichment, given the breadth of additional activities, visits, trips and guest speakers provided. There might be a need to reword this question. An area for improvement more generally related to student voice follow-up. Discussion with the new student governor would help to ensure that we made better use of the resources we already had in this area.

ITEM 7: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Tuesday 11 December 2018, starting at 18.30, in the Council Chamber, the Old Town Hall, Letchworth.

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Signed as an accurate record

Chair

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Date

ITEM 8: INFORMATION PAPER - 2017/18 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

- The paper circulated reported outcomes of the 2017/18 QIP. Most actions saw material progress. Where more progress is required, actions were carried forward into the 2018/19 QIP and considered during the SAR process reported on in Item 4.

ACTION LOG

Item	What	Who	When
4.	Consider scheduling a Q&I teleconference to discuss the draft SAR.	Kit Davies	31/10/18
5.	Circulate staff survey data relating to Maths and English teams with comparators.	David Hitchen	31/10/18