

## Newbury College Corporation Curriculum & Quality Committee

**Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 4.00 PM via Teams**

<b>Present</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
<b>Membership</b>	Matt Grimston (MG)	Student Governor
	John Knight (JK)	External Member – Vice Chair
	Rachel McCleary (RM)	Student Governor
	Sally Osmond (SO)	External Member
	Simon Thompson (ST)	External Member
	Shelly Van Meter (SVM)	Staff Governor
	Iain Wolloff (IW)	Principal
	Sue Wood (SW)	External Member – Chair
<b>In Attendance</b>	Jo Houghton (JH)	Director of Business & Partnerships
	Lee Hunt (LH)	Vice Principal
	Gill Parkinson (GP)	Clerk to the Corporation
	Jayne Steele (JS)	Director of Finance and Estates
	Cathy Wright (CW)	Director of Support Services and HR
<b>Quorum:</b>	Three members required	Meeting quorate, 8 members present

<b>Item No.</b>		<b>Action</b>
1.	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> There were no apologies.	
2.	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS</b> There were no declarations of interests.	
3.	<b>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b> <b>The Committee approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 subject to a minor amendment by ST (see Item 4) and these would be signed by the Chair and sent to GP.</b> Following the meeting GP noted there were two further sets of approved minutes requiring her signature – SW to sign and send to GP.	<b>SW</b>
4.	<b>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES</b> <b>Item 6</b> LH had circulated a summary of Ofsted recommendations and actions to the Corporation. <b>Item 6</b> LH had circulated a copy of the Quality Cycle to the Corporation. <b>Item 8</b> Safeguarding Report – ST noted that his view of Safeguarding was more robustly positive than the wording would suggest – it was agreed that he would provide some wording to GP to reflect this prior to the minutes being signed	<b>ST</b>

**5.**  
**5.1**

**CURRICULUM**

**Student Applications**

Student applications are monitored through the management information systems and tracked weekly. The current breakdown of applicants was:

	2019	2020	2021	Variance
16-18 FT*	160	164	208	+44
19+FT	41	49	61	+12
Part Time**	59	57	80	+23
Total	260	270	349	+79

\*Does not include returning or progressing students (Level 3 year 2)

\*\*Excludes apprentices.

IW explained that the figures were very fluid at this time and had increased to +90 by the time of the meeting. The key action would be conversion of applications to enrolments.

**SW asked whether there were any unmet curriculum needs?** IW was not aware of any. Increases in demand included for the Access programme, which could be related to an increased interest in Nursing and Allied Programmes.

JH explained the UCN programmes with the University of Northampton were still being developed, so applications would be received later in the year.

**5.2**

**Curriculum Developments**

Planned developments in the curriculum offer for 2021/22 were set out in a report. Potential developments include:

1. Approval to deliver T Levels from 2022, and a potential transition pathway in 2021.

**SW asked whether there would be a conflict between T- Levels and qualifications such as BTECs?** LH replied that there is a lot of uncertainty around this and it was dependent on the subject area and whether there was an equivalent subject T-Level pathway.

2. New courses in renewable energy in the Renewables Centre

The College had bid for and received funding from the LEP to develop resources to support the delivery of renewable energy courses with an emphasis on supporting progression of the plumbing area. The Centre would support the development of level 3 provision in this area and the introduction of three key areas of renewable energy development: Solar, Air Source and Biomass.

JH explained that several employers had expressed an interest in apprenticeship provision in renewables. **JK asked whether the College was well-equipped for staffing, and would there be difficulties in attracting staff with the requisite skills?**

JH explained that new staff would be recruited, and the College was working with employers to train staff and deal with more technical aspects. LH added that the College had recently employed a skilled plumbing lecturer who would develop skills in others and other staff in the construction area would be trained and redeployed.

3. Bid submitted for the pilot 'Business Centre' for Berkshire.

Over the past 18 months the College had been redefining its links to employers, and the next step was to develop a student hub inclusive of business, allowing for showcasing of their needs and linking to future opportunities for students. The College had bid for funding to develop a Centre within the former LRC space as a pilot for the wider development of Business Centres in Berkshire which accords with the vision for Business Centres outlined in the recent Government White Paper 'Skills for jobs'.

**SW asked whether the LRC would be relocated?** LH explained that the LRC area of the building is planned as a Student Hub, incorporating the Business Centre, employer engagement and access to online library resources. Library print resources are now held in the curriculum departments. Fiona Lees the LRC Manager was working with the UCN and the HoDs and the practicalities were unchanged.

**JK asked whether (particularly HE) staff would have access to the same resources?**

JH confirmed that UCN staff and students have full access to the online library resources of the validating university for their programme. For UCN staff and students on other HE programmes (e.g. HNC/D) they have access to the planned Student Hub and to library resources within the UCN. SVM highlighted that Fiona Lees works closely with partner University staff to ensure effective access to resources.

4. Development of the Foundation Learning course offer

The Foundation Learning curriculum offer had been reviewed and redesigned and there were now three distinct pathways leading SEN Students into more independent living or employment. Staff were developing supported internships and supporting learners from the focus pathway into progressive opportunities with employers.

5. Further expansion of sport provision through the development of the football academies in Oxford and Newbury

The College is delivering a football academy in partnership with Procision Oxford which was introduced in academic year 20/21 and has been successful in adding key provision to the College portfolio.

LH explained that the Football Academy, previously based at Park House School, would now be moving to the College where there was a better fit. This was an exciting opportunity albeit with an element of financial risk. **SW asked whether the sports area was likely to grow.** LH agreed that it was and could consider the introduction of fitness and coaching courses. It is also important to ensure that the provision links to both men's and women's football. **MG asked whether there are other academies in the growth plan?** LH noted that there are football academies in Reading and Bracknell which work with the respective Colleges in those areas.

6. Validation achieved with the University of Northampton, to enable delivery of additional degree programmes.

On 2nd February 2021, the College successfully gained institutional approval to partner with the University of Northampton and, therefore, to increase the range of degree programmes on offer in the UCN.

6.

## QUALITY

6.1

### College Quality Improvement Plans

The Committee received a report updating progress with the College FE & Apprenticeship Quality Improvement Plan and the HE Self Evaluation Review Quality Improvement Plan. There was positive progress in some key areas for both plans, although a range of actions were necessarily delayed by the impact of the pandemic and the national lockdowns. It was noted that the new national employer satisfaction measure rated apprenticeship provision at the College as 'Good.' Overall issues of concern were lower levels of Maths and English engagement by young people during lockdown 3, and the challenge of delivering enrichment activities and work experience during the pandemic.

#### College FE & Apprenticeship Quality Improvement Plan 2020-2021

**SW asked about Maths & English engagement, given that this was compulsory for students falling below a certain level but not part of their main course of study.** LH explained that delivery of Maths & English was all online and the College team had worked hard and were frustrated with the relative lack of engagement during the lockdown period; whilst recognising vulnerabilities within the student group. There was much work to make up, albeit not at the expense of overburdening the curriculum team.

RM added that she had found the recent College experience much more engaging than for previous lockdowns.

**SO asked whether lack of engagement with E&M could affect funding?** LH confirmed that there would be a risk to funding if students did not engage with E&M, however, this is being addressed now that students have returned to on site learning.

**SW thought that BTECs and other qualifications with continuous assessment should have a better validity given there are national questions over A Level grading this year.** IW agreed, although final exams would be teacher assessed. He noted that students doing practical and technical subjects would need to fit assessments into the end part of the year and this presented challenges. A Level and GCSE grade inflation was considered likely again this year, so vocational students could be unfairly disadvantaged for HE applications; this needed to be highlighted at a national level. ST noted that there was a note regarding A Level and GCSE qualifications on the Govt website indicating it would be "no easier or harder to obtain a grade", so thought there should be further communication from Government on how grade inflation may be managed.

Student enrichment was currently rated as Red. RM explained that there were many ideas among students for addressing this in the following term including sports, art, and group activities, some of which may not go ahead because of social distancing requirements.

Student involvement in meaningful industry placements or work experience was also rated Red with LH explaining that placements had happened but not to the extent that had been hoped for. **SW asked whether awarding bodies were taking this into account?** LH replied that they were, and some work experience had been simulated.

	<p><b>ST asked for more clarity and consistent in the RAG rating.</b> IW agreed that this was rather subjective - IW and LH to discuss and agree a definition of the ratings.</p> <p><b>HE Self Evaluation Review Quality Improvement Plan 2019-20</b>  The Covid pandemic had had a negative impact on several areas including recruitment (-7%) and work placements. There had been a 25% increase in BAME students but not yet any increase in female students. It was noted that Engineering currently remained the largest area of HE provision. There was progress on the use of Individual Learner Plans and the provision of employer related activities. There were no further questions on this area.</p>	<i><b>IW/LH</b></i>
<b>6.2</b>	<p><b>In-Year Quality Indicators</b>  The Committee received an update on student retention and attendance:</p> <p><b>Retention</b>  On October 7th, 2020, there were a total of 626 learners enrolled within Full Time Vocational study programmes (including Maths and English). Post census (06 Nov 2020) there were 597 learners remaining on the full-time study programme (Retention 95.4%, a pre census withdrawal rate of 4.6%) As at the 1st March 21 there are currently 575 learners remaining on programmes (loss of 22 learners = Retention 96.2%). Present retention rates are 16-18 (95.6%) and 19+ (100%) The overall predicted student retention for 16 – 19 Learners is positive, and the focus was on ensuring students are engaged and pass their study programmes, with remedial action taken to address some lack of engagement with M&amp;E.</p> <p><b>Attendance</b>  The overall attendance for 20/21 fell by 5.5% from 19/20. There are currently 467 learners that fall below the expected 85% attendance measure. From these learners there are 325 learners that are below 75%, 91% of which relates to attendance in M&amp;E. There is a recognised reduction on attendance levels since the beginning of the spring term due to lockdown. Before this, attendance levels were slightly improved on 19/20 (by 1%).</p> <p>The Committee also discussed the Quality Cycle flowchart which had been circulated prior to the meeting and commended staff as the College was on track. <b>ST thought Governors should be included on the list of key stakeholders</b> - LH to amend this.</p>	<i><b>LH</b></i>

<p><b>6.3</b></p>	<p><b>Teaching, Learning &amp; Assessment</b></p> <p>Teaching, learning, and assessment was significantly affected by the experience of the pandemic and the effects of national lockdowns. Student wellbeing and the quality of the provision remained key considerations and approaches were developed to meet the demands of the switch between blended and remote learning at different points in the year. The restructuring of the Curriculum Management Group had led to a reassignment of responsibilities, and Student Wellbeing was now the responsibility of the PASS and Safeguarding Team. Assessment was a key concern with a move to centre-assessed grades for some courses but adapted assessment being needed in other cases.</p> <p>LH explained that there was an opportunity to reorganise the organisational structure following Lockdown 1. There were now 3 HODs for learning, spanning a wider area taking a direct role in leading TL&amp;A. Mandy Bowns had been appointed as the HoD for Student Experience and Quality. There was now a more coherent team with a positive spirit. IW would distribute the new curriculum management organisation structure diagram via GP to the Corporation following the meeting.</p> <p><b>SW asked how lesson observations were being undertaken for online learning?</b> SVM is a member of the lesson observation team and noted that prior to the current lockdown there was a mix of online and class observations, with strict Health &amp; Safety rules. The teams were now completing online peer observations. The focus of observation was now on the development of teaching, unlike the previous grading system, and this was a better focus to get the best from staff. <b>SW asked whether there were external bodies to obtain advice on best practice?</b> SVM replied in the affirmative, although internal peers were often utilised.</p> <p><b>JK asked what % of staff needed significant development in relation to teaching and learning?</b> LH confirmed that the significant majority of staff were delivering effective teaching and learning and that those needing development were normally those who were new to teaching.</p> <p>There were no further questions.</p>	<p><i>IW</i></p>
<p><b>7.</b> <b>7.1</b></p>	<p><b>WELLBEING</b></p> <p><b>Equality &amp; Diversity Annual Report</b></p> <p>The Equality and Diversity Annual Report is a requirement of the Equality Act 2010 to be displayed on the College's external web site. The report provides a review of the Equality and Diversity action plan for students and staff, details of student achievement rates and the composition of the workforce. Key points from the report were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant improvements in student achievement across many of the protected characteristics, demonstrated by an overall 4% increase.</li> <li>• Leadership &amp; Management commitment to equality and diversity.</li> <li>• The ratio of female to male employees remaining unchanged.</li> <li>• The re-structure of the management team leading to delay in the confirmation of the action plan for 2020/21.</li> <li>• The Gender Pay Gap widening.</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>SW asked for more information on the widening of the gender pay gap.</b> IW outlined that the large number of support assistants in Foundation Learning was the most significant factor as these roles were mostly taken by women. CW highlighted the importance of ensuring adverts attracted both men and women and the fact that term time working was an important factor for many staff with families. SW thought the report was comprehensive. CW would ensure the RAG rating in Appendix 1 was consistent with the other reports. There were no further questions.</p>	<b>CW</b>																																																	
<p><b>7.2</b></p>	<p><b>Complaints Report</b> There had been a total of 27 complaints received thus far in 20/21 compared to 25 complaints received in 19/20. The complaints linked to 7 categories broken down as:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="344 562 1294 871"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Category</th> <th colspan="2">19/20</th> <th colspan="2">20/21</th> </tr> <tr> <th>I</th> <th>F</th> <th>I</th> <th>F</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Staff Conduct</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>9</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Funding/Finance Dispute</td> <td>1</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Appeal against student disciplinary action</td> <td></td> <td>2</td> <td></td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Student Conduct</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Curriculum Delivery</td> <td>6</td> <td></td> <td>4</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. High Needs Support</td> <td>2</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7. Covid</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>4</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>11</td> <td>14</td> <td>17</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(I = Informal. F = Formal) <b>JK asked if the definitions of Formal and Informal could be included in the report.</b> LH to do this. There were no further questions.</p>	Category	19/20		20/21		I	F	I	F	1. Staff Conduct	2	3	9	1	2. Funding/Finance Dispute	1	4	1	5	3. Appeal against student disciplinary action		2		2	4. Student Conduct	2	3	1	1	5. Curriculum Delivery	6		4		6. High Needs Support	2		1	1	7. Covid			4		Total	11	14	17	10	<b>LH</b>
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<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>COMMITTEE SUMMARY</b> IW thought the Board may need to hear about curriculum development as part of the Corporation agenda and this had been included in the draft agenda. SW would provide a written summary for the next Corporation meeting.</p>																																																		
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>AOB</b> SW thanked CW for the work she was doing on testing of students. CW noted this had been a team effort.</p> <p><b>MG asked whether students needed to isolate if they receive a positive LFD test at the College?</b> IW explained that tests undertaken in College with a positive result for Covid-19 did not require follow up PCR test and, therefore, the individual was required to self-isolate for ten days. However, the home testing kit had a different standard and therefore a positive result would require a confirmatory PCR test.</p> <p>JK enquired whether the UCN HE Quality Committee would constitute staff or governors? JH replied that this had been requested by the University of Northampton and Governor support and expertise would be appreciated in the future. IW added that JK would be a prime candidate to be HE lead Governor.</p> <p>The meeting finished at 17.58.</p>																																																		

Confirmed as a correct record: .....

Signature of Committee Chair

Date .....