

## **Minutes of: Curriculum and Quality (FE) Committee**

**Date:** 4pm on 17<sup>th</sup> June 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>▪ Ellie Bunston (<i>joined at item 5</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Collectively referred to as the "<i>Committee</i>" and individually as a "<i>Committee Member</i>"</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> </ul>
<b>Quoracy:</b> Meeting was quorate in accordance with paragraph 1 below.	<b>Absent:</b> Jennette Arnold

**Note:** Throughout these minutes, where a Governor has provided input that demonstrates impact are italicised and/or underlined, to highlight the contribution and potential influence of the Governing Body.

### **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 Jennette Arnold.
- Declarations of interest:** there were no new declarations of interest.

### **3. Minutes of last meeting**

- Approval of minutes of meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025:** Subject to the amendment under item 4(b), changing the reference from Level 3 to Level 2, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.
- Matters Arising:** all actions were noted as complete or as in progress.

### **4. FE Performance data – The Vice Principal (FE) presented this report highlighting key areas.**

#### **a. Key data year to date**

The Vice Principal (FE) provided an overview of the FE data. Applications were reported to be higher than last year, with new applications still being received. It was acknowledged that staff were working hard to convert applications into enrolments, including running events where prospective students could engage with current learners. Acceptances were also noted to be up on the previous year, with the Vice Principal (FE) suggesting the newly introduced 'Apply Now' button as a contributing factor. The Vice Principal (FE) highlighted how retention had fallen slightly by 1%, though overall remains high at 95%. While attendance was not flagged as a significant concern, it was noted that a post-Covid trend of lower attendance appears to be persisting. Improving attendance, particularly in English and Maths, remains a key focus. Recent withdrawals, predominantly involving students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), were primarily for personal reasons. The

Vice Principal (FE) clarified that these cases have only now been recorded in the data because formal handovers could not be completed until the local authority taken the necessary steps. The Chair referenced their recent attendance at the EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) network, raising concerns around funding for EHCPs and the current lack of clear policy guidance in some feeder counties. The Chair suggested this would be an area worth monitoring going forward.

**b. 2025/26 applications and acceptances**

The Vice Principal (FE) reported that current applications stand at 546, exceeding the target of 540 and demonstrating growth compared to the previous year. While some fluctuations are anticipated over the summer, overall figures remain consistent with expectations and reflect a balanced distribution across courses. Staffing levels are deemed sufficient, with recruitment currently underway in Creative Media and Technology. The Chair noted the government's confirmation of funding for in-year growth, and the Vice Principal (FE) highlighted forthcoming college events expected to further enhance student engagement.

It was noted that the number of students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had increased significantly, now 13% above the national average. The committee recognised how valuable these students are and how HCA's courses appeal to them. The Chair suggested highlighting this achievement in HCA's accountability statement. When asked if more staff would be needed to support the rise in EHCP students and the likely increase in one-to-one support, the Vice Principal (FE) explained that support is arranged based on individual needs. Another governor asked if there are enough teaching assistants locally, and it was noted that recruiting for this entry-level role tends to be easier. The Vice Principal (FE) also shared that Learning Support Assistants and teachers are currently receiving training to ensure high-quality care, and outlined the types of support available to students with EHCPs.

**c. English and Maths report**

The Vice Principal (FE) confirmed that the GCSE exams had finished and shared plans to improve future arrangements. They propose having non-exam students off campus during exam periods to create a better environment for those taking exams and enable staff to serve as invigilators. This approach will also allow staff to follow up with students who miss exams and provide a more welcoming atmosphere, with course leaders and Learning Support Assistants greeting students as they arrive. It was reported that attendance was 89%, which the Chair praised as a strong achievement. The Vice Principal (FE) also stated plans to review reasonable adjustments, noting that some current arrangements may be more than necessary. For example, students needing a smaller room do not necessarily require a private room, and a smaller shared space may be sufficient.

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*The Principal noted they will be meeting with a Governor later in the year to seek feedback on the college's exam processes and invigilation.*

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- 5. FE Quality Reports** – The Vice Principal (FE) presented key updates on the Quality Improvement Plan, the teaching and learning cycle, and student progress, including anticipated leaver destinations.

The Vice Principal (FE) presented data on examination attendance and performance, identifying areas for improvement and outlining plans to enhance the examination-day experience. Noting that a structured action plan developed in consultation with the staff would be needed. An update was provided on the successful implementation of the work experience programme, informed by employer feedback, as well as progress on the Empower platform, which is progressing well.

The early introduction of destination tracking has improved engagement with leavers and highlighted student needs for additional support in financial management and self-promotion. To improve response rates, completion of the destination survey is now required prior to final submissions. The Vice Principal also introduced “Have a Go” days to facilitate interdisciplinary learning. In response to a governor’s enquiry, plans to strengthen school engagement were outlined, including the upcoming Education Professional Private View of the Degree Show designed to raise the College’s profile. The Chair welcomed this as a strong example of a Board objective being followed through at committee level. The Chair also noted that people often have misconceptions about what an arts college offers, and that greater exposure through events helps challenge these and promote a better understanding of the college’s broad skill base. The discussion concluded with a brief update on the college’s learning cycle.

#### **6. Curriculum and Portfolio Development: Fashion Business & Retail**

The Vice Principal (FE) presented a proposed new course focused on digital branding and marketing within the fashion industry, aimed at academically inclined students who might otherwise pursue business-related studies. Designed to increase market share and make use of existing resources, the course shifts away from garment-making and introduces entrepreneurial and employability elements. The committee discussed the course title, staffing requirements, and potential risks. It was noted that while some internal expertise exists, recruitment of a dedicated course leader will be necessary. The Vice Principal (FE) confirmed recruitment efforts are already underway and will run alongside course promotion. It was noted that the college may require a minimum Grade 5 in English. The Chair queried how the course fits within HCA’s current offer and questioned its alignment with the existing fashion pathway offered at HCA. The Vice Principal (FE) explained that the course would connect externally with fashion retailers and could link with students progressing into fashion programmes. The Vice Principal (FE) added that while the course is standalone, it complements other areas and would sit within the Creative Media department.

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*While there was broad support, the committee stressed the importance of clear communication about how the course aligns with HCA’s strategy, particularly its focus on entrepreneurship and the creative industries. The proposal will be taken to the Board and Finance & General Purposes Committee for further consideration.*

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#### **7. 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.

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

With no further business to discuss, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 17:10. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 22nd September, at 5:00 PM.

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