

# Curriculum and Student Matters Committee

Tue 28 February 2023, 17:00 - 19:00

GW B, Parsons Walk Campus



## Attendees

**Present:** Andrea Ferguson (Independent Governor - Chair), Jenny Bullen (Independent Governor), Harinder Dhaliwal (Independent Governor), Anna Dawe (Principal), Rebecca Turley (Staff Governor), Jennifer Connor (Independent Governor), Millie Gallagher (Student Governor).

**In attendance:** Joanne Platt (Director of Governance), Anne-Marie Francis (Vice Principal Curriculum), Alison Rushton (Vice Principal Employment and Skills), Louise Brown (Vice Principal - Corporate Services), Dave Harrison (Vice Principal - Data and Funding), Ashley Bithell (Head of Animal Management), for Item 4, Ursula Hoyles (Head of HE) for Items 6.4, 9 and 11.

Alli Jones, Chair of Quality and Standards Committee and Sue Keenan, Director of Quality and Performance, both of Myerscough College, attended as observers, in accordance with Wigan and Leigh College's policy on Peer Review and Observation.

The Director of Governance confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

## Meeting minutes

### 1. Apologies for absence

CSM-23-02-01

Apologies for absence had been received from Ann Harrison and Steven Tomlinson.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

CSM-23-02-02

There were no declarations of interests.

### 3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

CSM-23-02-03

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting and agreed they were an accurate record of the meeting. All actions arising are complete.

**Resolved:** The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2022 for signature by the Chair.



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## 4. Curriculum presentation: Animal Management

CSM-23-02-04

The Committee received a presentation in relation to the Animal Management Curriculum Area, noting that this area had been focusing on staff recruitment and the impact staff vacancies have had on learner voice for some time, and that the issues being addressed had also been confirmed during the recent Ofsted inspection.

The Committee noted that there are currently 244 students across three levels of study and that the programme includes mandatory work experience (different hours for each level) and external exams for Level two and Level three students. Onsite provision includes exotics, rodent and dog grooming and is supplemented by offsite practical provision leading to excellent industry practical experience. Key modules of study are Animal Health, Behaviour, Accommodation, Welfare, Biology and Genetics.

Tutors have a wealth of industry and teaching experience and learners have practical sessions each week either on or offsite. A number of employer visits, guest speakers and industry related trips, some residential, take place and some students progress onto studying at Higher Education, including Veterinary surgery, zoology, animal behaviour, conservation and veterinary nursing, although the Committee noted that the College isn't planning to deliver HE in this area as there is enough HE provision locally for learners. It was also noted that the programme provides opportunities for learners to enter the industry following Level two achievement.

Improvement activities taking place include new ideas for evidencing learner progress, all staff being engaged with the College's Teaching and Learning Academy, increased student leadership opportunities (students attending weekly management meetings), increased frequency of student focus groups with swift responses to issues identified, a clear focus on progression and planning for growth for additional groups at L2 and L3 Year 1 due to increasing internal progression numbers as well as planning new community learning courses in areas such as dog grooming, aimed at adult learners.

The Committee noted that staff recruitment had recently taken place, the department had a very good external reputation, with students representing the College at a high standard, there were good L3 Year 2 mock exam results and feedback from L3 Year 1 January exams are positive. The Department works with Fab Futures on work placements, but now also had a designated Work Experience Champion and it was noted that a culture shift was evident with improved staff morale.

Curriculum planning is now underway and there is planned delivery of a T-level for 24-25, which will include industry simulation, a wider variety of species, industry placements (as opposed to work experience) and potential renovation of existing facilities at the Leigh campus.

In response to a question from a Governor, it was noted that retention, attendance and progression are all positive.

The Committee noted the presentation and thanked the Head of Department for his informative presentation and for the great work done to date to address the areas for improvement in this curriculum area.

**Ashley Bithell left the meeting at 5.30pm.**

## 5. Ofsted Report

CSM-23-02-05

The Committee noted the recent Ofsted Report and congratulated the Executive Team and staff, thanking them for their hard work during the inspection. The 'Strong' Skills judgement was particularly pleasing to note.

However, it was noted that the examples cited in the Ofsted Report were disappointing and did not reflect and celebrate the achievement of students at the College and that this has already been fed back to Ofsted.

The Committee thanked Millie Gallagher who had been involved in the student focus groups, noting that she found it a very positive experience.

The Committee noted the report.

### 5.1. Quality Improvement Plan

CSM-23-02-06

The Committee reviewed the revised Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which showed progress made to date and some additional actions cross referenced to address the findings of the recent Ofsted inspection.

It was agreed to recommend the revised QIP to the Governing Board for approval.



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## 6. Curriculum Reports and KPI Dashboards

### 6.1. Study Programmes and Dashboard

CSM-23-02-07

The Committee reviewed the Curriculum KPI dashboard for 16-18 Study Programmes at the mid year position.

It was noted that attendance is marginally below target and action is ongoing to motivate learners to attend. Key to this is that learners enjoy their lessons in college and want to be here. The Teaching and Learning Academy work around outstanding teaching, learning and assessment is following this aspiration and has launched a 'Be Brilliant' campaign to support high expectations of staff and students.

The Committee noted the impact of COVID on learners, and in particular, their grades on entry and their outcomes and that the College is now anticipating learner needs, filling gaps in knowledge and ensuring that students can make good progress to the correct next step for them

It was also noted that although retention is currently generally above target, it is below target in some areas and there is a focus on retaining students and swift and effective intervention to ensure students pass and progress.

The Teaching and Learning Academy is driving standards in teaching and learning through a coaching model and targeted support in classrooms and via CPD.

The Committee noted the report.

### 6.2. Adult Provision and Dashboard

CSM-23-02-08

The Committee reviewed the Curriculum KPI dashboard for Adult provision at the mid year position. It was noted that enrolments on part-time adult discrete programmes have increased by 54% when compared to last year, and adult attendance is generally good and still in line with target. Retention of adult learners also remains good and above target at all levels and there has been an improvement when compared with the same time last year.

However, the Committee noted that lower level attendance and retention remains in a small number of programmes, most significantly on Access to Health, and that strategies are underway to support learners at risk of withdrawal to improve attendance in these areas.

In response to a question from a Governor in relation to withdrawals, it was confirmed that this was largely due to the impact of the economic situation, with adult learners having to go back into employment.

The progress of adult learners, measured through One Grade software, is positive across the large majority of discrete adult and study programmes.

Adult curriculum development continues and includes a number of new programmes, including British Sign Language, IT programmes for job seekers and fast-track Teaching Assistants.

The Committee noted the report.



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The Committee reviewed the Curriculum KPI dashboard for Apprentices at the mid year position, noting that attendance is excellent and in line with KPI targets and that all ESFA accountability measures have been met.

The Committee noted that the College has been selected as an approved Training Provider by the National Skills Agency for Food and Drink (NSAFD) and that National Apprenticeship Week was a great success, with a number of events and celebrations taking place including a successful new Festival of Engineering and Construction.

Work continues with Trainer Assessors to improve compliance with the timely completion of reviews and the College is seeking a new e-portfolio platform for its Apprenticeship provision.

The Committee noted that Apprenticeships had made significant progress, which was testament to the strong leadership, focus and effort put into this area.

In response to a question from a Governor, it was confirmed that the issue on Prevent identified in the Ofsted report was being addressed and related to apprentices not being able to articulate how this related to them, rather than a lack of understanding of the definition.

The Committee noted the report.

#### 6.4. HE Provision and Dashboard

CSM-23-02-10

The Committee reviewed the Curriculum KPI dashboard for HE at the mid year position, noting that HE Reviews have taken place and University Centre Advantage Funding has been allocated. Attendance in HE and Professional Qualifications, is slightly below target and the Committee noted that the HE Learning Mentor was working with students with poor attendance.

Retention is currently above target for both HE and Professional Qualifications.

Close monitoring of applications for HE is taking place to support progression of internal students for whom the College's University Centre is the right choice and there is ongoing work to attract external applicants. However, it was noted that recruitment of HE students is lower than at the same time last year.

In response to a question from a Governor in relation to retention in one curriculum area, it was confirmed that this was largely due to a small cohort of students and some going into employment due to the economic situation.

The Committee noted the report.

### 7. Employer and Student Feedback Report

CSM-23-02-11

The Committee reviewed the Employer and Student Feedback Report, noting that the SPOC 1 induction survey was positive across all provision types including sub-contracted provision. There is consistency across levels and for the vast majority of learners with High Needs and Employer satisfaction in relation to College communication has improved this year, evidenced through both online employer assessments and during internal Curriculum Review observations.

Departmental Learner Voice records and HE Student forums demonstrate that action is being taken to address the issues raised, the full impact of which will be determined by learners in future surveys.

Learner and employer feedback during the Curriculum Review in Apprenticeships was positive and the vast majority of Curriculum Review survey feedback is positive, particularly in relation to teaching and learning, developing skills and safeguarding.

The Committee noted a small number of areas of declining satisfaction, including in Animal Management and Maths and English, the timeliness of feedback (mainly Teacher Education but also Health and Social Care and Travel and Tourism) and in Careers support. Actions are in place to address these areas.

The Committee noted that the National Student Survey was due soon and hoped that the outcome would be as high this year as last, but with higher participation levels.

The Committee noted the report.



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## 8. Strategic Chapters: Mid-year Update

### 8.1. Quality

CSM-23-02-12

The Committee reviewed the Quality strategic update, noting that many of the activities in the report had already been discussed under previous items on the agenda.

It was noted that innovation in teaching and learning is positively impacting on curriculum planning, including developments in Maths and English, short courses in sustainable energy through the Strategic Development Fund and significant vocational updating for staff, and that student satisfaction scores across the College average at 8.5 out of 10.

The Committee noted that the employer led curriculum continues to gain momentum with successful Traineeship programmes designed to lead to employment including one designed exclusively for care leavers with Kraft Heinz and Wigan Borough Council. The Committee discussed this programme and a recent example of a care leaver who had solved a complex problem at his work placement. It was noted that all students on this programme had now secured an apprenticeship and had a mentor working with them.

The Committee noted the update.

### 8.2. Place and Productivity

CSM-23-02-13

The Committee reviewed the Place and Productivity strategic update, noting that many of the activities in the report had already been discussed under previous items on the agenda.

It was noted that the Greater Manchester Colleges Group HTQ Digital and the Strategic Development Fund Construction projects are now underway and recruiting, and that applications for school leavers are positive and well above target.

A successful Festival of Engineering and Construction was held at the College's Pagefield site with over 150 visitors in attendance.

A number of partnership projects with Wigan Borough Council are also in progress including Renewables which involves the upskilling of Council staff, joint procured services for grounds maintenance and a community coffee cart entrepreneurial opportunity for students.

The Committee also discussed the use of the 'Chat Bot' as a teaching tool, noting that staff are currently involved in training in its use.

The Committee noted the update.



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The Committee considered a report providing an update in relation to HE, noting that the College had made its submission for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and that the outcome was expected by late summer.

The College's first Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) (HND Computing for England) has been delivered from September 2022, (HTQ) and HTQs have been approved in Construction and will be delivered from September 2023. Cycle 3 of the HTQs including Engineering and Manufacturing, Education and Childcare and Business and Administration are currently in review for delivery in September 2024.

It was noted that Office for Students funding will transform the Learning Resource Centre at Pagefield, increasing current capacity from 75 students to 123 students and will include a Virtual Reality Cave for the Centre for Advanced Technical Studies.

Renovation of existing mechanical workshops and electrical and electronic laboratories over the summer months and the purchasing of specialist equipment will be completed for the launch of the Institute of Technology (IoT) in September 2023.

It was also noted that delivery of the Strategic Development Fund short course took place on 21 and 22 February 2023. In response to a question from a Governor, it was confirmed that the aim of the short courses was to generate interest from students in progression to other programmes.

The Committee discussed areas of concern and in particular that there is no product specific national promotional campaign for HTQs in the public domain. It also noted that the College is involved in the mapping process of the occupational standards to the Higher Technical Qualification to drive changes and / or amendments and awareness with the awarding body.

Although purchase orders have been placed for specialist equipment for the IoT, it was noted that lead times from suppliers for delivery, the commissioning of the equipment and training of staff will require careful implementation and organisation.

The Committee congratulated the Team for successfully submitting the TEF bid on time and noted the uncertainty nationally on curriculum reform in relation to HNDs and HTQs, which will be kept under review.

The Committee noted the report.



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The Committee considered a report on Curriculum Reform that is currently underway and the challenges the proposals cause for both students and staff.

It was noted that the reform process is phased and is currently midway through the cycle and it was noted that the report was limited to 16-19 programmes.

Of particular concern is the defunding of qualifications deemed to 'overlap' with T-Levels, with the qualification landscape being streamlined into Academic and Technical pathways which will apply to Level 2 and below when the full reform process is complete.

The Committee noted that the College is in dialogue with the DfE regarding the challenges presented by the reform most particularly in relation to accessibility i.e. not all school leavers achieve five or more GCSEs including Maths and English and that to date vocational qualifications (BTECs) have provided realistic and aspirational options to these learners, yet in the current plans BTECs will largely be removed from the landscape.

The Committee's Student Governor, who is currently enrolled on a T-Level programme noted that there would be no time for students who need to, to also do GCSE Maths and English as the programme is very time consuming already, with three days in College and two days on work placement.

Wider challenges around viability, uncertainty and the number of placements that will be required also need consideration.

The Committee noted that there is an increased risk of NEETs being created by a reformed qualification landscape that is not inclusive and / or accessible and this remains the College's primary concern as the reform cycle progresses.

The Committee agreed to keep Curriculum Reform under review as it progresses nationally.

The Committee noted the report.

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## **11. Update on Access and Participation Plan**

**CSM-23-02-16**

The Committee considered a report on the Access and Participation Plan (APP), noting that the variation was submitted to the OfS in July 2022, has been approved and is now live on the College website.

It was noted that the OfS Access and Participation Plan dashboard will be available in late March, including the latest student data up to the 2021-22 academic year. The analysis of Access and Participation Plan activities in 2021-22 is underway, for reporting through to HE Strategic Board and the Equality and Diversity meetings during the academic year.

A dashboard is in development to enable the College to analyse Access and Participation Plan activities continuously throughout the year and to take action as necessary. In March 2023, the OfS will publish guidance on future access and participation plans, including the analysis of responses to the consultation and responses, and guidance on other key aspects.

The new APP will have a strong focus on evaluation and on raising attainment in schools and this is to be included. It will also include intervention strategies which are linked to named objectives and address the provider's risks to equality of opportunity and funding allocations to intervention strategies. The OfS may also decide to publish its views on whether or not a provider has properly delivered the commitments in its approved APP.

The Committee thanked the Head of HE and Jennifer Connor for their work and agreed that an update should be provided to each meeting of the Committee.

The Committee noted the update.

**Ursula Hoyles left the meeting at 6.00pm.**



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The Committee considered a report on the development of the College's Accountability Statement, now required in accordance with the Accountability Agreement with the DfE. It was noted that the Accountability Agreement will be used by the DfE to provide assurance on how the College is spending public funds. The Accountability Statement (Part 2 of the Agreement) should set out a number of outcomes targets that detail changes or developments to the curriculum for the coming year, which should be in response to national skills priorities and those reflected in the LSIP.

The Committee noted that the Accountability Statement must be completed and returned by 31 May and will be approved by the Governing Board at a special meeting scheduled for 22 May.

It will be informed by the draft LSIP which is expected by the end of March and should align with the final LSIP which is itself due for completion by the end of May. Extensions to the submission deadline can be requested but it was noted that the College does not anticipate that this will be necessary.

The Committee noted that the structure and focus of the Accountability Statement has been drafted following detailed discussion with Governors at the Strategic Workshop in January, when it was possible to identify local / regional priorities that currently exist and against which the College is planning key curriculum developments / changes. These may be updated and changed however, in light of the final LSIP findings.

The Committee agreed that a Governor Task and Finish Group should be established comprising the Chair and two Vice Chairs of the Governing Board (one also being the Chair of this Committee), to review the Accountability Statement prior to it being submitted to the Governing Board for approval in May.

The Committee noted that the Governing Board's statutory statement on how well the College's education and training offer meets local needs is also needed, although guidance on what this may look like has not yet been published and in this regard, it was noted that the Greater Manchester College's Group is currently looking at this with the Chairs Group.

The Committee noted the proposals and **Resolved to:** establish a Task and Finish Group comprising the Chair and two Vice Chairs of the Governing Board, to finalise the Accountability Statement prior to its submission to the Governing Board for approval.

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The Committee reviewed the Equality and Diversity Annual Report and objectives, which identifies progress in relation to the College's Equality Objectives for 2020-2024 with a further two years allocated to addressing these objectives. It was noted that the availability of the new HE KPI dashboard is supporting the College in identifying progress in relation to the Access and Participation Plan outcomes.

The majority of the report focuses on the impact of College performance in relation to learner outcomes and any internal differential in outcomes rather than comparison to any external benchmarks.

Specific areas of concern identified in the report include the impact of the pandemic on adult learners identifying with a disability / learning difficulty or health problem (particularly in relation to mental health) who are more likely to leave their programmes early which impacts on retention rates; the achievement gap for younger HE learners (particularly male) which remains too high when compared to mature HE learners (which is mainly an issue in Engineering and Creative) and female participation and achievement on apprenticeship programmes which has been adversely affected by the pandemic such as Health and Social Care, Management, Retail and Commercial Enterprise.

It was noted that in 2022-23 there will be an increased focus on retention of adult learners who disclose a mental issue through in-year tracking of learners, regular updates on progress at adult programme meetings, the introduction of a mental health strategy to support staff and learners, Bitesize training sessions for staff, a targeted approach through HE in-year reviews to track progress and through attention to advice and guidance / transition activities for learners progressing from L3, the close monitoring of individual learner progress in areas most affected by COVID and impacting on females, using quality checkpoints and Apprenticeship programme meetings.

Moving forwards, the College is in the process of working with the National Centre for Diversity to adopt use of the term FREDIE values and embed them throughout the organisation. The values of Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion & Engagement within a structured framework will inform continuous improvement in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This work is in draft form for soft launch in 2022-23 followed by full college rollout in 2023-24.

The Committee noted that some activities are also included within the QIP discussed under Item 5.1 above. They thanked staff for a very comprehensive report, which includes an excellent range of examples.

They agreed to recommend the Equality and Diversity Annual Report and Objectives to the Governing Board for approval.

**Resolved:** The Committee agreed to recommend the Equality and Diversity Annual Report and Objectives to the Governing Board for approval.



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The Committee considered a report on the Link Visits that took place on 15 February in Health and Social Care (HSC) and Degree Apprenticeships (Nuclear). It was noted that the planned visits in Construction and Engineering had to be cancelled due to a lack of Governors to attend these areas.

For HSC, the afternoon was planned to include a curriculum intent conversation with managers and a discussion on the strengths and areas for improvement in the department. There was then opportunity to observe teaching and learning and meet with students and test the impact by having students demonstrate their skills development.

There was also opportunity for a staff focus group discussion.

This visit afforded the Governor who attended, the opportunity to see and experience the facilities and resources students can access at the CATs building and also to understand in closer detail the T Level Healthcare qualification experience.

As has been previously been reported to Governors the T-Level in HSC has had a very challenging start due to issues relating to the Awarding Body. Students reported their own concerns about this and the effect it has had on them. It is notable that despite their concerns, all students have a positive next step destination including into nursing where that was their choice and one student in the group has been selected for the World Skills Squad UK, a team of 94 young people who have excelled in regional and national competitions. Issues identified during the visit were responded to by a detailed management response in the report.

The Degree Apprenticeship visit included an Awarding Body Update on HTQs in HTQ Building Services Engineering for England and the HTQ Civil Engineering for England which was timely given the plans for the IoT launch in March 2023. The rest of the visit followed a similar theme to the HSC visit with meetings with staff and students and a presentation from the Head of HE and feedback from this visit is very positive particularly in relation to the employer involvement in the qualifications.

The next link visits are planned for Thursday 18th May and have previously been agreed as Science and English and Maths.

However, the Committee was concerned at the lack of Governor engagement on the Link Visits (only two Governors attended and two visits had to be cancelled due to lack of attendance).

It was noted that although the timing of Link Visits is scheduled a year in advance with diary invitations and reminders being sent out to all Governors, it was recognised that the timing of the visits (during the day time) may have a negative impact on Governor's ability to attend. It was therefore agreed that the Director of Governance will undertake a survey of Governors to identify barriers to attendance and any suggestions on how to improve engagement on these visits in the future.

Governors who attended the Link Visits had enjoyed the experience and having access to the facilities and found it useful speaking to students. and the Student Governor who was involved in the HSC visit said that students really appreciated being able to provide feedback and were pleased with the management response provided in the report.

The Committee noted the report.

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**15. Items for inclusion in the Committee Chair's report to the Governing Board****CSM-23-02-20**

The Committee agreed the items to be included in the Committee Chair's report to the Governing Board.

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**16. Any other business****CSM-23-02-21**

The Committee congratulated Millie Gallagher for progressing to the next stage of the World Skills Squad UK, which if successful, will see her competing in the national finals. The Committee wished her well with this and asked to be kept updated on her progress.

There were no other items of other business.



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The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and in particular Alli Jones and Sue Keenan from Myerscough College for attending the meeting as observers.

The meeting ended at 7.15pm.

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## **18. Actions**

**CSM-23-02-19**

**Action:** Undertake a survey of all Governors to identify barriers to attending Link Visits and to seek suggestions on how to improve attendance.

**Action by:** Director of Governance



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