

Minutes of: Academic Quality and Standards (FE) Committee

Date: 3pm 18th June 2024 **Location:** College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
Mervyn Jones (Chair) Abigail Appleton (Principal & CE) Ian Axtell Kate Seekings Joe Hedges Russell Roberts Myfanwy Page (Staff Governor) Jennette Arnold (online)	Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE) Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors)
Quoracy: Meeting was quorate	

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE)
2. **Declarations of interest** – no new declarations
3. **Minutes of last FE AQ&S Meeting**
 - a. **Approval of minutes of meeting held on 19th March 2024** – minutes approved
 - b. **Matters Arising** – ongoing work around revision of AQ&S reporting timetable was noted
4. **FE Performance data** - The Principal presented this report, on behalf of Vice Principal FE, highlighting key areas.
 - a. **Key data year to date (attendance and retention)**

The Principal noted that data is generally looking good against targets. A key issue is Maths and English attendance – noted as a perennial problem, but that teams are relooking at it. Committee Members asked about formal benchmarking of attendance data against wider sector, and whether pastoral support and mental health was something to consider in relation to this. Discussions were held around anecdotal experience of wider sector attendance, correlation between poor attendance in Maths/English with same students' low attendance in arts subjects, the role of mental health in attendance issues, and the effect of Final Major Project deadlines and GCSE exam clashes on attendance. The work and dedication of staff to support students in attendance and mental health issues was detailed by Staff Governor and Vice Principal (HE).
 - b. **2023/24 applications and acceptances**

Numbers are currently equal to last year (although this is a drop in market share, as demographic has increased), and new measures this year around maintaining communication with new applicants are hoped to help improve on current situation. Recruitment in Creative Media and Technology has improved since last year. A

Committee Member suggested the developing strength of academies as a voice was worth taking into account.

c. English and Maths report

In addition to the attendance issues, the Committee heard that a dip in maths results is expected, due to particularly poor attendance at one GCSE maths exam this year. A reminder was given to Committee of changing DfE guidance around English and Maths (with the expectation of minimum of 3 hours English, 4 hours of Maths), per week, and the Committee heard about the work around incorporating this from next year.

5. FE Quality Reports - The Principal presented this report, on behalf of Vice Principal FE, highlighting key areas.

- a. Progress on Quality Improvement Plan - the development of the Taster Day programme into wider opportunities and experiences for prospective students was discussed. The use of this year's new Health Assured online support service is currently under review.

b. Professional Development Cycle (teaching and learning)

The Committee heard that this year's cycle is complete, and with the external advisor has identified 'stretch and challenge' as a key theme to focus on as part of 2024/25 staff development sessions. A training session on the cycle in August is available to Governors as well as staff.

Action: Clerk to circulate details to Governors

c. Student progress and anticipated destination of leavers

The Principal updated the Committee that although no hard data available yet due to time of the year, no major changes are expected in destination patterns. Better data is expected this year, due to planned follow up in Autumn to take into account early changes. Early signs from overall grades profile is expected to remain high.

6. Portfolio Development - the Principal updated the Committee that early discussions are underway around considering a UAL Business and Marketing Level 3 Extended Diploma, potentially with a fashion sector and/or photography focus, with aims for a Sept 2025 intake. Committee members asked about overlapping with neighbouring institutions' courses, and highlighted the opportunities offered by this course in supporting young people in challenging the potential cross-boundaried future between art and creativity in technology and digitisation. The Committee asked for more detail to be brought to Board about how this would work with other programme and could exploit current expertise and depth.

7. Key Risks

The Principal confirmed that no new risks had been identified. Government Policy (maths and English requirements, rescheduling of national exams, outcome of upcoming election, post-16 Qualifications reform) was suggested as a current risk by Committee Members, as well as non-HE student destination data incoming next year that could potentially propose a new challenge/risk. The ongoing nature of effect of the covid lockdown on school and college children of all ages was discussed as an ongoing risk and challenge for many years to come.

8. Any other business

Matrix Standard: The Principal introduced the 'Matrix Standard' - a quality standard for advice and guidance services, which includes a 3-yearly college-wide audit of staff and students, and yearly ongoing monitoring. HCA (HE and FE) recently passed the 3-yearly

Matrix Audit and a full report will be published. A range of positive comments from students as part of the audit report were heard by the Committee, and some development issues were identified by the Audit (website, personal and professional development strategy, training of staff with formal advice and guidance qualification, working more systematically with alumni).

Minutes of: Academic Quality & Standards Committee (HE&FE Combined) Committee

Date: 18th June 2024 **Location:** College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
Mervyn Jones (Chair) Abigail Appleton (Principal & CE) Ian Axtell Kate Seekings Joe Hedges Russell Roberts Myfanwy Page (Staff Governor) Jennette Arnold (online) Jo Horton (Co-opted Member) Helen Hurford (Student Governor) Charlotte Semus (Student Governor) Kate Mori	Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE) Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors) David Hawkins (Vice Principal Business Development and Student Experience)
Quoracy: Meeting was quorate	

Apologies: Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE)

Conflicts of interest: no new conflicts of interest

9. Minutes of last Combined FE&HE AQ&S Meeting

- a. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 19th March 2024 – meeting approved as true and accurate record
- b. Matters Arising
 - UCAS tariff was approved by Board.

10. Student Union update

The Vice Principal Business Development and Student Experience 7 applications have been received for Student Union President, and 7 roles available in full. Applications will be considered over the summer. Various Student Union events have been held over the past year by students, although the current Student Union team was noted as being too overwhelmed by course pressures this year to lead and organise events themselves. Informal activity by students has however led to some enthusiastic applicants for next year.

11. Student Charter (annual review, in advance of Board approval)

The Vice Principal HE reminded that this is revised annually, and has been approved by Academic Board and Student Council before coming to AQ&S for approval. Committee agreed to approve the Student Charter.

12. Access and Participation Plan (verbal update on development)

The Vice Principal HE gave a presentation on the College's new 5-year Access and Participation Plan (APP) – a requirement from Office for Students with the aim of increasing social justice in HE sector. The plan development is on-track to complete in October, and a draft will be presented to July Board. The final APP will be delivered to AQ&S for approval by email, in advance of submission in October. Committee Members asked about the role of the document within the college, how current related initiatives already in place can be included within the APP, and the idea of segmenting types of disability within the APP.

Action: VPHE to outline the strategic nature of the document in the Introduction

13. Policies and Strategies

a. Student Complaints Policy and Procedure

The Committee noted small changes reflecting updates to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator guidance. Committee Members asked about the involvement of the Principal in the appeal process, and whether Short Course students need a separate process. The Committee agreed that Short Course students need a quick and simpler process.

Action: Principal to develop a Short Course Student complaints policy

Decision: *The Committee approved the policy subject to the discussed amends*

b. CMA Compliance Procedure and Monitoring report (presentation, for information)

The Vice Principal HE outlined the key risks around Consumer Marketing Authority (CMA), upcoming staff training, and the role of the Annual CMA report which will come to November AQ&S. Committee Members discussed the website's role in achieving the CMA targets, and the importance of wording in indicating the tone and detail of what the college offers students.

c. Bullying and Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy

The Vice Principal HE reported positive use of this policy to date, a policy which has received some small changes to enhance clarity only as part of routine review. He also outlined for the Committee the college's position in relation to some new OfS regulations (following recent consultation), including around clear definitions of sexual misconduct, the need for a separate process that reflects the policy, capacity and resource, freedom of speech and minimising barriers to reporting. The Committee acknowledged the expertise and experience of the Vice Principal HE and other staff involved in dealing with cases of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. A comment was made about the importance of supporting students doing work placements off campus.

Decision: *The Committee agreed to recommend this policy to Board for approval*

d. Prevent (update for information)

The Principal informed the Committee that an Annual Prevent report will be delivered to Board in October, but updated that the Prevent Risk Register has been recently reviewed which has highlighted some actions which are now being undertaken.

e. Internal Progression Strategy

The Principal outlined how the college are looking at strengthening the awareness of students of the range of opportunities available to them. Committee Members asked about the feeling among students about Hereford as a place to live, and the Principal noted the role that HCA have identified for itself in place-making which is part of the new College Strategy.

f. Cross-College personal and professional development strategy

The Principal gave a presentation to update the Committee about HCAEMPOWER – a framework for delivering training in transferable professional skills alongside specialist creative skills and knowledge, across FE and HE. The Committee agreed that the approach is exciting in its breadth, and that diagram would be helpful for Board in communicating and understanding this. The Committee also felt that the approach would be as relevant and useful to apply to staff.

g. Policies in development (verbal update)

The Principal updated the Committee that a number of new academic policies are in development, as part of campaign for TEF Gold, around systematising academic processes.

14. Annual items

- a. **Election of Chair for 2024/25** – Committee agreed that this would be for discussion at S&G.
- b. **Committee Self-Assessment** – Committee noted the self-assessment with no further comments.
- c. **Review of Terms of Reference** – Committee agreed that its Terms of Reference are appropriate.

15. Any Other Business – none

16. Date of next meeting: 12th November 2024

Minutes of: Academic Quality & Standards (HE) Committee

Date: 18th June 2024 **Location:** College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
Mervyn Jones (Chair) Abigail Appleton (Principal & CE) Ian Axtell Kate Seekings Joe Hedges Russell Roberts Myfanwy Page (Staff Governor) Jennette Arnold (online) Jo Horton (Co-opted Member) Helen Hurford (Student Governor) Charlotte Semus (Student Governor) Kate Mori	Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE) Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors) David Hawkins (Vice Principal Business Development and Student Experience)
Quoracy:	

17. **Apologies for absence** – Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE)

18. **Declarations of Interest** – no new declarations of interest

19. **Minutes of last HE AQ&S Meeting**

- a. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 19th March 2024 – minutes approved as a true and accurate record
- b. Matters Arising

20. **HE Performance Data** - The Vice Principal (HE) presented this report, highlighting key issues as detailed below

a. Key data year to date (attendance and retention)

The Committee heard that HE attendance is down, but this reflects the sector and is not felt to represent a risk, but some specific gaps in attendance are being focused on.

Committee Member asked whether the numbers of students in hardship is rising, and about management of students with interruption of studies.

Retention was a risk at the outset of this year, and year has ended with 75% (OfS B3 threshold) before examboard outcomes. Level 5 and 6 retention is a current risk, but Level 6 retention has stabilised a little, due to huge staff support and involvement in a few students' cases. A Committee Member asked about how smaller courses who are currently falling behind 75% are monitored against the OfS B3 metric, and supported to improve.

Action: VPHE to check hardship levels with HE Finance team

Assessment: Examboards have just met, and anecdotally appears to be a high level of retrievals (data will come to next meeting) which presents a risk.

Student Voice: operational challenges noted in use of data. National Student Survey has been run and no results as yet.

Staff-student ratio was highlighted by a Committee Member as a potentially useful metric to include in analysing course quality, and the Chair noted the role of F&GP Committee in also more closely understanding the course value in this way.

b. 2023/24 applications and acceptances

Applications are significantly down against last two years. Digital spend is being carefully managed to try to make improvements. Non-acceptance students are being contacted. Principal and VPHE meet weekly with the marketing team, monitoring process on a granular level.

21. HE Quality Reports - The Vice Principal (HE) presented these reports, highlighting key areas.

a. Progress on Quality Improvement Plan

The Vice Principal (HE) presented the main themes for an HE Quality Improvement Plan. The Committee agreed to forward any thoughts to the Vice Principal on the initial plan, and to share any insight into other systems used.

b. Professional Development Cycle (Teaching and Learning)

Adhoc observations have been carried out this year, and the FE Professional Development Cycle model will be adopted next year, following staff training in July. Monthly Teaching and Learning Development Group has been a positive new introduction in 2023/24. A discussion around the challenges and benefits of engaging HE staff in a new model of peer observation, and around potential new models to use, was held.

c. Draft Minutes of Academic Board – The Committee noted the minutes, which were highlighted to be in draft format.

22. Portfolio Development

The Vice Principal (BDSE) gave an outline of Validation Body deadlines for new MA courses, a summary of some of the potential directions for course portfolio development, and highlighted early discussions ongoing with another local HE institution around potential collaboration around new courses. A Committee Member asked about the key driver for running an MFA.

23. Key Risks

Recruitment agreed as the main risk, and Government Policy noted to be a potential future risk (as noted in FE minutes). A Committee Member asked about the current feeling among staff.

24. Any Other Business

The Committee gave thanks to staff and management for the Degree Show, and all the work that went into it.

25. Date of next meeting: 12th November 2024

