

Academic Planning and Quality Committee Meeting

Tuesday 23 March 2021 at 5.30pm
Virtually using Teams

Members Present: Mary Tighe (Chair), Barbara Barratt (Vice-chair), Nic Blunsum, David Griffin, Jonathan Langdon, Nikki Lewis (Staff Governor), Matt Morgan (Staff Governor), Aaron Reid (Parent Governor), David Tomaney, Yuqi Cao (Student Governor) and Ella Tonge (Student Governor)

In attendance: Emma Fielding (Principal),
Becky Flower (Vice Principal Student Support),
Martin Wren (Assistant Principal Humanities and Social Sciences)

Observer: Grace Howard (Student Governor elect)
Clerk: Bettina Walker (Clerk to the Corporation)

Key * Denotes items with papers circulated prior to the meeting
^ Denotes items with a Powerpoint presentation at the meeting

MINUTES

1. WELCOME NEW MEMBERS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed new Parent Governor, Aaron Reid, new Student Governors, Ella Tonge and Grace Howard and new Community Governor, Nic Blunsum to the meeting. Apologies were received from Sarah Fox (Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. * MINUTES

APQ 48 Minute APQ43 was amended to read "The Assistant Principal Business and Creative Industries advised that the main aim of teaching and learning were to:"

RESOLVED: Following that amendment, the Academic Planning and Quality Committee minutes dated 18 January 2021 were agreed as a true accurate record and signed by the Chair.

APQ 49 4. *MATTERS ARISING REPORT – MARCH 2021

All other matters arising were on the agenda.

APQ 50 5. *COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference had been revised in line with recommendations made during the FE Commissioner's visit in November 2020.

There were likely to be further changes to the Terms of Reference in future as the College redesignates as an Academy in autumn 2021

RESOLUTION

The Committee agreed that the revised Terms of Reference would be forwarded to the Corporation for approval.

APQ 6. ^ HEADLINE DATA

51 6.1 Attendance Data – Spring 2021

The Committee noted that the overall attendance rate for the year to date was strong at 94.3%. The attendance for Level 2 at 84.7% and GCSE at 78.7% was more of a challenge and was being monitored.

APQ 6.2 Retention Data – Spring 2021

52 A further 34 students had left the College since December, making a total of 49 leavers since the census date in November 2020 with 31% of these because the programme was no longer appropriate or the student had new progression plans, and 33% because they were not enjoying their studies. A number of these students had moved to other institutions, started apprenticeships or had found jobs.

APQ 6.3 Progress

53 Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) had replaced exams in summer 2020 and, after grading appeals had taken place, there had been a higher than usual pass rate. There had been a 42% improvement rate on the CAGs. The number of students taking GCSE exams in the autumn in order to achieve improved grades was much smaller than usual as a result of CAGs.

The in-year monitoring of progress continued to be a challenge for Level 2 and GCSE. Catch up funding was available from the Government and was being used for one to one tutoring for students needing to catch up.

The Committee raised concern about two courses where less than 50% of students appeared to be on target. The Principal reported that for French, a Teaching Assistant, who was an experienced and qualified teacher, was adding extra teaching capacity to help students catch up. The VP Curriculum & Quality would be asked to provide the Committee with an update on the other subjects.

The Principal explained the differences between progress monitoring for first and second year students:

First year students had come to the College with Centre Assessed grades at GCSE, and the College had to formulate its own methods to generate students' target grades. These students would be given plenty of internal exam practice to ensure they were prepared for when exams were predicted to return in summer 2022.

Second year students would have come into College with their GCSE exam results and would have received more conventionally generated, nationally benchmarked target grades. However, these students had been most impacted by online teaching, and would be assessed using TAGs in summer 2021.

The Committee commented that the Progress Report was a useful summary of how to monitor progress and where measures to improve were focused.

APQ 6.4 Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) for summer 2021

54 Teacher Assessed Grades were replacing GCSE and A' level exams for summer 2021. The Committee discussed how accurate the TAGs would be, and what the methodology was in the context of the grades being so significant.

The College would be holding a dedicated staff day, to look carefully at evidence being used for the TAGs. The full guidance had still not been published by JCQ and the Awarding Bodies, and teaching and senior staff would need to remain agile in relation to any changes over the Easter period. For each student there would be a basket of evidence which could be used to determine the TAG from assessments and units already completed, to using a variety of assessments before the summer.

The Assistant Principals had a strong understanding of their teams and access to past data, including data available from previous years where predicted grades were compared to actual exam grades. The challenge for the College was to ensure consistency between different subject areas and teams. The College used the Six Form College Association's benchmarks across the Sixth Form sector called "Six Dimensions", and this would help to standardise the methodology used. The SFCA materials were used very successfully in 2020.

APQ 6.5 Pandemic Progress Monitoring Update

55 The Committee noted all the measures in place to continue operations during the ongoing pandemic.

7. ^ QUALITY PROCESSES

APQ 7.1 Requires Improvement Update – Apprenticeships Update

56 The Principal reported that David Watson, the Director of Apprenticeships, had resigned his post. The College had put in contingency plans, which involved appointing Julie Skinner, an experienced FE Consultant who previously carried out a review in March 2020. She has started assisting with the Apprenticeship Improvement Plan on a three day a week basis and would do so until July 2020. Julie had recent and relevant experience in apprenticeships and had already met with members of SMT and the Programme Leads.

The priorities were on the learner experience, tracking and progress monitoring, the development of professional behaviours, learner destinations, as well as the embedding of British Values and Prevent. Teaching & Learning assessment and quality generally across the apprenticeship provision was being reviewed, with Julie Skinner's support.

Other progress reported on the Apprenticeship Improvement Plan was that Learner Surveys replies were generally positive, especially from those that had started after March 2020, when the revised enrolment processes had been developed. Evidence suggests that they had a better starting experience as a result of the improvements in onboarding processes. Learning walks were taking place in classrooms and also looking at online teaching. There is a detailed action plan in place for Functional Skills (Jan 2021), subsequent to a poor Principal's Review meeting in December 2020.

The Committee noted that a full update on Apprenticeships would be presented at the next meeting and that APQ members would receive a written report for the next meeting.

7.2 Quality Improvement Priorities (QIP)

APQ 57 Progress was being made with the strengthening of the curriculum and pastoral partnership, enhancing the support provided for 16-19 learners.

Actions to narrow the gap for disadvantaged students across all 16-19 provision was taking place with enrichment activities and help with online access.

Continuing Professional Development for staff had been incorporated into the Huish People Strategy.

An update on the impact of the QIP would be reported to the June meeting of the Committee.

APQ 8 ^ STUDENT SUPPORT UPDATE

58 8.1 Progress Review Update

As a result of the national lockdown in January and February, the Year 2 Parent Consultations had been postponed to the end of March. Each Student was Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rated both for their progress against target grades and Individual Learner Level. At present there were 47 students RAG rated as 'red', but some students appeared more than once for different subjects. Students at risk of underachieving were being supported and action plans were in place to raise achievement by the end of the year.

APQ 8.2 Learner Voice

59 A Student Research Group was now active to explore different modes of Learner Voice in other colleges and to report back to the SMT. It was suggested that a couple of members of the AP&Q Committee could join in to receive the feedback. The Group would then engage with Huish Students about how they would like to be represented in the College. The VP for Student Support asked if it would be possible for the group to share their findings with AP&Q in the final meeting of this academic year.

APQ 8.3 Careers and Progression

60 In the absence of being able to provide Careers and Progression guidance in the usual way, the College had encouraged Year 2 students to take an online course provided by UNLOCK. A Student Governor reported that the course had been useful, especially for students that had not had a job before.

APQ 8.4 Prospectus 2021/22

61 A survey of current applicants and parent had found that the main reason for coming to Huish was reputation passed on from friends and siblings. Further information was then sought through the website.

The College had therefore decided to reduce the paper prospectus with student written hooks and QR code links to the relevant parts of the website, where much more detail would be available.

Following the popularity of individual subject videos made last year, more professional videos with student involvement would be made for popular subjects and those programmes where the College wished to increase numbers. The Committee asked if a draft prospectus could be shared with governors once available.

Student interviews were now taking place on site, with 420 held over the February half term. Four Welcome to Huish events were planned rather than the usual two, to have smaller groups and comply with distancing restrictions.

APQ 8.2 Safeguarding and Prevent Update

62 A Somerset County Council Audit of Safeguarding had taken place with two actions arising:

- The safeguarding governor should attend safeguarding training specific to their role: relevant training was currently being sourced.
- The Private Foster Guidance to be shared with SMT, which had been completed.

Risk Assessment around Safeguarding was taking place, and a knowledge quiz for staff during this term had shown good knowledge overall. Similar events would take place in the summer term for Whistleblowing and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) legislation to keep staff up to date.

The Committee noted the number of referrals to the safeguarding reporting site, My Concern. Staff were asked to distinguish between wellbeing and mental health concerns and issues related to anxiety from the feeling of being behind in studies or not knowing how assessment would take place. The latter was now being addressed as assessment plans were beginning to be formed.

The Student Governors reported that the tutors were generally really helpful in answering questions and concerns. During the lockdown, students had found it difficult to ask many questions during online classes: Progress Reviews with subject staff and the offer of one to one online sessions with the tutors had been most helpful in answering concerns.

9. ^ ADDITIONAL CURRICULUM ITEMS

APQ 9.1 Update on Summer 2021 Assessment

63 The Committee noted that the students impacted by the cancellation of Summer 2021 exams were Year 2 A level students, Year 2 (and some year 1) Level 3 vocational students and level 2 vocational students as well as those taking GCSE English and Maths.

The College were approaching Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) in a way that: ensured students had a continued valuable and enjoyable educational experience. enabled ample opportunities for students to demonstrate their full potential without overshadowing the hard work and commitment they had already demonstrated. supported students' successful progression and transition to their chosen destination.

Planning meetings had already taken place, with a further planning day for teams on Wednesday 24th March.

The Committee recognised that the College had been put into a difficult situation by Government late approach on this. The Principal stated that the amount of work this had created should not be underestimated. The Committee thanked staff for their efforts in putting together all that was needed for TAGs in such challenging circumstances.

APQ 9.2 Vocational Courses Update

64 The Assistant Principal Humanities and Social Sciences reported that the lockdown had made it very challenging to keep true 'vocational' context evident in delivery and assessment.

In December, the College had passed the Pearson Quality Management Review with no actions or recommendations for the third successive year. There had been no subject areas identified as 'high risk' and a number were rated in the top 10% in the country for academic achievement.

There had been some creative and innovative approaches to maintaining some vocational element of learning, for example sports students coaching siblings and parents in their gardens.

In a climate of uncertainty, vocational students were applauded for their dedication and resilience with 60% choosing to attend January exams despite the introduction of the third national lockdown. The results were very high with 87% overall receiving distinction or merit grades, and 100% in some courses, such as IT. The Committee congratulated these students but wondered if the success rate would have been so high amongst students that had chosen not to sit the exams.

There were currently 457 students on Level 3 Vocational Qualifications, and 410 applications had been received to date for 2021/22: more applications were expected after results day.

10. ^PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

APQ 10.1 Pilot Ofsted Inspection – May 2021

65 The Principal reported that the College had been due an Ofsted Inspection in Spring 2020, but that this had not taken place due to the pandemic. The College had now volunteered for a pilot Ofsted Inspection to take place in the week beginning 17 May. The Pilot would not be graded and there would be no formal report. Ofsted were carrying out pilots to look at the impact of the pandemic on colleges and to formulate the new Common Inspection Framework.

The FE consultant, Julie Skinner, would help to prepare apprenticeship staff for the Inspection and was planning work with Programme Leads in the coming weeks. A briefing session for Governors was also planned with Consultant and Ofsted Inspector, Lyn Bourne.

The Pilot Ofsted Inspection would provide good feedback for the College's 2021 Self- Assessment Report later in the year.

APQ 10.2 COVID Testing Centre

66 The College had successfully completed national testing requirements as students and staff returned to College early in March with well over 5000 tests carried out. The operation had now been scaled back as students and staff were now using home testing kits.

The Committee thanked all staff involved in the huge effort to carry out the testing.

10.3 News and Celebrations

The Committee was very pleased to see the good news stories shared by the Principal.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND DATES OF MEETINGS 2020-21

There was no other business to report and the meeting closed at 7:45pm

The remaining meetings for 2020-21 would take place on
Monday 10 May 2021, Monday 28 June 2021