

THE TRAFFORD COLLEGE GROUP

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee
held on Wednesday 13 July 2022, at 5.30pm via Microsoft Teams**

Present:	Graham Luccock Sarah Drake Fatema Desai Francesca Moores Kurt Allman	Chairperson for the Meeting) (HE Student Representative) (Co -Opted Member)
In Attendance	Barry Watson John Simpson Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava Andrew Mould	(Corporation Secretary) (Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills) (Deputy Principal) (Assistant Principal, Apprenticeships – Stretford)

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HEC&Q/14/22 Apologies for Absence

The Corporation Secretary (CS) reported that apologies for absence had been received from the Chairperson of the Committee, Collette Fagan, and James Scott (Principal and CEO).

In the Chairperson`s absence it was agreed that Graham Luccock would Chair the meeting.

It was noted that the Deputy Corporation Secretary, the Assistant Principal Vocational - Altrincham and the Assistant Principal Adult and Employer Engagement were unable to attend the meeting.

HEC&Q/15/22 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/16/22 Minutes of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee Meeting held on 02 March 2022

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

HEC&Q/17/22 Matters Arising from the Minutes

- i) HEC&Q/04/22 - Matters Arising from the Minutes – Community Response Strategy

The Chairperson asked if any progress had been made in respect of the Community Response Strategy.

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The Deputy Principal (DP) advised that it was still a work in progress and had been retitled the Community Learning/ Partnership Strategy and that it was expected to be finalised early in the New Academic Year.

In discussion it was agreed that the Draft Strategy would be presented to the Board of the Corporation at its meeting on 19 October 2022.

Action: Corporation Secretary/ Deputy Principal

ii) HEC&Q/10/22- Data Dashboard Update

A member raised several issues arising from the minute and the Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills (HHEHS) advised the Committee concerning the following:

- The attendance rates had been emailed to members shortly after the last meeting.
- The issue relating to broadening the curriculum offer around demographics and ethnic minority group interests had been considered but there were no plans at this stage to develop a Business Studies offer.
- It was confirmed that no feedback had been received from the Student Body in terms of the use of social space and the DP provided the Committee with details of the actions that had been taken by management to improve the environment for students. The HHEHS also advised that the Group had submitted a Capital Bid for £ 1.7m to the OfS Group specifically for Higher Education provision and that the outcome of the application would be known in September 2022. The HHEH advised of the intended use of the funds if the bid was successful.

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 and it was resolved that they be noted.

HEC&Q/18/22 Higher Skills Strategy Action Plan Update – June 2022

The HHEHS 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 June 2022.

The HHEHS went through the progress that had been made for each Strategic Objective and it was noted that for each objective, reasonable or good progress had been made.

It was advised that of the objectives in the Action Plan 5 were Rag Rated as Green,

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15 Amber and 1 Red. Regarding the Red Rag rated objective the HHEHS advised that this was because the Alumni approach was still under development.

Members raised several issues arising from the report as follows:

- A member asked how “Reasonable progress” was defined. The HHEHS advised that it meant that the task had started but that achievement was dependent on several external factors such as programme specifications from awarding bodies or clarification about National Initiatives which had slowed progress down.
- A member asked when the Group intended to start the Higher Technical Qualifications.

The HHEHS advised that the HND Cyber Security would start in September 2022, Health, Software Development and Construction in 2023 (all had been approved) with Engineering and Early Years Education in 2024.

The member asked how planning for the HTQ’s was progressing. The HHEHS advised of the arrangements that were in place in this respect including the work with the Collaborative Group, Digital organisations, and Employers.

- A member asked for a progress update relating to the actions around maximising recruitment opportunities and the appointment of a new Business Development Team.

The DP advised that recruitment to the team had gone very well, and appointments had been made to all posts. It was further advised that the Head of Partnerships had been appointed from the Department of Work and Pensions and that they would commence duties at the end of July 2022.

- A member commented that the actions relating to improvement in recruitment onto Higher Level programmes from employers including growth in Higher Level Apprenticeship’s appeared to be too general.

The DP acknowledged the point made and commented that it would be revisited and looked at from a programme level. It was advised that the targets were set at the curriculum planning level and that the information would be drawn together and shared with members. The DP commented that the target numbers were realistic in her view.

- A member asked who was responsible for progressing the Alumni actions. The DP advised that the Marketing Department were taking the actions forward but that it was a collaborative effort.

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.

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The HHEHS presented a series of Policies and Procedures for the Committee's consideration, and review as follows:

- **Admissions Policy and Procedure**
- **Student Complaints Policy**
- **Mitigating Circumstances Policy Procedure and Guidance**
- **Appeals Policy and Procedure**
- **Fitness to Study Policy**
- **Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure**
- **Academic Misconduct Policy**
- **Higher National Qualification Assessment Regulations**
- **Student Transfer Policy**
- **Student Terms and Conditions of Enrolment (2022/2023)**

The Committee were advised that there were no significant changes to any of the Policies previously reviewed by the Committee and approved by the Board and that the only changes related to personnel.

A member commented that some of the policies did not appear to have the correct dates on the documentation. The CS advised that there had been several formatting issues that would be rectified before the documents were presented to the Board of the Corporation.

Action; Corporation Secretary

There were no further issues raised by members and after due discussion and consideration it was unanimously resolved that all the policies as presented (subject to formatting changes) be recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

Action: Board of the Corporation**HEC&Q/20/22 Access and Participation Plan 2020-2027- Progress Update**

The HHEHS advised the Committee of the progress of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-2027 had now been submitted to the Office for Students (OFS) and that the Group was just now waiting for final sign-off. It was advised that three minor amendments had been made.

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The HHEHS further advised that there had been significant change to the APP since November 2021 and once the approval was received it would need to be reflected on and reviewed.

- A member asked if it was known when final sign off would be received.

The HEHHS advised that this was not known and was dependent on the workload capacity at the Office for Students (OfS).

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

HEC&Q/21/22 Quality Improvement Plan 2021-2022 – Progress Update

The HEHHS presented a report which provided members with Rag Rated progress against the key actions within the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as of July 2022.

The HEHHS advised that the number of key actions had remained at 11 and went through the key points from the update which were reflected in the Amber Rag Ratings as follows:

- The introduction of academic literacy as a module in all validated Foundation Degree programmes was now scheduled to be in place for 2023/24 provision.
- The audit of Higher Education staffing had not yet taken place. It was advised that this was not a significant risk to current provision but was a risk to the development of future provision. It was advised that the delay was due to other organisational HR priorities including merger-related and capacity-based issues.
- The launch of the Scholarship Development Programme had now taken place and plans were now in place for 2022-2023 with a Scholarship Conference scheduled for June 2023 and the relaunch of the scholarship journal.
- Applications for next year's Higher Education provision continued to increase but a key risk continued to be conversion. It was advised that activities were being put in place to support internal progression and to "keep warm" external applicants.
- The Access and Participation Plan has been submitted and was awaiting approval as previously reported.
- The response rate for the National Students Survey had increased by 30% and presented a positive overall picture.

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

- A member asked why the introduction of academic literacy as a module in all validated Foundation Degree programmes had been delayed for a year.

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The HEHHS advised that the issue was due to work capacity at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) and the changes in personnel but that a schedule had now been put in place which would start in September 2022.

- A member commented about the key risk around student numbers for the next Academic Year and asked how the Group was “keeping students warm”.

The HHEHS advised the Group had now launched a Summer School which was a weekly two-hour session which would be run throughout the Summer and that currently 56 students had signed up to the programme. It was also advised of other activities including the Pilot College Ready Programme which mirrored the FE programme and would be replicated across all the Group’s campuses and the one-day Adult Education Basic course.

The member asked what anticipated numbers were looking like.

The HHEHS advised that it was looking like a 11% increase and that the growth was in BA Hons Art and Humanities (Stockport) and Child Care Studies.

- A member commented around some of the issues facing the HE providers including significant fee rises and the areas that were seeing student number increasing particularly in Science, Engineering and Biology. He also reflected on financial pressures in the context of inflation, NI increases and fixed income issues and commented that it was important that the Group is flexible to be able to meet market changes and financial challenges.

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/22/22 Office for Students Risk Register Update - June 2022

The HHEHS presented a report which provided the Committee with a copy of the updated OfS 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 were 3 Red Risks and most risks had been assessed as medium.
- 3 conditions had been assessed as medium risk (A1, B4, C1).
- There were 23 conditions that were still required to be met.

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Members raised several issues arising from the report which were as follows:

- A member asked if the HHEHS could expand on the 3 risks that had been RAG Rated as Red.

The HHEHS advised that the 3 Red Risks were as follows:

- Support to all Students.
- Graduate Outcomes.
- Financial Viability (HE Provision and not the Group as an entity)

The HHEHS provided a detailed account that the Group was taking to mitigate each of the risks which were wide ranging and comprehensive, and a member commented that it was really positive to establish a starting point through the audit of staffing.

A member commented around Graduate outcomes and what the profile looked like with SHU. The HEEHS advised that the key risk area in this respect was First Degree students, but that part time provision was not as risky.

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/23/22 Data Dashboard Update

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

- Attendance 83.4%.

The HHEHS commented that the attendance outturn was lower than expected and was a hangover from Covid. He further commented that the low figure had not impacted on achievement.

- Retention 96 % which was much higher than the national benchmark. In discussion it was agreed that National benchmark figures would be included in future reports.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

- Completion 93 % which was a 2% improvement on last year's outturn.
- Predicted Achievement.

It was advised that this outcome was still awaited but that it was expected to be in line with last year's outturn.

- Student satisfaction.

The outcome from the NSS was 88% overall satisfaction rate which was 12% above the National Benchmark and the second best in Greater Manchester.

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The HHEHS commented that this was a very positive position with an 80% response rate which was 30% better than last year. He also commented around the learning resource issues which were being looked at.

Members welcomed the report and a member asked how the increase in the response rate to the NSS had been achieved.

The HHEHS and the DP provided a detailed account of the many actions that had been taken to improve the position to the member`s satisfaction.

The CS commented that this was a performance concern raised by Governors in the previous year and it was good to see a positive impact to the challenges made by members regarding the NSS.

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/24/22 Higher Education National Policy Update

The HHEHS advised that due to the current political difficulties at Westminster there were no National Policy updates to report to the Committee.

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/25/22 Governance Update- Terms of Reference for Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Update and Governor Recruitment

The CS provide members with a copy of the revised Terms of Reference for the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee which had been approved at the Board of the Corporation in May 2022.

The CS drew the Committee`s attention to the changes in the Committee`s membership arrangements and provided details of the recruitment that had been undertaken to appoint a new independent member to the Board who had a specialist knowledge of Higher Education together with an additional co- opted Committee Member appointment.

The CS also confirmed that the Board had appointed Professor Colette Fagan and Professor Kurt Allman as Co-opted members of the Committee which was welcomed by members.

The CS provided details of the response to the recruitment campaign which had not been as successful as hoped and members undertook to make colleagues and associates from the sector aware of the vacancies.

Action: Committee Members

A member commented that Para 3.4 (Membership) needed to be amended to ensure parity with the statement in the FEC&Q Committee Terms of Reference

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and the CS undertook to make the necessary adjustment.

Action: Corporation Secretary

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/26/22 Higher Education Freedom of Speech Bill – Letter from Minister of State- External Assurance Schemes

The CS provided the Committee with a copy of a letter that the PCEO had received from the Minister of State for Higher and Further Education in respect of Freedom of Speech and External Assurance Schemes.

It was noted that the Group was not a member of any external assurance and benchmarking diversity schemes referred to in the Ministers letter.

It was advised that the Group's Policy on Freedom of Speech and the Ministers Letter would be presented to the Board of the Corporation at its meeting on 20 July 2022.

Action: Corporation Secretary.

There were no issues raised by members arising from the letter and it was resolved that it be noted.

HEC&Q/27/22 Any Other Business

The HHEHS advised that the consultation process regarding the Teaching Excellence Framework had now closed and that he would provide an update on the matter in the Autumn Term 2022.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

There were no further matters raised under any other business.

HEC&Q/28/22 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 23 November 2022.

Action: Corporation Secretary

The meeting closed at 7.01pm