

QUALITY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: 22nd JUNE 2023

MINUTES

PRESENT	Anthony Smith (Chair), Amelia Sussman, Simon Horne, Mark Isherwood, Nicole Morgan, Angela Herbert, Asfa Sohail, Nana Brew
IN ATTENDANCE	Pablo Lloyd (Interim CEO), Kurt Hintz (Executive Principal), David Dangana (Director of Quality and Compliance), Jackie Chapman (CCCT Managing Director), Graham Drummond (Director of Governance), Graham Cooper (Clerk)
APOLOGIES	Susan Benhene (Student Member) Chanel Crooks (Student Member)
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	None

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH MAY 2023

Action

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING

The committee noted that:

With respect to item 3, progression data relating to students from diverse backgrounds was provided to Angela Herbert as requested.

There were no other matters arising.

3. GROUP QUALITY

The committee received and considered the Group Quality Update and the following was noted:

- Predicted achievement, as well as in year KPIs relating to attendance and retention, show a strong position as the Group enters the final part of the academic year. Both attendance and retention are higher than last year. Predicted achievement rates are expected to improve further. This is in line with the Quality Improvement Plans, which provide additional detail in relation to the progress achieved. The Committee particularly noted the significant improvement in functional skills predicted achievement and the Executive Principal provided further explanation in relation to the robustness of the predictions based on current data.
- With respect to retention rates on year 2 A levels, however, progress was not as strong. This was attributed to students having started two years ago with inflated grades awarded through the Teachers Assessed Grades process that they were unlikely to have achieved. These students were not therefore generally capable of coping with the A Level programme or of taking the exams at year 12, the realisation of which had resulted in a higher drop-off in learners than in previous years. This was despite a strengthened approach to advice and guidance with regard to potential alternative courses of study, in conjunction with the Inclusion hub and wellbeing support. There was also an increased incidence of students with mental health issues, who despite referrals to external agencies, were unable to continue. There are now signs of improvement amongst current year 12 learners who completed GCSE examinations, and the position is expected to recover. The variation across colleges was noted. The Executive Principal further clarified that predicted achievement for GCSEs shows a slight improvement in high grades.
- With respect to enrolment and offers for 2023/24, applications overall are c. 7% lower than last year. This is despite the significant increase in direct marketing activity, an increased number of school visits and open days. This reflects the continued challenges within the 16-18 market due to strong competition from schools to retain learners. The summer marketing campaign has been launched two months early, with more activity than ever before. The next twelve weeks will be crucial for recruitment.

- The Committee noted that generally, improvements seen during the current year (as the KPIs show) are a testament to the hard work and commitment of teaching staff across the Group, and the committee commended staff on this progress.

4. APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE

The CCCT Managing Director presented the Apprenticeship Update and the following issues were highlighted:

- Apprenticeship retention is currently 69.6%, which is 5% higher than the same time last year.
- The key measure of success will be the number of these who complete. A detailed risk assessment has been undertaken, which shows that of the 285 continuing, 268 are expected to achieve, but that there is only reasonable certainty that 141 will have done so by 31st August. If the 141 complete (with the remaining 87 carried over), the achievement rate will be 58/59%, which is significantly higher than last year's 48.8%. This would be a good outcome, compared also to the year before last, which was 55%.
- There were differences, and areas of concern, in individual areas. For instance, in Culinary Arts, employers have removed apprentices to work full time due to extreme staffing difficulties, and this has resulted in a drop to 56% in the number of apprentices. Subcontracted apprenticeships have been declining over the past few years and there have been no new starts, and the high level of failures is having a negative impact. These issues have been offset by performance in other areas.
- The committee noted the improvement from the previous year, but that the Group's overall progress is impeded by the national context and complexities relating to apprenticeships. The Group's destination data nevertheless remains strong, at over 95%, with strong progression into chosen career paths, even by apprentices who do not successfully complete.

The committee discussed the wider subject of the changes arising from the introduction of T Levels and the potential impact on the Group's curriculum offer. The Executive Principal advised that the de-funding of applied general qualifications that is linked to the introduction of T Levels is likely to present challenges if T Levels become the only alternative to A-Levels, although it is widely expected that applied general qualifications will remain. If so, alongside the introduction of T Levels and new technical qualifications, this is likely to mean that student numbers are divided between the array of options, presenting challenges with regard to the viability of each of the individual programmes.

Nicole Morgan requested an opportunity to meet with the CCCT Managing Director in order to gain further insight into the achievement rates relating to different areas of employment. The CCCT Managing Director agreed to arrange this.

JC

Angela Herbert requested further information in relation to ethnicity. The CCCT Managing Director advised that previous years' data showed no discernible difference in achievement by ethnicity, but that there are differences in the male/female and ethnic mix of students across different subject cohorts. She agreed to provide the current data, and she advised that an analysis of achievement by ethnicity will be undertaken at the end of the year end and will be provided to the committee. The committee emphasised the importance of tracking this throughout the year.

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5. HE UPDATE

The committee received the HE update and the following was noted:

- The Group continues to work with its current partners: Middlesex University, Canterbury Christ Church University, City University, London and Staffordshire University. Due diligence is being undertaken on a new partnership agreement with Roehampton University, and a partnership with Greenwich University is currently at the explorative stage.
- HE income has not met target, with actual income £1.34m against target income £1.94m. This is substantially due to low recruitment onto prescribed and franchised programmes at Westminster Kingsway College.
- The Group remains compliant with all the Office for Students conditions of registration. A full analysis was provided.
- NSS scores are expected early August, although these are unlikely to be meaningful in view of the small number of students who are eligible to complete the survey. Teaching Excellence Framework scores will be available in September.
- The Executive Principal highlighted that the Group continues to keep under review whether it is worthwhile continuing its HE provision, noting that this is relatively small and that targets are often not achieved. He brought the committee's attention to the analysis that shows the high

level of return. For franchise provision, the contribution rate is over 80%, which is very strong and supports the decision to continue, even with low numbers. The contribution rate for direct HE provision is much lower, and this continues to be wound down.

The committee also received and reviewed the Student Protection Plan. The Director of Quality and Compliance assured the committee that none of the Group's HE students are impacted by UCU's current marking and assessment boycott. The committee noted that the Student Protection Plan will go forward to the Group Board for approval.

The committee also noted the move by some FE colleges to obtain Degree Awarding Powers, including specifically Newcastle College Group. The Director of Quality & Compliance advised that there were currently no plans by CCCG Group to apply for such powers, given especially the relatively small size of the Group's HE provision. This may be something for future consideration, but would require significant effort and decision to apply would not be undertaken lightly.

6. CCCG QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The committee received for information the updated CCCG Quality Improvement Plan, highlights of which had been referred to earlier in the meeting.

7. SELF ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Director of Governance invited members of the committee to provide, either now or by email, any observations or suggestions relating to the effectiveness of the committee. No matters were raised at this stage.

The committee also noted its Terms of Reference a copy of which had been circulated. No changes to the Terms of Reference were suggested or recommended.

With respect to membership of the committee, there is currently a vacancy for a co-opted member. Recruitment is being undertaken for new independent members of the Group Board and it is hoped that a potential candidate for co-opted membership of the committee may emerge from this process. The vacancy will also be separately advertised.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The committee asked about policies relating to Artificial Intelligence in relation to the Group's assessment processes. The Director of Quality and Compliance advised that the Group is actively looking at the issues in consultation with awarding organisations, and the Group's policies will be updated during the summer to reflect the guidance provided. The Group is also actively engaging in discussions relating to how AI can be used to ease workload burdens.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 10th October 2023 5:00pm

Friday 24th November 2023 9:00 – 1.00pm

Thursday 25th January 2024 5:00pm

Tuesday 19th March 2024 5:00pm

Tuesday 14th May 2024 5:00pm

Thursday 20th June 2024 5:00pm