

THE TRAFFORD COLLEGE GROUP

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee
held on Wednesday 23 November 2022, at 5.30pm via Microsoft Teams**

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| Present: | Graham Luccock | (Chairperson) |
| | Sarah Drake | |
| | James Scott | (Principal and Chief Executive Officer) |
| | Fatema Desai | |
| | Emily McIntosh | |
| | | |
| In Attendance | Barry Watson | (Corporation Secretary) |
| | John Simpson | (Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills) |
| | Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava | (Deputy Principal) |
| | Tracey Wood | (Assistant Principal Adult Skills & Employer Engagement) |
| | Jane Nickisson | (Assistant Principal Higher Education & Skills) |

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Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Corporation Secretary (CS) welcomed Emily McIntosh (Independent Member) and Jane Nickisson the newly appointed Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills (APHES) to their first meeting.

HEC&Q/29/22 Election of Chairperson of the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee for the Academic Year 2022/2023

The CS sought nominations for the position of Chairperson of the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee for the Academic Year 2022/2023.

Graham Luccock was the sole nomination, and it was unanimously resolved that he be elected as Chairperson of the Committee for the period outlined.

Action: Corporation Secretary

HEC&Q/30/22 Apologies for Absence

The CS reported that apologies for absence had been received from Colette Fagan and Kurt Allman (Co -opted members).

It was noted that the Assistant Principal Vocational and the Assistant Principal, Adult and Employer Engagement were unable to attend the meeting.

A member asked why there was no Higher Education Student representation at the meeting.

The APHES advised that this was a work in progress and that at this stage no student had come forward to take on the role.

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The APHES further advised that student representation was critical to everything that the Group undertakes and hoped to have a representative in place in time for the next meeting.

Action: Assistant Principal Higher Education & Skills

HEC&Q/31/22 Declarations of Direct or Indirect Interest in any of the meetings business items

There were no declarations of either direct or indirect interest in any of the meetings business items

HEC&Q/32/22 Minutes of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee Meeting held on 13 July 2022

The minutes of the meeting were approved and accepted as a correct account of the meeting's proceedings.

HEC&Q/33/22 Matters Arising from the Minutes

- i) HEC&Q/17/22 - Matters Arising from the Minutes – Community Response Strategy

The CS advised that the Draft Community Response Strategy would be presented to the Board of the Corporation at its meeting on 14 December 2022 and advised of the historical reasons why it was a matter arising from the HE Curriculum and Quality Committee although not strictly within its remit.

Action: Corporation Secretary/Principal and Chief Executive Officer

- ii) HEC&Q/25/22- Appointment of Co -opted member to the HEC&Q Committee

The CS advised that good progress had been made in respect of an appointment to the Co-opted vacancy on the Committee.

It was noted that a very strong and suitable application was being presented to the Board of the Corporation at its meeting on 14 December 2022 when it was hoped that the appointment would be approved.

Action: Corporation Secretary/ Board of the Corporation

The CS went through the other actions arising from the minutes and it was confirmed that they had either been completed or would be addressed as part of the agenda for the meeting.

There were no further matters raised by members arising from the minutes.

HEC&Q/34/22 Self-Evaluation Documentation 2021/2022 and Quality Improvement Plan 2022/2023

The Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills (HHEHS) presented a report which included a copy of the final outcomes of the Self Evaluation Documentation (SED)

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for the Academic Year 2021/2022 and the proposed Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the Academic year 2022/2023.

With respect to the SED the HHEHS advised that the key issues arising were as follows:

- Teaching and Learning was good with standards being maintained and that external examiners had confirmed parity and quality.
- Student feedback continued to reflect strong satisfaction with teaching and learning with the Group securing the second highest satisfaction rating within Greater Manchester.
- Applications had increased on the previous year, but that overall recruitment had declined with some curriculum areas under recruiting.
- Retention rates had decreased compared to the previous year, but overall achievement rates had improved.
- Award classifications were at least consistent or higher than the previous year.

The HHEHS further advised that the proposed QIP was designed to address the issues arising from the SED and provided the Committee with an overview of the eight key actions contained in the QIP.

Members raised a number of issues arising from the report as follows:

- A member commented that student achievements is not just about qualifications and asked how students were involved in other aspects of achievements across the provision.

The HEEHS outlined to the Committee the many extra-curricular achievements, projects, and activities that the students were involved in particularly in the Stockport area. The member commented that it was important that Governors were made aware of such activities, and it was agreed that the HHEHS would ensure reporting to Governors on such activities going forward.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

- A member asked about what progress had been made in respect of the staffing challenges that the Group faced within its Higher Education provision.

The APHES outlined the staffing appointments that had been made recently and also provided a detailed account of the new CPD opportunities and events that had been made available to staff. The actions taken relating to Computing staffing and resources as a result of student feedback were also highlighted. The APHES also outlined the actions there were being taken in respect of the observation of Teaching and Learning and internal CDAR that would take place after Christmas.

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The PCEO also outlined in detail the positive actions that were being taken from a curricular perspective with staff including weekly briefings he also outlined the actions taken to support managers in dealing with the forthcoming CDAR.

A member commented concerning the Teaching Observation Criteria that she had experienced at another College and how classroom differentials tied in with CPD and undertook to share it with managers.

Action: Committee Member (EM)

- In respect of the QIP a member asked how enrolment had gone and what was being done to address the decline in recruitment.

The HHEHS advised the two main areas for concern in terms of recruitment were part time Engineering and Computing although applications had been positive, they had not been matched by enrolments. He further advised on the actions that had been put in place to address the issues including short course provision in January 2023 to fast-track students.

- A member asked if a survey had been undertaken to find out why applications had not turned into enrolments.

The HHEHS advised that all students had been contacted but that the response rate had been low, he further commented that the cost-of-living crisis in September 2022 had had a significant impact on the provision and that a piece of work needed to be undertaken around funding going forward.

The APHES advised the Committee of other actions that were being undertaken to improve recruitment and opportunities including, the admissions process and review, improvements to the website to better articulate the HE offer and the use of feeder courses.

- A member commented around the significant increase in students with Learning Difficulties and asked about the support that is provided to them.

The APHES advised of the staffing support that was available (Part time support Officer) and that the Group was looking to appoint a full-time support officer going forward. It was further advised that students have access to the funding made available to them and issues around evidencing disability were discussed.

There were no further issues raised by members arising from the report and after due discussion and consideration it was unanimously resolved that the Quality Improvement Plan 2022/2023 be recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

Action: Board of the Corporation

Minute No.**HEC&Q/35/22 Student Feedback 2021/2022**

The HHEHS made a presentation which provided the Committee with an overview of the outcomes from Student Satisfaction Surveys for the Academic Year 2021/2022.

The presentation covered the following key outcomes:

- Higher Education Induction Survey 2022 by programme area.

The HHEHS advised that the outcomes were satisfaction rates of above 90 per cent for all areas of provision.

- The Higher Education Semester Surveys.

The HHEHS advised that the outcomes were very positive with the average overall satisfaction rate being over 90 per cent. It was advised that Semester 2 had had a more positive outcome than Semester 1 and that the lowest scoring response for both Semesters was organisation and management.

- External Survey- The National Students Survey (Office for Students).

The HHEHS provided a detailed overview of all aspects of the survey including a comparison with 2021 and a Rag Rated summary of the eight criteria in the survey and the national benchmark data.

It was noted that the overall satisfaction rate had improved compared to 2021 and that it was 11.71 per cent above benchmark. The HHEHS advised that the performance was the second best compared with all other Northwest providers.

Members raised a number of issues arising from the report as follows:

- A member asked what items were included in the Semester Surveys in respect of organisation and management.

The HHEHS advised that it included such items as timetabling and staff responding to student communications. In discussing the outcomes and the presentation the HHEHS advised that he would produce the information at an earlier stage for members to allow them to review the outcomes and trends prior to the meeting.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

- A member commented that the information presented a good set of positive data and asked what the issues were relating to learning resources.

The HHEHS advised it largely related to reopening and closing times concerning the library and that actions had been taken to address the issue. He further added that the Group had been below benchmark in terms of performance but that satisfaction rates with respect to this had now increased by 16 per cent for this year and that the additional capital funding would

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improve the position going forward.

The APHES commented that the students are sometimes unaware how excellent the resources they have available to them are compared to other providers. It was suggested that awareness raising of this should be made known to students at induction going forward.

Action: Assistant Principal Higher Education Skills

There were no further issues raised by members arising from the report and after due discussion and consideration it was resolved that it be noted.

HEC&Q/36/22 Higher Skills Strategy Action Plan Update

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (PCEO) presented a report which provided members with a copy of the Higher Skills Strategy Action Plan (HSSAP) which set out how the objectives of the Higher Skills Strategy (HSS) were being addressed and the progress that had been made up to November 2022.

The PCEO went through the progress that had been made for each of the 5 Strategic Objectives and it was noted that for each objective, reasonable or good progress had been made with the exception of Student recruitment which had been impacted on by lower than planned recruitment numbers in September 2022.

It was advised that of the objectives in the Action Plan 6 were Rag Rated as Green, 11 Amber and 2 Red. Regarding the Red Rag rated objectives the PCEO advised that this was because the Alumni approach was still under development but that the appointment of a new marketing manager would help address this issue for the second half of the academic Year 2022/2023.

The PCEO provided the Committee with details of the challenges that the Group faced in recruitment within the categories of adults, 18-year-old school leavers and Individual Employers. He also advised of the targeted actions that would be undertaken within specific curriculum provision and the team that had now been put in place to support the initiatives.

The PCEO also advised concerning the work that had been undertaken in terms of Curriculum Planning post-Christmas and the expanded portfolio for the academic year 2023/2024.

Members raised several issues arising from the report as follows:

- A member asked about the plans to promote Lifelong Learning entitlement in 2025 and if the Group had the time to prepare for it.

The PCEO advised that it was on the Group's radar and outlined the approach around the skills guarantee and modularisation. It was also advised that engagement around Level 1 and 2 was in place but that the Government did not realise the problems relating to adults who were not operating at Level 3 and that entitlements were in place around Level 3 provision.

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- A member asked about the likelihood of the achievement for the target relating to the skills strategy in respect of liaising with Trafford MBC and UA92.

The PCEO provided the Committee with details of the plans for the current Academic year and advised that the current focus was on the Stockport offer.

He further advised that there would be a meeting with both parties shortly which would be used to reflect on the position and to ensure that the Group is in the right space. He further outlined details of the discussions that needed to be held around Digital and Access to HE which would be difficult.

There were no further issues raised by members arising from the report and after due discussion and consideration it was resolved that it be noted.

HEC&Q/37/22 Higher Education National Policy Update

The APHES presented a report which provided the Committee with information concerning the current Higher Education landscape.

The APHES provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the key issues and updates arising from the report as follows:

- Higher Education reforms and proposals.
- Office for Students update including, revised B3 conditions, revised Teaching Excellence Framework, consultation on Access and Participation and the National Student Survey review.
- Updates concerning the Quality Assurance Agency and the Higher Education Statistics Agency.
- Higher Technical Qualifications Update.
- Skills Injection Fund to which the Group had made an application.

Members raised a number of issues arising from the report and update as follows:

- A member commented that the Group faced some extensive challenges especially around the expectations that Universities and Colleges should work together and asked what plans were in place to address the challenge in Greater Manchester.

The PCEO and APHES advised the Committee concerning the substantial cross co-operation that was taking place across Greater Manchester including the Joint Group of Principals and University Vice Chancellors. It was further advised that this was very much a work in progress especially around issues including transition from FE to HE, school engagement at Key stage 4 and the sharing of good practice around student support, Mental Health, and Well-being.

The PCEO advised that members would be kept up to date regarding progress as part of the Higher Skills strategy Action Plan.

There were no further issues raised by members arising from the report and after due discussion and consideration it was resolved that it be noted.

Minute No.**HEC&Q/38/22 Access and Participation Plan 2020-2027- Progress Update**

The APHES presented a report which provided the Committee with a progress update concerning the progress of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-2027.

The APHES drew members to the following key issues:

- Confirmation of the Approval of the APP.

It was advised that the confirmation of the approval of the APP for the period 2024/2025 to 2027 had been received and the APHES provided members with a copy of the letter of approval. The APHES drew Committee members' attention to the conditions of the approval and outlined the actions that would be taken going forward to ensure the condition requirements were met. It was further advised that the Group would not be required to submit a new APP until 2023 for the period 2024/2025 onwards.

A member commented that the APP was a real challenge to small providers as the regularity burden was very extensive and it was important that the resources were provided to see it through, and it was an issue that needed to be monitored from a governance perspective.

The PCEO commented that it was a point well made and that there was currently no immediate answer to the issue. He provided the context to the APP in terms of falling numbers, the separation of management duties in terms of oversight between the PCEO and the Deputy Principal and the support and scrutiny of the Board of the Corporation. He further added that that the issue was on Governors' radar and that capacity issues would be looked at from a management perspective.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive Officer/ Board of the Corporation

There were no further issues raised by members and it was resolved that the progress update be noted.

HEC&Q/39/22 Teaching and Excellence Framework – Eligibility and Participation

The APHES presented a report which advised the Committee of the mandatory requirements of the Teaching and Excellence Framework (TEF) and the timeframe for the process which was a submission date of 24 January 2023.

The report also provided members with details of the requirements and coverage for the new framework including the option of a student submission to support the case for excellence.

The APHES provided an overview of the key issues in relation to the submission and commented that at this stage it was the intention to make a student submission.

The Committee debated the requirements and timeframe in detail in the context of the Group's Governance processes and in discussion it was agreed that the submission would be sent out to Committee members for their overview and

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comment prior to its submission.

In discussion it was also agreed that the HHESH would clarify whether the submission need Board of the Corporation approval.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

A member commented that in her view it would be preferable not to go down the student submission route because it was so different from the required submission. It was suggested that student representation could be included in the required submission and the HHEHS undertook to ensure that a student perspective was included in the submission.

There were no further issues raised by members and after due discussion and consideration it was resolved that the report be noted in the context of the agreed actions.

HEC&Q/40/22 Office for Students Capital Bid Outcomes and Progress Report

The APHES presented a report which provided the Committee with full details of the Capital Bid which had recently been approved by the Office for Students.

The report included a copy of the Capital Bid, a copy of the approval letter and a copy of the response form.

The APHES advised concerning the following key issues:

- Confirmation that the successful bid outcome was to the value of £1,753,130 over 3 financial years 2022/2023- 2024/2025 and that the scope of the funding was focused on supporting the infrastructure and resources around high value courses, STEM provision, part-time and flexible provision, and Higher Technical Qualifications. The PCEO also advised that the capital bid funding would also support the Group's Digital Strategy in terms of the replacement of Information Technology kit at the Stretford Campus.
- The establishment of a management Capital Bid Working Group comprising Leadership Team members, curriculum heads and other stakeholders whose role would be to ensure that the funding was managed effectively and was in line with the approved plan. The CS confirmed that the governance oversight and monitoring of the financial and quality delivery on the plan would be undertaken by the Resources Committee and Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee respectively.

The Committee welcomed the success of the bid and looked forward to the positive impact it would have for both staff and students.

There were no issues raised by members arising from the report and after due discussion and consideration it was resolved that it be noted.

Minute No.**HEC&Q/41/22 Office for Students Risk Register and Reportable Events**

The HHEHS presented a report which provided the Committee with a copy of the updated (November 2022) Office for Students Risk Register (OFSRR).

The HHEHS advised the Committee that the OFSRR provided an up-to-date information relating to the Group's current position and assurance as to how the risks were being mitigated.

He further advised that the OFSRR was presented in a changed format and provided the Committee with a brief overview of the changes together the key issues arising from the update which were as follows:

- There'd risk relating to the Access and Participation Plan had been mitigated and was now RAG Rated as Green.
- 3 conditions had been assessed as medium risk (B3, B6 and D).
- There were 23 conditions that were still required to be met (A -G3).

There were no issues raised by members arising from the report and after due discussion and consideration it was resolved that it be noted.

HEC&Q/42/22 Data Dashboard Update

The HHEHS made a presentation which provided the Committee with the following data:

- Retention (5-year trend) at 86 per cent which was 10 per cent lower than last year which was largely due to issues arising from the pandemic.
- Continuation rate (5-year trend) was 83 per cent which was a 3 per cent decline on last year's outturn. It was also advised that the rate for First degrees was 87% which down 1 percent compared to last year.
- Achievement by Qualification type including Group averages. The HHEHS commented that BA achievement was down at 80 % and that work was required to improve this outcome.
- Outcomes for other undergraduates were good at 70 per cent and were showing continuous improvement over the 5-year period. The HHEHS commented that this was a small cohort of students and that overall, it was a very positive picture.

Members raised a number of issues arising from the presentation as follows:

- A member sought clarification around the 20% achievement of BA and BSC students and the HHEHS advised that some of the achievements had been deferred with some students expected to achieve in June and some the following year. The member asked how the deferring and funding worked in practice and commented that 20 % was a high figure. The HHEHS advised the

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member of the process that students undertake through deferral in terms of additional support and tutorials and that the cohort was only 10 students and that he would include the numbers in future reports.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

- A member asked about First degree's completion rates and whether there was any weighting. The HHEHS advised that there were no weightings made and explained the three-year process undertaken by the students and the opportunities they had to exit within each year of study. He further commented that it was a hop on, hop off approach which did not affect the data or outcomes. A member commented around the possibility of providing Higher Certificates which were one year of study, and very flexible. The HHEHS commented around the current market situation for such courses and the marketing implications for such an approach. The Committee had a broad and wide-ranging discussion around the flexibility of Higher Education provision and the use of terminology.

There were no further issues raised by members arising from the presentation and after due discussion and consideration it was resolved that it be noted.

HEC&Q/43/22 Quality Calendar 2022/2023

The HHEHS presented a copy of the Quality Calendar for 2022/2023 and provided the Committee with an overview of the key features of the Calendar.

There were no issues raised by members relating to the matter and after due discussion and consideration it was resolved that it be noted.

HEC&Q/44/22 Arrangements for Future Meetings

The CS referred to the recent discussions that had taken place at the Board of the Corporation meeting arising from which Committees were invited to consider their future meeting arrangements with a view to optimizing governor attendance.

The CS reminded members of the previous practice of the Committee to hold all meetings Via Microsoft Teams with a commencement time of 5.30pm.

Members made various comments relating to individual preferences and after due discussion and consideration it was unanimously agreed that all meetings should continue to be held via Microsoft teams and retain the same meeting time.

It was further agreed that the position could be reviewed following the next Microsoft teams meeting.

Action: Corporation Secretary**HEC&Q/45/22 Any Other Business**

A member commented concerning the excellent Students Award Graduation ceremony that had been held recently and offered her congratulations to all staff involved in producing such a wonderful event.

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The Committee concurred with the members view and expressed their appreciation to all staff concerned.

HEC&Q/46/22 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 01 March 2023 via Microsoft Teams.

Action: Corporation Secretary

The meeting closed at 7.33pm