Agreed by the Committee 27/11/25

HART LEARNING GROUP

QUALITY AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Quality and Curriculum Committee took place on Thursday 2 October 2025 starting at 18.00 in the SITEC Room, Stevenage campus.

PRESENT

Toni Beck (Chair)
Jacquie Bamber
Liz Chatman (Staff Governor)
Kit Davies (Chief Executive)
Claire McCafferty
Grace Wade (Student Governor)
Richard Wilson

BY INVITATION

Geoff Lambert (Audit Committee Chair)

IN ATTENDANCE

Nadia Hodges (Director of Curriculum)
Lara Mathie (Director of Curriculum (SEND))
Lorna McCallum (Executive Director- Apprenticeships and Partnerships)
Kerry Pritchett (Head of Quality)
Keith Turner (Deputy Principal, Quality and Inclusion)
Robert Dale (Company Secretary)

WELCOME

- The Chair welcomed Geoff Lambert, Chair of the Audit Committee, who was attending to gain some insights into the work of the Quality & Curriculum Committee.

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- None.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Kit Davies declared that he was a member of the Board of WENTA, of the Stevenage Redevelopment Board and of the Hertfordshire Virtual School.

ITEM 1C: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meetings held on 8 July 2025 were an accurate record of proceedings.

ITEM 1D: MATTERS ARISING

- Actions had been completed as below:
  - Provide analysis of student outcomes this year including assessment of the impact of Teaching and Learning programmes. **Action under way**. Aspects of this would be addressed in Item 3.

- Include Spotlight item on Added Value to the 2 October agenda. **Action complete**. This was on the agenda at Item 3.

- Publish the Student Protection Plan on the NHC website. **Action complete**. This could be found in the Policies section of the website within the Higher Education tab.

ITEM 2: STUDENT GOVERNOR REPORT

- Governors discussed the written report, which had previously been shared with the Board and received a verbal update from the Student Governor. Since the Board meeting, several events had taken place intended to inform the student population of the work of student reps., ambassadors and the Student Governor, and to encourage people to participate. The team was considering how to emphasise the benefits of taking on a role in student leadership for the individual's CV, UCAS application, or simply to develop confidence and leadership skills.

- Breakfast sessions for reps were starting shortly, aiming the help brief students about their roles and to share good practice – eg around collecting and reporting student feedback. There had been a lot of interest in ambassador roles – which were aligned to specific projects or themes. There had also been a good number of candidates for class rep roles; curriculum reps were harder to recruit.

Question: *What was thought to be the causes of reluctance to take on a curriculum rep role?* It was perhaps because the nature of the role was not well-understood and perhaps there were worries about reactions from peers.

Question: *Might the title of the role be reviewed?* Yes, there would be a chance to 're-brand' the role.

Action: Review the title and description of the Curriculum Rep role.

- Governors were delighted to hear about the work of the Volunteering Ambassador (Oscar Sweetman) who had created a plan to support work experience offers including an initial survey to identify barriers to participation, and the creation of resources to assist students and families in understanding the aims of this element of their programme. He had also organized to get some police cadets to visit the college to talk about their training.

Question: *Were there other colleges that had excellent student council (or equivalent) structures and could these be visited to learn more?* The UNLOC network could be useful for exploring this.

Question: *How was the proposed promotional video coming on?* It was at the planning stage.

Question: How easy had it been to get sole traders to come into college to talk to students? Family connections really made a difference – although there were some (like a DJ) who had already worked with other schools. It was a challenge, but worth working on.

- **The Quality & Curriculum Committee were delighted** to hear about the excellent work being done by the student governor and her team.

ITEM 3: SPOTLIGHT – VALUE ADDED

- The paper highlighted a change in the college's approach to teaching and learning which would concentrate on 'added value'. Curriculum areas are now focusing on making sure students would achieve a grade profile which represented sufficient distance travelled from their level of attainment on joining NHC, to ensure the college helped them at least achieve their expected potential.

- The process began with understanding where students had reached on joining the college and used their GCSE scores to identify target outcomes, based on national benchmark data. There was a DfE 'ready reckoner' that could be used but the age of comparative data (from before the COVID-19 pandemic) meant that any level 3 qualifications introduced from 2019 onwards do not appear on the Ready Reckoner and curriculum areas had to apply their own professional judgement to set meaningful target grades for students.

- The rating was visible to students and teachers via ProMonitor, enabling staff to challenge and support students not on track to achieve their target grade. Individual student progress against their target grades is also monitored through teaching and learning activities in the classroom, formative assessments, marking and grading of summative assessments, and one-to-one coaching and progress reviews.

- The college had also invested in ALPS, a data analysis tool widely used in the sector, which would significantly improve its ability to set and monitor progress against meaningful target grades for level 3 students. Initial analysis from ALPS was shown in the paper and confirmed that the majority of students joining the college were either middle or low prior attainers. The report identified curriculum areas that were making good progress and those at the lower end of the value added table.

- ALPS would provide the college with robust comparative data over time that could be used to challenge and support teams.

- One conclusion from the initial analysis was that previously high and previously low attainers did well; fewer students in the middle range reached or exceeded their potential.

- At present, ALPS was only useful for setting L3 student targets, and other options would be needed for L1 and 2 and other provision.

Question: *Could the Committee be given a demonstration or 'teach-in' about ALPS?* This could be part of a governor in college session and a possible date would be set.

Action: Decide how and when to provide the Board or Quality & Curriculum Committee members with more information about ALPS.

Question: *How well would this analysis align with DfE performance measures?* Scores colour-coded Red or Black would be good; scores colour coded Blue would not be.

Question: *How did DfE measures work across other cohorts?* This was affected by learner numbers and some cohorts were too small to report. There would be a presentation to the heads on ALPS shortly. The real benefit of the application was that it could be used to influence interventions and target setting in-year. It was not just about satisfying the regulator!

Question: *How widely used was ALPS?* It was very widely used and had been around in various forms for many years. It included a teaching and learning score, helping colleges identify where teaching was most effective.

Question: *How did students see their targets and understand the value?* This was being explored at present. It was fair to say that the application benefited teachers more directly than students – who used different applications for their learning.

Question: *Were staff happy to use ALPS?* It was being rolled out at present, but it would significantly reduce the workload associated with target setting and monitoring so was expected to be well-received. Teachers would not regard the value added target as additional as it was simply a different presentation of an existing element of student progression. It replaced rather than added to and supported best practice sharing. It was considered a motivational tool for students.

- Overall ALPS analysis positioned NHC at Grade 6, which was good for a general FE college. And although this was not primarily about satisfying the regulator, it would help college staff and leaders analyse their students. progress and performance in a more granular and immediate way and allow them to intervene when necessary.

The Quality and Curriculum Committee welcomed the report

ITEM 4: LAST IMPRESSIONS SURVEY ANALYSIS

- This survey had been carried out around half term in May 2025 and had achieved an excellent response rate, with over 80% of students completing it at every campus. The survey questions received very positive responses with more than 80% positive for 27 of 29 questions and more than 90% positive for 16 of 29. One question (Q22) saw a decline in the rate of positive responses (albeit from a very high level). This could be linked to departments that had seen more staff changes and absences during the year. It was also important that students recognized when they were having 'one to one tutorials' to discuss their 'future plans and work experience' and this might require some clearer presentation of these meetings.

- Governors were delighted to see such strong positive responses from students, and particularly those about Maths and English. This validated the strategy that had been adopted.

Question: *What were response rates to such surveys like at other colleges?* There was no published data but enquiries would be made of local colleges.

Question*: Could work-related experience be more clearly affirmed to help support responses to this question?* Yes, this was worth reflecting on.

- Governors noted that changes to the survey were likely to be made this year with three rather than two instances. The first in September/October, with a focus on Induction, the second in January, concentrating on Teaching and Learning, and the last in May looking at students' next steps. This would permit more 'live' data to be produced.

Question: *How might the Student Council reflect on the feedback about student reps?* There had already been some discussion about how to make student voice activity more effective. The plan was to introduce face to face feedback sessions including 'you said/we did (or we didn't)' responses.

- Governors suggested that key elements from the survey should be communicated to students and families as part of the work on reputation.

Action: Prepare plan for communicating student survey feedback to students and families.

- **The Quality & Curriculum Committee accepted** the report.

ITEM 5: 2024/25 STAFF SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

- The low response rate was disappointing, though better than in 2023/24. The responses indicated a very high level of staff satisfaction with 96% happy to work at NHC. There were some areas of concern, such as around pay and conditions, and about the effectiveness of equipment available to staff. There had been investment in IT over the summer to help address concerns over adequacy and it was planned to re-introduce staff forums for consultation, and recognizing staff that had gained qualifications.

- The college had historically broadly met the Association of Colleges (AoC) pay recommendations and would seek to do the same in 2025/26; provision had been made in the budget for such an award at a level close to the final recommendation. Governors noted that the AoC's recommendation had an affordability caveat, and also that the survey had taken place before the 2024/25 pay award had been announced.

- Analysis of the staff survey at team level had been shared with managers and they had been tasked with preparing actions in response to matters raised, and as a result, Hart L&D had returned to holding face-to-face team meetings and there had been more sharing of good practice.

Question: *What were the mechanics of the survey?* The survey was not the only mechanism for gathering staff views, but the timing and other arrangements could be reviewed. The questions were similar year on year and the survey was promoted via HR emails, through manager and team meetings and Kit's all-staff emails. Responses were entirely anonymous.

- Governors noted that experience in other businesses suggested that a 42% response rate was good and that the results were very likely to reflect the general staff viewpoint. Outliers were worth considering in detail to assess possible reasons.

Question: *Was the proportion of staff expressing concern about 'work/life balance' a worry?* This was not encouraged, and some other answers perhaps contradicted this. Departmental action plans had been shared with staff and this matter picked up through that route.

- It was recognized that there was widespread dissatisfaction across the FE sector, but NHC was not part of the proposed industrial action about pay. This was also the case with the other Hertfordshire Colleges.

- Other modes of dialogue with staff to gather feedback and communicate key messages were crucial and the organization could doubtless do more in this area. Nonetheless, there were plenty of positive indicators from the latest results.

- **The Quality & Curriculum Committee accepted** the report.

ITEM 6: PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS 2025/26

- Governors considered the actions and improvement projects for the year including the rationale, current status and progress made for each. These were
  - Employer-embedded learning and real-world assessment.
  - Using value added data and sector intelligence to drive in-year improvement in the levels of student progress.
  - Embedding cultural capital in the curriculum to help support improved opportunities for 16-19 students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
  - Enhancing teaching learning and assessment quality and innovation.
  - Ensuring that our quality function meets the college's strategic imperatives.
- The Quality Improvement Plan would be launched in November 2025.

Question: *What was the reason the decline in the proportion of NHC students progressing into HE?* More effort was required to promote these opportunities to the wider student body, but many students did know where they wished to progress – not just university. Student engagement with the recent HE Unlock event had been very good and had prompted some more applications.

Question: *Were there similar initiatives to promote other destinations?* And did those initiatives also engage with L2 learners (ie to give them longer term aspirations? Yes, L2 learners participated and the college recognised the importance of encouraging aspiration. That was one reason for including the cultural capital action; developing learner experiences and broadening their horizons was so important in encouraging them to think bigger.

- Governors were pleased to see the focus on the quality function and the additional support this would receive. They looked forward to hearing more from the team and the data analyst in future.
- **The Quality & Curriculum Committee accepted** the report.
- Grace Wade apologized, but had to leave the meeting.

ITEM 7: NHC PERFORMANCE UPDATE

- The summer results had been excellent and placed the college well up the ranks of FE colleges in England. This was worth celebrating and sharing with the community, not least because of the strong Maths and English performance.
- Recruitment for 2025/26 had gone well with the number of 16-18 students standing at 2,807 (at 2 October) above the funded number and business plan target. Most of the additional learners had been accommodated within existing groups although there were additional groups in construction and IT. This meant that only a modest increase in cost had been incurred.
- Behaviour at the start of the term had been good with 3 students excluded following incidents and one re-integrated. Movements from one programme to another had created some temporary issues for measuring attendance, but these were being resolved.

- Maths and English and curriculum teams were working together on the issues identified for individual students through the diagnostic process, and staff were co-creating interventions and support actions.

- There continued to be a rise in the proportion of learners eligible for higher needs funding (HNF) – up by 20% - and those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – up 22%. 18.4% of study programme students were now on the SEND register. Governors noted that there were often delays in securing information from the local authority about EHCPs which had made it difficult to offer transition support from Y11 to all students that needed it. There was also a 33% increase in requests for access arrangements for examinations and a 9% increase in risk assessments for students. To help address this, 14 new part-time Inclusion Assistants (IAs) had been appointed to the Additional Learning Support (ALS) team and 11 new part-time IAs had been appointed to the Supported Studies team. Induction and training had been given to new staff before the start of term.

- NHC staff would be making a presentation to the Association of Colleges (AoC) National Conference later in the term, helping to raise the college's profile in the sector. And NHC had come out top of the University of Hertfordshire's student survey.

Question: *What extra staff resources had been needed to cope with the extra student recruitment?* One extra teacher and 3 to 5 extra groups in Motor Vehicle, Electrical, and Health. The group sizes had been carefully reviewed to avoid excessive student/teacher ratios. The team had made more efficient use of staff and physical resources to cope with this year's growth.

Question: *Was more SEND growth anticipated?* There continued to be an increase in the level and breadth of additional need, but it had been possible to recruit the additional staff needed to cope.

Question: *How well-prepared were staff to carry out the necessary risk assessments?* Staff were trained, skilled, and experienced at undertaking risk assessments.

Question: *Were additional resources needed to manage the increased level and complexity of student risks (for example, the doubling of the number of students displaying suicidal ideation)?* The college now had a trained mental health first-aider who was able to train staff. The safeguarding team had also been increased in size. The safeguarding team worked closely and coherently with the curriculum team.

- **The Quality & Curriculum Committee accepted** the report.

ITEM 8: HART L&D PERFORMANCE UPDATE

- There had been a strong start to the year for adult delivery, with new partners and an extended geographic reach – having been approached by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to deliver Sector Workbased Academy Programmes (SWAPs) in Essex. There was also a Care offer in Stevenage and a Teaching Assistant offer in Luton.

Question: *What was a SWAP?* It was a targeted programme with an employer partner and a guaranteed job interview with participants at the end.

- This year's target achievement rate for apprentices was 68% and the team was targeting individuals and learner groups for all adult delivery programmes that could improve on last year's outcome. On-line delivery outcomes were already very strong.

Question: *What factors were affecting the achievement rate for electrical apprentices?* There had been a tutor recruitment gap during the first half of the year, and the rate was also dragged down by drop-outs in previous years, as this was a long-term course, not just one year programme. Now that a new ECC programme manager had been appointed, with a full teaching team and ongoing progress monitoring, it was expected that the achievement rate would rise.

Question: *Had an appointment to the Head of Apprenticeships been made?* Yes, a verbal offer had been accepted and the formal appointment process was under way. It had been good to see a pool of candidates for the role.

Question: *The improved achievement rates for professional programmes, especially for AAT delivery, was particularly good to see. How had this been achieved?* New management arrangements ensured student progress was being properly monitored and there was more targeted and focussed delivery. This had been an area for improvement in 2024/25 with specific improvement plans and it was good to see the impact already.

- **The Quality & Curriculum Committee accepted** the report.

ITEM 9: CURRICULUM AND QUALITY RISK REGISTER

- There were no material changes in the current quality risk register, which continued to be kept under review. It was expected that some current risks might be closed or refreshed by the time of the next meeting in October 2025.

Question: *Should the risk score for Safeguarding be increased because of the increased number of students on the SEND register and with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)?* Although the size of the Safeguarding team had been increased in recognition of this growth in demand, the SMT would consider whether the probability of a serious incident taking place had increased, post mitigation.

Action: Review the mitigations for the Safeguarding risk (Risk 68) and consider whether the probability of a serious incident had increased.

- **The Quality & Curriculum Committee endorsed** the latest iteration of the risk register.

ITEM 10: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Quality Improvement/Salf Assessment Review Panel sessions

- These would start during w/c 6 October and governors were invited to participate in at least one session.

ITEM 11: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Thursday 27 November 2025, starting at 18.00, by videoconference.

ACTION LOG

Date	Item	What	Who	When
02/10/25	2.	Review the title and description of the Curriculum Rep role.	Claire Anderson-Byrne	31/12/25
02/10/25	3.	Decide how and when to provide the Board or Quality & Curriculum Committee members with more information about ALPS.	Keith Turner	31/10/25
02/10/25	4.	Prepare plan for communicating student survey feedback to students and families.	Keith Turner	31/12/25
02/10/25	9.	Review the mitigations for the Safeguarding risk (Risk 68) and consider whether the probability of a serious incident had increased.	Keith Turner	13/10/25