

# HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

## STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

### Minutes of the meeting held at Harlow College on Wednesday 27 November 2024, 2pm

Membership:                   \*Rod Bristow (Chair)  
                                  \*Caroline Betts  
                                  Vic Goddard  
                                  Arthur Hall-Jackson  
                                  Stephen Isherwood  
                                  \*Ayub Khan  
                                  \*Lily Lin  
                                  Karen Spencer  
                                  \*Michael Travers

\*denotes present

In attendance               Becky Jones, Vice-Principal  
                                  Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal  
                                  Kirstie Craig, Assistant Principal  
                                  Wendy Martin, Assistant Principal  
                                  Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal  
                                  Kelly Edwards, Executive Director – Quality  
                                  Simon Boyce, Executive Director – Student Services  
                                  Viv Kimeng, Head of Academy  
                                  Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

#### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Vic Goddard, Arthur Hall-Jackson and Stephen Isherwood due to work commitments and Karen Spencer due to personal reasons.

The Committee recognised and thanked Liz Laycock for her contribution to the Committee.

The Committee thanked Lily Lin and Michael Travers for joining the Committee for this academic year.

#### **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 27 June 2024 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **4 Matters Arising from the Minutes (not mentioned elsewhere on the agenda)**

There were no matters arising.

## **5 Student Voice**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Student Voice, presented by Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that Student Ambassadors and Student Governors had attended a learner voice conference hosted by Unloc and FEDEC. The conference confirmed that the College is in a good position with many things, particularly sustainability. FEDEC is looking to host another conference to continue the momentum from the first conference. Laura Wedgbury-Glew highlighted the social action projects being undertaken by the Student Ambassadors and Student Governors and the Committee noted that when students come up with their own ideas, there is more ownership of the projects, which is making them successful.

Student Ambassadors and Student Governors have helped out at a number of internal and external College events, with more planned for the rest of the academic year.

The committee noted the issue with food costs and noted that the College will be drilling down more into the issues raised by students to find out whether the bursary is not covering the cost of the food or maybe students are not getting the correct amount of bursary funding they are entitled to. A focus group for this will be established.

A Governor asked how much the bursary is per day. Paul Whitehead confirmed that it is £6 per day they are timetabled to be in College. There is always an affordable hot meal available within the bursary amount. Those who are eligible for bursary are identified through means testing. The bursary policy is reviewed annually and more people are now eligible to claim bursary, as thresholds have been lowered. The College ensure that it is using its full allocation of bursary funding, however there can sometimes be an issue with the uptake.

A Governor asked how much the College receives in bursary funding. Paul Whitehead confirmed that the allocation is approximately £400k per annum. Healthcheck meetings have taken place with the Catering Team and staff and student feedback will be gathered to look at the affordability of the food provided and to ask what they would like to see more of in the catering outlets.

A Governor asked if the catering services run to gain a profit and Paul Whitehead confirmed that the catering facility runs at a loss. Costs have become higher compared to the income received, however, all costs will be looked at going forward. The College is not seeking to break even with its catering provision, however wants to ensure that the College is effective with its finances.

A Governor asked if a survey has been conducted with students to ask what they consider as healthy foods. Paul Whitehead confirmed that this has not yet been done as the feedback has been very anecdotal to date. Becky Jones reported that this has been previously raised at STAC and the menu has been changed as a result of student feedback.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Student Voice.

## **6 Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Plans**

### **6.1 Headline Data and Five-Year Trends**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Headline Data and Five-Year Trends, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Becky Jones reported that the College's performance for 2023-2024 had improved compared to the previous year across all measures with the exception of the 19+ pass rate however this was due to an isolated staffing issue and that there is a correlation between attendance and achievement rates. There has been a significant improvement in Maths and English attendance – further details on this can be found in Agenda Item 6.5 – Maths and English. The College's rates are approximately in line with the national averages for FE colleges.

Becky Jones reminded Governors that in the College's recent Ofsted inspection, all areas were graded as good, with a strong judgment for meeting local skills needs. The issues raised by Ofsted were not a surprise to the College and will be worked through. They will be included in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and work has already begun on addressing the issues. Ofsted raised an issue around the quality of apprenticeship teaching in some theory lessons, however Becky Jones reported that some staff are still developing the craft of teaching whilst having excellent practical skills. There is a new focus on tracking apprentices and consistency around how progress reviews take place and all apprenticeship processes and procedures are being reviewed.

A Governor thanked Becky Jones for the good report and highlighted that it was good to see the improvements made by the College.

A Governor asked if the College is closing the gap in areas where performance is below the national average for FE colleges. Becky Jones confirmed that it is.

A Governor asked about the plateauing of data for walkthroughs, the consistency of walkthroughs and if the judgements are the right ones to take the teaching and learning from good to outstanding. Becky Jones reported that the College acknowledged that a change in the system was required however had waited until after Ofsted so that progress over the years could be demonstrated to Ofsted. Kelly Edwards reported that the probationary observation process and the walkthrough judgments have been reviewed and improved and are now more specific around what is being seen. A Governor asked if there is enough weight on the judgments to see improvements and Kelly Edwards confirmed that the judgments do not need to be weighted. It was agreed that further information on the walkthrough process and judgments should be included at a future Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting. Kelly Edwards also reported that there is a new focus in the deep dives on teaching, learning and assessment and consistency across the whole team.

A Governor asked how the walkthroughs and deep dives feed into the College's performance management processes. Becky Jones reported that the College has policies and procedures in place linked to appraisals, walkthrough observations and probation periods. The College has appointed Advanced Practitioners who work with staff whose performance has dropped. The first course of action is a development plan and then this escalates up through the College's policies and procedures if required. Paul Whitehead reported that the College has a positive approach to supporting continuous improvement and development of staff. A Governor asked if the 4 Steps to Success is consistently being checked. Becky Jones confirmed that this was the case and Kelly Edwards reported that a lot of work has been undertaken with staff on formative assessment.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Headline Data and Five-Year Trends.

## **6.2 Study Programmes**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Study Programmes, presented by Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew highlighted the 5% improvement in retention and the outstanding attendance in teams such as 95.3% in Performing Arts. The College is looking at what can be learnt from the teams with excellent attendance and how this could be translated to teams which are struggling.

In the Summer student survey, all students including apprentices scored face-to-face communication as outstanding at 90%, an increase from 87.5% in 22/23. Acting on views has increased from 75% in 22/23 to 77.5% in 23/24 however it is still not as high as the College would like and this is being addressed.

The Committee reported that the report was all very encouraging.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Study Programmes.

## **6.3 Adult Education**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Adult Education, presented by Wendy Martin, Assistant Principal.

Wendy Martin reported that there has been an improvement in achievement rates on very short and short courses however achievement on long courses was below target, due to low achievement on HE Access programmes. Achievement on very short courses at Bright Futures and Stansted Academy is very high. 40% of learners at Stansted Academy move into employment which is particularly high as the JCPs report 4% - 8% positive destinations. This highlights the impactful partnership the College has with Manchester Airport Group.

E-learning has seen increases in rates for the third consecutive year.

Further work is being undertaken on the collection of destination data.

The College's adult provision received strong, positive feedback from Ofsted however it did highlight that sometimes teachers move on too quickly however feedback from learners is good.

A Governor asked how many adult learners the College has. Paul Whitehead reported that it is between 2,000 – 2,500 per annum however most are on short programmes and e-learning programmes. A Governor asked if learners have access to a tutor on the e-learning programmes and Paul Whitehead confirmed that this is the case.

A Governor asked about retention on long courses and asked what the main issue was in learners attending. Becky Jones reported that the main issue is for the HE Access learners. Whilst the College gives robust information, advice and guidance at the outset, many have family commitments which become a barrier to attend. Wendy Martin also reported that learners in full time education do not receive any benefits, so many have to work as well as study.

A Governor asked what the College is doing to help learners with their mental health. Wendy Martin reported that the College has internal support systems and has established a community hub at Bright Futures where learners can access external support services. The College recognises that there is a stigma with male mental health, particularly in the construction trade and therefore has embedded a Level 1 mental health course into its construction course. The College also signposts learners to e-learning modules in mental health first aid and advocacy in the workplace.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Adult Education.

#### **6.4 Apprenticeships**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Apprenticeships, presented by Kirstie Craig, Assistant Principal.

Kirstie Craig reported that there has been a slight improvement in the achievement rate however it was lower than the predicted 60%. This was due to a number of end point assessments moving from July to August. The Apprenticeships Accountability Framework sets a target of 60% however the national average across all levels is 54.6%. The pass rate for 2023-2024 was 98% compared to 100% in the previous year. The data shows that if the College retains its learners, they will pass however a number of learners have not been retained as they have moved into full-time employment, often on a self-employed basis. A Governor asked if it is often the case that they are opting for money rather than education. Kirstie Craig reported that many state when they withdraw that they are going into full time employment for financial reasons or they are having a complete career change. Becky Jones reported that some apprenticeships last four years therefore it is harder to retain these learners than those on shorter apprenticeships. Retention on Professional Apprenticeships was 76.2% and IT was 75% which are the two shortest apprenticeships the

College offers. Kirstie Craig reported that some apprentices are only paid minimum wage and that there is a big disparity between the minimum wage and the real living wage.

A Governor asked what the College will do differently going forward. Kirstie Craig reported that there will be a focus on getting predictions more accurate. Progress reviews will take place more frequently and be of better quality, ensuring the apprentice, the employer and the College are all fully involved in the process. The template being used for the reviews has been revised and is currently being trialled.

Paul Whitehead highlighted that there has been a decline in the number of withdrawals which is positive and will have a positive impact on the data in future years. A key point of the progress reviews is when the apprentice is expected to complete their apprenticeship and when this will be seen in the data.

A question was asked as to whether the number of enrolments is broadly the same. Kirstie Craig reported that this was the case with between 450 and 500 each year.

Kirstie Craig highlighted Ofsted reported that practical session delivery was strong and that there is now a focus on sequencing of learning and implementing formative feedback. iPads are being rolled out to all apprentices and feedback from the apprentices is positive.

A Governor asked about the Quality Improvement Plan action on moving the ethnicity profile of apprentices and asked if equitable access was the issue. Kirstie Craig reported that the College is in the process of gaining Investors in Diversity accreditation and as part of this, the College has a target to diversify its profile of apprentices and is exploring what can be done to open access for all different groups and characteristics. A Governor asked if the College knows the profile of the under-represented groups. Paul Whitehead reported that the College has looked at its staff and the community profile and apprentices are a significant outlier. How employers recruit apprentices will be looked at to determine why some are not getting these opportunities. Kirstie Craig reported that this target has just been set and that the College is at the start of its journey to address this.

A Governor asked if the College believes it is on track for the 2024-2025 62% achievement target. Kirstie Craig reported that 60% is a realistic figure however the College is aiming for 62%.

A Governor asked if there is any correlation with the destination data from schools. Kirstie Craig reported that the apprenticeship stand at the October open evening was constantly busy and it is believed that apprenticeships are being promoted more by schools. There is a need to promote apprenticeships to students from an early age. There is however an issue with employers who do not want to employ 16 year olds and they want people who can drive.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Apprenticeships.

## **6.5 Maths and English**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Maths and English, presented by Viv Kimeng, Head of Academy.

Viv Kimeng reported that attendance has significantly increased and that there is a big correlation between attendance and achievement. A lot of work has been undertaken on attendance in classes and for exams, with a 91% attendance rate for the summer exams.

The achievement rate has also improved significantly this year and whilst the College is self-critical about the percentage of high grades (English 24%, maths 22%), the College is above national benchmarks (17.5% English, 15.1% maths). There has been a decline in maths higher grades of 9-4 this year mainly due to the increase in students and staff who left the College with supply teachers being required. It was therefore hard to stream and stretch the students.

A Governor highlighted that if there are more students that are sitting the exams, there is a chance that a higher number could fail.

A Governor asked if KPI 4.4 should be amber rather than green however Becky Jones reported it was green as it was close to the target (less than 1%). Viv Kimeng reported that whilst it was below the College's target, it is above the national average.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Maths and English.

## **6.6 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs)**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs), presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Paul Whitehead reported that there has been good progress with closing the gaps for learners with disabilities, females studying maths and English and high needs funded (HNF) learners. There are however some gaps for ethnic minority groups which are widening and this will be a key focus for 2024-2025. Some gaps also remain for vulnerable learners. The Investors in Diversity Strategic Action Plan will address these issues and there will be some separation in this report as some of the Investors in Diversity reporting will be via the Resources Committee.

A Governor asked how many students have an EHCP. Tracy Mucci confirmed that the College has 126 with an EHCP. A Governor asked if this attracts additional funding. Paul Whitehead reported that some students with an EHCP do not attract additional funding however the majority are HNF students. The

College also has some HNF students who do not have an EHCP. This report focuses on HNF students. A Governor asked who decides if a student qualifies for HNF. Paul Whitehead reported that there is a self-declaration on the enrolment form or identified when potential students are interviewed by the College. The College works hard to understand the needs of each individual and communicates with the LA on how to fund students' needs. This is through negotiation and the College has a good working relationship with the LA.

A Governor asked if it was approximately a quarter of College students with high needs. Paul Whitehead confirmed that this was correct however the support required is wide and varied. Ofsted identified that the College does a very good job at supporting these learners. Paul Whitehead reported that this is not without its challenges. There has been a significant increase in the number of students with EHCPs and SEND needs in 2024-2025 and the College has had to recruit to get the right level of resource to support these students.

A question was asked about whether any work can be done with those who do not disclose their ethnicity as they appear to be a higher risk of not achieving. Paul Whitehead reported that these individuals often do not declare other things as well therefore it is not limited to ethnicity.

A Governor asked given that this is such a high-profile area, does the College believe it has the right level of resources in place given the increase in numbers. Paul Whitehead reported that previously the College's systems were not as strong. From the beginning of this term, the College has been preparing for the increase in numbers. There has been internal progression of some Learning Support Practitioners (LSPs) therefore these roles have had to be back-filled. The College has adapted its timetable and delivery to ensure that the right level of support was in place from the start of the term for the most vulnerable learners. Agency staff were recruited early and these have been strong appointments. Tracy Mucci reported that parents are involved a lot and the College engages with them to ensure the right support is in place and is reactive to what is needed. Governors complimented the College on this approach.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on SEND and EDIMs.

## **6.7 Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Learning, Teaching and Assessment, presented by Kelly Edwards, Executive Director – Quality.

Kelly Edwards reported that there is a focus on the craft of teaching and on staff preparing students better for exams. The deep dives that took place last year prepared staff well for Ofsted and there will be more focus in the deep dives this year on teaching, learning and assessment and ensuring consistency across the teams. Advanced Practitioners are working to support staff that are new into teaching and this has reinvigorated the Advanced Practitioners and their teams.



The College has been embedding AI and is using TeacherMatic as a tool to help staff with their planning. It is being used on a regular basis and is saving staff between 3 – 5 hours per week. Bodyswaps, a VR package, has been rolled out to students and is now being rolled out to staff. The chatbot on the College's website was designed by College students. The Committee praised the College's use of AI.

Kelly Edwards highlighted the walkthroughs which are ungraded, snapshot observations lasting no more than twenty minutes and are based on seventeen key judgements.

Paul Whitehead reported that the College takes a positive approach to improving teaching and learning, in an encouraging and supportive manner.

The Committee congratulated the College on its good Ofsted rating and highlighted that this is an outstanding achievement. A Governor asked if Ofsted are removing the one-word judgements for colleges as well as schools. Kelly Edwards reported that they will be removing it.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

## **6.8 Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes, including Student Voice and Disciplinaries**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes, including Student Voice and Disciplinaries, presented by Simon Boyce – Executive Director, Student Services.

Simon Boyce reported that positive progress was made last year, with a particular growth in employability skills and behaviours.

Positive interventions have been put in place this year which includes the newly formed Student Futures Team, Youth Workers and the better use of the Grofar system, all of which are making significant contributions to improvements. The role of the Student Futures Team was explained. Governors were informed that Grofar enables reflection and impact measuring of interventions. The Youth Workers' key area of focus has been building and promoting positive relationships and this has contributed to a lower number of disciplinary cases this year to date compared to this time last year.

A Governor asked about the number of violent / dangerous behaviour cases in 2023-2024 and how these have been dealt with. Simon Boyce reported that there was a unique situation with several cases involving a large number of students. This has been a side effect of the College's growth in ESOL provision. The College responded quickly to the cases and supported students. The College has focused more on these issues in its tutorial programme and has been supported by the police.

A Governor asked what impact this has on the College's reputation and how is this being managed. Paul Whitehead reported that the majority of incidents were off campus and outside of College time. The College employed security guards and managers patrolled the campus to ensure there was a safe environment on campus.

A Governor asked what the consequences are for those involved in the violent incidents. Paul Whitehead reported that they are managed in line with the College's Disciplinary Policy which has a range of sanctions and there is a focus on positive behavioural change and interventions.

Simon Boyce reported that the College shares and publishes bulletins to parents and on social media. More students from outside of Harlow are choosing to study at Harlow College as the College has a good reputation. The recent knife arch had a positive response from students.

Becky Jones reported that the student survey always asks how safe students feel and this has a positive response. Students sell the campus on open evenings and will talk to perspective students and parents about how safe they feel.

A Governor reported in the student voice session held as part of the self-assessment event, students reported that they feel safe on campus. In addition to this, they spoke positively on the enrichment activities connected to their studies and reported that they understood the balance about what they want and what is good for them. They reported that they feel special being a student here at Harlow College.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes, including Student Voice and Disciplinarys.

## **7 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2023-2024 and 2024-2025**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on KPIs for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The Committee noted that the KPIs had been discussed as part of Agenda Item 6.1 – 6.8 above.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the final position of the KPIs for 2023-2024 and agreed that the proposed KPIs for 2023-2024 will be presented to Corporation for approval at its meeting on 19 December 2024.

## **8 Higher Education**

### **8.1 Higher Education Update and Quality Assurance Report**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Higher Education (HE) Update and Quality Assurance Report, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Governors noted that there has been one OfS reportable event which is highlighted in the report and detailed in Agenda Item 8.2 below.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the Higher Education Update and Quality Assurance Report.

## **8.2 OfS Reportable Events**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted that there has been one OfS reportable events since the Committee last met on 27 June 2024. This reportable event was the change in the Chair of the Corporation from 24 October 2024 and was reported to the OfS, with confirmation being received from the OfS that the change has been made.

## **9 Complaints and Compliments 2023/2024**

The Standards and Curriculum received and considered the report on Complaints and Compliments 2023/2024, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Paul Whitehead reported that there has been a slight decrease in the number of complaints in 2023/2024 compared to 2022/2023 however there has been an increase in the number of complaints being upheld. This was mainly due to an issue with one programme which generated a number of complaints.

The College continues to receive a high number of compliments, the majority of which are for the Guidance Team.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on Complaints and Compliments 2023/2024.

## **10 HE/FE Academic Misconduct Policy**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the HE/FE Academic Misconduct Policy.

## **11 Any Other Business**

There were no items of any other business.

## **12 Dates of Future Meetings**

Spring Term 2025	Thursday 13 March 2025	9.30am
Summer Term 2025	Thursday 19 June 2025	9.30am

**Key Points From The Meeting For Corporation:**

**1. Self-Assessment 2023-2024, including Key Performance Indicators 2023-2024**

To receive and approve the College's Self-Assessment for 2023-2024.

**2. Key Performance Indicators 2024-2025**

To receive and approve the Key Performance Indicators for 2024-2025.