

GOVERNING BODY

QUALITY AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the non-confidential part of the meeting held on Thursday, 14th January 2010 at 6:15 pm at the Richmond Business School, Richmond

Present:	Ms Sally Field (Chair) Ms Christina Conroy OBE, Principal and Chief Executive Ms Rohini Bhattacharya Ms Lesley Kirby Mr Sylvester Olutayo Dr Mike Sevitt
In attendance:	Ms Gabrielle Flint, Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) Ms Louise Ellis, Head of Quality Ms Nikki Herbertson, Director of Business Development Mr Paul Coveney, Clerk to the Governing Body & College Secretary
Apologies:	Mr Sebastian Scotney Ms Judith Potter, Vice Principal (Finance & Corporate Services)

Part I: Non-Confidential Items

Before opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed Nikki Herbertson, and all present introduced themselves briefly.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the Committee meeting of 3rd June 2009 were, with a minor amendment, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda, with the exception of:

- Item 5: the meeting of the Chair, Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) and Clerk to develop the programme of business for the year had yet to take place, and the Clerk would arrange this by e-mail
- Item 7: the Principal reported that the College had appointed an interim Director of Finance, who would lead on CIS improvements, with an action plan for resource deployment and the acquisition of new software.
- Item 7: the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that the missing entries in the operational plan would be corrected for the SAR.
- Item 11: the events calendar would be considered at the Committee's next meeting. The Chair emphasised the importance of an explanation as to the relevance of the calendar to the Committee's terms of reference.

Clerk

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. CLASS OBSERVATIONS BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Chair reminded the Committee that she had last year encouraged members to observe teaching and learning by the College's non-traditional learners. The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that Governors who had taken such opportunity had found the experience useful and insightful. Sylvester Olutayo confirmed a similar experience from attending a photography class observation. The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) and the Head of Quality would prepare a schedule of three dates which would be suitable, and the Clerk would then invite Committee members, and other Governors, to attend.

GF
Clerk

The Chair noted the difference between attending a lesson (which would be a good

starting point for Governors) and shadowing a lesson observation (as she and Sylvester Olutayo had done).

The Clerk would arrange for progress in this matter to be added to the agenda of subsequent meetings of the Committee.

Clerk

Lesley Kirby reported that she would like to offer a reciprocal arrangement for observation shadowing with Shene School, a suggestion which the Committee noted with gratitude.

5. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that the substance of risk management, and progress in terms of performance indicators, would be reported to the next meeting. The Committee noted that it would monitor risks 1 to 6 and 11, and that reporting progress against the performance indicators would provide a helpful way for it to monitor progress in the management of those risks.

Clerk

The Committee noted that 6 of the 16 risks were rated as significant, which could seem to be a high-risk strategy. The Principal reported that the College had more experience of managing some of the risks, and their likelihood was therefore considered to be lower than for the newer risks: the College was operating in a high-risk environment, and therefore the impact of many risks was considered to be high.

The Committee noted that the strategic objectives with which the risks were aligned related to a three-year timescale, and that the College was currently in the first of those three years: it was not surprising that the risk likelihood was relatively high at this stage. The Committee further noted that the volatility of the College's environment was likely to require objectives (and their associated risks) to be reviewed on an annual basis.

The Committee noted the risk management report.

6. **COLLEGE SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR 2008/09**

The Principal tabled an Ofsted learning and skills summary from its annual report for 2008/09, as useful calibration for the College SAR for the same period: the Ofsted report showed common sector problems with Skills for Life, and with over-graded teacher observations. The Committee noted that the overall percentage of outstanding and good providers was similar to those in the schools sector.

The Committee noted that it was not required to scrutinise the SAR word for word: its responsibility was to be satisfied that it was truthful and reasonable, and that its overall assessment was also reasonable.

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) summarised the draft Self Assessment Report for 2008/09. She stressed the changed context from last year: there was a new Ofsted Common Inspection Framework for FE Colleges (similar to that used in schools): the previous five key questions had been replaced by three Aspects, each with a number of sub-questions. As a result, the College now had to provide much more evidence for its self assessment. Also, there was concept of "limiting grades": Colleges with less than good performance relating to Health & Safety and Equality & Diversity could not expect a high overall rating. The new focus was more on learning and the individual than on teaching and the organisation.

In some areas, the need to provide new evidence had shown that College performance was better than may have been expected.

The College had assessed the three Aspects as follows:

- Outcome for Learners – 1 (outstanding)
- Quality of Provision – 2 (good)
- Leadership and Management – 1 (outstanding)

The overall assessment was 2 (good): the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reminded the Committee that it had last year also assessed itself overall as good, but that Ofsted had upgraded this to 1 (outstanding). The current overall assessment had been affected by the review of Employer Responsive provision in 2007/08, and by the College's under-developed systems to support some of the new learner groups.

The Committee asked for an explanation as to why the College had assessed itself as outstanding for Leadership and Management. It recognised that the College Management had made fundamental changes (approved by the Governing Body) to recover from the Employer Responsive difficulties, but could not recommend the SAR for Governing Body approval unless it was satisfied that the current assessment was reasonable.

The Principal acknowledged that the Employer Responsive difficulties represented failings in leadership and management, but these failings had occurred, and been recognised, in 2007/08: the leadership actions in 2008/09 to resolve the difficulties had been commended by the College's internal auditors, and the beneficial effects would be most strongly evident in 2009/10, having started to appear in the last months of 2008/09. In particular, the internal auditors had been of the view that, while other Colleges could make significant changes, few could do so with the speed of RACC. The College had reflected long and hard on its assessment for Leadership and Management: the contributory grades were as follows:

- C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation? – Grade 1
- C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge? – Grade 1
- C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners? – Grade 2
- C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? – Grade 2
- C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement? – Grade 2
- C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners? – Grade 1
- C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money? – Grade 1

The Committee noted that the Employer Responsive difficulties related to 2007/08, while 2008/09 saw the implementation of the recovery from those difficulties, and expressed its pleasure that, despite the known CIS difficulties, the College returns had all been accurate. The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that the CIS difficulties had imposed a management overhead in ensuring the timeliness and accuracy of data, but that the underlying data itself was sound. She also believed that Leadership and Management should be assessed across the College, and not seen only in the Employer Responsive context, which had affected some 200 of the College's 14,000 learners. Employer Responsive provision had been a problem nationally, and the College was far from alone in experiencing difficulty.

The Committee observed that two of the Grade 2 areas were grade limiting for Ofsted, to which the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) replied that the College recognised that during 2008/09 improvements had had to be made to these systems to ensure that they met the needs of new learner groups. However, issues were being rapidly resolved. There were currently no precedents for how the new grade limiting process would operate but it was expected that colleges who were 'Good' (grade 2) in these areas would not be affected.

The Committee recognised the importance of management recognising issues, and then resolving them.

The Committee noted that the College's achievement results for young people were 1% below the national benchmark, and asked whether the benchmark referred to similar Colleges. The Principal replied that it did, but reminded the Committee that the College's young learners were those who had not succeeded in other schools or colleges: they often had different and complex needs, and the narrative in the SAR explained this. The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that it was possible that Ofsted might take a different view, in which case the College would have the right of appeal.

The Committee was satisfied that the College's assessment of Leadership and Management as Grade 1 was reasonable.

The Committee recommended that the Governing Body should approve the College Self Assessment Report for 2008/09.

The Committee noted that, following approval by the Governing Body, the actions identified in the SAR would be fed into the QIP, which would then be managed by the Academic Board, and monitored by the Quality & Curriculum Committee.

The Committee recognised the quality and quantity of work done by the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) and the Head of Quality in particular in compiling the SAR, which was in a new and challenging format compared with previous years. The Head of Quality reported that the whole College had been involved, and had benefited from that involvement.

The Committee expressed its thanks and congratulations to the College for its efforts in compiling the SAR.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Clerk reported that the date of the next meeting (25th March 2010) clashed with an AoC London event for Governors to provide feedback on the recent AoC/LSIS sponsored Schofield report on strategic governance in Further Education in England. He would be attending a similar event the coming Monday, 18th January, and would report to Governors on the value of the event.

Should members of the Committee wish to attend the March event, this could pose a problem in achieving a quorum on the day. The Committee noted, however, that changing the date of the meeting could cause a similar problem.

Clerk

This part of the meeting ended at 7:50 pm

The following items were considered in Part 2 of the meeting.

8. MINUTES

The confidential minutes of the meeting on 5th November 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

9. MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

10. ANY OTHER CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

There was none.

The meeting ended at 7:52 pm

CHAIR