

**The Corporation Board of Accrington and Rossendale College**

**Minutes of a Meeting of: The Curriculum and Quality  
Standards Committee**

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**Location: Conference Room, Heartwood Centre**



**Confirmed**

**Members Present:**

Mr S Ireland	Chair of the Committee and Independent Member
Dr A M Coyne	Independent Member
Mr S Cox	Independent Member
Mrs L Spencer	Independent Member
Dr M Lee	Independent Member
Mrs S Taylor	Principal
Miss T Landon	Staff Governor

**In Attendance:**

Miss W Higgin	Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality)
Mrs J Crowther	Director of Learner Services
Mrs R Tootell	Director of Quality & Standards
Miss T Deasey	Director of Business and Engagement
Mrs L Higham	Director of People and Performance
Mr A Armiger	Clerk to the Corporation

**Apologies were received from:**

	Date:
Draft Minutes Prepared by: AA	18-11-15
Draft Minutes approved by the Chair: SI	23-11-15
Minutes Approved by the Committee:	10-03-16

.....*Steve Ireland*.....  
Chair

Mr Ireland welcomed Members, particularly Mrs Spencer who was attending her first meeting as a member of the Committee, and College managers to the meeting

## **CQS**

- **15/16-1.1 Apologies for Absence**  
There were no apologies received
  
- **15/16-1.2 Declarations of Interest**  
There were no declarations of interest.
  
- **15/16-1.3 Minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015**  
Minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015 were approved as being an accurate record of the meeting.
  
- **15/16-1.4 Matters Arising**  
The Clerk advised that there had been no recommendation requiring action from the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015:
  
- **15/16-1.5 Success Rates and High Level Performance Data for 2014-15**  
The Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality) presented her report. Miss Higgin began by advising the members of the Committee that her paper contained the most up to date information given the availability of external data benchmarking reports such as QARS and NSRTs. It is though t that due to the significant changes in the funding and success rate methodologies (particularly regarding English and Maths) it was expected that national benchmarks would decline and this would affect the college's national position. More accurate judgements of the college's 2014-15 results would be able to be made in January and April 2016. Until that time results published in this paper are based on comparison to the 2013-14 reports.

Miss Higgin reported that the overall college success rate had declined from 90.2% in 2013-14 to 84.9% in 2014-15. Miss Higgin reported that this is still above the 2013-14 national benchmark, but it was, as reported earlier, too soon to say where it would stand against 2014-15 national benchmarks. Members were advised that English and maths results had had as significant impact on the overall success rates and if English and maths had been excluded the overall success rate for the College in 2014-15 would have been 90.3% (slightly down from 91.7% in 2013-14). It was also reported that the timely success rate is 76.3%, 7.2% below the 2013-14 national benchmark. Members were disappointed with these results as they have high expectations for the College's students and know that the college management and staff share those expectations.

Mr Ireland noted that he had attended the recent Audit Committee meeting where he had heard a searingly honest appraisal of the current college situation with regards to its finances and some of this had been put down to lack of rigour and communication amongst college management. Mr Ireland asked if this had been replicated here. Miss Higgin replied that she and the senior management believed fully that the Quality framework in place in the college is rigorous and that its

operation can only work where there is good communication so it would not seem that that is the case.

Miss Higgin went on to say that the introduction of progress grades as part of the College quality process had in fact indicated the direction of the success rates.

Miss Higgin moved on to report on individual types of provision noting that 16-18 study programmes had an overall success rate of 80.7%, but there were no benchmark marks for comparison. Adult Learning programmes remained about the same with only a 1% dip in success rates. Apprenticeship programmes had taken a significant dip compared to 2013-14 results. College management had set a best case scenario at 70% but the success rates had not attained this and were at 68.8% with timely results being at 47.8%, both below national benchmarks. Members questioned Miss Higgin on what was being done to put this right. Miss Higgin responded by saying a restructuring had taken place in the latter half of 2014-15 to ensure improvement and the SLT had confidence that this would deliver better results for 2015-16. However, it was noted that there was concern in College regarding the 2014-15 apprenticeship results about poor recruitment and subsequent retention and the impact it had on the overall success rates.

Mrs Spencer asked if this was the case in other areas of the curriculum. Miss Higgin replied that yes was the case. The 2014-15 results had been compromised by curriculum teams having inappropriate recruitment and then unsuitable internal progression i.e. wrong student, wrong level, but at the same time the teams were under pressure to hit recruitment marks to achieve funding targets, which is never a good situation. However this was not the sole cause of lower success rates and College management had put action plans in place to rise success in 2015-16.

Miss Higgin pointed out that to members that a decline in success rates and the current College financial situation will impact significantly on the College's Self-Assessment Report grade. Miss Higgin wanted to inform members that in light of recent Ofsted nominee training it is highly likely that the College will not be self-assessing as 'Outstanding' for 2014/15 for 'overall effectiveness' due to the 'outcomes for learners' key judgement being 'Requiring Improvement' with the other key judgements likely to be 'Good'.

Members expressed their disappointment and asked Miss Higgin to give details as to what actions were to be taken to remedy the situation. Miss Higgin described a range of actions being taken which included setting realistic KPIs, reviewing the learner recruitment strategy to ensure learners are recruited with integrity other than meeting targets, improving progress tracking, establishment of a high level Apprenticeship steering group and further strengthening of English and maths leadership to increase accountability and raise standards to improve outcomes for students. It was also noted that clear targets would be set for all teaching staff via their performance appraisals to promote individual accountability for improvement.

Miss Higgin explained that as and when the 2014-15 benchmark marks were released the College SLT would review the SAR grade. Members would be kept informed of any

decision made and the reasons for that decision as soon as possible following a review. Following final discussion members

**Resolved C&QS 15/16-1.5: to note the report, the issues presented and the actions being taken to ensure the college moves back towards an 'Outstanding ' grade in its SAR within a two year period i.e. 2016/17**

**• 15/16-1.6 Maths and English Performance in 2014/15**

The Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality) presented her report. Miss Higgin began her report by setting out the reason the College believed contributed to the English and maths results for 2014-15. Aside from the change in the data methodology, it was apparent that too many learners failed their exams or failed to complete their programme of study. This was due to the inability by many learners to cope with the level of study required, lack of motivation on the students behalf after 'failing' English and Maths at school, poor teaching that fails to engage the learners and insufficient time allotted (due to efficiency drives) to classroom study.

Mrs Higgin reminded members that from 2014/15 all learners taking English and maths were counted in data sets. Previously those who failed to sit an exam or did not attend classes were discounted from the data. This has had a serious effect on College Success rates as described in the previous item. Also the Condition of Funding (CoF) for 2014/15 required that those learners not attaining a grade C or above at school now had to work towards that target at College. They may be able to use a stepping stone qualification to eventually achieve this target. However in 2015-16 all learners who achieved a grade D in English and maths must be enrolled on a GCSE programme and could mean that up to 67 learners will have to take GCSE maths and English in one year.

Members expressed their concern over 2014-15 results, but understood that changes made to GCSE requirements were not helpful. Members asked what was being done to ensure that the teaching of English and maths improved. Miss Higgin explained that the team responsible for delivery was currently in the college's 'special measures' process. There was some good teaching place, but it was proving particularly difficult to engage learners as previously explained. New staff have been employed (50% increase) and new younger staff were 'refreshing' the way English and maths are taught. As explained previously the number of hours used for English and maths teaching were restricted by efficiency measures required across the whole of the College, but hours on the time table for English and maths had now doubled for 2015-16.

Members and management discussed the prospective grade for this area. After a lengthy debate and contributions from all members present it was advised that a grade of 'Requires Improvement' should be used.

The discussion turned to how the College could demonstrate that the work the College is carrying out in this area is having an impact. Mrs Spencer noted that many of the students having 'failed' English and maths at school will simply not be motivated to want to do it again. Dr Coyne agreed and stated that learners were being set up to

fail again. Miss Higgin agreed and stated that there was a real difference in the 16-18 cohort and their attitude to the subjects and Adult learners returning to education to take the subjects and this is reflected in the results achieved. Miss Higgin advised that it would be important for the College to show the progress made for individuals from their grades archived at school to show that the work of the College is making an impact on them and plans had been made to achieve this. Mr Cox advised that the college should strive to be aspirational in its work with students in these subjects. It will become evident that it is a national issue and members would need to judge the results when national benchmarks are available.

Mrs Taylor informed members that recent student survey results are showing that this year's cohort are more positive about maths and English, and it was felt that this was because there is a stronger team teaching the subjects. Also every curriculum team has been brought down in their SAR grades by their students English and maths results and they have now seriously realised that it is in the teams' vested interest to ensure attendance and progress in the subjects.

Miss Higgin led members through the range of actions being taken to achieve better results for 2015-16 following a review of the 2014-15 action plan. Actions for 2015-16 had been discussed during this item, but members were also informed that Miss Higgin is leading the English and maths steering group at which a harder focus on outcomes are being maintained.

Following final discussions members

**Resolved C&QS 15/16-1.6: to note the report, the issues presented and the actions being taken to ensure that College results for English and maths are improved for 2015-16 and beyond.**

The Chair thanked Miss Higgin for her reports

• **15/16-1.7 Curriculum Self-assessment Outcomes 2014-15 - Team Outcomes**

The Director of Quality and Standards presented her report. Mrs Tootell began by outlining to members the substantial changes made to the Curriculum Self-Assessment process which included inclusion of grades by Types of Provision (ToPs) in line with the new Ofsted Common Inspection Framework (CIF), changes in success rates methodology, addition of 'limiting grades to reflect college and external priorities. Mrs Tootell went on to describe the two stages of forensic data scrutiny and action planning at curriculum team level involved in the SAR process. Following those stages SAR judgements are made against four aspect grades and curriculum provision structured by sector subject areas.

Mrs Tootell informed members that the new methodology along with the previously discussed maths and English results had caused a depression in team grade profiles and as a result there were now no Grade One Curriculum teams (30% in 2013-14), 10 Grade Two teams (63% against 51% in 2013-14), 3 Grade Three teams (19% against 14% in 2013-14) and 3 Grade Four teams (19% against 5% in 2013-14). Mrs Tootell reported that there were some curriculum teams were very close to being in higher

Grades, but that the new factors introduced had stopped that happening and that as discussed the English and maths results had had a serious impact.

Other contributing factors discussed included inappropriate recruitment to wrong levels of study. Mrs Tootell informed members that strategies introduced for 2015-16 were having a positive effect in this area and the impact of changes are already being seen. Mrs Tootell then moved on to inform members about the continued impact of the College Special Measures process. Where issues in teams have been around teaching the process has continued to have a positive impact. However, some teams have been unable to move out of the process because of continuing staffing issues e.g. availability of suitable specialised teaching staff. As a result the process is being reviewed to ensure that these issues receive attention at higher levels of College Management.

Mrs Tootell concluded her report with discussions with members about the risks and actions being taken around the areas of curriculum performance, but advised members that the College headline success rates and subject area performance outcomes will result in the College SAR grade for 'Outcomes for Learners' being a grade3 – 'Requires Improvement'. Members were informed that progress towards an improved grade will be reported on at the March 2016 Committee meeting.

Mr Ireland informed members that he and Mrs Lynch, the new Staff Member of the Board, had attended the recent Curriculum SAR review and commented that it was a thorough process and he was impressed by the honesty of the teams in reaching the SAR grades and was convinced that no team was prepared to sit back and accept the grade as they were awarded, but would strive to improve on those grades.

Members advised that they understood the reasons for the current grades, but wished to express their concern. It was apparent that the College had a lot to do to improve its curriculum provision, the standards of that provision and the results achieved in curriculum areas, but it believed the processes in place driven by the Colleges SLT could improve the Colleges position. After final discussion Members

**Resolved C&QS 15/16-1.7: to note the report, the issues presented and the actions being taken to ensure that the Colleges curriculum grade profiles improve in 2015-16 resulting in a higher grade for Overall Effectiveness in the College SAR.**

The Chair thanked Mrs Tootell for her report

**• 15/16-1.8 College Recruitment Report 2015-16**

The Director of Business and Engagement presented her report. Miss Deasey gave an overview of the current Recruitment situation detailing the up to date recruitment numbers for the College's 14 -16 cohort, 16-18 cohort, Apprentice cohort and HE learners and went on to provide an analysis of the various cohorts.

With regard to School Leaver recruitment it was noted that the application to enrolment rate had risen in both Rossendale and Hyndburn. Members were informed that that 59% of all applications to the college came from school leavers with a

marginal rise from 2014-15 in the market share of learners recruited from Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley.

Members were informed that new apprenticeship recruitment has risen in 2015-16 and the College was already at 83% of last year's total apprenticeship income and that there were 77 further apprentices currently ready for enrolment.

Moving on to Adult, Community and Work-Based learner recruitment it was reported that currently there were fewer 24+ learner Loan students than last year enrolled and currently fewer 19+ learners enrolled at College. However until the cash values for these student are realised it was not possible to say if the college was on target for the financial value of these students.

Miss Deasey advised members that HE recruitment was varied across the programmes offered but the Higher Education team has recruited strongly, whilst Teacher Education had not met its target. This was thought to be in some part a result of the current state of the FE Sector.

Members asked Miss Deasey to expand on the factors affecting current recruitment Miss Deasey advised that there was continuing aggressive competition from local FE Colleges, sixth forms and training providers amid a falling school leaver cohort. The college, because of its financial position, has had significant budget restraints on its marketing team, in comparison with other colleges. Also, cuts to the College's Adult Skills Budget is having an impact on the ability to recruit adult learners.

Miss Deasey concluded by setting out the actions being taken improve recruitment during the year and for 2016-17.

Dr Coyne asked if there had been unrealistic recruitment target set for the College for 2015-16 and would this lead to continuing to have wrong students on wrong courses. Mrs Taylor responded that it was realised that this had happened last year in response to funding targets, but the College has looked at its provision, closed some areas that were unviable e.g. Schools Partnership Programmes and was continuing to work to ensure the College recruits all through the year to meet targets. It is also hoped that better retention this year will help recruitment for 2016-17.

Following final discussions members

**Resolved C&QS 15/16-1.8: to note the report, the issues presented and the actions being taken to continue in year recruitment and improve College recruitment for 2016-17**

The Chair thanked Miss Deasey for her report

**• 15/16-1.9 Safeguarding our Learners Update**

The Director of People and Performance (and College Designated Senior Lead) presented her report. Mrs Higham began by advising members that her report updated members with a summary of the final figures for 2014-15 and current information for 2015-16. Moving on Mrs Higham drew member's attention to

Appendix A which was the College's updated Safeguarding and Protecting Policy and Procedures which required Corporation Board Approval. Mrs Higham highlighted the minor changes to the document and asked that it be approved by the Corporation Board. Members

**Resolved C&QS15/16-1.9A: to recommend the updated Safeguarding and Protecting Policy and Procedures document to the Corporation Board for approval.**

Moving on Mrs Higham advised members that updated Ofsted guidance on Safeguarding had been issued in September 2015 to reflect the new CIF. Members had noted the document as Appendix B and that the role of the Governing Body is clearly documented. Members

**Resolved C&QS15/16-1.9B: that a copy of the Ofsted guidance be supplied to all current members of the Corporation board for their information and action if required.**

Mrs Higham was pleased to see that Mrs Spencer, the Board's Designated Lead Member was now a member of this committee, as was MR Cox the Deputy Lead member and noted that Mrs Spencer attends the College Safeguarding and Protecting meetings. Mrs Higham then presented her update on Safeguarding referrals noting that referrals for housing, emotional /mental health issues, bullying and issues related to family breakdown continue to remain the biggest challenges for the College's Safeguarding team. Mrs Higham also reported that last year saw a rise in learners with complex personal and social difficulties which caused barriers to learning, completion of programmes and positive progressions. Members recognised that this of tied in with several issues discussed in the previous items.

Mrs Higham gave members an updates on Children Looked After, Young Carers, Learners engaged with YOT, and the work of the College Nurse. With regard to learners feeling safe in college Mrs Higham reported that in the recent Student perception survey 97% of respondents agreed that they felt safe with 65% strongly agreeing.

Mrs Higham moved on to update members on recent LADO referrals and then current HR issues and Staff training with reference to Safeguarding and the Prevent Agenda All new members of staff continue to receive Safeguarding and Protecting training as part of their induction. All College staff have undertaken on-line training on the Counter Terrorism and Security Act and the new Prevent Duties for Colleges using materials provided by the National College of Policing. Although it was noted that some members of the Board had undertaken this training it was felt that all members should carry out the online training that is now available as a resource specifically for Board members from the Education and Training Foundation. Committee members

**Resolved C&QS15/16-1.9C: that all members of the Corporation board should, if they haven't already done so, undertake the ETF on line Prevent Duty training**



Mrs Higham went on to advise that the next phase of staff development in this area would be to ensure staff understand and are able to exemplify British values in their practice and use opportunities with their students to explore those values and challenge extremism.

Mrs Higham then moved on to the college's programme of learner training with regard to British values and key Prevent messages reporting that the recent Review and Challenge week had focused on these and a range of other issues. It was noted that the College's tutorial and enrichment programmes will continue to focus on these issues as well. Members and College managers discussed at length the values and how it was felt learners would respond to them.

Mrs Higham concluded her report by giving a Prevent Duty specific update and presented the comprehensive risk assessment which had been approved by both the Safeguarding and Protecting group and the College's SLT. It was noted that document was a 'live' document, would continue to be updated regularly and presented to this committee as assurance to the Board of the College's actions being taken in this area.

The Chair thanked Mrs Higham for her extensive and comprehensive report which showed the extent the College goes to safeguard and protect its learners and ensure its learners, staff and Board members understand their duties under a wide range of legislation. Following final discussions on this report members

**Resolved C&QS 15/16-1.9D: to note the report and the issues and actions being taken**

**• 15/16-1.10 Progression and Destinations for Student 2014-15**

The Director of Learner Services presented her report. Mrs Crowther began by highlighting the importance of the information in demonstrating, as a key measure, how effective the College is in moving its learners into positive outcomes such as further education/ Higher Education/ training or employment.

Mrs Crowther explained to members that since last year's report the college data collected has been used by the government to release experimental data which allowed comparison with other college's for benchmarking purposes. Also there is now a requirement to monitor progression into qualification relevant occupations. All in all this means that comparisons with last year's data is to be treated with caution. Mrs Crowther presented members with progression data as an appendix to her report.

Members discussed the data presented. With regard to adult progression data it was recognised that although it seemed at first sight poor, the positive adult experience in college did not always result in a 'positive' employment/ further education outcome because of the types of adult learners the college has. However the 16-18 CBL result remains high at 85.9% of learners moving on to positive progression.

With regard to internal college progression there are currently no national benchmarks for comparison and the college picture is complex and requires looking at each level and by curriculum team. Mrs Crowther informed members that College learners with high needs all had positive progression outcomes. Members were also

presented with a list of the range of institutions and programmes that College learners had progressed on to in Higher Education and they noted the excellent opportunities students had moved on to in college and beyond College.

In conclusion Mrs Crowther highlighted the risk of not achieving a high level of positive progression for its students. It was noted by members that that progression is high on the Government's agenda and low progression rates coupled with low success rates in college, and nationally, would indicate the FE sectors failure to prepare its learners for the world of work.

Mrs Crowther finished by highlighting the actions being taken by the college to better understand new progression data and to monitor the College's data to ensure high levels of progression are able to be achieved and reported. Members

**Resolved C&QS 15/16-1.10: to note the report and the issues and actions reported**

**• 15/16-1.11 Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare.**

The Director of Learner Services presented her report. Mrs Crowther began by advising members of recent changes made to the Personal Development (PD) team over the last year in light of the requirements of the CIF and the need to make financial saving in College. This was alongside savings made in the restructuring of the Learning Support (LS) team which raised concerns about the impact on the learner that may have followed. Further reductions in the have taken place in the PD team in November and again there is concern that this may impact on learner success, but this is hard to gauge. All steps are being taken to minimise the risks identified with this.

Mrs Crowther moved on to report on a range of Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare achievements and issues including:

- the number of queries dealt with by personal tutors in 2014-15 - 1,132
- the number of disciplinaries dealt with by the PD team in 2014-15 - 570
- the types of interactions developed to access the learner voice such as corridor councils, student ambassadors, student forums and democracy work
- work experience - 86 % of curriculum teams were graded good or better for external work experience
- Enrichment for students
- career guidance
- links with East Lancs NHS Trust

Mrs Crowther then went on to detail developments for 2015-16. These included:

- further development of the tutorial framework incorporating careers guidance, progression, the Prevent Agenda and British values
- Review and Challenge weeks - now 3 times a year to facilitate robust target setting and monitoring for learners and provide opportunities for high quality enrichment activities.
- the roll out of a new disciplinary policy and cross college behaviour management strategy
- introduction of the use of SelfSmart

- further roll out of the College Duke of Edinburgh awards to support personal development, particularly at Foundations level
- Further development of Careers Guidance for high needs learners and foundation level students and further development of the Career Guidance VLE pages for staff

In conclusion Mrs Crowther picked out a range of information from the tables in the extensive appendices highlighting the work of the college in supporting its learners.

The Chair and members commented that it was apparent from all the information provided in the report that the College was, despite limited finances, carrying out a wide and comprehensive programme of development and support for its learners. It was hoped that despite further cuts to the team this year the impact on students, although hard to gauge in some instances, would not be reduced and positive outcomes achieved.

**Resolved C&QS 15/16-1.11: to note the report, the work of the Personal Development and Learner Support teams and the proposed developments in the teams' work with learners for 2015-16**

- **15/16-1.12 Date and Time of Next Meeting**  
5.00pm on 8th March 2016

The Chair thanked all for attending the informative meeting

The meeting closed at 7.15pm