

New College Corporation

Student Achievement and Standards Committee

28 September 2009

Minutes

Present: Mr A Pickerin (Chairman)
Mr G Clark (part)
Mr P Boulter
Mr D Hopkins

In attendance: Mrs B Tyley
Mrs E Vingoe
Mr P Taylor (Clerk)

1 Apologies

Dr Ali.

2 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Student Achievement and Standards Committee meeting held on 1 June 2009 were confirmed.

3 Declarations of Interest

None.

4 Quality Improvement

Mrs Tyley introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee, explaining that it provided an overview of the College's overall approach to quality improvement, set in the context of planned changes to external review processes, and took account of internal changes and developments.

On **External Review** Mrs Tyley summarised the major features of the new common inspection framework introduced for the sector in September 2009, and referred members to the fuller description set out in appendix 1 to the report. She noted that the College could expect to have a 'full inspection' in the period between September 2009 and December 2010, and a 'focussed visit' at any time. In response to a question from Mr Hopkins, she acknowledged that while it did not appear that any previous elements had been removed, changes of approach and emphasis were apparent in the new system. In response to questions from Mr Pickerin and others she noted that limiting judgements in 'satisfactory' and 'equality and diversity' would prevent any award for overall effectiveness reaching 'excellent'. Mr Hopkins noted the increased focus on progress made by different groups of learners and while he welcomed the intent

of the process, he voiced a concern that a judgement made arising from following or tracking a very small number of students could lead to skewed or inaccurate conclusions. Mrs Tyley commented that the intention was that following discrete groups of students would allow systems to be tested and the development of hypotheses. In response to further questions Mrs Tyley confirmed that while the new system continues to provide for an inspection 'nominee' and accuracy checks before a report's publication, inspectors' judgements were not readily open to the challenge.

(Clerk's note: at this point in proceedings, Mr Clark joined the meeting).

Mrs Vingoe summarised the new framework for the HE sector introduced by the Quality Assurance Agency for HE, and noted the greater emphasis in the process on the views of learners.

In general debate on the external review of the College's provision, Mr Pickerin asked whether the new role of commissioning by the local authority will involve quality review matters. Mr Clark responded that full commissioning was likely to be introduced for the 2011/12 College year. He reported that it was as yet unclear how an account of the quality of provision will be taken. He noted the tension in the system of commissioning between the principle of funding 'following the learner' and that of 'strategic skills planning'. It remains unclear how these two apparently contradictory elements will be reconciled.

On Quality Improvement: The College Curriculum Mr Clark reviewed the College's stance and noted that it was taken as including all aspects of the experience of the learner. He stressed the function of the curriculum as comprising the College's key framework and included choices and decisions at college and was the vehicle for transition beyond college. His view was the curriculum goes well beyond the choice of courses to offer but includes all aspects of learning and development and acts as a framework for choice, decisions, learning, development and transition. Its key structural components are: courses; the personal tutorial system; and enrichment activities. He commented that the capacity within the College for curriculum innovation and development was not now as strong as he would wish it to be, and that it was of great importance that the College regains its capacity for curriculum design.

In general debate on the matter in response to comments from Mr Boulter, Mr Pickerin and Mr Hopkins, Mr Clark confirmed that individual aspirations remained a significant driver for curriculum design and that the College retained considerable room for manoeuvre notwithstanding considerable external pressures and other constraints.

On Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Mrs Tyley summarised the major organisational changes made in the summer 2009 period, which are set out more fully in the report, and drew members' attention to the increased emphasis on prioritising further developments of the personal tutorial system. She described the work currently underway in the area of updating and developing written policies, procedures and guidance in a number of areas, and stressed the importance of a renewed focus on equality and diversity across the

College to ensure that the elements of the equality and diversity agenda become more coherent and sustained.

On **College Performance 2008/09** Mrs Tyley summarised the results of the preliminary analysis of whole College success rates set out in the report, commenting that overall success, retention and achievement rates were broadly the same as last year's, noting that the context for these outcomes was rising student numbers and an increasingly diverse range of students including those with increasingly complex needs. Mr Clark cited some examples where the College is successfully making provision for students with considerable needs.

Mrs Vingoe drew members' attention to the results of the student feedback annual learner survey, the details of which are set out in the report. She reviewed the areas of positive feedback, and also those responses raising some concern. She commented that compared to national benchmarks New College students are positive about many aspects including the quality of teaching and assessment and the organisation of their courses. However student satisfaction could be improved by a greater focus on student support including reviews with personal tutors. Mrs Tyley noted that further analysis of the responses was being undertaken.

The Committee resolved to receive the report.

5 Student Achievement 2008/09

Mrs Tyley introduced the report for the Committee. With the permission of the Chairman she replaced the circulated report with one benefitting from additional updated information (copy in minute book).

She explained that the report summarised student achievement data from 2008/09, setting out in detail examination results (shown in appendix 1 to the report) and value added measures (shown in appendix 2 to the report).

Mrs Tyley summarised the main features of the exam results including: the maintenance of the good pass rates at A2; the decline of AS pass rates; the good pass rates in BTEC courses good pass rates maintained in vocational (BTEC) courses; and variable results at GCSE with some very good results in some subjects. On value added measures she reported that the ALIS data indicated a general improvement for 2008/09 on overall College performance. At A2 value added continues to improve as does that for AS.

After satisfactory responses from Mrs Tyley to questions of detail from members, the Committee resolved to receive the report.

6 Intervention and Support

Mrs Vingoe introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee explaining that it provides an overview of progress made in areas of concern 2008/09 and goes on to identify proposed courses or areas to be targeted for

intervention and support in 2009/10. It also explains changes to be made in strengthening the processes involved.

She summarised the work undertaken in the College to strengthen intervention and support processes, and drew members' attention to the draft criteria for the identification of areas requiring intervention and support shown at appendix 1 to the report, noting the inclusion of a 'capacity to improve' criterion, and one related to the student numbers involved. She also reviewed the category descriptions, with Committee members making helpful suggestions for amendment to category description names.

Turning to the summary of progress on Areas of Concern 2008/09, she noted that retention has generally improved (with some exceptions), and that pass rates were generally good at A2 and showed an improvement in some AS courses, but were poor in AS Product Design, AS Geography and AS Use of Maths. She pointed out the work that had been undertaken in Art, Design and Media and that the changes had led to improvement in Film, Fine Art, ND Design Crafts and A2 Product Design, although major concerns remain in AS Product Design.

On the Proposed Areas of Concern for 2009/10 she reviewed two areas proposed for the various categories, and referred the Committee to the performance data 2008/09 for these areas set out in detail at appendix 2 to the report.

Mr Clark commented that although the number of proposed areas of concern in 2009/10 was larger than that for 2008/09 this should not be taken as an indication of a general decline in teaching and learning. He commented that overall teachers in the College were enthusiastic and were willing to engage in more experimentation, particularly in the area of the use of new technologies. Although there were some worries about the rate of improvement he was confident that teaching and learning was improving across the College, and that generally the difficulties in areas of concern were unlikely to be as intractable as hitherto.

The Committee resolved to receive the report.

7 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Student Achievement and Standards Committee will be held at 6.00pm on Monday 8 February 2010.