

**Minutes of: Curriculum and Quality (Combined) Committee**

**Date:** 5pm on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025      **Location:** A5, College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mervyn Jones (<i>Chair</i>)</li> <li>▪ Abigail Appleton (<i>Principal &amp; CE</i>)</li> <li>▪ Ian Axtell</li> <li>▪ Myfanwy Page (<i>Staff Governor</i>)</li> <li>▪ Rosy Miller (<i>Student Governor</i>)</li> <li>▪ Charlotte Semus (<i>Student Governor</i>)</li> <li>▪ Jennette Arnold (<i>Online</i>)</li> <li>▪ Russell Roberts</li> <li>▪ Ellie Bunston</li> </ul> <p>Collectively referred to as the “Committee” and individually as a “Committee Member”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Justin Gregory (<i>Vice Principal of Higher Education, “Vice Principal (HE)”</i>)</li> <li>▪ Xaviere Hughes (<i>Vice Principal of Further Education, “Vice Principal (FE)”</i>)</li> <li>▪ Abigail Boyce (<i>Clerk to the Corporation, “Clerk”</i>)</li> <li>▪ David Hawkins (<i>Vice Principal of Business Development and Student Experience, “Vice Principal (BDSE)”</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Quoracy:</b> Meeting was quorate in accordance with paragraph 1 below.	<b>Absent:</b> Helen Hurford and Kate Mori.

**1. Quorum**

The meeting was duly convened as a quorum of three members was present, satisfying the quorum requirement set out in Section 5, Clause 2.2 of the Standing Orders (*Academic Quality and Standards Terms of Reference*).

**2. Apologies and Declarations**

- Apologies for absence:** Apologies for absence were received from Kate Mori. Helen Hurford was absent without notification.
- Declarations of interest:** there were no new declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of last meeting**

- Approval of minutes of meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024:** the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.
- Matters Arising:** all actions were noted as complete or as in progress.

**4. Freedom of Speech Act 2023**

The Vice Principal (BDSE) provided a brief overview of the Freedom of Speech Act 2023, noting that while the duties on Student Unions have been removed, the institution now has a greater responsibility to promote free speech. In summary, the Act has been reintroduced in a more streamlined and sensible form.

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*A Committee Member asked whether the Student Union had been consulted about the new draft. The Vice Principal (BDSE) confirmed that discussions had taken place, but clarified that the new legislation primarily affects independent Student Unions, while HCA's Student Union, being part of the college, is less impacted.*

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- 5. Updates on EDI and Targets for 2024/25** – The Vice Principal (HE) presented this report, highlighting key areas.

**a. EDI Report on 2024/25 Targets –**

The Vice Principal (HE) presented an overview of the report, highlighting HCA's commitment to the AOC EDI Charter. He outlined how the college aims to make reasonable adjustments for students where feasible. The demands placed on staff due to the diverse needs of students were acknowledged, and the Vice Principal elaborated on the teaching strategies being implemented to support students with a range of disabilities.

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*A Committee Member inquired whether HCA could collaborate with other colleges to explore best practices for achieving equitable learning. It was suggested that other institutions might be facing similar challenges and could offer valuable insights. Another Committee Member queried whether additional staff training was required and what the plans for this were. The Vice Principal (HE) clarified that a dedicated week in the summer is allocated for this purpose. Further discussions regarding the learning week will be addressed at the F&GP meeting.*

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**b. Access & Participation Report on 2024/25 Targets**

The Committee discussed the shortfall in meeting the APP data targets. The Vice Principal (HE) clarified that this posed a low risk. It was noted that the Office for Students is transitioning from the POLAR to the TUNDRA data set and revising its definition of poverty. The Vice Principal (HE) also confirmed that while HCA is meeting regional diversity targets, the college is committed to exceeding these and striving for higher performance in this area.

**c. Access and Participation Plan**

Discussion on this item has been covered in the previous two sections, and no further points were raised for consideration under this heading.

## **6. DfE Accountability Statement**

The Vice Principal (BDSE) presented an overview of the DfE Accountability Statement, focusing on the 2024 document. Concerns were raised about employability in Hereford's creative industries, with students struggling to effectively market themselves. It was noted that while £6 million had been allocated to support the construction sector, the creative sector's future remains uncertain, as Skills England is still being developed. The Principal acknowledged this as an opportunity to refine HCA's objectives and align course offerings with industry needs, such as Graphic Design, which is a skills gap area with good graduate outcomes but has room for improvement. A Student Governor shared progress on initiatives to help students develop self-presentation and interview skills. It was noted that collaboration with other providers is crucial. Due to timing constraints, the statement will be presented for approval at the May Board meeting.

## **7. HCA Empower**

The Vice Principal (BDSE) provided an overview of the personal and professional development programme, outlining the consensus on key skills and reviewing the Summary table. The Principal explained that the programme is designed to be responsive, with a focus on fostering self-awareness among students. It was noted that the Glossary is utilised to support students, and skills are developed and implemented at various stages. Some initiatives are aimed at skill

development, while others serve to guide students in further enhancing these abilities. The Vice Principal (BDSE) emphasised that many of the processes are ongoing, in line with the principles of lifelong learning. The programme has been soft-launched, with a focus on improving self-awareness among students.

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*A Committee Member inquired about the measurement of the programme's impact, specifically whether a baseline would be established. The Vice Principal (HE) clarified that both quantitative (via surveys) and qualitative approaches would be employed to assess progress. The Chair underscored the importance of soft skills, acknowledging that this is a common area of concern raised by employers.*

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## **8. Academic Portfolio Development**

The Vice Principal (BDSE) provided an overview of the platform and explained the trends in course popularity. It was noted that combining subjects could be an effective strategy, broadening the range of options available. The Committee expressed support for this approach, recognising its potential to enhance the curriculum and facilitate smoother transitions between subjects. The Principal highlighted that while the FE retail business at Level 3 is under consideration, no recommendation has been made at this stage.

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*A Committee Member raised a query regarding PhD options, and the Committee discussed the logistical and financial implications of offering such programmes. The Principal noted further clarification would be required around the costs involved.*

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## **9. Key Risks**

No key risks were identified during the discussion at this time. The Committee will continue to assess and address any potential risks as they arise.

## **10. Close of Business and Date of Next Meeting**

With no further business to discuss, the Chair adjourned the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025, at 5:00 PM.

Minutes approved: ..... Date: .....