

The College of West Anglia
Minutes of Performance Review and Quality Committee
28 September 2011 – 10.00 am Board Room

Present	Jaqui Fairfax	Chair
	Paul Cotton	Vice Chair
	David Pomfret	Principal
	Sandy Willatt	
Attending	Andrew England	Head of Organisational Development and Quality
	Arlene Clark	Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning
	Jill Francis	Executive Director, Partnerships (part)
	Richard Williamson	Executive Director, Finance and Information (part)
	Steve Lowery	Head of Technology (part)
	Tara McKenna	Quality Officer (part)
	Neil Stapleton	Educational Technologies Co-ordinator (part)
	Paul Adcock	Programme Manager, Continuous Professional Development (part)
	Rochelle Woodcock	Clerk to the Corporation

1 Apologies

There were no apologies.

Absent

Spencer Cranmer

2 Election of Vice Chair

Sandy Willatt proposed, seconded by David Pomfret, that Paul Cotton be re-appointed as Vice Chair of the committee. There being no other nominations, his re-appointment was endorsed.

3 Minutes of the previous Meeting – 18 May 2011

The Minutes of the meeting of 18 May 2011 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters Arising

It was confirmed that all actions from the last minutes had been completed.

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality gave an update on the following agenda items:

(i) Pages 3/4 Item 7(ii) – Curriculum update – AS Psychology

The achievement rate had been 38.3% (2009-10) and had increased to 54.2% (2010-11), which represented a marked improvement, although there was still considerably more work to be done. A detailed action plan was currently being worked through with the team.

(ii) Page 4 Item 7 (iii) – Curriculum update – AS ICT

Modular results in January 2011 were poor with 21 candidates out of 24 ungraded. The out-turn for the end of the year was just under 69%. A huge amount of work had been done by management and staff in this area to improve results.

5 Curriculum Area Update

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality introduced the session, advising that the Technology Faculty was a key area to the college and its management team had been in intervention since last Autumn due to poor levels of performance. Steve Lowery, Head of Faculty was to present an update to Governors on progress made to date.

Steve Lowery joined the meeting at 10.10 am.

(iii) Technology Faculty

The Head of Faculty noted that performance within the Technology area had been poor over the past three years and success rates had taken a noticeable dip in 2009-10. Some of this may have been due to the closure of the workshop block and staff issues.

Actions taken to improve the situation included:

- the refocusing of Faculty Management
- improving the understanding of Faculty aims by all staff with the aim of achieving a grade 1
- staff actively monitored on results, student attendance etc
- Course Directors were required to make a presentation on their performance to Faculty Managers at the end of last year.

The overall results for 2010-11 have shown an improvement compared with 2009-10:

- Retention 87% (from 79%)
- Achievement 90% (from 87%)
- Success Rate 78% (from 69%) with more results awaited.

PC asked whether the Estate had impacted on performance.

The Head of Faculty advised that there had been some legacy issues, with some off-site working for part of the year.

He then went on to highlight performance by area, as follows:

- Construction Fenland – Excellent overall performance at grade 1
- Construction King's Lynn – some progress, but there remains a problem in the brickwork area currently
- Apprenticeships – the success rate was excellent with engineering achieving 91%, from 200 apprentices.

In summary he noted the following:

- achievement of an overall 75%-78% success rate
- Construction King's Lynn – L2 plumbing transferred to Isle campus due to poor results at King's Lynn over the past 3 years. A Programme Manager vacancy currently exists
- residual estates issues in Construction at King's Lynn have now mainly been resolved
- outstanding performance in Construction had been achieved at the Isle campus
- excellent overall Apprenticeship performance at 83%
- significant progress had been made in Engineering at King's Lynn.

Next steps:

- aiming for a SAR grade 2 in Engineering and Construction 2010-11 with achievement of a grade 1 by the end of 2011-12
- pilot introduced – provision of personal support tutor (pastoral) in Engineering at King's Lynn
- recruit Construction Programme Manager
- recruit 0.5 FTE Curriculum Support Manager in Engineering at King's Lynn.

The Principal added that this was an area that had been under intervention and had been given huge levels of support and investment, as this area was so important for the local economy. Staff and managers were fully aware of the need to raise the standards.

The Chair asked whether the disciplinary process was implemented for staff that were just coasting.

The Principal responded that managers were supporting staff to raise performance above satisfactory.

PC asked whether staff were paid by results.

The Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning advised that this was not the case but any member of staff graded at 3 or 4 would be supported to raise their performance.

SW asked whether the excellent results and success at Isle could be spread to King's Lynn.

The Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning added that the Programme Manager conference had given technology managers an opportunity to share good practice with the rest of the college.

The Head of Faculty advised that the Programme Manager at Isle is also currently working with staff in King's Lynn. He added that recruitment, in Engineering, of 50 new apprentices had been double what had been expected. New links had been forged with a local company to train apprentices and an Engineering Advisory Board had been started, involving 4/5 local companies.

The Chair thanked the Head of Faculty for his presentation.

The report was noted.

Steve Lowery left the meeting at 10.38 am

Tara McKenna, Neil Stapleton and Paul Adcock joined the meeting at 10.40 am

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality introduced the Learning Practice team advising that focus of the team was to provide support in teaching and learning and quality.

(iv) The Learning Practice Team

The team made a presentation to the meeting, summarising their key areas of responsibility which included:

- teaching and learning – support
- education technologies – new learning portal and VLE platform recently introduced, allowing personalised online learning. Student induction survey to be conducted via this medium this year
- Quality – quality procedures and quality management system
- delivery of initial teacher training
- assessment and IV

The Learning Practice aims to drive up standards across the college by supporting teams and individuals both proactively through:

- CPD programmes
- Flying Start programme for new teachers and LSO's

- informal observations
- college training days
- web-based staff development

and reactively through:

- focused support to staff on any issues
- type 2 interventions
- audit (process and procedures)
- support for staff achieving a grade 4 observation

The Learning Practice's aims for the next year were to:

- shift the focus from reactive to proactive
- provide a staff development area on the learning platform to include CPD programmes, obtain staff feedback and share good practice
- provide a modular graduate teaching programme
- re-energise the quality system by mapping documentation to the learner journey
- move to a more personalised online learning opportunity to engage learners with the process
- linking the use of technologies to KPI's, to add value
- ensuring that versatile technologies are integrated into teaching spaces.

and in three years to:

- co-locate members of the Learning Practice
- drive positive change through process, support, innovation and technology
- strengthen links with partners and external agencies.

The Chair asked whether there were any plans to introduce Apps.

NS advised that they would like to develop these and are looking at possibilities, as a lot of students already had the technology to access these. The new platform currently works with iphones and ipads etc.

SW noted the importance of not putting students, who did not have personal access to these technologies at a disadvantage.

The Chair thanked the team for their presentation.

The report was noted.

*Tara McKenna, Neil Stapleton and Paul Adcock left the meeting at 11.00 am
Jill Francis joined the meeting at 11.00 am*

With the agreement of the Chair, agenda items 13 and 14 were brought forward.

6 Safeguarding Child/Vulnerable Adult Policy

The Executive Director, Partnerships presented the Safeguarding Child/Vulnerable Adult Policy for Governors' review and approval. She highlighted the changes that had been made to the policy which included:

- the establishing of a Safeguarding Board
- changes to the Independent Safeguarding Authority
- the appointment of a Safeguarding Governor.

Paul Cotton proposed, seconded by Sandy Willatt that the policy be recommended to the Board for adoption. Agreed unanimously.

7 Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives – Progress Report

The Executive Director, Partnerships advised that the format of the Scheme and related Objectives were now complete and progress against actions were summarised in her report. Objectives 1 and 2 (success rates) required further data to be provided to allow further drilling down on information relating to some disadvantaged groups. MIS were currently trying to record this data from the outset. Objective 3 (access) had seen some improvement with the decant from the Tower Block. Objectives 4-7 were HR related areas and some good progress had been made on these already.

The Chair noted that there were no target dates against actions and requested that these were inserted to allow monitoring of progress. **Action Executive Director Partnerships - asap**

The report was noted.

Jill Francis left the meeting at 11.10 am

8 Complaints Received May 2011-September 2011

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality summarised key aspects, relating to complaints from May 2011 to September 2011. A total of 34 complaints had been received during the period, the most (50%), being from the largest campus at King's Lynn. He noted the following trends:

- Landbased – 26.5% - an increase on previous quarters
- Estates - 6% - remarkably low considering all the recent upheaval
- On course management - 32.3% - a worrying increase
- General management - 29.5% - an increase which would need careful monitoring
- IT systems – 11.8% - a decrease in complaints, which was positive
- Staff Student interactions – 8.8% - a slight increase on the last quarter, but lower than previous.

Governors asked questions regarding specific complaints recorded including:

- 895 – student feeling unwelcome (The Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning noted that this related to a series of issues which were currently being dealt with by HR).
- 904 – access to the Isle hairdressing salon (The Principal advised that the salon was on an upper floor with no lift access. No reasonable adjustment could be made at Isle but access to the course was available at King's Lynn).
- 908 – changes to class timings and lateness of lecturers (The Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning commented that this was mainly related to payment of EMA. Programme Managers monitored timekeeping of lecturing staff).
- 909 – ICT exam system crash (The Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning advised that, where this occurs, the exam board has a system to close the exam down and a further opportunity is given for completion later).
- 910 – student suffered an epileptic fit (The Head of Organisational Development and Quality would obtain specific information for Governors on this incident). **Action HoOD – next meeting**

The report was noted.

9 Summary of Complaints Received 2010-2011

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality presented the summary report of complaints for the year 2010-2011. A total of 195 complaints had been received, with the % at each campus similar to last year, relative to the size of the campus: King's Lynn 55%; Isle 34% and Milton 11%. He noted the following trends over the past four years:

- Estates – remained fairly steady
- IT – increase
- Staff/Student interactions – worrying increase from 2009-10
- Transport – steady decrease
- Exams – good
- Teaching and learning – excellent
- Other students – increase from last year – students are concerned regarding behaviour of other students, which the college needs to take account of.

The report was noted.

10 Hearing the Student Voice 2010-2011

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality advised that, for the first time, evidence had been pulled together from across the college using a variety of methods. He noted that the college had moved away from a costly annual survey and adopted a more varied approach, which included using a SurveyMonkey online evaluation. A sample of the survey results were presented including:

- teaching on course – 86% outstanding/good
- the way in which computers are used on course – 69% outstanding/good (an improvement)
- would you recommend the course to a friend – Yes 87% – where students answered No, Heads of Faculty were made aware
- have you felt safe at college – Yes 96%
- one thing you would like the college/course team to consider to improve the course – a free text response was enabled, which proved useful. Feedback from the survey was also given to staff teams.

Governors asked the following:

- Could results be drilled down? Yes - results had been provided by course and faculty etc.
- Would results and action taken be fed back to the students? Yes - for overall concerns, a poster campaign was being launched: 'you told us'; 'we have done'. Results will also be discussed at Class Rep meetings in October. Further feedback would be provided via the new VLE platform which, going forward, will also facilitate weekly online surveys, with instant feedback for students. Overall concerns will be tabled at Tuesday Managers' meetings and incorporated into SAR action plans.

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality concluded by saying that this had been the first truly co-ordinated approach to Hearing the Student Voice.

The Principal commented that it might be useful for the Chair to advise Board members of this approach and the results (Chair's items). It might also be possible to include a briefing on this in a pre-Corporation meeting session, so that all members could fully appreciate what was being done in this area.

The report was noted.

11 Observations 2010-2011

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality presented a draft SAR summarising the effectiveness of teaching and learning. He noted that the number of grade 1 and 2 observations had dropped to 73% this year, compared with 84% last year. This was a concern, after 3 years of steady improvement. Plans to drive through improvements include:

- the Learning Practice to continue to target grade 4 observations
- special sessions to be held with fractional and hourly paid staff

- a training day to be held on 21 October for academic staff on teaching and learning
- observer workshops
- Flying Start programme for all teachers
- training materials available via the VLE platform
- new teaching and learning policy is currently being drafted.

PC asked whether these results were likely to impact on last year's achievements.

The Principal advised that data was still being collated, but success rates will be an indicator of the validity, or otherwise, of this seeming decline in the observed quality of teaching.

The Chair asked how observations were determined.

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality advised that every member of staff should be observed annually. The observation team might check specific areas; the rest would be covered by the Faculty or the college consultants BW, who are also used to moderate grades. At the moment the trend is being treated as accurate and a plan put into place to address

The report was noted.

12 Teaching and Learning Policy – Annual Review

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality advised that the Teaching and Learning Policy had been prepared two years ago. It was proposed that the Learning Practice should produce a policy with which the Faculties could engage more interactively. The current policy had been updated, but it was intended to bring the revised version to the committee later in the year.

Jaqui Fairfax proposed, seconded by Paul Cotton that the current updated policy be approved. Agreed.

Richard Williamson joined the meeting at 12.00 pm

13 IT

The Executive Director, Finance and Information presented the following reports:

(i) IT Projects

The Director formally commended both the Property Service and IT teams for the huge amount of work they had undertaken relating to the Tower Block decant. Generally the project had succeeded, with a low level of problems at the start of term, although there had been a few teething problems including, the poor IT service at Elm Road, initial problems with the BT lines – now resolved, and issues with the configuration of equipment at Lynn Sport.

IT Servers - the second phase of the project was to move IT servers into Beech House probably during half term week (if the facility was ready on time). A minority of services including staff email and the EBS student records system would have to be switched off during the move.

The Chair asked whether student records were kept in hard copy for back up, in case they were needed. It was confirmed that they were, although re-entering them would be very costly.

Telephones King's Lynn – the remainder of the campus to be converted to the new telephone system.

Other Projects – a list of all other projects was provided. This had been driven largely by individual requests rather than priorities set by Faculty Heads and Curriculum Management.

PC asked who authorised expenditure on IT.

The Principal noted that the culture of localised decision making needed to change and that no delegated budget should commit to any IT expenditure without prior authorisation.

(ii) IT Strategy

The Director reported that HHES (IT consultants) had prepared a report for SMT on the college's IT system. The report had confirmed that management of IT was poor, identifying the following issues:

- a lack of control/prioritisation in projects giving rise to a wish list culture
- a lack of basic management disciplines over processes and systems
- no ability/expertise to control technical judgements made by the networks team and some poor technical judgements, made in the past, which has created instability in the system.

HHES identified 5 priority areas:

- re-engineer architecture to Microsoft platform
- improve the way in which services are delivered
- a large programme of projects to catch up with sector – wifi etc
- further projects to move the college to a sector-leading ('good') position
- the move back into the Tower Block in 2012 or 2013.

The college does not have the capacity to address the above with the current team, approach etc.

4 options were presented for consideration:

- do nothing – not an option
- do it yourself, with some consultancy support – high risk and not recommended
- bring in strategic partners to run different elements of the operation, eg network structure, development, user support – risk relating to overall responsibility, which remains with the college to manage, and to the splitting of responsibility between three separate external organisations with scope for disputes over accountability for issues that arise
- outsourcing the whole operation – risk passed to the outsourced company to manage; would require an OJEU tendering process and was likely to take 10 months to put into place.

Management recommended a hybrid option, which was to commence the outsourcing process now and, meanwhile, bring in a partner to take on a one-year development project to re-engineer the core infrastructure to deliver a stable Microsoft environment.

It is proposed that a short term reorganisation of IT services is undertaken to split the team into two to cover different elements and provide better overall management:

- Development – the supervisor and one other from existing IT networks staff, reporting to a manager seconded in from the development partner, who in turn reports to the Executive Director, Finance and Information
- Systems and service user support – the remaining team managed by Toby George, Head of IT.

PC asked whether HHES would continue to be involved in the process.

The Director advised that, potentially, they could be. A tender was currently being prepared for consultants to support the procurement of an outsourcing partner organisation.

The Principal added that it was important to bring in the right contractor for both the short-term and total outsourcing. In the short-term there was likely to be a cost, but the long-term running costs of the department should not increase as the outsource partner organisation should be able to run the operation more efficiently. The time was right for the adoption of a more radical approach to solve the ongoing problems.

The Executive Director advised that a full paper will be taken to the Finance and General Purposes committee and Governors would be involved throughout the process, with final approval sought for the final contract. The Employment Policy committee would also be briefed verbally.

Governors agreed that this was a positive move forward, to try to resolve the problems that had been ongoing for so long, and gave their broad support for the plan.

The reports were noted.

14 IT Governance Structure

The Executive Director, Finance and Information advised that there were two main strands to his proposal to formalise Governors oversight of IT as follows:

- Performance Review and Quality Committee – continue to review the IT service to students
- Finance & General Purposes Committee – a new role to oversee IT strategy and support for business activities.

PC asked whether there would also be a link to the Audit committee.

The Director advised that Audit would continue to ascertain that the IT system procedures and processes were working, through internal audit.

The Principal noted that IT was one of the top three issues facing the college and, because of its scale, regular reports would be provided to the Corporation Board.

Governors endorsed the proposal.

15 Any Other Business

None.

16 Chair's items for briefing to Corporation

- Hearing the Student Voice
- Observations
- Teaching and Learning Policy

17 Date and time of next Meeting: Wednesday, 30 November 2011 at 10.00 am.

The meeting closed at 12.45 pm