

GOVERNING BODY

QUALITY AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 4th November 2010 at 6:15 pm at Parkshot, Richmond

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| Present: | Ms Sally Field (Chair) Ms Christina Conroy OBE, Principal and Chief Executive Mr Alberto Esguevillas Lete Mr Sebastian Scotney [Items 2 to 9] Ms Lesley Kirby, non-Governor member |
| In attendance: | Ms Gabrielle Flint, Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) Ms Louise Ellis, Director of Quality & Assessment Mr Paul Coveney, Clerk to the Governing Body & College Secretary |
| Apologies: | Dr Mike Sevitt Ms Judith Potter, Vice Principal (Finance & Corporate Services) |

Before opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed Alberto Esguevillas Lete as a new member, and all present introduced themselves.

Part I: Non-Confidential Items

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 15th June 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MATTERS ARISING

- Item 2: the Clerk reported that the inclusion of class attendance as a part of the Governor induction process had been approved by the Search & Governance Committee on 15th September 2010.
- Item 4: the Clerk reported that class observations for Sebastian Scotney and Lesley Kirby had not so far been arranged. The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) said she would arrange these, as well as for the new Governors, Alberto Esguevillas Lete and Naren Ramachandran.
- Item 6: The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that the College had not been successful in its bid for funding to support developments in the volunteering area, but was now collaborating in a consortium bid for ESF funds relating to the unemployed in South London: the result of the bid was expected within about six weeks.

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3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee noted that there were no substantive changes from the previous year, and that, as suggested by the Committee on 5th November 2009, the phrase "the quality of the student experience" had been added to point 12 under Responsibilities.

The Committee received its terms of reference for 2010/11.

5. RACC OPERATIONAL PLAN 2010/11

In considering the Operational Plan for 2010/11, the Committee noted that the 16 strategic objectives had, following the Governing Body on 23rd September 2010, been rationalised to 8. The Committee would be particularly concerned with numbers 1 (Teaching and Learning Excellence), 2 (Learner Client Groups) and 3 (Digital Solutions & Delivery), although the Finance & Resources Committee would be monitoring many aspects of the last of these.

The Principal advised the Committee that **Teaching and Learning Excellence** was particularly focussed on growing success rates through the use of innovative teaching and learning.

In considering **Learner Client Groups**, the Committee noted that the College proposed to rationalise the original eight groups to five: the original groupings had been found to contain

duplication and overlap, which was not helpful for market segmentation. The Committee observed that the College management had the knowledge required to choose the appropriate groupings in the context of the community, funding and other changes, and the general operation environment of the College. The Committee asked how well, after two months of the term, the College was doing in terms of enrolments compared with target, to which the Principal replied that adult education was above target, but this was partly explained by the fact that, with the reduction in the number of approved qualifications, some College courses were now funded as Adult Education, rather than as accredited qualifications. Her general sense was that the College was around 10% below target on enrolments. One trend that had been observed was that the ratio of enrolments to learners was almost 1 to 1 in 2010/11: in 2009/10 it had been closer to 1.4 to 1. The College planned to commission research into elasticity of the demand/price relationship. The College had recognised the need to develop more flexible fee structures: the market was now more self-regulating than previously, when it had been largely government-regulated. In 2010/11, the College would go back to a zero base, and build the fee structure needed for its new operating environment in 2011/12. The College was also working with LBRuT regarding the borough skills training plan, which might for instance have a focus on customer service and hospitality management.

In considering **Digital Solutions & Delivery**, the Committee welcomed the suggestion by the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) that Governors might be given a demonstration of the College's e-learning environment. This could cover that environment as it was currently, and what that offered to learners and staff, as well as plans for extension and improvement. The Committee requested the Clerk to bring this offer to Governors' attention, with a view to planning sessions as required.

Clerk

The Committee noted the College operational plan for 2010/11.

The Committee considered a tabled paper setting out the College 2010/11 risk register, as developed by the SMT following production of the operational plan. The Committee noted that the three risks within its scope were all considered to be of high impact, but that the plans taken to contain them placed them in the Medium or High assessment levels: they were not at this stage regarded as Significant. The Committee noted that the number of performance indicators was reduced from last year

The Committee noted the risk management report.

6. **CURRICULUM STRATEGY**

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reminded the Committee that this had been developed originally to address the problems experienced in 2007/08 in the Richmond Business School. The strategy had proved successful in improving Employer Responsive provision, meeting funding requirements and improving the focus on volunteering, but it needed to be reviewed in view of changes in government focus, for instance the abolition of Train to Gain and the decision to maintain leisure funding. Changes would reflect the College's intention to get closer to its learners and understand better what they actually wanted.

The Committee welcomed this approach, and asked that in future, assertions in presented papers should always be supported by evidence. The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that there were known difficulties in obtaining the latest data through CIS, although the basic reports were available.

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The Principal stressed the importance of Enterprise within the curriculum strategy: LBRuT's assessment was that the borough represented a "hot spot" for home-working and business start-up.

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that the College planned to re-write the curriculum strategy: it would be subject to consultation in the Spring term, after which it would be reported again to the Committee.

The Director of Quality & Assessment informed the Committee that the use of e-mails had resulted in an improved response from learners regarding employability and enterprise. 21% of respondents said that they were now able to begin self-employment (2008/09: 16%). The Principal added that the Chief Executive of the Skills Funding Agency would be visiting the College on 15th November, and the College would stress to him the role of enterprise and adult education for employability and the needs of small businesses.

The Committee noted the update on the curriculum strategy.

7. **LEARNER MATTERS**

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reminded the Committee that the learner engagement strategy had been developed in 2009/10: learner forums, paper surveys, feedback cards, telephone and e-mail had all been used to obtain a much increased level of learner feedback. The College had responded to many of the items of adverse feedback, and learners had commented on how pleased they were that their views were recognised, and responded to. She said that the improved learner feedback, along with the review of the target learner groups and the market research on price sensitivity and competition were all important ingredients in the College's plan to improve its services to its learners, even in a time of funding cuts.

The Committee noted the report on learner matters.

8. **COLLEGE SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT 2009/10**

The Director of Quality & Assessment reminded the Committee that the SAR was required every year: it would be posted to the SFA in draft by the end of December 2010, and in a final form (approved by the Governing Body on the recommendation of the Quality & Curriculum Committee) by the end of January 2011.

Most of the data had now been collected, and the bottom-up academic review was almost complete. The Committee noted that much of the work for this had effectively been done already for the May 2010 Ofsted inspection, and that the SAR findings were likely to be consistent with the Ofsted report, which had expressed a high level of approval for the way in which the College used self assessment to improve. The Committee further noted that there were some decreases in success rates compared with the previous year, but that these were in line with expectations as the College moved provision to more challenging learner groups. The decrease was also a result of changes to the regulations relating to learner data management which were introduced by the mid year in 2009/10 by the LSC.

The Committee noted the SAR progress report.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Framework for Excellence

The Director of Quality & Assessment informed the Committee that this was the first year in which the FfE scores (excepting financial health and financial management and control) would be published. The Committee noted that the College's scores had improved in some areas since the previous year, but asked what was the purpose of publishing these scores. The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) replied that the LSC had apparently believed that prospective learners would use the statistics as a factor in deciding which college to attend.

Dates of remaining meetings

The Chair informed the Committee that she would not be able to attend the next meeting on 13th January 2011. This was an important meeting for the Committee, since it was the one at which the SAR would be subject to detailed scrutiny before being recommended to the Governing Body for approval. In the circumstances, she had discussed the position with the Chair of the Governing Body, who had agreed that he would chair the next meeting of the Committee.

Chair

The meeting ended at 7:35 pm

CHAIR