

CENTRAL SUSSEX CORPORATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee Held at 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 25th June 2009 in FF33, Haywards Heath Campus.

Membership: Clive Behagg (Chair)*, Leslie Edwards, Laura Howes, Anne Parkinson, Mark Read*, Ramesh Shingadia*, and Russell Strutt*.

Also present: John Peel, Sue Dare, Maureen Kilminster and Nick Whitley (Clerk).

* = present

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Leslie Edwards and Anne Parkinson.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. Clive Behagg declared an interest as Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Chichester.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 11TH MAY 2009

3. With one amendment in paragraph 13 for clarification, namely the addition of "planning the" between "role in" and "spreading good practice" in the third line, the minutes were signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

4. There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT TIME-TABLE FOR 2009

5. Sue Dare apologised that it had not proved possible to prepare a printed time-table for the meeting; she undertook to provide it for circulation with the minutes.
6. She advised that it was planned to follow the same approach as last year; the individual self-assessment teams within Faculties had already begun meeting and would be feeding the outcomes of their reviews into the Faculty Self Assessment Report (SAR).
7. It was planned to have the Faculty SARs drafted for review by early October to enable the moderation panels to be held prior to the autumn half term. The first draft of the College SAR would be prepared at the beginning of November for final review and approval by Corporation in December.
8. Sue Dare confirmed that she was planning to conclude the Faculty SAR reviews before taking up her new post as Principal of Northbrook College; the Committee congratulated her on her appointment.
9. The report was noted.

LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEME REVIEW

10. The Principal introduced this item explaining that he had written the first introductory section of the report for discussion by the Teaching and Learning Managers Group. He advised the Committee that the fundamental point that the OFSTED Inspectors had raised was that the

lesson observation scheme as operated was not accurate. While it was essential to address this point, to ensure the accuracy of the scheme for the future, improving accuracy would not of itself improve performance.

11. There were a number of ways that accuracy could be assured, including drawing on the services of a South East Group of peer observers who could come to the College to observe and assess teaching and learning, providing the assurance of external independence. There was also a similar scheme within the Sixth Form College grouping that could be drawn on for the Haywards Heath Campus.
12. Enquiries of other Colleges' practice had been made by the Principal and the Clerk. Of 30 Colleges in the South East Colleges Peer review Group, only 3 had adopted unannounced observations and these were not outstanding colleges; within the FE Sussex Colleges none of the three Beacon Colleges had unannounced schemes.
13. The general opinion from the South East Colleges Peer Review Group was that the key to moving a College's teaching and learning to outstanding was to ensure all teaching staff understood what excellence meant; Beacon and Outstanding Colleges all trained their staff to understand this.
14. The problem currently with the peer observation scheme was that the teachers did not always know what they should be looking for: in particular how the lessons they were observing had been planned and how excellence had been achieved.
15. As far as the accuracy of the scheme was concerned, independent external observers would be brought in; sampling of lessons may also be introduced.
16. Sue Dare then addressed the steps being taken to improve the lesson observation scheme in the College. She stressed that there was already a framework for articulating the criteria for outstanding teaching; more detailed descriptions had been developed which needed to be incorporated within the general teaching in the College. Currently too much time was being spent focussing on the impact of the overall summary grade rather than considering the individual elements that made up the lesson.
17. It was important to ensure that every teacher knew of the criteria in full detail and to encourage individual teachers to develop fresh approaches to their subject.
18. It was planned to place a video compilation of good practice on the College Intranet and to develop a wider approach to sharing examples of good practice through FE Sussex (learning from the practice adopted by the Surrey Colleges). The Teaching and Learning Managers were keen to develop electronic resources to assist with this; for example taking a topic such as note taking that was common across all subjects and identifying effective examples of teaching that topic.
19. It was suggested that actors might be used to role play examples.
20. **The report was received.**

ATTENDANCE/RETENTION/STUDENT WITHDRAWALS

21. Sue Dare introduced this item. She stated that she was particularly pleased by how well attendance had held up. She reminded the meeting that the slight dip at Haywards Heath campus had been noted at the last Committee meeting; it was believed that this was primarily due to a stricter application of the distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence. She confirmed that authorised absences were included within the numbers of students attending.

22. Retention also appeared to be holding up well and there were no concerns to raise. It was anticipated that there would be a further drop of 1% in retention by the end of the year.
23. It was noted that Adult and Community Learning tended to have the worst attendance figures; there was little that the College could do to change this; particularly since adults tended to have conflicting responsibilities they needed to address. However they were also generally better at catching up on missed work and assignments.
24. **It was agreed that an additional column would be provided for the Attendance Report Tables to show the number of students involved as well as the percentage; this would make it easier to focus attention on any significant problem areas.**
25. **The report was received.**

REVIEW OF COLLEGE CHARTER

26. The Principal introduced the item, giving a brief overview of the Charter. It summarised what the student could expect of the College and what the College expected of its students. The Charter was gone through with students at their Induction.
27. It was noted that the Charter was published on the College Website; it was suggested that it would be helpful to build in an electronic link to the Equality and Diversity Policy.
28. He drew attention to the fact that the Charter still made reference to the law of plagiarism, whereas this was in fact a matter of practice, not law. He had made a similar point a year ago when reviewing the then Charter; he asked that it be corrected.
29. It was noted that the College was undertaking to hold an interview within one month of an application being submitted; while it was recognised that there were practical constraints on the College, one month was considered a long time for an applicant to wait. The Principal agreed to review the length of time and consider how difficult it would be to shorten it.
30. **It was agreed to recommend that the Corporation approve the Charter subject to correcting the reference to plagiarism.**

DEVELOPMENT PLAN TARGETS

31. The Principal advised that the College Management was only now able to conclude the business planning cycle, which included setting targets. In general they were being set to match the LSC requirements. The Committee and Corporation had already reviewed the Success Rate Targets; the Learner Number Targets would need to go straight to the Corporation.

LINK MEMBER SCHEME

32. Copies of the reports by Members of the Burgess Hill & Haywards Heath Local Community Board (LCB) were laid round and the Committee took time to read them.
33. The Principal pointed out that at the request of the LCB, guidance on how to report on a curriculum area had been provided; some Members used the format as a template while others considered it a starting point. The Scheme was working well from both the staff's and the Board's perspective and was giving rich insights into the work of the College.
34. **The reports were noted.**

TRAINING QUALITY STANDARD – UPDATE

35. Maureen Kilminster advised the Committee that the application for accreditation had now been submitted and the first hurdle successfully overcome. The reviewers had arranged to visit the College to test the narrative on the 13th and 15th July. They would be asking for supporting evidence to review what had been referred to in the narrative. They would also interview some 30 members of staff.
36. If the College were successful at this stage, a random selection of the College's employers would be telephoned and asked on a scale of 1-10 whether they would recommend the College to other employers.
37. Finally there would be a desk based review by a panel, after which the College would be given feed back on the application.
38. It was confirmed that the College would need this accreditation for bidding for Government contracts. Maureen Kilminster reminded the Committee that the Standard was divided into two parts; Part A was essential for any contract bidding and a pre-requisite for the more specialised subject specific Part B. Assuming that the College was awarded Part A this time, several Part B submissions would be prepared in the autumn.
39. It was noted that the TQS was based on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model. Maureen Kilminster commented that, although the exercise had caused additional work it had proved valuable in its own right.

INTEGRATED QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT REVIEW (IQER)

40. Maureen Kilminster advised the meeting that the IQER summative review had taken place on the 16th and 17th June. There had been four reviewers even though the College only had four Higher education (HE) programmes with some 300 learners.
41. The College would be judged on its Academic Standards, the Learning Opportunities it offered and its approaches to Public Information.
42. The reviewers had met teams of staff and groups of students as well as representatives of the partner Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).
43. Initial feedback was that the report would be a positive one, with some references to good practice and a number of recommendations.
44. The reviewers had suggested that the SAR for Higher Education should be tailored to meet the external requirements of the HEIs as well as the College's internal quality assurance process.
45. The Principal expressed his thanks and congratulations to Maureen Kilminster and her team, both for the IQER review and the TQS submission.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

46. The Principal introduced this item explaining that it was being brought to the attention of this Committee as well as to Resources because it had the potential for a significant impact on the experience of students.
47. He drew particular attention to the "Disabled Go" Website, where the College's physical access arrangements were described in sufficient detail to meet the needs of physically disabled visitors and students. Specialists for Disabled Go had come to the College and measured it up for this purpose.

48. He also drew attention to the identification of a mental health champion for the College, who met regularly with the care and the mental health services locally, to ensure that the right support could be provided to those learners with mental health needs.
49. It was recommended that for the next year's statement an introduction should be added clarifying the legal framework that disabled learners could rely on. It was also suggested that the HE Code for Assessment could provide some useful guidance on how the College could meet its anticipatory duty.
50. **The Disability Statement was noted.**

FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE

51. Sue Dare laid round a summary of the LSC's Framework for Excellence for the College, and reminded the Committee what the Framework for Excellence was setting out to do.
52. The College had originally contested three of the grades, but had to concede on two of them. The Success Rates grading was still being contested vigorously on the grounds that despite using the same data as OFSTED it had scored the College as Satisfactory whereas OFSTED had rated the College as Good and that they had not followed their own stated methodology by excluding value added information on AS Levels.
53. Only three of the grades would be published (Learner Destinations, the overall OFSTED inspection grade and Success Rates).
54. It was noted that the Framework for Excellence was a Government priority.
55. The College was asked to establish the percentage rates that the scores represented, so that the Corporation could understand the table better.
56. **The report was noted.**

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

57. There being on other business, the meeting closed at 6.40p.m.