

**Minutes of the
Academic Standards and Quality Development Committee
held on Tuesday 8 March 2016 at 8.00am
in Room 814 at the Matthew Boulton Campus**

Present:	Apologies:
Veronica Docherty (VD) (Chair)	Philip Cornish
Jenni Ord (JO)	
Andrew Cleaves	
In Attendance:	
Taher Hussain (TH)	
Adrian Morris (AM)	
Julie Nugent (JN)	
Liam Nevin (LN)	
Tony Dennant (TD) (For items 6 and 7)	

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Philip Cornish.

Declarations of Interest

There were none save for those already recorded in the Register of Interests.

JO asked that it be noted that she was no longer the Chair of Health Education West Midlands

Item 1 - Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 8 December 2015

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting

Matters Arising and Action Log

It was noted that the action log erroneously referred to student satisfaction with sub-contractor provision being addressed in the Finance Committee report. AM advised the committee that student satisfaction with their programme, and progression opportunities were both good, and the feedback from delivery providers was also positive and confirmed through the College's own programme of observations.

It was noted that interim measures of performance would be addressed at agenda item 5.

Item 2 (i) – Strategic Review of HE

JN presented this item and summarised that a key component of the proposed strategy was to do fewer things better. This would include a strong focus on employer related higher skills provision, with marketing focussing on employability and affordability geared towards the key sectors prioritised by the Corporation

VD noted that increased fees had generally not reduced demand for HE provision amongst prospective students and in light of the College's income targets questioned whether JN was confident in respect of positioning the College in this way.

JN assured the committee that this issue had been carefully considered, and that whilst the demand for full time higher cost courses was robust nationally, the College's natural market was more mature and part-time students. However, there was a challenge for the College in ensuring that it carried out a detailed market assessment as a precursor to more detailed proposals.

VD questioned whether the curriculum focus was aligned with the prospective focus of the strategy and JN advised that further curriculum development was necessary around the developing trailblazers and degree apprenticeship frameworks. There was growing demand with employers for this type of provision and the apprenticeship levy was likely to develop that interest further.

VD further questioned whether the strategy proposed competing with university partners and whether that would require some renegotiation of commercial relationships.

JN advised that there would be some competition and that the College needed to re-negotiate its commercial arrangements to reflect that it also had choices about the FE institutions it worked with. However, there would also be areas where collaboration was a more favourable solution to growth.

VD noted that the recruitment of a proposed senior lead for HE would not impact on the 16-17 programme and questioned how the strategy would be managed prior to that appointment. JN advised that workstreams were already in place to address issues with quality and reducing attrition.

JO stated that she was supportive of the overall direction of the strategy but encouraged some further reflection on who would be the interim lead, and suggested that the Committee needed more assurance on the detailed activity that would deliver the strategic objectives. This would require a detailed implementation plan for 2016-17, and sales targets linked to the specific disciplines prioritised by the Corporation. It would also be useful to examine whether the College might make use of the UCAS clearing system, whilst acknowledging that young full time students would not be its target growth population. The paper represented a good start but there was more work to do in developing the detail.

JN advised that Sue Woodward was the existing HE lead and this would continue pending recruitment to the position. In addition, the business planning for 2016-17 included targets for HE.

AC summarised the debate by stating that the paper was supported in terms of its broad direction but the Committee had posed a challenge to develop a strategy and an implementation plan reflecting four main themes; quality, progression, marketing and partners. This would encompass the timing for recruitment to the senior HE lead, and clarification of curriculum development objectives. It was proposed that this work would be completed over the next month, circulated to committee members thereafter for comment, and presented to the May Corporation for endorsement.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

To recommend to the Corporation:

- **To promote a strong higher level skills offer, based on close links with industry and the development of higher level skills to support career progression. This**

should include traditional HE qualifications and, increasingly, the development and delivery of higher level (including degree) Apprenticeships. Marketing will focus on affordability and promotion of employability skills.

- **The Higher Level Skills Strategy will align with the Growth Strategy, with a clear focus on developing and delivering increased volumes of provision in Advanced Manufacturing, Business and Professional Services, Rail, Health and Social Care, Retail and Construction. Other provision, for example sport, will be kept under annual review with Heads of Faculty and College and maintained in relation to local demand.**
- **To recruit and appoint a new senior role to lead and deliver the HE strategy**
- **That the Heads of College develop the HE experience at each of the four main colleges, creating a differentiated experience that reflects BMet's strong vocational focus and provides a high quality professional and technical environment.**
- **That the further actions proposed by the Principal in the summary of the preamble to this minute (to develop a strategy and an implementation plan reflecting four main themes; quality, progression, marketing and partners) be endorsed.**

Item 3 – HE Quality Review Update

AM presented this item and advised the Committee that the letter provided to the Committee from the QAA represented the outcome of its recent inspection. The College had met the assessor's expectations in all four areas that were assessed and the judgement provided clear affirmation around strategy and quality. The inspection had benefitted from strong leadership from Sue Woodward and the support of Sue Toy and the student representative.

VD commended AM on the outcome and asked that thanks be passed to the staff involved.

JO asked what steps were being taken to publish the results and harness the favourable judgements and JN advised that PR was being developed which would be acted on following publication of the full report on the 25 March.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the conclusions from the QAA assessment of Higher Education provision be noted.**

Item 4 – Quality Strategy

AM introduced this item and noted that approval of the strategy was a matter reserved to the Corporation. Whilst the strategy addressed the 15-16 academic year it was recognised that proposals should be brought to the committee preceding the commencement of the academic year and therefore an update for 2016-17 would be brought to the June meeting of the committee,

Thereafter AM summarised the content and structure of the strategy.

JO stated that the document was broadly acceptable but the tone and content required some further consideration as it needed to reflect the responsibilities of lecturers and students for achieving excellence. At present there was too much emphasis on "being done to."

AC agreed that the document needed to be more inclusive and asked for the committee's approval in making these changes for the 2016-17 iteration that would be brought to the committee in June.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Quality Strategy is recommended to the Corporation for approval**
- **That the Quality Strategy be reviewed for the 2016-17 academic year and that changes incorporating those proposed in the preamble to this minute be presented to the meeting of the Committee in June 2016.**

Item 5 – Performance Update

AM presented the report and advised that in addition to providing a mid-year assessment of performance and forecast outturn, the findings were key to directing further and more intensive interventions to drive improvements in those curriculum areas that were underachieving.

Thereafter AM advised on the various forms of assurance and triangulation that had been adopted to ensure that the forecasts were robust, particularly in light of historic weaknesses in this area.

Thereafter AM summarised the headline forecast success rates for apprenticeships and classroom based delivery, compared against national averages for 2013/14 (it being noted that the 14/15 figures had not yet been published).

JO noted that the monitoring was robust and questioned whether the framework failures were as a result of English and Maths provision and AM advised that the evidence did not support this.

It was noted that there were some legacy issues in performance outcomes arising from decisions made by the College in the past but in 16/17 the impact of these would be negligible.

Thereafter AM described the targeted interventions that were now being undertaken in relation to areas of underperformance.

AC summarised and advised the committee that the report reflected substantial improvements in the identification and analysis of the issues that underpinned the forecasts and that this was facilitating evidence based interventions. However, he was not satisfied that there was sufficient clarity around the remedial measures to address underperformance. He therefore advised the Committee that AM would produce a plan setting out the specific interventions to address areas of underperformance and that this would contain greater detail of the remedial measures in respect of specific areas of provision. This work would be completed in sufficient time to allow VD to brief the Corporation at its meeting on the 17 March.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the committee note the report and the actions being taken to address the risks identified**
- **That a plan containing detailed remedial measures to address the areas of underperformance be agreed with the Chair of the Committee in order to facilitate a briefing of the Corporation meeting on the 17 March 2016.**

Item 6 – Complaints Update

AM presented this report and advised the committee that it reflected the year to date position, and provided an analysis by site and curriculum area.

JO noted that the number of complaints was relatively small but questioned whether there were themes in curriculum areas. AM advised that the underlying issues behind many of the complaints were related to staff changes or shortages or occasions when classes were unstaffed.

JO asked whether there was any data on student satisfaction with the resolution of complaints. AM advised that whilst the report did not address this, 84% of complaints were closed in a timely manner. However, the Executive were also of the view that too many complaints were not being resolved quickly enough.

VD stated that the information in the report helped triangulate with the performance forecasts and queried how the complaints data was being used to improve teaching and learning. AM advised that the data was being used and that observations were routinely drawing on this information.

TD joined the meeting at this point and advised that the big teaching and learning survey had recently been completed and Heads of College would shortly commence monthly surveys. This would involve staff with Ipads approaching students directly to record opinions, as well as static surveys and possibly suggestion boxes.

AC noted that the feedback and the committee debate indicated that the report would be improved by linking the analysis to the College Performance Report, and he volunteered to review the report content to address this.

VD agreed and asked that positive feedback also be reflected in the data.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the committee note the report**

Item 7 – Harborne Academy – Progress Update and Recent DfE Visit

TD presented this report in his capacity as Chair of Governors for the Academy. He explained that in the 2014-15 academic year the Academy had out-turned at 32% with 5 grade A-C GCSE's which was below the target of 40%. However, the new measure for performance in this and subsequent academic years was "Progress 8" which was a point score measurement of progress by students through their school career.

The target as reflected in the report was the Academy would achieve between 0.4% and 0.10%. The forecast was 0.8% and whilst governors were reasonably confident of this they were mindful of the inaccurate forecast for 2014-15.

TD further advised that the Academy was now full for the September cohort and this was based on first or second choice options. It was important to maintain this level of interest in the Academy by meeting or exceeding forecast performance.

Further measures had also been taken to embed improvements, including engaging with a local grade 1 rated school, appointing a former Ofsted inspector to validate the forecasting, and considerable work to develop the leadership team.

VD welcomed the report and the clarification of the role of College as sponsor in reviewing the Academy's performance.

AC asked for an update on the recruitment of an external governor with head teacher experience and TD advised that this was targeted for completion by the end of April.

Jo questioned the extent to which progression was channelled to the College and TD advised that this was not an opportunity that had been exploited but would be considered.

JO further asked about the steps that the Academy had taken to assess and act upon its analysis of progress by ethnicity. TD advised that this data was reported to the Board and actions were in place to address underperformance which, in relation to ethnicity, was particularly an issue in boys with Afro-Caribbean ethnicity.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

Any Other Business

VD asked what action was being taken in relation to security and anti-terrorism measures and AC advised of the report presented to the Audit Committee and the commitment to revert to it with an implementation plan in respect of the activities that had been deemed necessary.

VD further asked whether any rationalisation of the curriculum would be necessary as a result of the Area Review and AC advised that there was no impact.

Date of the next meeting – 21 June 2016

Signed:..........(Chair)

Dated:.....21/6/2016.....