



**HUDDERSFIELD NEW COLLEGE
FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**

**MINUTES OF THE QUALITY COMMITTEE
HELD AT HUDDERSFIELD NEW COLLEGE
ON MONDAY 28th SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 4.30pm**

MINUTES

Present: Mr S Leigh, Mr D O' Neill, Mr D Giblin, Ms A Williams

In Attendance: Mr P Kennedy, Ms H Smithson, Mr R Walker

Clerk: Mrs C Coupland

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received by Ms L Dearman, Professor M Page and Ms L Tempest.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 16th April 2008

Resolved:

- **That these be accepted as a correct record.**

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising

4. Results Analysis 2009

The findings of the report were discussed. Mr Kennedy drew particular attention to the following areas:

Key Strengths/Improvements

- Overall success rate for the college is up to 83% (+4 on 2008)
- A level success rate up to 95%, and above Sixth Form Colleges (SFC) benchmark (+4 on 2008)
- A level value added* by Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS) measure at 3 (top 25% nationally)
- A level high grades up 3.8% points to 30.8%
- AS level success rates up 3.5% points to 74.5%
- Level 3 vocational courses success rates up to 80.6% and above SFC benchmarks
- Level 3 vocational courses value added by ALPS measure at 2 (top 10% nationally)
- Level 2 vocational courses high grades up by 15.2% points
- GCSE English A*-C grades up by 23% points to 67.2% (over 5% points above national average)
- Foundation diploma success remains outstanding

*Value added measures are intended to allow fairer comparisons between schools with different pupil intakes.

Key areas for further work/improvement

- Overall college success rate is still below the SFC average
- A level high grades achievement (A/B grades) for the most able students is lower than 08
- AS level achievement rates and high grades (A/B) are lower than 08
- AS level success rate still below the SFC average.
- AS level value added by ALPS measure has dropped from 3 to 5
- Level 2 vocational courses success rate is lower than 08 (-4) and is 2% points below the national benchmark
- GCSE maths A*-C grades down by 15% points to 45.1%
- GCSE science A*-C grades down by 12% points to 60%

Members of the Committee found the College's strengths to be very pleasing especially with regards to the improved success rate and also with the increase in GCSE English grades which are up by 23% points. Mr Kennedy explained that the improved grades in English was the results of the 2008-09 improvement plan which involved trialling different teaching methods to address the marginal failings by means of intensive training and support in order to fast track students in Autumn 2008 thus achieving a pass rate of over 80%. In comparison, Maths pass rate was significantly lower than 2008 with grade A-C rate of 61.5%. Mr Kennedy explained that the quality improvement plan for maths was to be checked to ensure that detailed steps are in place to address this issue. Mr O'Neill informed the Committee that he had made contact with other local colleges and HNC results were similar if not better. The analysis of the updated national data, when available, will therefore give a better understanding of the true extent of this issue, given that it could be a national, rather than a local concern.

Mr Kennedy reminded the Committee to be cautious when comparing the achievements and high grades at AS this year against those of previous years. This also applied to considerations of benchmarks and value added data sets which are drawn from pre-2008/9 statistical information; this is because all AS Specifications are new, with no national statistical comparisons available until publication of the Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT).

Ms Smithson explained that the new specifications in general had reduced the coursework component and in turn the opportunity for tutor support. The Principal agreed that the demise in coursework had placed reliance upon students to do well under examination conditions. The College therefore now needed to train students to do better in exams. Mr Kennedy explained that the new specifications may also have impacted upon the results for GCSE Maths this year as well as Sports Studies and Sociology. It was recognised by the Senior Management Team that teaching staff had underestimated or even misunderstood the implications of the new specifications. The Chair acknowledged that it was key for staff to familiarise themselves with the new classifications and questioned the need for more robust procedures to manage the significant changes and to ensure that all staff were familiar with and understand its implications for next year's results.

The Principal informed the Committee that all teaching departments had appointed a member of staff to act as a subject 'specialist'. The nominated staff member had attended examination training and subsequently cascaded the training to all departmental staff. The Principal acknowledged that it was difficult for the Senior Management Team to assess the staff members' knowledge of the new specifications prior to cascade training given the scope of all subjects. Furthermore, the Principal was also of the view that the examination training including conflicting advice from the exams board did not clearly signpost the extent of the specifications changes and only with feedback on the exams can the College learn. For example, the College has agreed to incorporate a common scheme of work involving teaching the same thing at same time by different teachers with all departmental staff setting the same essay question. This teaching technique will enable the Senior Management Team to make comparisons across groups. HNC accepts that creativity in teaching will be lost and for some teaching staff it is a huge cultural shift. However sports studies and sociology are moving to this method of teaching given that it worked effectively for Psychology. The Committee also considered alternative support for teaching departments, Ms Smithson acknowledged that it would be beneficial for HNC to encourage more staff to become examiners in order to gain an 'insiders view' to the new specifications.

Mr Kennedy informed the Committee that achievement on advanced vocational courses remains outstanding. The pass rate of 99.6% with high grades of 90.7% is roughly static from last year. The success rate of 80.6% is 6 points better than last year and represents a significant improvement overall, especially in context of substantially increased student numbers on these courses (from 155 completers in 08 to 246 completers in 09). Increase in retention numbers may have been due to rigorous procedures in following up and challenging poor attendance. Furthermore, around one third of students on these courses achieved at overall distinction level (equivalent to three grades As at A level). This was outstanding. The value added score based on ALPS analysis puts the college in the top 10% of providers in the sample (a score of 2 by this measure). This score has been maintained at this level for 2 years. (The 2007 figure of 1 is derived from the NDVA measure – a BTEC value added pilot scheme measure which predates the ALPS analysis)

Mr Kennedy explained that the students taking these courses are often the most “at risk” learners in college because they tend to have modest GCSE points scores (average GCSE score on entry is c4.6). Mr Kennedy is of the view that given that this qualification gives students a superb sense of achievement, it would be beneficial for HNC to try to encourage weaker AS students to take this route to gain entry into Universities. However it was recognised by the Committee that the college does not want to lose sight of higher performing students and to continue to stretch student’s potential.

5. An Outline of the Self Assessment Process

Mr Kennedy advised the Committee that the self assessment process was underway across all departmental areas with draft versions to be presented to the SMT by 2nd October 2009.

The Chair questioned validity of the self assessment process. The Principal confirmed that the College uses ‘Critical Friends’ to their benefit. Last year one ‘Critical Friend’ challenged the Psychology’s departments Self Assessment Reviews and action plan. Such feedback prompted a departmental review and amendments were made. The Principal advised Committee Members that at present there are no Governors involved in the Self Assessment Process. This was something that the Committee members wished to take forward with a view for Governor Volunteers to also become ‘critical friends’ in time.

In addition Mr Kennedy confirmed that he acted as a ‘Critical Friend’ to another College. The Chair commended this and wishes for the College to encourage other staff members to take up this role as a means of observing others’ practice initiatives and developing further support networks.

Mr Walker informed the Committee that NORVIC Peer Review Group is very successful. Different support themes have previously included the Learner Voice and Self Assessment Process. Mr Walker suspects that this year’s theme will be on the new Common Inspection Framework and its implications. The Principal informed members that the New Framework is very contentious and mechanical and that it would be beneficial for this to be a future agenda item.

Resolved:

- **Draft College SARS to be presented at the next meeting**
- **Common Inspection framework changes and model of Excellence to be provided at a future meeting.**
- **To seek volunteers from the quality committee to engage with samples of reviews.**

6. Terms of Reference:

The terms of reference were considered. Members agreed that the existing terms needed to be revised in order to encapsulate wider external quality judgements on all work undertaken in the College.

Resolved:

- **Draft terms of reference are to be approved by the Principal and the Chair prior to recommending them to the Corporation.**
- **To incorporate Investors In People Performance Inspection, the International Award and the British Dyslexia Award at the next Quality Meeting given the proposed changes to the terms of Reference.**

7. Any Other Business

Meeting Schedule: The Chair had advised members prior to this evenings meeting that he was unable to attend the next meeting scheduled for 24th November 2009. Members agreed to bring the next Committee meeting forward to the 23rd November 2009.

8. Confidentiality:

No items were determined as confidential.

9. Next Meeting: **Monday 23rd November 2009 at 4.30pm at Huddersfield New College. *Please note that Committee Meetings will now take place in the new Board Room in the Senior Management Suite.**