

## QUALITY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: 10<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2023

### MINUTES

**PRESENT** Anthony Smith (Chair), Amelia Sussman, Simon Horne, Mark Isherwood, Nicole Morgan, Asfa Sohail, Rowda Ali (Student Governor)

**IN ATTENDANCE** 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** Angela Herbert, Nana Brew (Staff Governor), Pablo Lloyd (Interim CEO)

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** None

The Chair welcomed everyone and specifically Rowda Ali, recently elected student governor, who introduced herself.

#### 1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22<sup>ND</sup> JUNE 2023

**Action**

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

#### 2. MATTERS ARISING

The committee noted that:

With respect to an analysis of achievement rates by ethnicity, this will be covered in the Group Quality Update.

#### 3. GROUP QUALITY

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

General Qualifications (A Levels and GCSEs)

- These are results for the first examination series that students have sat since the pandemic that do not include Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) or Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). The changes in grade boundaries to bring the grades to pre-pandemic levels have meant that performance is generally lower than the last academic year's results, when extra support such as pre-release materials was provided to learners.
- The Group's provision includes 29 A Level Subjects, as listed in the report. The overall pass rate this year is 92% (8% below national average), while the high grades (A\*-B) is 28% (24% below national average). The pass rate for A-C grades is 53% (22% below national average). Pass rates by individual subject were also reported, along with breakdowns of results by age, gender and ethnicity. The Director of Quality and Compliance highlighted that these results generally show no significant performance gaps, nor evidence that particular groups across the college had been disadvantaged, albeit that in some instances overall performance is below national benchmarks. The committee challenged this assertion, though the Director of Quality and Compliance provided further explanation, advising that the analysis showed that that the wide range of differences in results was not as a direct result of students belonging to specific groups, but due to those groups representing a large proportion of students in classes where there are issues relating to Teaching and Learning overall. This points to a future focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in those classes.
- Pass rates in Art and Design were noted as being particularly good.
- Comparative pre-pandemic pass rate data by subject was included in the report, although the committee noted the need for caution in reviewing the data at this level due to the small number of learners in some subjects.
- The self-assessment reports for the year will also include achievement rates. The latter will generally be lower than pass rates, due to the impact of issues relating to retention.

- Whilst the national averages quoted in the report were for FE colleges (not for all institutions), the committee asked that for the SAR review meetings in November, comparative data for similar profile colleges is also included. The final ALPs scores are also expected to be available, in addition to which the committee asked that data is presented to show comparisons by subject between actual grades and the earlier predicted grades.
- The Director of Quality and Compliance advised that although results overall were better than expected, not as much progress as expected had been made in some subjects. Maths for example, had been a particular disappointment.
- The Chair challenged whether, given the shortfalls against national averages, the overall results could rightly be regarded as Good. Whilst the need for further improvement was acknowledged, the Executive Principal advised that the results are broadly in line with expectations following on from the Ofsted inspection during the year, notwithstanding that there were some areas where the results are better than expected and others where they are disappointing. He also noted that overall performance was better than the pre-pandemic level.
- Performance will be discussed further and in more detail during the forthcoming SAR review meetings, with areas for improvement identified for inclusion in the 2023/24 Quality Improvement Plan and Rapid Improvement Plans put in place as appropriate in individual subject areas. Notwithstanding the assurances provided, the Chair stressed the importance of ensuring that performance gaps are addressed.
- With respect to AS levels, for 2022/23 a decision had been made to promote AS levels to some learners, so that those who decide to withdraw after their first year of A level study at least have the opportunity to leave with a qualification. This was mainly open to learners at the Kings Cross Centre. The AS level pass rate was 60%, which is c. 20% below the provider group and national averages. An analysis by age and by gender was provided, but it was not considered, in view of the small size of the cohort, that an analysis by ethnicity would be statistically meaningful. A key issue in relation to AS levels is the number of U grades (c. 38% of learners), which will prompt more substantive discussions with students in the future as to whether AS level exams are right for them, or whether vocational exams would be more appropriate.
- With respect to GCSE English, the pass rate was 94%, with 30% of students achieving grades 9 to 4 (5% above national benchmark). An analysis also showed that 15% of learners improved by 2 or more grades, whilst 16% improved by one grade. Around 31% of students dropped grades, which was unfortunate given that to sit GCSE Maths or English, students must have at least a grade 3. An analysis by age, gender and ethnicity was provided. Overall, therefore, the picture was mixed.
- With respect to GCSE Maths, the pass rate was also 94%, which was 5.8% above national average. 18% of learners achieved grades 9 to 4 (3% above national average). Approximately 23% of learners improved by one or two grades, 45% did not improve on their previous grade and 32% of students dropped by at least one grade. Again, an analysis by age, gender and ethnicity was provided.
- The committee asked about how overall pass rates for GCSEs compared with pre pandemic levels and the Director of Quality and Compliance advised that they were slightly higher.
- The committee also discussed the group of learners 'stuck' at grade 3 and struggling to make the jump to grade 4, a matter that should be looked at further once the MiDES report is available. Also, the committee asked to be provided at a future meeting with data relating to the extent of the increase in learners needing to study functional skills.
- The committee was also keen to see UCAS destination data when it is available.
- Whilst acknowledging the progress made by some students and the overall performance relative to national average, the Chair highlighted the significant percentages of GCSE Maths and English students who had made no progress or had failed to attain the same grades as previously, which he suggested was not a comfortable situation and should be the subject of further reflection. The Executive Principal reinforced this view, notwithstanding that he also highlighted that this is a national problem and largely a consequence of learners continuing to be forced to study these subjects in which they have no or little interest.

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#### Enrolment

- The Executive Principal advised that it had been pleasing to see an increase in 16-18 enrolments, by c.10% compared to last year, reversing the previous decline.
- Progressing learner headcount is up on last year. Subject to the growth seen in new enrolments continuing, this is expected to lead to a return to pre-pandemic levels.

- An analysis of the increase in enrolments across colleges was provided. This includes strong growth in the number of A-Level students at the King's Cross Centre, and a recovery to former levels at the Angel Centre following a drop last year. There is also a significant increase at Level 2, due to the change in grade boundaries and the number of students who did not achieve a grade 3 in GCSE English and Maths having to return to Level 2 rather than progress to Level 3. Adult enrolment is strong, with significant increases in both full-time and part-time courses, resulting in an average increase in class sizes by 1.5 – 2 learners, which is a positive achievement in terms of efficiency.
- These numbers reflect the current position, with the main enrolment period due to end shortly. The committee noted progress as encouraging and as positive news in terms of lagged funding for next year based on the RO4 return due to be submitted shortly, with the additional possibility of increased in-year funding.
- A future report will provide data on the extent of increase in students who are on Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs), but the growth is not believed to be significant.

#### Higher Education Update

- The response rate to the NSS survey for 2023 was 57%, representing a 7% drop on 2022, but it is important to bear in mind that the number of students participating is small – only 49 students were eligible to complete the survey. New questions had also been added and some themes had been dropped from the previous survey.
- Comparative data going back to 2019 was provided. Notwithstanding improvements in scores, all were below national average, except for the score for 'Assessment and Feedback'.
- The only course that met the threshold for an individual report was FdA counselling, for which all scores were below national average.
- A significant amount of work is required to further improve scores in the future. A working group has been set up, headed by a Vice Principal, to monitor learner satisfaction rates throughout this academic year with the aim of making interventions where necessary. This is not only relevant to the NSS outcomes, but is also critical to the Teaching and Excellence Framework (TEF), in which the NSS plays a key role.
- The TEF provisional outcomes were shared with providers and were then published on 28<sup>th</sup> September. The provisional outcome for the Group is 'Requires Improvement' based on a Silver for Student Outcomes and Requires Improvement for Student Experience, which is significantly based on the NSS scores. A representation has been submitted with regard to the latter, and it is hoped that Student Experience will be upgraded to Bronze.
- The committee questioned the reasons for the downward trend in NSS satisfaction scores since 2019 and the Director of Quality and Compliance advised that these partly reflect the fact that students were unhappy with the decision, as a consequence of the Group's Middlesex reorganisation, to teach out that particular provision.
- The committee noted that overall, the results showed some disappointing and worrying trends and stressed the importance of these being addressed, so that if the Group is to continue with its HE provision, it can be satisfied that it is delivering this well. Engagement with HE students, who can be vocal with regard to the quality of teaching and learning, is an important element of this.
- The forthcoming SAR validation meeting will include the HE SAR and will therefore provide an opportunity for the committee to discuss these issues in more detail.

#### Learner Survey

- The college will continue to gather feedback from learners using the key surveys and some straw polls. The key internal surveys are:
  - The Post Induction Survey
  - The Autumn Learner Survey
  - The Spring Learner Survey
  - The Exit Survey

There are also a couple of external surveys: the Greater London Authority (GLA) London Learner Survey (LLS) and the Higher Education NSS survey, as already discussed. All the surveys are used to measure learner satisfaction and contribute to the Group's quality improvement strategies. The outcomes will be presented to the committee as these become available throughout the academic year.

#### **4. APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE**

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

- The Group's apprenticeship provision is monitored by the ESFA based on the Apprenticeship Accountability Measures. In 2021/22, the Group was judged as Amber / Needs Improvement in 3 key areas on the Accountability measures and presented to by the ESFA on the reasons. As a result, there was a light touch intervention.
- Although retention improved by 7.8% for 2022/23, the achievement rate only improved by 2.4%, which will keep the Group in the Amber category. The number of achievements dropped to c. 52%, due to unforeseen issues such as late results of functional skills and shortage of availability of EPAO assessors.
- An analysis of key areas of underperformance and actions for improvement was reviewed. It was particularly noted that in relation to chefs, the largest group of apprentices, whilst the achievement rate is still above the national average, at 57.4%, it has reduced by 10% from the previous year. The primary reason is the withdrawal of apprentices from learning due to staff shortages in the workplace. The delivery team are working with the new intake to reduce the risk of this happening, and utilising the Break in Learning more.
- Due to the failure in several teams to maintain improvements, a more robust quality process is proposed for 2023/24. This will take the form of a regular meeting of Heads of Apprenticeship provision, attended also by Vice Principals and Heads of Quality, in order to review data and agree on interventions.

#### **5. IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

##### **5.1 2022/23 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The committee received for information and reviewed the 2022/23 Quality Improvement Plan. The committee noted the progress that had been made across the Key Areas for Improvement identified in the December 2022 Ofsted Inspection Report.

##### **5.2 2023/24 DRAFT QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The committee received the draft 2023/24 Quality Improvement Plan. The Vice Principal explained that this is a draft version and will not be finalised until the end of October when the Self-Assessment Report for 2022/23 has been completed. A final version of the QIP will therefore be brought to the next meeting. He also explained that in addition to improvement actions, the QIP includes Development Actions focused on a number of Key Strategic Health Indicators as agreed by the Group Board, for reporting to the Board during the next year whilst the Group's new strategic plan is being developed.

#### **6. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

A report was received and it was noted that:

- The Search and Governance Committee will be making a recommendation to the next Group Board meeting that the following are appointed to the Group Board and as members of the Quality Oversight Committee:
  - Praful Nargund
  - Mary Stiasny
- A recommendation will also be made that Professor Antony Moss is appointed as a Co-opted member of the committee.
- CVs for these three new members were provided for information.
- The committee's terms of reference, as reviewed at the previous meeting, had been considered by the Search and Governance Committee and will be recommended for approval at the Board's meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October.

#### **7. QUALITY CALENDAR 2023/24**

The Group's Quality Calendar 2023/24 was received for information.

#### **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **8.1 OVERSIGHT OF EDI ISSUES PERTAINING TO QUALITY**

The Chair emphasised the responsibility of the committee to assure itself that appropriate EDI policies relating to Quality and Delivery of provision are in place, and also that there is a clear and

accessible complaints policy relating to EDI issues in place and that it is being followed. Whilst complaints may originate from a number of sources, including students, staff, governors and members of the public, it is important to distinguish between complaints relating to student matters and staff grievances, and not to confuse the channels that are in place for resolving these. It was agreed that in the first instance a link to the complaints policy will be circulated to the committee.

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The Executive Principal advised the committee of a broader initiative that is being undertaken at the request of the Group Board to develop a sector leading Single Equity Scheme, with an action plan for reporting progress to the Board and sign off by the Board annually. A call has been put out to external contacts to form an advisory Group to contribute to the development of the scheme.

## **8.2 FE WEEK AND NEWS DIGESTS**

The committee discussed views that had been provided on the publication *FE Week*, specifically strong views expressed by members of the committee that this is not an inclusive publication, which has resulted in representations being made to FE Week's editorial board. It was agreed that further consideration should be given to other news digests / publications and ways of keeping governors up to date on developments in the sector from a perspective that is inclusive.

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### **FUTURE MEETINGS**

*Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 9:00 – 12.30pm (SAR Validation)*

*Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024 5:00pm*

*Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 5:00pm*

*Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024 5:00pm*

*Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024 5:00pm*