

CENTRAL SUSSEX CORPORATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee Held at 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 28th January 2010 in T11, Crawley Campus.

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

Also present: Adrian Dodwell, Maureen Kilminster and Nick Whitley (Clerk).

* = present

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Leslie Edwards and Ramesh Shingadia.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 8TH DECEMBER 2009

3. The minutes were signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

4. **Further report on BIMM/46:** Adrian Dodwell advised that he had recently met with BIMM, but was waiting for some documents before he could finalise a report to the Committee. Overall he had been very impressed by what he had seen. He confirmed that he would submit a full report to the next meeting of the Committee.
5. **Higher Education (HE) Strategy/60:** It was confirmed that the Chairs of Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee and of the Corporation had "signed off" the final version of the Strategy, as agreed by Corporation and the Strategy had been submitted to the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE).
6. **Teaching and Learning Scheme/65:** It was confirmed that the first stages of implementing the new scheme had been undertaken, whereby the necessary "windows" for observation had been agreed and further training for the observers provided. The first observation under the scheme would take place during March.

SELF ASSESSMENT QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP)

7. The Chair of the Committee pointed out that the QIP was the vehicle to convert the judgements within the Self Assessment Report (SAR) into an action plan with measurable outcomes and timescales. The role of the Committee was to test it on behalf of the Corporation for its rigour and robustness and also for the reasonableness of the choice of actions and measures to achieve improvements.
8. Maureen Kilminster introduced the QIP, explaining that further consultations had been carried out since the draft document had been sent to Members of the Committee. These had led to some refinements of the detail of the action plan, and there was still some formatting to be carried out, however the QIP remained substantially the same.

9. The Committee went through each main action point. With respect to Action Point 1(Improve the proportion of curriculum areas graded at least good), it was noted that there was a list of sectors without actions. It was confirmed that the specific actions required were detailed within the appropriate Faculty QIPs. **It was agreed to add the statement “see Faculty Plans for actions and measurable outcomes”.**
10. It was noted, with respect to Action Point 2 (Increase the number of Outstanding curriculum areas), that the realistic target number of outstanding areas was 5 not 6. English and Modern Foreign Languages was unlikely to achieve outstanding status within the current year.
11. Under Action 3 (The proportion of outstanding lessons is increased from 18% to 22%/ More confidence can be placed in the judgements of the quality of Teaching and Learning), attention was drawn to the new “Innovation Zone” which had been recently set up with the support of the College’s Teaching & Learning Coaches. It was designed to enable best practice and resources to be shared and had initially been intended for the “harder to reach” teachers. These were generally part time or variable hours teachers who found it difficult to attend course team meetings and training sessions because of their other commitments. The scope of the Innovation Zone had now been widened and it was being promoted to all staff.
12. **It was agreed to incorporate a visit to the Innovation Zone into the next Committee meeting Agenda.**
13. It was noted that group tutorials were included within the range of learning activities that may be observed; however the methodology for observing one to one tutorials (non-pastoral) was still being refined and they were not yet covered.
14. Adrian Dodwell advised the Committee that ways of delivering tutorials were currently under review. The tutorial system had already been strengthened during the year, but further work was being undertaken.
15. In relation to Action Point 4 (Raise overall success rates for Entry and level 1 courses for 16-18 year olds and Adults), it was noted that the issue to be addressed was achievement, not retention. Faculties had successfully driven up retention, but the achievement rates had not kept pace within some Faculties.
16. Under Action 5 (Adult short courses to improve to the national rate), it was noted that it was difficult to find the correct focus, since the overall success rate was below the overall national benchmark, but the latter did not reflect a comparable mix of courses to those run by the College. Taken course by course, the College’s success rates were nearer to national benchmarks than the overall figure would imply, although there was still some room for improvement.
17. Action 6 (Consistent approach to the student review system to motivate students to achieve aspirational goals/Use distance travelled data for reviewing performance and setting aspirational targets for students), recognised that the College needed to improve its practice with respect to the evaluation of learners “distance travelled”. The qualifications on entry for learners were not being captured and recorded in a sufficiently timely way; this impacted in turn on establishing individual targets for the learners.
18. It was noted that target setting had been identified previously as central to making progress towards excellence.
19. Action 8 (An improvement in survey measurement of overall student satisfaction and in some identified areas): It was noted that some of the planned actions cited were being revised to make them more specific, particularly how they could be carried out. As written currently they were expressed in too broad a fashion.

20. Adrian Dodwell advised that he had recently carried out a review of student involvement in all Faculties; while this had revealed good progress it had also identified ways in which it could be further improved.
21. The response rate from learners to the learner survey was discussed; it was confirmed that there had been a high response rate for learners attending the College, but not from those in the workplace. It would need further consideration as to how to engage those learners in surveys.
22. Action 9 (Improved progression routes and rates): The importance of accurate mapping of progression rates was stressed, so that any gaps could be identified and the quality of progression routes assessed accurately. There was a need to improve the quality of data collected and held by the College; this was not an easy exercise. UCAS and Connexions were responsible for providing information to the College, but they did not do so comprehensively. The Principal stressed that from his perspective this was also an important focus for the College, particularly to help redress low aspirations within the Crawley catchment area.
23. Action Point 10 (No courses to have significantly negative value-added): It was noted that the use of "distance travelled" measures and value added needed to be extended across the range of vocational courses. The progress of every learner should be checked on a monthly basis.
24. Action Point 12 (Improve measurement collection and increase the retention rates on all L2 Apprenticeship Programmes): It was noted that the College was good at ensuring the success of apprentices who stayed on their programmes; however the focus on retention needed to be strengthened. Monthly meetings at management level had been instituted to ensure this focus was maintained.
25. Action Point 13 (Train to Gain overall success rates exceed minimum level of performance): It was noted that a facebook community was being developed to facilitate communication with learners in the workplace.
26. Action Point 14 (Improved success of BME learners to the level of learners as a whole): It was noted that this encapsulated the key points arising from the Equality & Diversity SAR.
27. The Committee judged that the QIP had the right level of detail with well defined timescales and measurable outcomes.
28. It was confirmed that the first review of progress would take place in February. A progress report would be presented to the next Committee meeting in May.
29. It was noted that the final overall success rate for the College for 2008/2009 stood at 80.3% compared to a target of 81%. The national success rate had dropped slightly to 78%. In the Principal's view, this reflected the difficulty for Colleges to maintain year on year improvements to success rates once they reached 80% or above.
30. The Clerk confirmed that the Committee was being asked to approve the QIP for submission to the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) via the "Gateway" with a deadline of the 31st January. Whereas the LSC required the SAR itself to be approved formally by the Corporation there was no such requirement for the QIP; therefore the Committee's approval was sufficient.
31. **It was agreed to approve the Quality Improvement Plan for submission to the Learning & Skills Council with the amendments to the detail discussed during the meeting.**

EMERGING FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS – IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT CURRICULUM

32. The Principal advised the meeting that he was giving them an early indication of the implications of the funding for the adult curriculum; this would be explored further at the Corporation Away Day on the 6th February.
33. The funding for 16-18 year olds had now been ring-fenced and reflected 2% efficiency savings. This was a manageable position for the coming year. The College was well positioned for the following two years because it had been confirmed that consolidated growth would be funded.
34. On the other hand the political focus on achieving savings had been on the adult provision. He had been expecting a greater cut in funding for the 16-18 year olds; somewhat to his concern there was a much greater reduction in adult funding than he had anticipated. This was typical of the sector nationally.
35. The funding methodology was extremely complex and difficult to understand. The disproportionate cut in adult funding was likely to challenge the educational character and ethos of the College.
36. The LSC (acting on behalf of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA)) had decided to fund nine priority categories of adult curriculum only; funding would cease for any programme that fell outside those categories. They had been asked to provide the details of the analysis they had carried out of the College's provision for 2008/2009, which they had used to inform the indicative allocation for 2010/2011; at the time of the meeting the information had not been provided.
37. Some anomalies were already apparent; the most extreme of which was electrical installation. The current qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 were not classed as full Level 2 or full Level 3, because the relevant Sector Skills Council had not specified them as such. In consequence they would not attract any adult funding.
38. It was noted that the total reduction in funding for adults across Sussex as a whole was approximately £4.5m.
39. The Principal advised that the Executive would need to have developed plans by the end of February to manage the reduction in funding, so that the proper consultation process with Unions and staff could be undertaken. The Executive had been planning for an anticipated reduction in funding on a contingency basis for some months; however the depth of the cut in adult funding had been unexpectedly severe.
40. **The report was noted.**

TRAINING QUALITY STANDARD

41. Maureen Kilminster advised the meeting that the College had submitted three Part B (sector specific submissions) in December, namely Construction, Building Services and Engineering.
42. These had now been assessed (the assessors had carried out a verification visit for all three submissions during the 14th and 15th January). In accordance with the process no feedback had been provided; the assessors' reports would be presented to a panel during the latter part of February. The earliest that the College would be informed of the outcome was the 24th February.
43. The assessors had indicated that the process remained robust nationally; over 400 Part B submissions had been made, with a success rate of 62%. Of the successful submissions 80% were conditional.

44. **The report was noted.**

NEW INSPECTION REGIME

45. Maureen Kilminster took the meeting through a presentation taken in the main from one given by Melanie Hunt of OFSTED in December to FE Sussex.
46. It was noted that, despite having been inspected as recently as January 2009, the College might have another inspection at any time over the next five years. This was because OFSTED had decided to schedule inspections of all good and outstanding inspections evenly across the next six years, to ensure that the outcomes of their inspections were not skewed by having an unrepresentative number of good or mediocre Colleges in any one year.
47. It was suggested that OFSTED may be prompted to sharpen their evaluation of equality and diversity by virtue of criticism of their practice and standards.
48. The major thrust of inspection under the new regime was to focus on the learners' experience and outcomes. It would be important to review and revise the structure of the College's Self Assessment Report to reflect this change of emphasis; safeguarding would need to be addressed explicitly, for example.
49. The Principal advised the Committee that FE Sussex had been commissioned to develop a common policy and approach to safeguarding for its member Colleges.
50. **It was agreed to present a progress report to the next meeting.**

PROGRESS REPORT ON UNIVERSITY CENTRE CRAWLEY

51. The Principal advised that little had been developed since the last meeting of the Committee. It remained the intention to launch the Centre on a full cost basis, with Foundation Degrees that local industry was committed to supporting.

COMMITTEE REVIEW 2008/2009

52. The Clerk took the meeting through the composite response to the review, focussing in particular on the comments.
53. The overall assessment was that the Committee had performed well and had addressed its remit effectively.
54. **The report was noted.**

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 6.55p.m.