

Minutes of: Governing Board Meeting

Date: Mon 13th May 2024 4pm **Location:** A10, College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
Abigail Appleton (Principal/CE) Mervyn Jones (Chair of Governors) Charlotte Semus (Student Governor) Ian Axtell John Auckland Kate Mori Peta Darnley Clive Hodgeman Joe Hedges Caroline Sedilek (Staff Governor) Kate Seekings Myfanwy Page (Staff Governor) Jennette Arnold (online attendance) Judy Balderson (online attendance) Russell Roberts (online attendance)	Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE) Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE) Tim Williams (Finance Director) David Hawkins (Vice Principal BDSE) Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors)
Quoracy: Meeting was quorate	

1. Apologies and introductions

- a. **Apologies for absence** - Helen Hurford (Student Governor)
- b. **Declaration of Interests** - no new declarations

2. Minutes of last meeting

- a. **Approval of minutes of meeting held 26th February 2024** - minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record
- b. **Matters arising**
 All actions noted as completed or in progress. The Board expressed thanks to Course Leader Del Done for the success of the Ferrous Festival. A Board Member commented on the lack of HCA branding HCA/opportunities promoted as part of Ferrous, and the Principal confirmed that post-festival learning discussions (including around marketing) were already underway.

3. Governance

- a. **Ian Axtell (Co-opted Member of AQ&S Committee) appointment to Board** - The Board approved this appointment, and Ian was welcomed formally to the Board.
- b. **Chairs of Committees:** The Chair of Governors noted that the Search & Governance Committee will be seeking Chairs for Board Committees over the coming months.

4. Principal's Report

a. Principal's written report - the Principal presented this report, and highlighted key areas.

Positive recent events highlighted included the new Herefordsculpture trail, the continuation of the HCA 170th Anniversary programme, a positive meeting held to support Student Union recruitment and activity, and successful recruitment of a Digital Content Course Leader.

A Board Member asked about plans for legacy of 170th events, and a discussion was held around the opportunities for making links with the City presented by the Hereford Sculpture Trail. The Link Governor for Cybersecurity gave assurance to the Board that the IT and Estates Manager is appropriately across this area, and noted the importance of succession planning, considering the large amount of information and knowledge currently held about this area by one member of staff.

b. KPIs and objectives - The Board noted this report. The Chair confirmed that Recruitment is the key area, and would be discussed later in the agenda (Section 6).

5. HCA Strategy

The Principal presented a draft final version of the Strategy. She thanked Board for their final feedback, and confirmed that two key challenges made have now been addressed (ensuring enough distinctiveness; ensuring the centrality of student experience) along with some change of language following suggestions made.

The key changes made in final development stage of the Strategy were outlined as:

- Being absolutely clear about our current strengths and building on them
- Further step change in focus on professional development and careers in the creative industries and beyond
- Curriculum development to meet changing student and industry needs
- Institutional and individual external engagement

The Board also discussed: the role of the Board in relation to the Strategy; the importance of the application of creativity in the external world as a key underlying theme; the importance of including the consideration of countywide links as well as City; the importance of considering Governance within a Strategy; the inclusion of Alumni within the Strategy; expressing the value of the breadth of the HCA (FE&HE) learning journey offer; the role of the Strategy in expressing the importance to HCA of enabling student choice and the breadth of opportunity offered by a creative education.

Decision: The Board agreed to support the document, with the acknowledgement of the comments made today, and agreed to leave the final edit of the Strategy to the Principal and her team.

6. Finance, Marketing and Recruitment

a. Risk Register – the Board noted this report

b. Management Accounts including key risks - FE and HE recruitment was noted as the most significant risk, with no major issues or differences to last year outside of this

c. Marketing and Recruitment update

The Principal presented this report, and noted that:

- The report included April 26th data, and May 10th data was presented live in the meeting
- Main challenges are: converting offers made to accepted places, attracting new applications, and developing understanding of reasons for losing applications to other institutions unexpectedly in initial January 2024 period (with HCA interview process identified as a key area)
- Marketing and Recruitment operations has room for improvement - SLT members are now providing close oversight, and some restructure has occurred

Current issues then highlighted to the Board included:

HE Recruitment

- Initial additional investment has been made into MA and Digital campaigns
- Cubed data has identified alternative audiences to target for new digital courses
- Team are looking at how we use digital tools to allow a digital conversation with applicants and other new models of engagement with 18-25 year olds in current digital world
- The costs associated with tools to increase breadth of reach are significant

FE Recruitment

- Timing and breadth of circulation of FE prospectus
- The development of relationships with schools and careers education within them
- The opportunities presented by some re-branding of curriculum and widening of curriculum offer

Board Members then asked about/discussed:

- How working with new website providers has helped investigate new ideas
- Use of search engine optimisation
- Importance of the website to those who have already decided on the institution
- Timescale for the new website
- Understanding of (and learning from) competitors' recruitment processes
- Role of interviews within the process

The Chair of the Board noted that the economic impact of the recruitment challenge will be outlined at the July Board, as part of the Budget presentation. The Principal confirmed that some changes may need to be considered if recruitment does not improve, and that early planning around possible structure reorganisation is underway in order in an attempt to prevent more sudden changes having to be made at a later date. She confirmed that her two equal and main priorities are the protection of jobs and maintaining the quality of student experience.

- 7. Accountability Statement** - the Vice Principal for Business Development and Student Experience (BDSE) presented this report, noting that the Accountability Statement is a funding-linked requirement from the DfE, the draft is based on the new Strategic Plan, and that progress against the initial Accountability Statement (published July 2023) is also included within the report for Board information.

He noted that the Accountability Statement is not significantly different to last year's and highlighted interesting areas from the Statement's development as: the consideration of transferable skills being as important as that of skills for employment, the embedded nature

of creative-type roles, and a lower level of self-employment in Herefordshire in comparison to other areas of the country.

The Principal confirmed that Aim 3 will be altered to indicate the main focus of work with schools being around careers education.

Board Members commented on the usefulness and quality of the document. Discussions were also held around the expectations of HE/FE sector requirements following a possible change of Government.

Decision: The Board agreed to accept this draft Accountability Statement

8. UCAS Tariff Proposition

The Vice Principal (HE) presented this report to the Board, noting that the HCA tariff is low compared to competitors, and that this tariff is viewed by applicants (and those advising them) as an indicator of the quality of a course. He explained that coming into line will help market ourselves as level with others, and a contextual offer process is key to running alongside this, to allow exceptional cases to be taken into account where the tariff is not met.

Board Members asked questions around the mechanism of altering the tariff, handling the timeframe of this change, the proportion of the current intake that wouldn't have joined the college under this new tariff (estimated as being less than 5%), the relationship between students outside of the new tariff and those who don't achieve/complete degree, and the safeguards in place against a negative impact on ED&I.

Decision: The Board agreed to support this change of UCAS tariff

9. Policies for noting/approval

a. Suicide Safer Policy

The Vice Principal (FE) presented this policy, outlining the consultation done as part of its development and the potential role it will play in guiding the Safeguarding team in such an event. The role of the policy in supporting the wellbeing of staff was also noted.

A Board Member noted that 'three Cs' (connection, collaboration and choice) in a similar House of Commons guidance document were not included, and the Vice Principal (FE) agreed to look into this. Discussions were then also initiated by Governors around:

- The wording of point 3e (which was agreed to be changed from noting an intention to consider to 'we will consider whether we are involved with' to 'HCA will have a relationship with' the LA Suicide Prevention Committee, or similar)
- The role of the Board – the Chair noted that in the event of a suicide, the Board would expect to receive a full report and to discuss event and learnings in a dedicated meeting
- The consideration of a person independent of staff (ie. from the Board) being nominated to be involved to support any staff handling the situation who are closely affected themselves
- the lack of detail around Crisis Communications – Vice Principal (FE) confirmed that this is included in the main HCA Safeguarding Policy which would also support any suicide-related situation

Decision: the Board agreed to approve this policy, subject to potential changes following the discussions above

Action: VPFE to arrange for final amendments to be made before sending to Clerk for publishing

b. **Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy (approved at AQ&S 19th March 2024)** - this policy was noted by the Board

c. **Support for Study Policy (approved at AQ&S 19th March 2024)** - this policy was noted by the Board. The Vice Principal (HE) outlined the motivation behind replacing the previous Fitness to Study Policy with this new Policy, which occurred following a previous challenge from a Board Member.

d. **AI Policy (approved at AQ&S 19th March 2024)** - this policy was noted by the Board. A Board Member noted the need to direct students to this proactively, and asked about the staff and student training behind the policy. The Vice-Principal (HE) confirmed that the policy would be reviewed yearly.

Action: Clerk to publish approved policies

10. Committee draft minutes

- a. **Audit Committee (15th April 2024)** - the draft minutes were noted by the Board
- b. **Search and Governance (22nd April 2024)** - the draft minutes were noted by the Board
- c. **Finance and General Purposes (22nd April 2024)** - the draft minutes were noted by the Board
- d. **AQ&S Committee (19th March 2024)** - the draft minutes were noted by the Board

11. Any Other Business - no other business was raised

12. Date of next meeting: 4.30pm 8th July 2024 (preceded by 3.30pm Board-Staff Engagement event). Board photo will be taken at 4.15pm on same day.

A Confidential section followed, please see separate minutes