

**Minutes of the  
Quality, Standards and Achievement Committee  
Tuesday 7 June 2022  
Tower Board Room Bedford**

**Present:** Richard Dimbleby  
Ian Pryce  
Raj Randhawa  
Sheila Selwood  
Allan Schofield

**In attendance:** Dominka Kalinowska (Governor observing)  
Em Lowe (Vice Principal)  
Alex Mortby (Director of HE)  
Rachel Nicol (Director of Governance & Clerk to the Corporation)  
Petra Williams (Director of Quality Improvement, Learning, Teaching and Assessment ("QILTA"))

**QSA/19/22 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Sharon De-Leonardis, Melissa Peacock and Abigail Stevens.

**QSA/20/22 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest from those present relevant to the matters on the agenda.

**QSA/21/22 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

The Committee had been invited, with other board members to a Special Educational Needs briefing prior to the meeting.

Dominika Kalinowska, recently appointed governor, was welcomed to the meeting as an observer.

There were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**QSA/22/22 External assurance**

The Vice Principal responsible for Quality summarised the recent activity including the Ofsted thematic review of T levels and the review of residential provision at

Shuttleworth including key findings, developments and the planned work of the Safeguarding Committee going forward.

EDI had been noted as a positive thread across the provision reviewed.

Assurance was provided that further investment in accommodation has been noted to be a priority and the need for a discussion on balancing priorities in terms of resource will take place at managerial and governance levels.

Planning for all external visits has been revisited and preparation plans are being shared with Directors and Heads and relevant training being rolled out.

An Ofsted monitoring visit is expected after merger.

The question of proportionality in Ofsted judgements was raised by the Committee. The current profile of the group and differences between colleges across the sector, and how this is managed through Inspection was questioned. It was understood the impact of apprenticeship provision on overall grades is being considered across the sector.

Student and staff feedback and destinations data are currently positive indicators.

### **The update was noted**

## **QSA/23/22 Academic Risks**

The Vice Principal presented the highlights of the report including:

- Adult provision and work being done with Marketing to determine demand and promote courses. The Committee questioned the reasons for the decline in numbers which was explained in terms of local competition, including local councils. The offer is being reviewed and the loss of market share in Bedfordshire being managed.
- T levels and risks around low student numbers and likely trends.
- Media coverage and need for development in the relationship with special educational needs parent forums to ensure timely and direct feedback to the College. Work has also been carried out on development of staff around special educational needs and appropriate use of language with all students.
- Approval process for university partnerships and need to monitor progress.
- Risks around performance tables given the lack of published data since Covid.
- Challenges around work placements. The Committee questioned what the incentives are for employers to offer placements and how this will be managed.
- Salary pressures and level of vacancies. The Committee noted the implementation of a new recruitment system and questioned the impact of the funding differential with the schools sector. Discussions were noted to have taken place in the Resources Committee around strategies for resource management and flexible ways of working. Mental health and wellbeing of staff is a key focus.

A general discussion took place on the challenges for the sector and the likely political response. A question was raised on the potential impact of Union demands and the Association of Colleges' response. Assurance was given that as the College has given pay awards each year they are in a strong position. The balance of investment between buildings, infrastructure and people will continue to be closely monitored.

**The report was noted.**

#### **QSA/24/22      Quality Improvement Plan (“QIP”)**

The Director of QILTA summarised the report and explained the rating and the role of the internal Performance Monitoring Meetings (PMM)

The Committee questioned the adequacy of actions to support attendance. Access to online learning resources has enabled students to access content from home but the need to clarify expectations and benefits of in person attendance for the next academic year was noted. Learning, teaching and assessment innovation is being promoted. The Committee sought to understand the processes and role of parent engagement in supporting attendance. It was explained that students in a College have to opt in to parents being contacted. Options of charging for exams and registration fees can be looked at but have not been historically.

The Committee questioned whether, if everything in the QIP was achieved, the College would be outstanding. It was explained that the focus of the SAR for the current year and development of the next QIP will provide the conceptual basis for achieving excellence.

The impact of merger was raised. SAR templates have been shared with Central Bedfordshire College (CBC) and best practice is being shared.

**The report was noted**

#### **QSA/25/22      HE update**

The Director of HE attended to present the report.

The University Centre branding has been approved and will be launched in June.

[Confidential minute removed]

Regulatory changes since 1 May 2022 were outlined and risk assessments carried out. A new Director of Access and Fair Participation is in place at the Office for Students and all providers have been asked to review their access and participation plans and resubmit.

Policy activity was outlined, including potential risks around students not being able to access loans.

### **The update was noted**

#### **QSA/26/22 42 day leavers and conversion rates**

The Executive Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment provided highlights on the report and explained the analysis presented.

A decline in conversion rates was noted in September 2021, believed to be partially attributed to relative stability in the previous year (September 2020) due to the pandemic. A further review will be carried out in September 2022. The Committee discussed the impact of teacher assessed grades. New software is being launched to assist with the improvement of conversion rates through tailored correspondence. Work is being done with individual subject areas to assess the reasons for different conversion rates. It was confirmed that the College looks at applicants and not the number of courses applied for. The position at the National College of Motorsport was discussed in terms of the uniqueness of the provision and previous conversion levels.

An overall decline in application numbers from the previous year was noted. Areas showing a lower conversion rate showed some correlation with issues in quality. Previously identified variances between counties are reducing.

The position on adult students, decrease in conversion rates and number of applicants in the current year is looking likely to continue.

The number of 42 day leavers shows a reduction on the previous year. Analysis in terms of characteristics has been carried out with minimal differentials around learning needs and deprivation areas. Work is however being carried out based on a 3 year trend.

### **The report was noted**

*The Executive Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment and Director of HE were thanked and left the meeting*

#### **QSA/27/22 Quality dashboard**

The Director of QILTA presented the report. The methodology has been changed in the student survey to remove the neutral response which reduces the overall percentage. It was explained that using the previous methodology, improvement in results is shown. Targets will be reviewed in due course.

Attendance remains a focus. The Committee questioned the level of investigation of links between mental health issues, attendance and retention. Work with mental first aiders, support plans and work with Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (“CAMHS”) was outlined. Links are being made with safeguarding and short courses focusing on mental health awareness have been delivered.

The Committee questioned the impact of the financial crisis and need of individuals to work to support families on attendance. The College has sought to provide flexibility and also further developed the bursary policy. The Committee raised the question of work carried out to support development of the whole college community rather than individual development, increasing the sense of belonging and how this is reported on.

Retention targets and the predicted position was highlighted as a potential concern but the impact on achievement is noted to be minimal.

No particular EDI gaps or HE achievement issues were noted.

A big drive in all vocational areas for high grades is taking place.

The Committee questioned the balance between student attendance and need for flexible working arrangements for some staff. The balance between the need for social and community experience and flexible arrangements was noted to be a challenge but policies have been developed.

### **The report was noted**

#### **QSA/28/22 Stakeholder feedback**

The report presented by the Director of QILTA centred on the Spring survey results. It was noted that a slightly different survey had been used for the Bedford 6<sup>th</sup> form (“BSF”). Neutral scores had been removed.

A correlation was noted between curriculum areas on high intervention scores and satisfaction rates. Overall satisfaction rates were outlined with some individual areas with extremely positive results. Follow up communication across the Group and action in respect of departments with lower results was outlined.

The overall scores had improved across questions for TBCG with high satisfaction on the quality of learning. BSF results were outlined and discussed in detail. The Committee questioned the intervention scoring and this was explained in relation to the action plans. It was questioned whether there is any correlation between the level of satisfaction and the staff vacancy levels. Issues raised are being explored in focus groups.

The Committee analysed the data further and discussed the assumption that being satisfied relates to likelihood to recommend.

A general discussion took place on oversight of the developments in play and the review of the governance structure. The potential to correlate different data sources for particular areas in future reporting was outlined.

### **The report was noted**

#### **QSA/29/22 Destinations**

The Director of QILTA explained the highlights of the survey which is carried out by an external provider 9 months after students leaving the College.

Securing participation is noted to be challenging.

Key headlines from the report were raised and discussed with positive progress noted in leavers moving into employment or education. Whilst there is a greater percentage of females in paid employment of 16 hours or more there was no significant difference in destinations outcomes by ethnicity.

The Committee noted the most stark change from the previous report was the reduction in the percentage of respondees who felt that their studies had had an impact on pay. The Committee considered potential reasons for this but suggested that it may be a topic worthy of a wider piece of research.

### **The report was noted**

#### **QSA/30/22 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 10 March 2022 were an accurate record of the meeting

#### **QSA/31/22 Next meeting**

The Calendar for the next academic year will be available before the end of term