

The Corporation of New College Durham

**Minutes of the Higher Education Quality Curriculum and Students
Committee meeting held on 23 November 2023**

Present:

Ben Fisher (Chair)
Andy Broadbent
Mark Gomersall
Alice Tomlinson
Ian Green

Apologies:

Julie Coverley
Andy Stephenson

In attendance:

Alison Maynard – Deputy Principal
Peter Morrison – Vice Principal
Suzanne Crane – Assistant Principal
Caroline Winter – Head of Governance & Corporation Secretary

Action

23/31 Chair's introduction and starred items

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that this was the first HEQCS Committee meeting for new Student Governor Alice Tomlinson.

The Chair reminded members to declare their interests in any item of business to be discussed at the meeting. No interests were declared.

Members confirmed they did not require any further discussion about the starred agenda paper G and were reminded that the agenda had been re-ordered to bring forward the Partnership Update discussion (Paper E).

23/32 Apologies for absence were received from Julie Coverley and Andy Stephenson.

23/33 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2023 were agreed as accurate and signed by the Chair.

23/34 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

23/35 Partnership Update (Paper E)

This discussion is recorded confidentially under minute 23/35a.

23/36 Review of Higher Education Annual Report 2022/23 and Quality Development Plan (HEQDP) (B)

Peter Morrison presented Paper B, the Higher Education Annual Report for 2022/23 and Quality Development Plan (QDP).

Peter introduced the paper by explaining that this year's Annual Report was a shorter more concise document than in previous years to reflect the development of the separate strategic KPIs document that would continue to evolve and enable regular monitoring by the Committee. The Annual Report would continue to reflect on quality and standards and provide members with the wider HE context relating to Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP), Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), High Technical Qualifications (HTQs), degree apprenticeships, governance and legislation.

Members noted the performance headlines for Durham and London provision in relation to full and part time recruitment, in-year retention, continuation and completion rates, and student satisfaction. Peter advised that the fall in recruitment, in-year continuation rates and completion rates were areas of concern. These areas were all under review and would feature in the QDP for 2023/24. In addition, follow up activity was taking place with students that decided not to come to NCD to understand why, and a paper would be developed to understand the full position and inform the strategy moving forwards. Action plans would also be developed to address issues in the two programme areas showing student dissatisfaction around resources and support for students. Members noted the six key areas for inclusion in the QDP as detailed in the report.

Members expressed concern at the recruitment numbers in the context of the proposed targets to be discussed in the following paper on strategic KPIs. Peter advised that a large amount of work had been carried out to understand the issues and the marketing research had been useful.

Part of this item has been recorded confidentially under minute 23/36a.

Focusing on the internal pipeline, benchmarking within the curriculum framework to ensure programmes were delivering an appropriate number of hours and aligning the curriculum offer would all be key. Members noted that the KPI targets for Durham were aspirational and set before the new recruitment numbers for the year were confirmed, however it was acknowledged that the position had changed and this may require further review.

Members agreed to endorse the HE Annual Report and Quality Development Plan and recommend both documents to Corporation for approval.

Andy Broadbent left the meeting at 4.38pm.

23/37 Strategic Monitoring – 2022/23 Year-end report on wider HE Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and approval of 2023/24 HE KPIs and targets (Paper C)

Peter Morrison presented Paper C, which updated on progress against the 2022/23 KPIs and sought approval of the KPIs and targets for 2023/24.

Members reviewed the overall College performance in 2022/23 against KPIs for retention, full time and part time continuation and completion rates and overall student satisfaction. Peter updated on the work to improve the College's HE data and use Power BI to enable drilling down into different areas including individual partners, full and part time and school level information. Members discussed the approach to reporting on students studying prescribed and non-prescribed qualifications and commented that it would be helpful to understand both and to report these at both HEQCS and FEQCS Committees.

**AM /
PM /
AS**

Members noted the student numbers at Durham and Peter confirmed that the proposed targets were aspirational. Partner student numbers had remained consistent with targets however in-year retention had the potential to mask problems. As timely withdrawals were improving, a more accurate picture could be seen at academic board. An 'at risk' board had also been established which provided a greater understanding of students that were not attending and therefore would not achieve. A KPI in relation to progression and destination would potentially be useful and would be considered when developing KPIs for next year. The split between FT and PT may also be reviewed next year.

Peter outlined the revisions to the KPIs for 2023/24 as detailed in the report. Members reviewed the proposed targets and commented that whilst they should contain an element of stretch, targets needed to be achievable and have clear ownership. It was noted that Corporation had delegated approval of the 2023/24 targets to the Committee, however members felt that some required further review.

PM

Members noted the progress against KPIs for 2022/23 and early progress against KPIs for 2023/24.

23/38 Curriculum and Quality monitoring report (Paper D)

Peter Morrison presented Paper D, the curriculum and quality monitoring report, which updated on key issues impacting the external higher education landscape.

Members were briefed on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) noting the College had been awarded an overall silver rating. Peter also updated on the Office for Students (OfS) B3

Assessment Quality Cycle for 2023/24 and the potential for the College to be selected for assessment in the current academic year. Members noted the work underway to prepare for any assessment and the importance of having a clear rationale for working with partners in terms of both intent and the commercial case, as well as a strong action plan to deal with any issues or concerns.

Part of this item has been recorded confidentially under minute 23/38a.

Mark Gomersall left the meeting at 5.09pm.

23/39 Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (Paper F)

Peter Morrison presented Paper F, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which had been revised following the Committee's previous endorsement of the development of a joint strategy for staff and students. Peter advised that the College was close to meeting the standards in the Association of Colleges' Charter and whilst this would be considered in future, the College already placed significant focus on mental health and wellbeing and took a proactive approach through a range of support.

Members welcomed the combined approach and agreed to recommend Corporation ratification of the strategy.

23/40 Review of Foundation Degree Regulations (Paper G)

Members received and noted Paper G, which detailed the key changes to the College's Academic Regulations for 2023/24.

23/41 HE Student Forum Feedback – overview of issues and progress update (Paper H)

Alice Tomlinson presented Paper H, the HE Forum feedback. Members noted the first forum of the year had introduced students to the purpose of the forum and had been very positive with no concerns and very few actions to take forward. Students had provided feedback on their reasons for choosing to study at NCD and the first 'Student Think Tank' of the year would look at what else could be done to attract students to the College. In response to a member's question, it was confirmed that the relevant staff would attend think tanks related to their areas and that the themes considered in each session were determined on the basis of current issues as they emerged throughout the year.

23/42 Any other business

Members were updated that the recent social work validation process in November had resulted in a successful outcome with the programme recommended for approval subject to two conditions.

23/43 **Date of next meeting:** 13 March 2024 (Wednesday)

Signed.....**Date**.....