



Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Wednesday 17 May 2017 at 5.30pm in Room 301

Members present: Lynda Brown (Chair for this meeting), David Craig, Phil Cook (Principal), Neville Dart and Rebecca Hodgson

Officials: Liz Boynton (Head of Quality), Mick Hickey (Deputy Principal), Jason Faulkner (Assistant Principal, Curriculum), Sarah Thompson (Clerk), Phil Hastie (Vice Principal: Corporate Planning and Performance), Carol Richardson (Quality & Compliance Manager), Jim Hubbard (Interim Director of Operations) and Michelle Elliott (Director of Business Development)

Apologies: Mark White (Chair), Daniel Johnson, Deborah Merrett (co-opted member)

Mr Mark White, Committee Chair, had submitted apologies for this meeting. Lynda Brown, as Vice Chair of the committee, chaired this meeting.

SIC17/14 Agenda Item 1 - Minutes of Previous Meeting

It was **agreed** to approve the circulated minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 22 March 2017

Updates against agreed actions were noted.

SIC17/15 Agenda Item 2 – QAA Review (verbal)

The Head of Quality reported that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) had undertaken a review of the College's Higher Education provision on 16 and 17 May 2017. The focus of the inspection was compliance with baseline regulatory requirements and the College had submitted over 80 pieces of evidence in advance of the review, covering areas such as academic standards, quality of teaching and learning, code of governance, terms and conditions applicable to students and complaint handling. The team had also permitted the College to submit additional evidence during the review, with around 166 documents in total submitted.

The review team had comprised two reviewers, a further student reviewer, an observer and a shadow observer. Feedback would be received on Friday 2 June 2017 in the form of a draft report outlining the team's judgements in respect of whether the College had not met requirements, had partially met requirements or had fully met requirements. The team would also judge whether the College was a sufficiently mature organisation to exit the developmental period, based on academic standards and quality of student experience.

It was clarified that the College operated as franchised provision from Teesside University and was therefore indirectly funded. All awards were made via Teesside University and operation was in line with a Memorandum of Understanding. The review team had been particularly interested in action taken directly by the College to ensure high academic standards.

The Deputy Principal reported that the tone of the inspection had been positive overall and the team had appeared satisfied with the answers provided. The review team had commended the high level of knowledge among the higher education team and the positivity and support of students. As the College representative, the Head of Quality had attended all meetings, other than the meeting with students, which the Student Representative had attended. The Principal and Corporation Chair had also met with the reviewers and had demonstrated a passion for higher education and a detailed understanding of College operation. Feedback indicated that all meetings had gone well.

The Principal commended the effort of the Head of Quality and Head of Higher Education, Health and Care, who had led the process from the College side. Members received and noted the information and thanked the Head of Quality for the update and for her work towards the review.

SIC17/16 Agenda Item 3 – NETA Quality Improvement Plan

Members welcomed Carol Richardson, Quality and Compliance Manager, NETA, and Jim Hubbard, Interim Operations Director, NETA, to the meeting. The Vice Principal clarified that Phil Blewitt would take up a permanent position of NETA Operations Director from mid June. A permanent Government Funded Training Manager was also being recruited.

Members were asked to note that the majority of NETA income (around 55%) related to commercial income and significant responsive activity was taking place with employers. Within the government funded provision, which comprised around 45% of NETA activity, apprenticeship provision was outstanding with both overall and timely apprenticeship success rates significantly above the national

rates (at around 85% and 83% respectively). There were issues with the Study Programme provision, which made up around 13.5% of NETA provision, and planned actions were detailed in the circulated Improvement Plan.

The Quality and Compliance Manager highlighted the support provided by the Head of Quality and the Stockton Riverside College quality team and the improvements to systems and processes in line with College quality procedures, for example, the introduction of MarkBook. She also highlighted the significant investment made in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and commended the positive impact of one-to-one meetings in 'at risk' areas, which had been implemented by the Interim Head of Government Funded training. The Head of Quality clarified that there were concerns regarding outcomes of study programmes in the current year and courses had been extended to allow catch-up time. Plans were in place to ensure outcomes improved in 2017-18. It was recognised that the role of the quality team was to monitor provision and provide support and that accountability for outcomes was with the NETA team.

In response to members' challenges, the Interim Director of Operations clarified that more vocational EAL qualifications had been introduced to replace a number of BTEC programmes. EAL was a different awarding body which was recognised in fields such as manufacturing and the qualifications were more suitable for the majority of learners, who benefited from more experiential learning, and were also more suited to the needs of employers. The Interim Director of Operations also clarified that the previous Level 3 provision had been replaced by a suite of qualifications ranging from Level 1 to Level 3, which was designed to support progression to apprenticeships. Members challenged retention levels and it was clarified that these were expected to improve as a result of improving staff skills. In response to a further challenge regarding the cohort, the Interim Director of Operations confirmed that many students appeared to struggle with the levels of maths required for engineering and this was a further reason for the introduction of EAL qualifications and provision at Level 1 and Level 2, which incorporated functional skills and GCSE respectively. This ensured students were prepared for Level 3 qualifications.

Members noted issues with poor communication at enrolment and challenged the action being taken for September enrolment to ensure learners were placed on the right courses. The Vice Principal clarified that the curriculum changes would ensure learners' expectations of more practical courses were met. The Interim Director of Operations also highlighted that more interviews were taking place at the NETA site to allow staff to demonstrate the equipment used and clarify the importance of maths and science in engineering courses.

The Principal also reported that terms and conditions of employment of NETA staff were under review and some redundancies were possible. Applications for 16-18 year old provision currently appeared positive with a forecast of around 70 applications and anticipated income of between £250 k and £750 k. However, if applications fell significantly, the College would close the provision. In response to a challenge, it was confirmed that there would be ongoing monitoring of 16-18 recruitment and the College would only continue the provision if it was able to maintain a good educational service.

Members were reminded that the areas of concern made up a smaller proportion of NETA provision and recognised the importance of understanding the wider context and celebrating the success of much NETA provision. Members received and noted the information and governors expressed their support for the planned actions.

SIC17/17 Agenda Item 4 – In Year Provision of Concern: Update on Progress

A report had been circulated outlining a new, high-profile process to identify, in year, the areas of provision giving rise to the greatest concerns. Data such as attendance and retention, information regarding English and maths study programmes, and quality information from the Teaching and Learning Development Manager were collated and reviewed at fortnightly meetings led by the Principal and attended by relevant managers and the Head of Quality. The Principal commended the purpose-built spreadsheet provided by the Information Services team as part of the process. The process supplemented the College Performance Improvement Action Plan, which was retrospective and looked at provision that had under-performed in the previous academic year.

Four areas of concern had been identified in the current year: Childcare; Health and Social Care; Travel and Tourism; and Computing. A separate improvement plan for NETA had been developed.

In Health and Social Care, there had been no further drop in retention [redacted]. In Childcare, one further student had left the course. A new curriculum lead had taken up post in the area and was having an impact, although further work was needed to improve attendance.

In Travel and Tourism, there were no historic issues.

The following three sentences have been redacted.

The impacted cohort was relatively small (14 learners). The Programme Area of Leader was demonstrating enthusiasm, passion and focus to resolve the issues and learners had confirmed that they were now receiving good support.

In Computing [],

The following three sentences have been redacted.

Interim Head of Department was in post and seeking to resolve the issues. While some very positive feedback had been received, there was a need for improvement and plans were in place to address this for 2017-18.

The Head of Quality commended the impact of this monitoring process. The Principal reported that the process would be implemented at an earlier stage in 2017-18 to ensure improvements were realised. It was acknowledged that this was a new process and could be improved further to achieve maximum effectiveness.

In response to members' challenges, the Head of Quality clarified that there was no specific additional resource to support staff in escorting learners to classes but tutors assisted in ensuring learners attended English and maths lessons wherever possible. The Assistant Principal also confirmed that leavers were asked to give reasons for leaving a course but it was recognised that, regardless of stated reason, there was usually an issue with quality of teaching and learning. The Principal highlighted that Heads of Department, Programme Area Leaders and Course Leaders were responsible for ensuring an environment appropriate for each particular curriculum area, with the role of the Senior Leadership Team being to suggest, advise and guide, including via Performance Review and Business Planning meetings.

Members received and noted the information.

SIC17/18 Agenda Item 5 - Value Added

The Deputy Principal drew governors' attention to the circulated report, which showed a positive position with most actions now rated green or amber. Actions targeted at improving value added included an emphasis on stretch and challenge and close tracking of progress of individual learners, which in turn supported improved accuracy of predictions. Data appeared positive, with projections for achievement higher than in 2015-16 and around 70% of learners expected to achieve their target grade. Not all projections appeared realistic, as there had been some embedding of the process in the current year and a smooth process was expected in 2017-18.

In response to members' challenges, the Deputy Principal clarified that management expected staff to understand the progress of individual learners, which in turn resulted in higher expectations. The Head of Quality highlighted that predictions were made by Heads of Departments as a summation of expectations of individual learners. Heads of Department were therefore accountable and very focussed on improving outcomes. While achievement rates for NETA Training Trust were expected to be very low, this would impact on only a very small number of students. There were concerns about performance of Bede, which were partly related to the introduction of linear A levels. As this was a new system, there were no national rates available and the impact of a linear system was unknown. The course end date was also in the following academic year and predictions were low at 81.5%. Members recognised that non linear A levels had been used for around 15 years and many teaching staff would have no experience of linear A levels. In addition, limited support had been provided by examination boards.

Members challenged processes for scrutinising predictions and student progress, noting examples of rigorous scrutiny of pupil work in primary schools. The Head of Quality confirmed that SRC Bede predictions had not been scrutinised in 2015-16 but the 2016-17 action plan had built in sampling, testing and intervention and was having an impact. In respect of monitoring learners' progress, the College was introducing MarkBook, a highly transparent system which was accessible to leadership. The Vice Principal highlighted that MarkBook had been recently introduced at NETA and was providing very good data in respect of learner progress and was also encouraging learners to engage and challenge tutors to ensure they were achieving good progress. MarkBook was further encouraging tutors to use Pro Monitor and incentivising teaching staff to mark work.

Members received and noted the information and **agreed** to propose that the next Governors' Strategic Seminar should include a session considering new technologies and the benefits they provided for learners.

SIC17/19 Agenda Item 6 – Learning Walks

Feedback from learning walks undertaken by Rebecca Hodgson and Deborah Merrett had been circulated and it was noted that Lynda Brown had provided verbal feedback on learning walks at the previous meeting. The Head of Quality thanked governors for their involvement and highlighted that staff had welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate the work carried out by the College. It was proposed to arrange a session for members involved in the process to further discuss the College's quality assurance processes, for example, training of assessors, in order to ensure governors had full oversight of the process. An annual approach would also be planned to ensure key areas of provision were covered and

governors' role was clarified. Once fully established, the process would be rolled out to include more governors, including those without an educational background.

Rebecca Hodgson commended the high quality of teaching and learning and the positive atmosphere and interest and engagement of learners in classes. Her comments were supported by Lynda Brown. Members were pleased to receive assurance on the robustness of College processes.

Members received and noted the information and **agreed** that a meeting should be arranged to allow governors to further discuss the learning walk process.

SIC17/20 Agenda Item 7 – Self Assessment Report (SAR) and Master Targets (Quality) Schedule

A report had been circulated outlining proposed dates for the development of the College's SAR and Master Targets (Quality) file. The Deputy Principal highlighted that targets were developed following consultation with curriculum teams within agreed parameters. This was a particular strength of the College system, with Heads of Department highly committed to achieving mutually agreed targets.

Members received and noted the information.

SIC17/21 Agenda Item 8 – Inspection Preparation

A report had been circulated outlining the College's preparation for inspection. The Head of Quality reported that the timescales within the Ofsted framework would require an inspection of the College by the end of the 2017-18 academic year, although it was recognised that more providers were now subject to the Ofsted regime as a result of the introduction of the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers and this could impact. It was possible that an inspection could take place in the current year and the College would continue preparing for an imminent inspection. The primary focus for Ofsted was quality improvement and, in particular, numbers of learners passing and having good achievement and positive progression. The Deputy Principal highlighted that the College recognised the challenges of an inspection early in the academic year, particularly in relation to NETA and English and maths. The College was engaging a specialist Ofsted adviser, who had reviewed priority areas for Ofsted, for example, A levels, English and maths and the Single Central Record. She had also undertaken some joint learning walks. She had provided very positive feedback and some helpful suggestions for further improvement, which the College would take forward.

Members received and noted the information, recognised the importance of ensuring the College was ready for September and **agreed** that a further meeting of the Ofsted group should be arranged for the first week in September.

SIC17/22 Agenda Item 9 – Any Other Business

There were no additional items of business considered by the committee.

SIC17/23 Agenda Item 10 – Approval of Documents for Public Inspection

It was **agreed** that the agenda and supporting documents for this meeting would be made available for public inspection with the exception of the NETA Quality Improvement Plan, information regarding in year provision of concern, value added update, governor feedback from learning walks and inspection preparation information, which were deemed commercial in confidence.

SIC17/24 Agenda Item 11 – Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 8 November 2017 at 5.30 pm

(The meeting ended at 7.10 pm)