

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2009 AT 5.30pm**

**PRESENT:**

Marianne Howarth – Chair  
Delroy Brown  
Geoff Hall  
Brian Hambidge  
David Nelson  
Ellie Sewell  
Carla Stemate

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Julie Ashton – Deputy Principal  
Danuta Januszonok – Director of Quality  
Claire Kay – Clerk to the Corporation

The Chair welcomed the new members to the Committee.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were noted from Carol Parkinson, Rick Heslop and Nick Whitehouse.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST IN AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no personal interests declared.

3. **MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2009 were approved and signed. An amendment was made to minute reference 9 changing “demonstrated” to “provided evidence of”.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

**(6) Employer Responsiveness**

Members were updated that the application for the Training and Quality Standard had been submitted and would be assessed in mid December. The concerns in relation to the low response rate for the employers’ survey for Framework for Excellence had resulted in the survey window being extended for 2009/10.

5. **HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY 2009-2014**

Members were informed of the new required for colleges to adopt a Higher Education Strategy for submission to Hefce in January 2010. The Deputy Principal outlined the key rationale, of widening participation and employer engagement, embedded within **ncn**’s HE Strategy. These had not changed from the priorities outlined by the Dean of HE and International at the June meeting when he delivered the HE Annual Report. The four strategic objectives were:

- Supporting staff development, learning research and new technology;
- Developing the international strand of HE provision;
- Achieving the national HE participation benchmark and broadening provision to attract other funding;
- Successful achievement of the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review.

The HE strategy was consistent with Hefce guidelines and required Corporation approval. Members welcomed the focus on widening participation and the importance of staff development. Members explored the progression routes from **ncn** HE provision through to level 5 and the integration of level 3 vocational provision within the College's curriculum offer. Members noted that the strategy included increased volume of provision dependent on Hefce growth funding and international developments.

Members encouraged management to seek informal feedback from the regional Hefce representative prior to submitting the strategy document to ensure it was considered fit for purpose.

The Committee passed the following resolution:

**The Committee recommend the HE Strategy for approval to the Corporation.**

#### **6. STUDENT ENROLMENT 2009/10**

The Committee considered the information reported at the October Board meeting in relation to enrolment data. Members sought assurance that there was a proper process in place for the management of over-enrolments in relation to FE full time learners. The implications of capping student numbers were explored in relation to entry requirements, funding, and overall organisational risk. Members noted that the planning cycle for 2010/11 would commence in December and some of the practical aspects of managing student numbers in year would be reflected on for future years during this process.

Members noted the report.

#### **7. COLLEGE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The key performance data for A/AS and National Diplomas and Certificates was presented to the Committee.

16-18 year olds had improved success rates for AS (68%) and A2 (93%), with improved retention rates in both areas (AS 86%, A2 95%). 19+ also had improved success rates for AS (67%) and A2 (87%), with improved retention rates in both areas (AS 85%, A2 95%). The overall improvement target from the LSC was a success rate of 77%; the success rate achieved was 76.4%.

The performance data for national diplomas and certificates was still to be completed and an update would be provided to the February meeting. Currently the data for level 1 provision indicated a fall in retention rates had impacted on the success data. Work was still being undertaken to understand the data and from 2009/10 new strategies and techniques had been engaged to address attendance. Curriculum areas would pick up actions of areas of concern via the Self Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plans. A retention strategy was also being developed to managed student's expectations before January and tackle retention earlier.

Members noted the actions being taken and requested that these could be drawn out in the report in future to demonstrate management's interpretation of the data. Members requested a report in February comparing the final performance data with the Quality Strategy.

Members noted the report.

#### **8. QUALITY AND STANDARDS REPORT**

The Committee received a report outlining the key quality processes in year and the actions taken for 2009/10 to continue driving quality standards.

### School Performance Reviews

Members noted the management of compliance and performance through school reviews and the monitoring of actions in relation to punctuality, attendance and student feedback. The improvement in retention at AS/A2 seen in 2008/09 was considered a direct result of management through school reviews.

### Lesson observations

The target in 2008/09 was to achieve 100% lesson observations however only 77% of full time and 42% of part time staff was achieved. Actions had been taken to ensure 100% of staff were observed in term 1 of 2009/10 and for staff PDR's to be completed within 2 weeks of being observed. Progress would be monitored through the school reviews. Members explored the reasons why the target may not have been reached and noted that there was a prioritisation of inadequate of satisfactory practice and on theory lessons to observe class management. The target was considered challenging but a variety of support had been available to all staff. A report would be compiled in January against the 100% target.

### External Verifier reports

Members noted the high proportion of external verifier visits and the good feedback received. The actions taken when major risks were identified were noted. Members noted the Beacon Award short-listing achieved for the "keeping warm" activities which had also been commented upon by the external verifier.

Members noted the report.

## **9. DRAFT SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT**

The Committee reviewed the draft SAR for 2008/09. Members were requested to feedback any comments to the Deputy Principal for inclusion in the full report by the end of November. It was considered that the promotional aspect of the report was unnecessary and detracted from the main purpose of the report. The importance of the equality and diversity objectives and the safeguarding conclusions were explored and it was considered more explanation was needed as to why the safeguarding grade was lower.

Members were asked to feedback specifically on the overall effectiveness, capacity to improvement and leadership and management sections considering if the comments were self critical and evidentially based.

Members noted the report and agreed to provide feedback on the report by the end of November.

## **10. INSPECTION AND EXTERNAL VERIFICATION**

The report outlined to members the new arrangements for inspection under the revised Common Inspection Framework increasing the focus on the learner experience and raising the importance of safeguarding. Members noted the "inspection readiness" requirements of the new 3 week notice period.

The planning for the Quality Assurance Agency review of higher education provision was noted.

Members also noted the external reviews that had been undertaken during the 2008/09 academic year and the resulting actions taken following those reviews.

Members noted the report.

## **11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT**

The Head of Inclusion presented the diversity data contained in the College's Annual Equality and Diversity Report. The report contained data for both learners and staff but did

not contain achievement data for learners; this would be included within the College SAR with actions as appropriate.

The percentage of student and staff ethnicity which was unknown was regarded as too high and action would be taken to reduce this figure during 2009/10.

Members noted the statistics and the priorities identified for 2009/10 but considered further priorities may emerge from the achievement data which would need to be included within the corporate priorities in relation to equality and diversity outcomes.

The Committee passed the following resolution:

**The Committee note the progress made during 2008/09 against the priorities identified and recommend the Equality and Diversity Annual Report to the Corporation for approval.**

## 12. LEARNER VOICE

The Committee received an update on the changes being made to the Learner Involvement Strategy to take account of the increasing emphasis of the learner experience. Learner Voice Boards had been established with course representatives to discuss, amongst other things, teaching and learning strategies and learning styles. Training would be given to course reps. to help student involvement in this process.

Members reviewed the Learner Involvement Strategy and passed the following resolution:

**The Committee recommend the adoption of the Learner Involvement Strategy to the Corporation.**

## 13. QDP EXIT SURVEY RESULTS

Members reviewed the outcomes from the exit survey which was undertaken in May 2009. Members were surprised to note the comparatives to the benchmark data as although **ncn** had improved over time some areas were lagging behind benchmark. Members noted the Framework for Excellence student survey was now in place and counted towards the overall framework grades. Members requested a review of the surveys undertaken with students and their timings to ensure the request for feedback was meaningful and the results timely, members were pleased to note that a framework did exist for analysis of the feedback received through school reviews.

Members noted the report.

## 14. COMMITTEE SELF REVIEW

Members reviewed the self assessment report for the work of the Committee during 2008/09. Members considered the compliance with the Committee's terms of reference was outstanding but when reviewing the effectiveness of the Committee members considered the Committee had only performed satisfactorily when monitoring the learner experience. Members noted the areas for improvement in 2009/10 and recognised that if the College was to achieve an outstanding Ofsted grade the Standards Committee needed to demonstrate outstanding effectiveness.

The Committee agreed the following effectiveness grades:

- Monitoring and reviewing strategies for improving success – Good
- Identify, monitor and minimise risk – Good
- Monitor staff development in achieving college objectives – Good
- Monitoring the learner experience – Satisfactory
- Rigorous and transparent decision making – Satisfactory

## 15. CONFIDENTIALITY OF BUSINESS

There were no confidential items.

16. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was provisionally scheduled for 9 February 2010. The Committee Chair submitted her early apologies for this date.

The Chair closed the meeting at 20.10

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_