



Notes of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (FE)
held on Tuesday 20 June 2023

Present: Abigail Appleton (Principal)
Mervyn Jones (Chair)
Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Governors)
Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal Further Education)
Justin Gregory (Vice Principal Higher Education)

The meeting was inquorate. The Chair apologized to the executives that the meeting was inquorate acknowledging their hard work to prepare papers for the Committee.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jennette Arnold and Tim Newsholme.

2. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Notes of the last meeting held on 28 March 2023 and matters arising

These were noted with confirmation that the action had been addressed.

4. Performance Data

Key data year to date was outlined with expected students in September based on applications that have been accepted; these are different to expected students comparing similarly to applications and firm acceptances in HE. Events have been arranged for applicants. Acceptances are lower than last year. There was a question about the demographic which is not known. Fewer students had opted for GCSE creative arts in 2021; data could be obtained to confirm this; however, limited data is available as secondary schools which are academies do not submit data to the Local Authority. Arts GCSEs take up has decreased nationally. Fewer open days will be held next year which will be bigger events; this will not prevent applicants from arranging visits and an individual tour. A creative impact day was held for year 12 HSFC students to participate in the creative process, making and problem solving. This was a new initiative as part of work experience and employability. Creative workshops are arranged with year 10 and 11 students from schools in July. Three college open days take place annually with the neighbouring colleges.

Attendance is better than last year at 89%. There was a question if English and Maths mandatory attendance had affected overall attendance. It had not impacted on attendance; however, the current cohort have not had the

experience of exams due to the pandemic which increased anxiety levels for some students.

The English and Maths report showed that some students were extremely close to passing Functional Skills; it is anticipated that they will successfully achieve Functional Skills. Education and industry sessions have been arranged. There have been exceptionally high levels of attendance to GCSE exams. This year all students have been invited to attend College to collect their exam results before posting these to them.

5. Quality Improvement

Progress on 2022/23 Quality Development Plan was presented which is regularly updated. Attendance target to English and maths had not been achieved with strategies for the next academic year outlined. 'Save the Wye' is a cross-college exercise and project focusing on the environment with a community event on 1 July. There was a suggestion to notify the Wye and Usk Foundation about the event. The Student Council have talked about cross-college collaboration which has also been discussed by FEMT. Sustainability and the community are part of the personal and professional development strategy for next year which will also complement the carbon literacy training. The College is working with the Wild Life Trust and Museum. FEMT is discussing establishing a working group of art and design visual media students with PA/music students to work together on projects to prepare marketing, design sets and costumes as a live brief. There was a question how this would link to UAL course criteria with confirmation it would fit into the course brief. Overall the College is working to improve high grades; Foundation results have increased following visits by staff to see courses at other institutions. External moderations are completed online. There was discussion if grades are appropriate or assessed over stringently noting that UAL do a sample check of grades with no changes implemented to moderation. Work is standardised for assessment with a rigorous and detailed assessment process. The Portfolio and Foundation courses are being assessed separately this year.

Student progress and anticipated destination of leavers is being collated. The majority of students progress to HE (c76%), employment, volunteering or choose a gap year. The College will ascertain if employment is linked to their course. The College will contact FE leavers in the autumn and offer support; this will be subject to their data permission to contact them after they leave. Careers advice and guidance is offered to students, particularly those who are not progressing to HE. Independent careers and progression advice are a mandatory requirement for the College.

6. Curriculum Development

Key focuses of curriculum development include collaboration and wellbeing. Working outdoors will be incorporated across all courses as part of wellbeing. Digital course leavers will be eligible to progress to HCA HE programmes. A new Course Leader has been appointed to Digital Futures who will work across FE and HE. Photography will be delivered as part of curriculum development. A School of Photography competition will be launched.

The Post-16 Skills and Education Act will reform UAL qualifications in 2026 which is a risk.

7. Identification of Key Risks

- I. Attendance
- II. Digital Futures recruitment, curriculum development and resources to develop digital curriculum
- III. Ofsted
- IV. Embedding the Skills Agenda
- V. Post-16 education reform and potential changes to assessment
- VI. Student applications
- VII. Risk on students' mental health, social issues and its financial impact

8. Any Other Business

The Chair reported that AoC has launched its manifesto covering lifelong learning, fit for purpose qualifications, estates and the workforce. This anticipated a change to the political regime; it was proposed that the Committee review potential risk and impact in the future. The Board should set a vision to enable it to adapt to change.

9. Date and time of next meeting

Tuesday 21 November 2023 commencing at the slightly later time of 3pm and the combined meeting at 4.45pm. The meeting to discuss the draft College Self Assessment Report would be brought forward in the autumn term.

ACTION: CLERK



Minutes of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee
(HE and FE Combined Meeting)
held on Tuesday 20 June 2023

- Present:** Abigail Appleton (Principal)
Dr Joanne Horton (Co-opted Member) (Teams)
Mervyn Jones (Chair)
Charlotte Semus
- In attendance:** Justin Gregory (Vice Principal Higher Education)
Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal Further Education)
Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Governors)
Mary Malcolm (AoC Consultant) observer
Hannah Jones (Graduate Ambassador) item 3 taken first on the agenda

The meeting was quorate as four Members were present.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jennette Arnold, Dr Kate Mori and Tim Newsholme.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 28 March 2023 and matters arising

It was agreed that the Chair should sign the minutes as a true record noting that the UWTSD's fitness to study policy had previously been used for HE.

Matters arising had been completed with the exception of the amendments to the fitness to study policy which the Vice Principal HE would follow up with Jennette Arnold. **ACTION: VICE PRINCIPAL HE**

The Committee agreed: -

- To approve the minutes of the last meeting

3. Student Union report and Student Experience (this item was taken first on the agenda)

The Graduate Ambassador joined the meeting providing a presentation of the Student Union, its role, events, obstacles and aims for next year. Low cost events included freshers' events (the first held on site following the pandemic), three key annual events with c270 attending, along with some additional events were held. Theme nights such as a drag night, were extremely successful with plans to aim to offer a themed night each month. Over 18 years FE students can attend events subject to evidence with ID.

There are several societies which are successful with some held at Station Approach. Bar night numbers have decreased with activities and meals offered to seek to increase attendance. The bar was created as a social space in response to students; there is an option to review if this should be provided on a weekly basis or a different evening as dynamics have changed following the opening of Station Approach. Costs have balanced for the SU and bar this year. Courses could be invited to host bar evenings. Plans and timelines for actions will be implemented with SLT notified if these are not addressed.

Additional societies are pitched regularly with student involvement to enable more student participation based on feedback. SU information will be publicized at Station Approach. The Student Governor commented that there was more information on societies and bar nights during the first few weeks of the year which needs to be continually publicized.

The Board agreed: -

- To thank the Graduate Ambassador for her informative presentation who has a key role working with the SU
- To arrange for SU and student council presentation to the Board in February 2024 **ACTION: CLERK**

4. Policies, Procedures and Strategies

- I. The Student Charter was presented with an amendment proposed which had been discussed by Academic Board.
- II. The Freedom of Speech Act (HE) was given royal ascent in May 2023. Boards need to be able to evidence how this is actively adopted which has implications to dovetail to equality and diversity and prevent harassment. OfS has appointed a director responsible for Freedom of Speech complaints. Briefings on freedom of speech will be provided to students and staff as part of professional development to ensure it is proactively embedded. Freedom of speech is links to the College's commitment to equality and diversity noting that tolerance, inclusion and respect for diversity are key. Freedom of speech is not freedom of consequence or a one-way vehicle. There was acknowledgement of the complex legal and moral obligations for Colleges with discussion about how this should be embedded and evidenced concluding that the Principal will prepare a statement outlining the College's commitment to freedom of speech; this would be included in the student guide and raised at Freshers' week. **ACTION: PRINCIPAL**
- III. A letter had been received from the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education requesting strong commitment and support to the mental health of students and for suicide prevention. Student wellbeing is paramount to the College with a student wellbeing strategy to be embedded to support continuous improvement; this will be an overarching document. **ACTION: PRINCIPAL/VICE PRINCIPAL SEBD**

The Committee agreed: -

- To recommend the Board approve the Student Charter

- To note the updates

5. Annual item for Committee

The Committee agreed: -

- The Committee did not propose Chairs of the Committee for next year in light of current reduced membership and agreed to delegate to the Search and Governance Committee for a recommendation based on its proposed membership for next year **ACTION: CLERK**
- The Committee effectively met its terms of reference with some areas for development identified in the self assessment. Additional Governors will be appointed and the Search and Governance Committee is addressing committee membership
- The Search and Governance Committee will discuss proposed changes to the terms of reference in view of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act and the Freedom of Speech (HE) Act

6. Any other business

There were no items.

7. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting was arranged for Tuesday 21 November 2023 with the FE: agreeing to defer the FE meeting to 3.00 pm, combined meeting: 4.45 pm and HE meeting to follow the combined meeting. **ACTION: CLERK**

Signed as a true record of proceedings

Chair: **Date:**



Minutes of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (HE)
held on Tuesday 20 June 2023

- Present:** Abigail Appleton (Principal)
 Dr Joanne Horton (Co-opted Member) (Teams)
 Mervyn Jones (Chair for the meeting)
 Charlotte Semus
- In attendance:** Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Governors)
 Justin Gregory (Vice Principal Higher Education)
 Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal Further Education)
 Mary Malcolm (AoC Consultant) observer

The meeting was quorate as four Members were present. Mervyn Jones chaired the meeting in the absence of the Chair.

- 1. Apologies for absence**
 Apologies were received from Tim Newsholme (Chair) and Dr Kate Mori.
- 2. Declaration of Interests**
 There were no declarations of interest.
- 3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 28 March 2023, and matters arising**
 It was agreed that the Chair should sign the minutes of the meeting as a true record. There were no matters arising.

The Committee agreed: -

- To approve the minutes of the last meeting

- 4. Key Data year to date**
 The Vice Principal HE summarised that performance had declined particularly in Polar Quintiles 1 and 2; these related to geographical data which reflects income and opportunity. Retention showed a slight decline from last year which was very high but remains good for Level 5 (82% from the start of the course). Governors were assured that measures will be implemented to support Level 6 students next year. The College provides high levels of support to students; this year group are the students who commenced their studies during the pandemic. The Student Governor asked if students who drop back a year are included as a negative figure; this was uncertain as data would need to be calculated manually. Top-up students' retention is good; however, these are not counted by the OfS. There are very few students who transfer from

HCA to other institutions with more students choosing to transfer to HCA. Health, mental health and family responsibilities are key reasons for withdrawals.

Retrieval information was provided as requested with additional data to be presented at the next meeting. **ACTION: VICE PRINCIPAL HE.** Students in retrieval for more than one module have a significant amount of work to do with a limit of 60 credits to carry forward.

Application data shows a modest increase in applications with an inconsistent profile across courses. There was discussion about marketing the course dynamics and acknowledgement that some Course Leaders are inspirational. Course Leaders have a fundamental role in marketing and recruitment. Governors agreed that all Course Leaders should be encouraged to drive their course recruitment. Governors are committed to strategies to grow courses and student numbers.

The Committee agreed: -

- To note the report and statistics

5. Student Experience

The Complaints and OIA annual statement were noted showing a zero return to OIA.

There were 18 complaints with 13 resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, 4 were partly resolved and one remains ongoing. Details of complaints by course and resolutions were provided. There was discussion about the significant amount of management time to address student issues which had increased. Thorough and rigorous processes are followed for each student complaint. There was a suggestion to consider purchasing in mediation expert to facilitate complaints if considered appropriate.

The College provides a caring and supportive environment for students meaning that deadlines for course submissions are often extended; this can have a negative affect that students do not understand the importance of taking responsibility for their course and achieving deadlines. The Student Governor confirmed that some students rely heavily on their tutors and their leniency; it is crucial that students develop resilience.

[Dr Horton left the meeting]

6. Quality Improvement

- I. The Professional Development Cycle is undertaken with staff working in pairs, generally by school, with an observation completed by each pair. The focus has been to explore teaching and encourage risk taking where the curriculum allows. An agreed action plan is developed and teaching practice shared. Overall student feedback, data and focus groups triangulate with observation.

- II. Minutes of the Academic Board were noted with a question if academic staff find the Academic Board useful. All staff engage in topics with very useful discussion.

The Committee agreed: -

- To note the report and minutes

7. Curriculum Development

The Vice Principal HE presented the report providing an update on course revalidation and validation of new courses. There was discussion about the photography course which would include opportunities for specialisms. Courses should publicise specific themes and distinctive elements. Digital degrees have gone to external and internal readers with positive feedback.

The Student Governor raised opportunities for collaborative projects with other courses as she felt that some students can feel segregated. It was agreed that internal communication would be implemented to ensure students, particularly 1st years, are aware of collaborative projects and the timeline for these on the course. **ACTION: VICE PRINCIPAL HE**

The Committee agreed: -

- To note the informative paper which would be presented to the Board
ACTION: CLERK

8. Identification of Key Risks

- I. Curriculum development and resources to develop digital curriculum
- II. Student applications
- III. Level 5/6 course retention
- IV. Risk on students' mental health, social issues and its financial impact
- V. NSS results
- VI. Potential negative feedback from digital skills centre refurbishment
- VII. Quality regulation and changes to APP, TEF and B3
- VIII. Graduates outcomes

9. Any Other Business

There were no items.

10. Date and time of next meeting

Tuesday 21 November 2023 commencing at slightly later time of **4.45 pm.**

Signed as a true record of proceedings

Chair: **Date:**.....