

## **DRAFT Minutes of the FE Academic Quality and Standards Committee**

**Tuesday 21 November 2023 3-4.30pm  
held in A10, College Road Campus**

1. **Apologies for absence** – Ian Axtell, Joe Hedges, Helen Hurford

**Attendees:** Mervyn Jones (Chair), Jennette Arnold, Tim Newsholme, Abigail Appleton (Principal & CEO), Myfanwy Page (Staff Governor), Lucy Ramsey (FE Student Governor - left at 4.20pm)

**Present:** Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE), Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE), David Hawkins (Vice Principal Business Development and Student Experience), Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors)

2. **Declaration of Interests** - none

3. **Minutes of the last meeting:**

- **Minutes of meeting 20th June 2023:** approved as true and accurate record
- **Matters Arising:** none

4. **Performance data – reports from VPFE**

I. **Key data for 2023/4 year to date**

The VPFE presented report and highlighted key areas:

- 89% reported for overall attendance – same as last year. Attendance for English and Maths is up on last year, but remains lower than target and noted as a key area for improvement. Low maths/English attendees are noted to also be low attendees on their main course.
- Low-attenders continue to be followed up with both student and parents, and work ongoing with relevant students to improve attendance using intermittent targets. Anxiety, social and emotional health issues still noted to be playing a key part in consistent absence.
- Board member asked whether those with EHCPs are linked to lower attendance, as could appear to be so in report – VPFE confirmed this is not the case. A Committee Member (Staff Governor) confirmed that in general EHCP recipients attend well in English & Maths
- Retention remains at 99%. 31 withdrew/were withdrawn before October census date (this number was 35 last year). Some transfers occurred between Music/PA courses, and between levels within /between these courses - not felt to be a risk, and clear link between the two subject areas understood as key factor

- A Committee Member asked about first year transfers in from other colleges. The VPFE confirmed that there are some of these each year, but current statistics not included within this report.
- 25% increase in students studying English & Maths, understood to be due to larger number of failures nationally this year.

## **II. Destination data 2023 including internal progression**

The VPFE presented report and highlighted key areas:

- 32 HCA FE students enrolled in HCA HE in Sept 2023, but internal progression noted as still being a key area of risk. However, 32 is an increase on the last few years, and sits just below the 2019-20 rate
- Overall progression to HE (internal or external) sits at around 59% (this has varied between 53-59% over last four years). Higher levels moving to HE from Foundation course, and lower levels from Extended Diploma. Principal noted that this data doesn't take into account gap years, and noted that focus on those that don't move directly on to HE (and following these students up/offering support) is an area for development. Similar picture also noted at Hereford Sixth Form college
- This year sees an increased number of Saturday Open Days and reduced number of evening events, freeing up staff to visit schools careers evenings along with Outreach team (towards improving recruitment)
- Destination data – it was noted that this is based on intended destination data from UCAS, but that in future all students (not just those with no destination) will be followed up to confirm these/clarify any changes

The Committee Chair commented that the F&GP Committee had noted the need for more systems to be put in place to track and improve recruitment. The VPFE confirmed that biggest change made to date is more curriculum staff going into schools with the Outreach team – something that has not happened for many years, and team hoping this will make a difference

The Committee Chair asked whether there was an area of arts education that we don't cover that we know students want? The VPFE stated she felt that the areas needed are fashion marketing and advertising. Principal confirmed that the VPBDSE will work with the VPFE on curriculum development.

## **III. Ofsted feedback (verbal)**

The Committee noted "Outstanding" result following Ofsted Inspection. Chair congratulated the VPFE and recorded thanks to her and SLT, Folly Lane staff, and Committee Members involved in the inspection for their contribution. The Committee Chair noted this is not an endgame for HCA, but rather gives a platform for improvement. The VPFE thanked the FE AQ&S Committee also for their part in challenging and setting expectations, which has contributed to this Ofsted result.

IV. **Self-Assessment Report (SAR)** – The VPFE gave a verbal update on this moderation visit:

Moderation visit was noted to be a very helpful experience, with different view to previous year's assessor - full of challenge, interesting comments, and very productive. Visit prompted no feelings of defensiveness, and visit clearly identified areas for development. Various areas of strength were identified by the assessor, and he noted progress shown around the key areas for development identified at the 2022-23 self-assessment.

A Committee Member asked whether our rural setting requires us to be clearer about employability, and whether wider online opportunities are valid as part of this work. The VPFE confirmed that employability is a very broad area: employer contact for students could consist of an employer coming into meet, but also includes teaching transferable skills, CV development, confidence to audition/pitch, online communication/collaboration.

A Student Governor noted that students were encouraged to approach local supermarkets etc, but beyond this it felt like there was limited opportunity for in-person work in industry locally, and that online approach feels like a more exciting and beneficial opportunity for students. The VPFE confirmed part of the work experience approach was to encourage students to find this themselves, and that the resource for coordination of this wasn't available at this time. She also noted that skills teaching plays a part. Chair thanked Student Governor for her challenge, and also commented that from an employer point of view (as well as the student), these interactions can often be very formulaic and uncreative. Chair noted a need for Committee to return to discussion of the quality of experience of work experience.

5. **Teaching and Learning Professional Development Cycle (Teaching and Learning)**

Report was noted and accepted by the Committee. The VPFE talked through key areas of the report and answered queries raised:

- This year's cycle has started (delayed a little by Ofsted) and is the third iteration of this staff observation cycle, with development having been informed by Board, Ofsted and Tony Davies (external consultant).
- Now moved from dual observations following challenge from Board last year. Process asks teaching staff to give evaluative comments to each other rather than feedback.
- Following last year's process, an aspirational matrix has now been formulated – uses quality standards which are taken from reflections and recorded as data. Expert /independent learning was identified as an outstanding area for development, leading to a staff development focus on this for 2023-24.
- A Committee Member suggested a need to wait for fourth year to examine data for improvement, following the move away this year from the 'pair' model, and asked whether there as an opportunity halfway through the year to gain a sample of student feedback to get a feel.

The VPFE confirmed that three teaching and learning surveys are carried out over the year. This process is more to challenge staff to develop, reach in new directions etc. Staff governor confirmed from experience that it led to beneficial learning from others, an opportunity to reflect on sessions, and for staff to identify areas to work on for themselves

- A Committee Member asked whether the VPFE walks around college and talks to students as part of her role. The VPFE responded that there is sadly little time for this in her role, but that the range of other opportunities for evaluation and student feedback is felt to cover this. She noted that student reps also bring issues to team meetings and student council. Principal confirmed further that this triangulation is valuable and important.
- The Principal summarised that the T&L Professional Development Cycle process is not one of judgement, and has been felt to be a surprisingly successful way to develop a mature culture of self-reflection, as well as to judge impact, not activity itself. She confirmed that there are other ways beyond this process for staff to develop as well. Data will be able to show the impact of this on teaching and learning in time.

## **6. Student experience: Settling in Survey**

**Vice Principal presented this report and highlighted key areas:**

- Disappointing result in terms of numbers compared to last year, but response level still statistically-significant
- Results showed that 95% students feel safe. Therefore the 9 students who didn't feel safe were followed up – a few were answers helpful, but some related to life outside of college.

## **7. Identification of Key Risks**

The VPFE confirmed current key risks as:

- Recruitment
- Employability - it is hoped that Teaching and Professional Development process will impact on this positively

## **8. Any other business**

- A Committee Member commented that a staff body can sometimes live in fear and dread following an 'Outstanding' Ofsted result, due to the idea of losing it again, and suggested that this is another feeling to be aware of. The Principal agreed that it can also make people risk-averse when considering innovation, but hopes that a likely three-year period free of Ofsted will allow staff the freedom to be brave. The Principal reminded the Committee that the first slide presented to Ofsted by SLT at the outset of their inspection stated that 'Outstanding is not a destination, but part of the HCA journey'.
- A Committee Member suggested that a module feedback survey could provide some context and micro-level data to support/enhance

teaching and learning development process. The Committee Chair noted further that we have course-specific data from students at HE but not at FE. The VPFE confirmed that this data is available within grade profiles.

9. **Date and time of next meetings:** SAR reviews scheduled for Friday Dec 1 2023 (tbc). Next AQ&S Committee Meeting: Tuesday 19 March 2024 - FE: 2.00 pm, combined meeting: 3.45 pm and HE: 4.30 pm.

**Minutes approved:**

**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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:**.....





**Academic Quality and Standards Committee**  
**Tuesday 21 November 2023**  
**held in A10, College Road Campus**

**MINUTES of the HE and FE Combined AQ&S Meeting commencing at 4.45 pm**

**Present:** Jennette Arnold (left meeting at 5.40pm), Kate Mori, Mervyn Jones (Chair of Governors), Myfanwy Page (Staff Governor), Lucy Ramsay (Student Governor), Russell Roberts, Tim Newsholme (Chair of Committee), Abigail Appleton (Principal& CEO)

**In attendance:** Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE), Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE), David Hawkins (Vice Principal Student Experience and Business Development), Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors)

**Apologies:** Helen Hurford (Student Governor), Joe Hedges, Charlotte Semus (Student Governor), Joanne Horton, Ian Axtell, Joe Hedges

1. **Minutes of the last meeting**

I. **Approval of the Minutes of meeting held on 20 June 2023** - approved as true and accurate record

II. **Matters arising:**

- Fitness to Study policy review: Vice Principal HE confirmed further meeting required with JA following initial summer meeting  
**Action:** Vice Principal HE
- SU/Student council presentation to Board: noted this will be actioned as part of 2024 Board business planning next year
- Student guide – Principal confirmed this guide is in development
- Suicide prevention in sector – Principal updated Committee that this action will be included in the development of a student wellbeing strategy
- Chairs of committees – action outstanding. MJ and TN will remain as Chairs of Committees for now

**Action:** Clerk

2. **Draft Minutes of the Academic Board – 1 November 2023:** Committee noted that this would be picked up in HE section of AQ&S meeting

3. **Policies**

I. **AI Policy (draft)**

The Vice Principal HE gave some background to this policy, explaining that the widely-used academic originality checker 'Turn It In' have been working on an AI checker, but the sense from computer scientists currently is that you cannot in essence manage AI and its impacts on originality via an academic policy. Sector is moving more widely to incorporating AI as a professional tool than focusing on originality.

The Vice Principal HE then gave a presentation to the Committee that included an introduction to where AI is currently, the creative education sector's approach to it, potential directions of travel of AI in wider world, and HCA's response to this complex issue

Vice Principal HE then outlined the main elements of the policy:

- Clear policy (for students and staff)
- Staff training
- Student training
- How we develop our approach
- Requires us to be clearer about standardisation – defines different levels of use of AI (acceptable, unacceptable, excellent, ineffective)

A Committee Member confirmed that other institutions are taking similar approaches to HCA. The Principal confirmed intention for policy to be regularly reviewed at SLT level due to speed of development in this area, allowing small adjustments to be made at SLT, while full updates of policy coming to AQ&S for approval as usual. The Committee noted the above presentation and the suggested approach to developing the draft policy. The Committee agreed that AI should remain on the Combined AQ&S agenda as relevant to both HE and FE.

## **II. Student Professional Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy (verbal update):**

The Vice Principal HE confirmed that this policy is fundamentally sound, but some small changes to wording have been made to ensure consistency of terminology between 'stages of process' and 'level of misdemeanour', giving improved clarity to students and parents when used to guide a disciplinary process. Full review due May 2025. Updated policy will be brought to AQ&S in March 2024, and Committee agreed to its use with the improved terminology in the meantime.

## **III. Child on Child Abuse Policy**

Principal updated Committee that changes made are simple terminology alterations only. Incorrect copy was provided with papers, and so Committee agreed to updated copy to be provided by email, and submitted to Board for approval.

## **IV. Bullying Harassment and Sexual Misconduct**

Principal updated Committee that changes made are simple terminology alterations only. Incorrect copy was provided with papers, and so Committee agreed to updated copy to be provided by email, and submitted to Board for approval.

## **4. Cross College integrated student personal and professional development strategy**

*Aim: To receive the report on the development of an integrated cross college personal and professional development strategy presented by the Principal*

The Principal updated the Committee that this work is in progress, and aligns with one of Board's KPIs. More work is planned around language, what are defined as skills/competencies, and how creative pedagogy is a vehicle for developing these skills.

A Committee Member queried whether there are some objectives that are priorities within this. The Principal confirmed that no priorities had been specifically set/arisen at present.

The Committee Chair asked Committee Member for advice on how to code 'soft skills' and the extent to which students are achieving these. The Committee Member

commented in agreement that 'soft skills' is not an ideal term and agreed to discuss with Principal offline as part of scheduled strategy conversation. The Vice Principal HE confirmed that within HE modules, these skills are broken down into more specifically-defined skills.

The Chair of Governors commented that entrepreneurialism is not mentioned in the strategy presented. Principal noted this and agreed that it should be included.

5. **Annual Reports 2022/23**

I. **Equality and Diversity 2022/23 Annual Report and 2023/24 objectives**

The Committee noted this report.

The Vice Principal HE commented that HCA's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead is a driver for improving our data around ED&I, and that her approach brings externality – providing a wider lense through which we view what we are doing locally.

The Committee Chair noted that on reading report it can feel anecdotal, asked whether we have a measure for how we are progressing, or a measure of artistic diversity. He noted that due to these responses it was possibly hard for Committee to respond to the report provided.

The Vice Principal HE commented that this is area is a challenge for the college, as can lead to apparent need for highly-individualised education, whereas data and monitoring of this need does not indicate the same. In practice, the HCA teaching team demonstrate a high level of dedication and ability to individualise delivery of education provided, which has led to students expecting/requiring further individualised actions (eg. a one-to-one repeat of a teaching session after missing it due to not being in attendance).

The Vice Principal added that team are currently trying to make systems more efficient and consistent, whilst still hitting ED&I targets. Principal noted that the hard targets are captured in APP, but suggested that a core set of metrics and a tracker could be useful to further demonstrate progress.

*Committee agreed that ED&I report and objectives will be re-drafted and brought back to Board for approval*

II. **Freedom of Speech Annual Report**

The Vice Principal for Student Experience and Business Development presented the report, highlighting some interesting national change around intention / spirit in which something is intended/motivation/whether an end goal is achieved. He noted that the law appears to be trying to widen the current boundaries and we need to decide where we sit as an institution (as part of our policies).

The Principal commented that this document means we should feel less constrained, and supports academic freedom. The Vice Principal HE noted that we are often more constrained by our student body than by policy in this area.

A Committee Member asked where Prevent fits with this slightly altered approach.

Vice Principal HE responded that Prevent is clearly defined separately, and suggested that bringing the debates out with more confidence may in fact support the support the avoidance of Prevent-related issues

*Committee approved continuation of work in this area in line with the approach of the Annual Report*

The Principal commented that next steps would include incorporating the approach within the Student Guide.

6. **Any other business - none**

7. **Date and time of next meeting:** Tuesday 19 March 2024. FE: 2.00 pm, combined meeting: 3.45 pm and HE: 4.30 pm

**Minutes approved by:**

**Date:**