

**Meeting of the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQ1011-3)**  
**held on Monday 21 March 2011**

**Present:**

Mary Tighe	Chair	Hollie King	Member (and Audit Committee)
Guy Adams	From 5.39 pm	John Lockwood	Member
Sue Popplewell	Staff Member	Oliver Price	Apologies
Lucy Yarde	Apologies	Gill Turner	Member
Jo Gill	Member	Rob Setchell	Audit Committee Member - for item 1 of Business only
Garry Charles	Audit Committee member - for item 1 of Business only	Harry Hodgkin	Audit Committee Member - for item 1 of Business only

**In attendance:**

Peter Avery	Principal
John Abbott	Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Quality
Carole Melia	Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Student Support
Martyn Owen	Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Operations - for item 1 of Business only
Jane Scott	Clerk to the Corporation
Marc Webb	Director of Finance - for item 1 of Business only
Paul Smith	Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Enrichment

The meeting opened at 5.33 pm and was quorate throughout.

**PART 1 : MEETING FORMALITIES****1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Oliver Price (Academic Planning and Quality Committee) and Adrian Stallard (Audit Committee). Members of the Audit Committee were in attendance for the item on *Development Planning* only.

**2. Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 4 January 2011 APQ2010-11-2**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4 January 2011 were agreed and signed.

**3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising which are not dealt with under the agenda for the current meeting.

**PART 2: ISSUES FOR THE MEETING****1. Development Planning**

The Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Operations noted that the cleaning contractors currently employed by the College had been asked to provide the College with information about the service it could continue to offer, but with a 10% reduction on their current costs.

The catering contractors had experienced a number of difficulties associated with turnover of managerial staff. There is currently a temporary manager and some planned improvements to the service, particularly in respect of hygiene issues.

There are a number of challenges facing the College in ensuring that the campus continues to flourish and develop at a time when there are less financial resources to facilitate this process. The College already enjoys the benefits which many students bring to the College through their music, drama and other artistic inputs, and work is being done to further promote this ethos through engaging students to assist with the environmental aspects/biodiversity and sustainability of the College campus. Working with the environmental science group, there will be a focus on developing eco systems which will not only enhance the overall appearance of the College, but contribute to the sustainability of the campus in the longer term and provide considerable enrichment opportunity for students. It is envisaged that the overall appearance of the campus will be enhanced and that strong sense of 'ownership' of the campus by the students will have a positive impact on student respect for their surroundings. It is anticipated that the estates budget will be supplemented by external sponsorship, and that planting schemes contributing to the bio diversity of the area will not only contribute to the course work for their subject, but that the work will also be subject to national accreditation/award, bringing additional kudos/benefits for the College.

## **2. The Equalities Act: the Learner Perspective**

The Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Student Support delivered a presentation to the meeting on the provision contained within the new Equalities Act and the implications for learners. Later in the year, the Personnel Director will provide governors with some training in respect of the new Equalities Act and the implications from the employer perspective.

The new Act further reinforces the nine protected characteristics of earlier legislation, and also promotes the diversity and equality agenda. Eight of the characteristics apply to students. The protected characteristics of pregnancy and maternity apply to students. Harassment is not a protected characteristic, and is covered by the Harassment Act.

The new Act affords students additional protection when the protected characteristics can be applied through association with a student. For example, a student could claim that they are being bullied because of a sibling's disability etc.

The Act goes some way to making provision for promoting equality of opportunity, particularly important in respect of procurement and fostering positive relations.

Socio-economic deprivation is not a protected characteristic. However, the College has purchased software which will enable the monitoring of achievement by post code, facilitating the targeting of resources to ensure that living at a particular post code does not become a barrier to achievement or inequality of treatment.

The College is reviewing its provision in respect of implementation of the Equalities Act, and will undertake some comparative/benchmarking work with Hereford College.

The College has become a centre for recording 'hate crime' and will work with the Police to provide improved data in respect of the impact/enforcement of the Equalities Act generally. This work will involve the recording of 'hate crime' involving any of the students of the College, not the general public.

## **3. Diversity and Equality Monitoring: the College Self-Assessment Report**

The Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Student Support noted that recent changes to the College application form have already proven to be constructive in terms of the information which prospective students provide before they commence study,

assisting the College in providing appropriate support and equality of opportunity.

The College needs to develop the range of data which it collects in order to inform diversity and equality monitoring, though it is recognised that this is not always a straightforward process. Additional work needs to be undertaken to ensure that students celebrate diversity. One mechanism for this will be to invite former students to discuss their individual experience with current students.

The Assistant Principal noted that the Diversity and Equality Action Group which has until very recent times been proactive within the College will now be discontinued, and that instead there will be a move to focus group meetings looking at a range of issues in a more informal but focused fashion.

#### **4. Introduction to Student Financial Support 2011-12**

The meeting acknowledged that there are a number of separate financial issues which are converging to make the next period a financially challenging one for many students and their families. The demise of the current system of Education Maintenance Allowance, and the absence of sufficient information about its replacement mean that there is considerable uncertainty about how students will receive financial support from 2011-12 onwards and the impact that this will have generally at the College.

All students attending the 'Welcome to Huish' day in the summer will receive an application form in respect of financial support, along with information about charities offering specific support. Students will be asked to return this form before the start of term so that at the time of enrolment the College will be able to confirm what support is available to the student. Students will also receive information about the costs associated with their course of study, and will be advised if they can receive a 50% contribution towards them.

The College is currently reviewing the way in which the refundable deposit will be administered in order that course work books and other resources can be provided in a more equitable and cost effective way. Overall, there is an impetus at trying to reduce the volume of paper/printing which takes place.

The College will work with other local colleges to ensure that there is consensus over financial support for students. The College is also collaborating with the Citizens Advice Bureau in order to make financial advice available to students on-site.

#### **5. Lesson Observations**

The lesson observation process is part of the College process for improving teaching learning, and a formal process which enables the College to make its self-assessment report on the quality of teaching and learning within the College.

The College works with Hereford and Darlington sixth form colleges in the formal lesson observation process. This system provides scope for the separate colleges to compare, analyse and benchmark themselves against each other. Some staff at this College continue to undertake a peer observation process, although this is no longer driven by the senior management. In terms of national benchmarking, the Alps measure of value-added performance currently indicates that the College is in the top 3% of colleges.

Whilst there has been a significant increase in the number of observations assessed as grade 3, it is considered that the moderation process associated with lesson observations needs to be improved in order to for better assurance that there is

consistency in the process. Other factors potentially affecting this outcome include the observation of all part time staff in the current process, rather than the previous rotational system. The timing of the lesson observation period also coincided with the start of the introduction of new subject modules, therefore making it difficult to demonstrate what learning was taking place. In order to afford accurate benchmarking, the timing of the process may need to be reviewed.

The College will undertake further investigation to satisfy itself that its observation process is robust and that the observers are using an appropriate range of criteria. Talking with students about their perceptions of a lesson will provide some feedback; course quality questionnaires will also provide some insight. Focus group discussions with students are a valuable means of validating the lesson observation process. Staff training will also be provided in how teachers can develop their questioning techniques, and the impact of lesson activity on teaching and learning.

#### 6. Review of the Safeguarding Policy

In reviewing how the Safeguarding Policy had been invoked during the period since the appointment of the Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Student Support, the meeting noted the following:

- One student had been referred to Social Services due to concerns about personal safety
- One student reported that they had been subject to abuse when a younger sibling had been referred to Social Services
- A family member of a student had been referred to Social Services on account of health problems affecting their ability as the sole carer in the family
- One vulnerable adult gave cause for concern, and the Police were involved in the subsequent handling of the matter

The Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Student Support reported that all the local agencies had responded well in instances when they had been involved in safeguarding issues. Safeguarding training for staff is up to date. The designated safeguarding officer is the Assistant Principal: Curriculum and Student Support, with the Principal supporting that role.

The Safeguarding Policy will be amended to reflect current job titles. The meeting noted that in 2.1 of the Policy, the term 'other users' adequately reflects all those who may be briefly on-site.

Mary Tighe recommended that the Safeguarding Policy be approved by the Corporation. This was seconded by Gill Turner and agreed *nem con*.

#### 7. Review of the Quality Policy

There had been only minor changes to the Policy, and the overall content of the Policy remained unchanged.

Mary Tighe recommended that the Quality Policy be approved by the Corporation. This was seconded by Gill Turner, and agreed *nem con*.

#### 8. Student Destinations

The meeting noted the data associated with analysis of student destinations. 96 students deferred their higher education places until 2011 - it is anticipated that this figure will not be replicated with the current cohort of students due to the

introduction of higher university fees.

The three universities most favoured by students were Plymouth, the University of the West of England UWE, and Cardiff, with students perceiving Wales as a local/regional destination. There were fewer than anticipated students gaining places at the University of Exeter, with the potential for this position to be improved through stronger relations with the University. The most popular choice of subject overall was business and finance, with a marked fall-off in places taken up for humanities subjects. It is anticipated that there will be a similar decline in the number of students wishing to take humanities subjects at the College. The College has seen a rise in the number of applications from students wishing to study chemistry and maths.

Of the fourteen students gaining Oxbridge places, three came from local independent schools. The success in gaining Oxbridge places is underpinned both by the high standards of the students making applications, and by the personal contacts facilitated with Oxbridge colleges via a member of staff.

**9. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting is Monday 13 June 2011.

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....