



**WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held (via Microsoft Teams) on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020 at 5:00pm**

**GOVERNORS PRESENT:** Mary Mamik, Chair (from 5:20pm)  
Andrew Cropley, Principal and CEO  
Kate Truscott (acting Chair from 5pm until 5:20pm)  
Jen Hope  
Spencer Moore  
Steve Sutton (from 5:20pm)  
Mark Williams  
John Gray

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Maxine Bagshaw, Clerk to the Corporation  
Matt Vaughan, Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality  
Diane Booth, Assistant Principal: Quality & Standards  
Louise Knott, Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement & Student Experience  
Nikki Slack, Assistant Principal: Health, Education & Service Industries  
Jane Fishwick, Assistant Principal: HE, Academic, Digital, Creative & Professional Studies  
Ian Frear, Interim Assistant Principal: Construction & Engineering  
Rebecca Joyce, Governor and Observer for this meeting

		<b>ACTION by whom</b>	<b>DATE by when</b>
<b>1</b>	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></b> The acting Chair reminded governors present to declare any interests they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.		
<b>2</b>	<b><u>WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS &amp; APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b> John Gray was welcomed to his first meeting. Apologies were received from Melanie Stirland. Absent without apologies were Jane Hawksford and Andrea Morrissey.		
<b>3</b>	<b><u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020</u></b> The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.  AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24 <sup>th</sup> February		

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2020.

There were no matters arising.

**4 ACTION PROGRESS REPORT**

In relation to line 1, the Clerk confirmed that there was a safeguarding exceptions report presented for this meeting; this is to give the committee a more detailed opportunity to discuss information shared directly with the board on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020. The committee were happy to note the content of the update provided.

**5 ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING SINCE "LOCKDOWN"**

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality introduced this item and confirmed that 76% of all CBL study programme learners engaged in online learning in week two of lockdown. This was described as a real improvement on the week one position, which had involved both learners and staff getting to grips with the new ways of working.

He drew the committee's attention to section 2.4 of his written report, and key matters brought to the committee's attention were:

- There is very good attendance at level 3.
- The weaker area was level 1, however, the college did see some improvements.
- There are some really good examples of engagement taking place across all aspects of provision.
- Areas of concern remain level 1 brickwork and level 2 painting and decorating. This is because the practical, hands-on activities are not available, and these are of particular appeal to these learners.
- Staff are now driving forward a quality initiative for all learners so that they can identify any issues and blocks to online engagement.
- He provided assurance that the college is providing support and encouragement to all teachers. He described the vast majority as being superb and reiterated that support was being provided to those members of staff who were currently not at the same level.
- He confirmed that he and the team had been monitoring the level of engagement this week, it being after the two-week break for Easter. There was initially a concern that learners would not re-engage, however, engagement appears to be in the 70%. This is better than feared, it being the case that post-Easter is a challenging time for colleges in any event.

He confirmed that the college is reviewing the IT available for students, including kit, Wi-Fi connections, etc. He provided assurance that the college was addressing any known issues.

A question from one member of the committee was in terms of the

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proportion/percentage of staff who are not engaging in teaching and learning as required. The Vice Principal indicated that it was a very small percentage. There are 14 staff who are being supported; however, he explained that, within this 14, there are a high number of staff who are moving forward positively. He indicated that ten out of the fourteen relate to English and maths. He confirmed that there was a body of work to do to re-engage students in relation to English and maths, and part and parcel of this is offering incentives to encourage student participation. Small prizes will be made available. In addition, the college is also challenging student progression opportunities for those who do not engage in English and maths. He provided assurance that the college was not "resting on its laurels". To give further assurance to the committee, he confirmed that fourteen members of staff represented less than 3% FTE, and it was noted that some of the staff within this group are part-time.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

## 6 HEADLINE DATA

He drew the committee's attention to the headline data dashboard as at period 9 and explained that performance data for this academic year will be discounted because of the COVID-19 challenges, however, this does not mean that the college will not use the data internally.

In terms of the statistics provided, he explained that attendance has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 and that, in reality, attendance can only be measured up to 20<sup>th</sup> March: thereafter, education providers were placed in lockdown. The attendance statistic up to that point in time was 82.5% and after this the college will measure engagement rather than attendance. He acknowledged that the attendance figure was not good enough and that the college's target was higher. As has previously been reported, the attendance levels are influenced by maths and English. Retention is 92.2%, which is just under where the college would expect it to be.

Progress position is -0.8; this is as against expected target grades.

He drew the committee's attention to the fact that vocational statistics have now been RAG-rated as red, as they have decreased; however, they still remain higher than maths and English. He confirmed that there were a number of plans in place to improve the position for 2020. There is now a full stable staffing base in place, which will go some way to addressing challenges seen this year. Planning for maths and English is improved with three one-hour blocks established and better timetabling to avoid any known key risk times and days.

In terms of adult learner programmes, he described attendance as static. Progress is slightly below where the college wants it to be. Retention is

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slightly down, however, he explained that this was not unusual and is a national pattern seen.

In relation to apprenticeships, retention is 70.3%. This is still not where the college wants it to be, however, it is above the national rate of 66.7%. This goes some way to evidence the significant improvements made in terms of apprenticeship provision at WNC.

In terms of the data provided, he expressed the view that there were some green shoots, and, in particular, the level of off the job training for apprentices has increased. The college is expecting this to continue to increase significantly as the college and apprentices are taking advantage of furlough. Some apprentices will now fall outside of their review period, and this is something that the college will need to address.

The committee then considered data in relation to high needs and free school meals, and it was explained that the information reflects cross-college concerns regarding English and maths.

In terms of the information provided, a challenge from the committee was that they would wish to see, wherever possible, how the college was performing against comparators/competitors, rather than a simple internal review. The Vice Principal confirmed that comparator data would be provided wherever it is possible. He indicated that the progress scores are the college's own internal measures, but gave assurance that he has confidence that systems and processes to measure and monitor this are robust.

A question from one member of the committee was in terms of how the college is doing in securing a whole journey for students. The Vice Principal felt that the college was strong in this area and aspects contributing to this are:

- Positive engagement levels, and quick action being taken to address where there are not.
- Process of grading, ranking and marking. This is a significant piece of work and a task and finish group has been established to oversee.
- Standardised monitoring and tracking sheets are in place.
- The college is applying quality checks.
- Teachers have really good knowledge of their learners.

The Vice Principal advised that the Head of MIS is working on a formula to convert existing data into gradings and rankings. There is confidence that the college will be able to evidence that proposals presented for grades are provided with integrity. The CEO indicated that the college has challenged the ranking requirements as part of the consultation process, as this is a huge challenge to FE. He explained that the vast majority of learners of attend FE colleges are most likely to get grades between 2 and 4 and not 1-9; therefore, with many hundreds of

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learners, trying to rank them within a grade band of 2-4 is an artificial exercise.

The committee questioned whether there was an appeal/challenge programme. The CEO advised that the consultation process is envisaging this, and that students will also be given an opportunity to sit exams in September. He confirmed that the process is still part of the consultation taking place and that appeals would be against grades and not ranking.

The committee questioned whether there were any issues associated with apprentices who are awaiting Functional Skills qualifications. The Vice Principal confirmed that there are, with 110 learners in maths and 120 in English who have an end date of 31<sup>st</sup> July. He confirmed that, for these individuals, the college is focusing on the additional non-working time that is now available.

The committee made the observation that it was clear that the college now has a much improved use and transparency regarding the metrics, and all agreed that this was a step forward.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

## 7 **APPRENTICESHIP REPORT**

The Assistant Principal: Quality and Standards introduced this detailed report and key matters noted were:

- Retention – the national rate is 66.7%. If all current apprentices achieve, the college will be above national.
- Subcontracting provision – there are six learners who have a long break in learning and were rolled over; these have now had to be withdrawn.
- Retention concerns are linked to historical issues that have been reported throughout this academic year and the prior.
- Retention for direct delivery is significantly improved, therefore the college is starting to come out the other end of resolving historical issues.
- To date, 94 end point assessments have taken place this academic year; the pass rate is good at 98.9%, with high grade achievement being positive at 61.3%.
- Online learning mirrors what the college is doing in relation to CBL. This sets the college and apprentices up well for returning to face to face delivery in relation to maths and English when lockdown is lifted.
- OneFile task group has been really successful.

One member of the committee questioned how much assurance the board can take now in terms of the data; an example given was construction. The AP expressed the view that the senior team and the board can be confident that the data is secure; however, COVID-19 will have an impact, particularly in relation to apprentices in the construction

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industry.

The committee asked whether there were any concerns in terms of the end point assessment organisations. It was explained that they are taking either an adapted approach or will delay. If the test relates to practical skills, it will be delayed. However, other aspects are being adapted where possible. The sector is seeing that awarding bodies are working hard to adapt to the current challenges.

The committee asked whether the college was seeing any impact following furlough. It was explained that the majority of apprentices enrolled with the college have been furloughed rather than put on a break in learning. Specialists and assistant principals are monitoring closely and, at this stage, apprentices continue to be very engaged in learning.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

## 8 **CURRICULUM PLANNING 20/21**

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality introduced his detailed report, and he confirmed that the college has taken a three-pronged approach, including maximising the content of the ASPIRE curriculum. He confirmed that the intention this year was to drive forward with an innovative hands-on curriculum. He reminded the committee that there was a seven-step approach to curriculum planning, which is now almost complete; this includes:

- Utilising the 4Cast system
- Much more granular 4Cast planning than has ever been the case before
- The development of a forensic approach

He advised that the initial deadline for 1<sup>st</sup> April was not met, with a number of meetings remaining. The college is now aiming for finalisation by 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020. In terms of timetabling for next year, he confirmed that the plan is that English and maths will take centre stage with one hour rather than longer sessions. The students will also be provided with a common tutorial slot, therefore these can be used to support English and maths as and when required. He confirmed that enrichment was also a really important part of the college's offer next year.

He expressed the view that the ASPIRE curriculum offers a real-time approach with exciting content, which should lead to greater degrees of engagement and retention. For level 1 provision, there will be a better balance next year between theory and practical opportunities.

In general discussion, all agreed that development of the learning company initiative is a real opportunity for students and is an exciting development.

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The committee were reminded that the “first 42 days” is one of the business improvement projects. Key aspects will be:

- Supporting new students
- A staggered start for students
- A very flexible approach

In terms of maths and English, the committee all agreed that it was good to see that there are plans in place to address as this is a key issue in the QIP and this has been there for some time.

The committee asked whether there would be time for reflection within the first 42 days. The Vice Principal confirmed that there was and explained that the staggered start provides for this. There will be a series of workshops covering a number of aspects and also learning champions have been identified to act as mentors and chaperones. 9<sup>th</sup> September is the agreed date for teachers and support teams to review and take stock. Included within this is a view on the artificial gradings given this summer. Staff will need to look at aptitude, skills and abilities, and there may need to be some adjustments made. The swap don't drop campaign will be strengthened with a bespoke focus. Robust careers education, advice and guidance will be in place and this will sit alongside heightened expectations in terms of student engagement.

The committee questioned whether, in terms of managing behaviour, there were enough staff available to focus on this given the time away from school that students will have had. The Vice Principal indicated that the college had previously engaged two security guards, who had a really positive impact, and the senior team are considering whether to re-engage at the beginning of term. He confirmed that Louise Knott's team has been tasked with fully assessing support team capacity and being clear if there are additional resources required. The senior team are currently looking to review and potentially expand the structure for the welfare team. Early intervention support roles are also being reviewed: for example, to support attendance.

The committee were advised that there may be a number of students who are signposted to the Inspire and Achieve Foundation, which is a programme offered akin to transition. These students will start at Inspire and Achieve in October, and the charity will help to get them ready through a referral model. This could be either short sharp support or a longer term plan over a year.

The Vice Principal indicated that the college was anticipating a “bubble” of mental health issues coming to the surface when face to face contact can resume. It is anticipated that there will be challenges in terms of settling a number of students back in to organisational learning.

The committee asked for more detail on the curriculum validation

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processes utilised. The Vice Principal confirmed that the seven-step planning process resulted in a short written curriculum plan. Accountability lies/dovetails with 4Cast planning. He explained that governors have been kept informed at an overview level and that, at the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March, he was given an opportunity to articulate curriculum changes to governors. Going forward, the senior team will report on key changes and not at the granular level.

The Vice Principal expressed the review that in-learning progression will be more important this year, as it is likely that employment and apprenticeship opportunities will be reduced. Students who had originally envisaged moving onto an apprenticeship will be supported with a plan B programme; this will be a 16-week programme to improve their work-related skills. Construction provision is likely to be one of the hardest hit in relation to this.

The committee were advised that the college will be holding progression boards after the May half term and, through this, every student will be reviewed including their plan B, if they had been hoping to move on to apprenticeship provision.

The committee questioned how the college will cope with students taking GCSE exams in the autumn if they are unhappy with their assessed grade. One member of the committee indicated that there was information in the independent sector that students were being given the opportunity to opt out of the assessment process and simply take the exam later and he questioned whether this was something that could apply in FE. The CEO confirmed that he was drafting a letter to all local head teachers to ensure that the schools and the college work together to ensure that students are on the right level and the right course in September. The impact of September resits will be significant for the college and staff are currently working on scenario planning in relation to this.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

## 9 **SUBCONTRACTING REPORT**

The Assistant Principal: Quality and Standards introduced this item and key matters noted were:

- This academic year, all AEB subcontractors are based within, or very close to, D2N2.
- The college stopped work with two subcontract providers at the end of 18/19 because of concerns.
- Due to the apprenticeship reforms and changes to subcontracting funding rules, the college will no longer be working with subcontracted providers for apprenticeships once the 22 apprentices have completed.
- As at period 8, the retention is 1.1% above the final retention rate last academic year. Pass and achievement rates are in line

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with the final pass and achievement rates last year, although there are 361 continuing learners. The Inspire and Achieve Foundation is affecting the data because retention is currently low at 92.8% and their pass rate is very low at 81.1%. The reason for the decline in pass rate for this subcontract provider is that some learners changed from a certificate qualification to an award qualification, therefore had to be recorded as completions but fails for the certificate qualification. Linden Management's retention is also currently a cause for concern at 95%, however their pass rate is 100%.

- As a result of the COVID-19 situation, all subcontractors have been given instruction to cease face to face delivery. Six subcontractors have indicated that they seek to maintain activity with current learners via remote teaching. Where this is the case, the college has requested details of remote activity in order to monitor engagement and the quality of learning.

In general discussion, the Assistant Principal confirmed that she and the team have met with five subcontractors this week and explained clearly the college's expectations, and there has been some really positive dialogue. Some learners do have IT access issues, and subcontractors and the college are working hard to overcome this. All subcontractors are aiming to maintain relationships with learners and are also offering wellbeing support.

The committee questioned whether the Quality team can ensure all systems are in place regarding online learning, including observations. The Assistant Principal confirmed that the college still has good contact with all subcontractors and it is clearly known which can and can't offer online activity. For example, one that can't is in relation to the rail industry. She advised that subcontractors are reporting that learner engagement is variable and, to respond to this, they are taking a very individualised approach.

The committee asked whether the college can be sure that its QA arrangements will show what is and isn't a quality experience. The Assistant Principal confirmed that this will be the case as the college has online access to the learning being offered and undertaken; this is the same as with direct delivery. There are meetings in the diary every three weeks with subcontractors and the college has made its expectations very clear in terms of meaningful engagement.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

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#### **HE UPDATE**

The Vice Principal drew the committee's attention to her detailed written report, and confirmed that wherever possible the college is ensuring that progression routes exist between the college and NTU. This has meant the reintroduction and/or amendment to some of the level 3

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offer.

In terms of practicalities, NTU have now agreed to provide University of Derby students with a learning resources card that gives them limited access to the library services that will be in place.

An issue still to resolve is in terms of access to staffing resource, such as study skills coaching and employability support. Both members of staff who provide this service currently will be subject to TUPE and, as such, it was agreed to come back to these issues once formal consultation had commenced.

Formal documents still to finalise towards the end of April include:

- A formal transfer of validated programmes to NTU.
- An agreement that covers the recognised prior learning arrangements for PGCE and Cert. Ed and next a formal facilities and services agreement for franchised programmes that will be taught out by the University of Derby.

In terms of the college's relationship with OfS, she indicated that the need to submit a transparency return has been suspended by the OfS as a result of COVID-19. This is one of a suite of relaxations of regulatory requirements from the OfS to ease the burden on providers at this time.

The committee asked whether, other than the delay in finalising arrangements, there are any other concerns or potential impacts of the COVID-19 situation. The Vice Principal indicated that there would be an impact where the college works with acute hospital trusts, and it is likely that there will not be a September cohort as planned. This was originally envisaged as a cohort of ten.

In addition, some HE students are considering a break in learning as they are finding online learning an issue. First-year students who do this will be a challenge as they cannot roll onto NTU programmes as NTU are only planning a year 2 offer.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

## 11 **RISK REGISTER**

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality introduced this item and confirmed that there were three potential risks on the risk register that fall within the focus of the Standards Committee. These are:

- 14 – failure to embed the ASPIRE Curriculum
- 15 – grade 3 Ofsted overall effectiveness
- 16 – grade 4 Ofsted overall

In terms of mitigating actions, he confirmed that:

- Teaching and learning is the college's core business
- Frequent CPD has been offered and will continue to be offered

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- A focus all about powerful knowledge acquisition
- Drivers for CPD include feedback, motivation, deepening and extending learning
- Learner voice (with the introduction of a rate your course initiative for 20/21)
- Continue with deep dives – online learning deep dives are planned for next week
- Continue with performance monitoring
- Driving forward with a talented workforce

The committee asked for an update in relation to the middle management team and questioned whether everyone is now on a sure footing, i.e. are they proactive and confident in their post. The Vice Principal expressed the view that middle managers were getting there and that they are now more incisive regarding teaching and learning. There is confidence that they now know what good teaching and learning look like and are focusing on impact and outcomes. He described this as a work in progress, but provided assurance that the middle management team has moved significantly since January 2020. To support this, position statements are prepared and these themselves are really improved in terms of content.

The committee asked what has made the difference in terms of bringing middle management along. The CEO indicated that there were a number of areas, including:

- Ownership
- The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality's conversations and willingness to support
- Freedom to explore ideas in the curriculum
- Challenge
- Change in culture
- Improved value of staff
- Drive, patience and tenacity of the assistant principals
- Team leadership
- Middle managers were described as the engine room of the organisation.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

## 12 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality introduced this update and the full QIAP. He described this as a critical document and confirmed that work is undertaken on this all the time. Key points brought to the committee's attention were:

- COVID-19 pandemic – the need to maximise online learning.
- Progress check 4 – a lot of learners (approximately a third) did not get their P4 check. Significantly influenced by the need to prepare for COVID-19 online learning. 20<sup>th</sup> March was the

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deadline but it was not met and therefore the college needs to now address this.

- Teachers and CPD – this is significantly improved with greater engagement and take-up seen. Flexibility is really helpful and it is believed that the CPD offered and planned will transform teaching.
- Apprenticeship provision – this was discussed as a separate agenda item at this meeting.
- English and maths – there are green shoots in terms of stable staffing at last. New Head of English joined on Monday, and is very experienced and qualified. The stable staffing base will complement the staffing taking place. In terms of CPD, there is still a minority of staff who the college is working with, which is why it is still RAG-rated as red.
- Leadership and management – business improvement projects are really working well. Ten projects are taking place and the outcomes are now being presented to the CEO and governors. It was confirmed that a summary of outcomes will be presented to the next board meeting. An example given was the review of paper-based processes, and it was confirmed that these had been totally changed.

CEO

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He confirmed that the QIAP captures the changes made and some of the critical areas still to improve. The committee all agreed that it was clear to see the work being done. An observation made by the CEO was that the staff survey will be interesting and this should hopefully give a mechanism for measuring the changes.

A challenge from one governor was that it would be an interesting exercise to measure how the board is improving, as this is very much a key part of leadership and management. She felt that it was important to measure and continually reflect on how effective the board is. The CEO indicated that, from his experience and perspective, the board is really effective with high quality scrutiny, support and challenge. He indicated that discussions with governors really adds value to the senior team's thinking.

The committee agreed that it was important that governors continue to be challenged. They asked for a process to be considered to assess governor performance, their contribution, and value added, etc. They described this as a grown-up conversation in terms of how governance could be improved.

The committee agreed that they were really pleased to see that the QIAP was not littered with the phrase "on hold because of COVID-19". It is clear to see that quality improvement continues even in these circumstances.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

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**13**      **SAFEGUARDING EXCEPTIONS REPORT**

The Vice Principal presented her detailed report and it was agreed that this would not need to be debated in detail given the discussions at the board meeting earlier in the week. The Vice Principal did indicate that, this week, staff were picking up a greater number of family relationship issues, with students being required to find alternative accommodation. This is a real challenge for students. Temporary accommodation availability is a challenge, and it is anticipated that this will increase as an issue the longer the lockdown continues.

AGREED: To note the content of the update provided.

**14**      **AOB**

As a matter of additional business, one governor present challenged the college to use governors more, with the suggestion made that governors be invited to give a virtual introduction to students and/or staff in their areas of specialism. Mark Williams suggested that he could offer a contribution in relation to construction. The Vice Principal indicated that she had been considering an employer seminar series, therefore it would be really valuable if governors could contribute to this. It was agreed that the Clerk would liaise with the Vice Principal and the Principal's PA to arrange a schedule and then invite governor participation.

As a final observation, Rebecca Joyce, who had joined the meeting as an observer, indicated that she had taken comfort from the fact that there were no surprises within the reports presented, which gives assurance that information being provided to full board aligns with the detailed work of the committees.

**15**      **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The Clerk confirmed that the next scheduled meeting is on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020. It was agreed that the invite for this meeting would be recirculated with the plan for it to take place via Microsoft Teams rather than in person.

Meeting closed at 7:15pm.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_ Chair

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