

THE TRAFFORD COLLEGE GROUP

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee
held on Tuesday 2 March 2022, at 5.30pm via Microsoft Teams**

Present	Colette Fagan	(Chairperson)
	James Scott	(Principal and CEO)
	Sarah Drake	
	Graham Luccock	
	Fatema Desai	
	Francesca Moores	(HE Student Representative)
	Neil Hanney	(Co-opted Member)
In Attendance	Barry Watson	(Corporation Secretary)
	Alison Duncalf	(Deputy Corporation Secretary)
	John Simpson	(Head of HE and Higher Skills)
	Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava	(Deputy Principal)
	Andrew Mould	(Assistant Principal, Apprenticeships – Stretford)
	Kendra Kirby	(Assistant Principal, SP Vocational – Altrincham)

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HEC&Q/01/22 Apologies for Absence

The Corporation Secretary (CS) reported that no apologies for absence had been received

HEC&Q/02/22 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/03/22 Minutes of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee Meeting held on 09 November 2021

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

HEC&Q/04/22 Matters Arising from the Minutes

- i) HEC&Q/33/21 - Matters arising from the Minutes – Community Response Strategy

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (PCEO) advised that the Community Response Strategy was still a work in progress and that it was expected that the Strategy would be in place by the end of the Academic Year 2021/2022.

He further advised the Committee of the activities that were currently being undertaken which would be formalised in the Strategy.

The CS went through the actions arising from the minutes and it was

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confirmed that they had either been completed or would be addressed as part of the agenda for the meeting.

There were no other matters raised by members arising from the minutes and it was resolved that they be noted.

HEC&Q/05/22 Access and Participation Plan 2020-2027- Progress Update

The Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills (HHEHS) advised the Committee that the Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-2027 had now been submitted to the Office for Students (OFS).

In answer to a question from a member the HHEHS advised that the outcome from the submission would be known in a few weeks' time and provided details of how the APP might change going forward due to the new advice that had been received leading to a more streamlined APP.

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

HEC&Q/06/22 Access and Participation Plan 2020-2021 – Impact Report

The HHEHS submitted a report which included a copy of the Access and Participation Plan Impact Report (APPIP) 2020/2021 which provided members with the following information:

- The Group's aims in relation to target Groups.
- The yearly milestones up to 2024/2025.
- The RAG Rated Group performance impact for 2021.

The HHEHS advised that there was no longer a requirement to submit the APPIP and that updates were only now required. He provided the Committee with details of the Group's targets to reduce the entrance gaps for students within specific cohorts together with an overview of the performance against the 11 targets which was as follows:

- The Group's internal data suggested that the annual milestone in narrowing the gap in Access in MID1 and Polar 1 had been achieved. It was further advised that further work needed to be undertaken in order to capture data in respect of Care leavers.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

- The Group's internal data suggested that the annual milestone in narrowing the gap in continuation from IMD full time and part time students and students from the BAME community had been achieved. It was further advised that the Group did not achieve the annual target for improving continuation for disabled students together with the target of narrowing of Asian students on Undergraduate programmes.

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- No data was available for student's employment destinations and progression details were awaiting the outcomes from the survey data.

Members raised several issues arising from the report as follows:

- Why had the OFS suspended the impact report and what were management most concerned about regarding the report?

The HHEHS advised that it was because new guidance was being undertaken which would be based on providing evidence on a risk basis and that he would provide further information in his Higher Education Update Report.

- A member asked why employment destination data was not available and was advised that the Group relies on external agencies to provide it and it was therefore not within the Group's control. The HHEHS provided further information relating to the base year data (2016/2017).
- A member commented about the measurement of the different cohorts of leavers and high levels of employment and how the issue could be brought to the attention of the OFS. A member supported the comment and asked how the Group could lobby to address the issue in the context of value to community/ society.

The PCEO advised that a lot of University fall down on this issue hence the forthcoming reforms and that a lot of activity was being undertaken nationally by the Association of Colleges and that it was the FE sectors responsibility to make sure that awareness of the issues was raised at a high level. A member commented that collection of case studies of students might help support. The HHEHS that the Group were performing at a level between 60-62% which was above the expected level of 45%.

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/07/22**Quality Improvement Plan 2021-2022- Progress Update**

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

The PCEO advised that the number of key actions had increased from 10 to 11 as a result of the condition arising from the Collaborative Periodic Review (CPR) process with Sheffield Hallam University (SHU).

He further advised that there were no matters of real concern arising from the update and that the only Red Risk related to staffing but that was not concerning current arrangements rather it was in terms of future needs and requirements.

The PCEO went through the key points from the update which were reflected in

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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 2022/23 provision.
- The audit of Higher Education staffing had not yet taken place. The PCEO advised that this has been delayed due to other organisational HR priorities including merger-related and capacity-based issues.
- The launch of the Scholarship Development Programme with middle managers had yet to take place but was scheduled to be a focus in the second half of this academic year and launched at the next Higher Education Management Committee.
- Applications for next year's Higher Education provision were positive, but a key risk remained 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.
- Improving the response rate for internal student surveys remains a key improvement area (based on semester 1 response).

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

- 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 on the close liaison the HE team had with the Marketing Section and outlined in detail the various strategies that were adopted to send out key messages to potential students throughout the Year.

Members made several comments about other actions that could be undertaken including:

- the setting up of social media channels,
- clearer information on the Group's website
- Summer Activities including the example of the Flying Start activities.

The PCEO thanked members for their suggestions and further outlined the Groups intentions relating to College Ready for HE and the impact that the new building would have in terms of activities that would be undertaken.

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/08/22 Office for Students Risk Register Update - March 2022**

The HHEHS presented a report which provided the Committee with a copy of the updated OfS Risk Register (OFSRR) and 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 no Red Risks and most risks had been assessed as low.
- 3 conditions had been assessed as medium risk 2 of which were financial.
- There were 23 conditions that were still required to be met.

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

- A member commented about the discussion behind the assessments within the OFSSR and asked if the management felt they were in a comfortable place regarding the level and breadth of the input.

The HHEHS advised that the current position was the start of getting more people involved in the process and that going forward the risks would be incorporated into the Group's Board Assurance and Risk Management Framework and reported to the Audit Committee as part of the Governance arrangements for the monitoring of the Group's risks.

The PCEO advised that the OFSRR had been considered in detail by the Higher Education Management Committee and a member asked if they had debated Condition D (Financial Sustainability and Viability).

The PCEO commented that the overall financial rating for the Group was Outstanding and that Higher Education provision in terms of numbers had declined but that in context it was not a significant risk and actions were in place to address the position.

He also commented around the volatility of HE Finance and student numbers which was an ongoing risk.

- A member sought clarification around the manager who was responsible for conditions B1 and B2 as it was not evident from the information provided. The HHEHS confirmed that it was the Assistant Principal Study Programmes (Vocational) Altrincham and undertook to amend the OFSRR accordingly.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

- A member welcomed the updated a new format for the OFSRR.

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

Minute No**HEC&Q/09/22 Curriculum Developments and Partnership Update**

The PCEO presented a report which provided the Committee with details of the key Higher Education curriculum developments and partnership activity as at March 2022.

The PCEO advised and provided a detailed overview of the following key issues:

- Collaborative Periodic Review with the Group's Validating Partner Sheffield Hallam University.

The PCEO advised that the CPR had taken place in November 2022 and that the review has led to positive outcomes to both parties. He provided the Committee with a copy of the full report arising from the review.

The PCEO highlighted the agreed outcomes from the CPR together with the conditions for SHU which included the requirement for SHU to have strategic conversations with partnerships within Greater Manchester concerning the future direction of FE and HE.

It was also advised concerning the impact condition for the Group which related to the need to ensure that clear and consistent information is provided to students about out of hours access to studios and learning resources.

The PCEO commented that this condition was detailed in the QIP (action11) and that the progress was RAG Rated as Green.

- Regional Collaborative Activity with the Greater Manchester Colleges Group (GMCG)

The PCEO advised that there were 3 key Higher Education related collaborative activities which were taking place through GMCG as follows:

- The agreement in principle to a strategic collaborative approach to shaping new higher technical provision at Level 4/5.
- The approach to developing new Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) through 8 GM Colleges in relation to Digital HTQ's.
- The GMCG continues to engage with the GM Vice Chancellors Group around collaboration and good practice. The PCEO commented that this should lead to a more coherent relationship between FE and HE providers in the region.

- Ongoing Partnership discussions with University Academy 92 (UA92)

The PCEO advised that following recent discussions with new Chief Executive Officer of UA92 new areas of partnership working had been identified to the mutual benefit of both institutions.

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- Curriculum Developments at the Group as part of the planning process.

The PCEO provided details of the developments and commented that the Group were committed to providing more flexible provision for Adults and Employers and to making headway with this objective.

The PCEO also commented that the Group were also committed to pursue potential validation with John Moore's University in relation to Police and Justice programmes.

It was also advised that the joint bid to secure the GM Degree Apprenticeship in Policing had been unsuccessful but that there was still an opportunity to for higher level provision in related provision in the GM area.

Members raised several issues arising from the report as follows:

- A member welcomed the very positive report and developments particularly the emphasis on the GM Digital Skills Strategy and commented concerning the incredible benefits that it could bring in terms of transforming employer opportunities and addressing skills shortages in the Region. It was further commented that GM did not appear to pay as much prominence to the Creative and Cultural Industries.
- A member commented on the very positive outcomes on the SHU CPR report and asked if the Group had had any feedback on why the joint bid with JMU had not been successful.

The PCEO advised that the bid had been led by John Moore's University and that it had been unsuccessful by a very small amount on the Quality section of the bid. He further commented that the bid had always been an ambitious one because it was a bid outside of Greater Manchester run in and for Greater Manchester.

- A member commented that the collaboration that was occurring was excellent and welcomed the fact that the PCEO of the Group was leading on it and asked if it was all 9 Greater Manchester Colleges that would be putting in a bid for the Capital pot bid.

The PCEO advised that not all the Colleges would be bidding as some had already received funding from Institute of Technology (IOT). He advised of the bidding process and the next steps that would need to be taken to submit a proposal. He added that the funding was not guaranteed to Colleges but that should be in a strong position to be successful as GMCA saw Colleges to be a player in this space.

- A member asked about the approach to delivering HTQ and why only 8 GMCA Colleges were involved.

The PCEO advised that Bury College were not involved in the initiative as they had a separate project in respect of Health.

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

HEC&Q/10/22 Data Dashboard Update

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

- Entrance Data (Polar1) by Quarter.
- Data by mode of delivery (Full Time / Part Time.)
- Data by Gender (Male / Female).
- Gender by Disability (Disabled /Non- Disabled)
- Ethnicity (Black/Asian/White/ Mixed)
- Retention by Curriculum area.
- Outcomes of HE Student Survey including response rate and satisfaction rates by category and Overall satisfaction rate
- Attendance Rates - The HHEHS advised that the data for attendance was still awaited from MIS and as soon as it became available, he would e-mail it out to members.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

The HHEHS went through the data for each category identifying the key issues, trends and performance narratives.

Members raised several issues arising from the presentation as follows:

- Why were the retention rates for Sport provision so low at 60%?

The HHEHS advised that the Group were late to market with the offer for this provision and whilst the intake was good the number of late applications had impacted on the retention rate.

- A member commented that the data for Black and Asian students were both very low and asked if this was representative of the demographic areas in which the Group was located.

The PCEO advised that the Group had strategies in place to seek to address this issue and that the Group had a strong commitment to increase representation in both Higher and Further Education.

The HHEHS commented that the Higher Education curriculum offer also adversely impacted on the data as the Group did not offer provision that particularly attracted ethnic minority groups.

He further commented that this was something that he would be looking at with the Higher Education team.

Action: Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills

Minute No

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

HEC&Q/11/22 Higher Education Update

The HHEHS made a presentation to the Committee concerning current national and topical issues impacting on Higher Education which covered the following issues:

- The future of Access and Participation.
- Higher Technical Qualifications.
- Post 18 Funding Review Outcome.
- Office for Students Consultations.

The HHEHS provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the key issues arising from the identified issues and any likely impact on the Group, the provision and students.

In terms of OFS consultations, a member referred to discussions earlier in the meeting in terms progression and when students gaining employment will be recognised.

The HHEHs advised that it would be measured through the job outcomes measure and referenced those curricular areas that could more readily identify progression regarding this such as engineering.

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/12/22 Any Other Business

A member asked the HE Student Representative (HESR) about her experience and overall view as a student of the Group's Higher Education provision.

The HESR advised that overall, the experience had been extremely positive and provided a detailed outline of her experiences of the Groups HE Child Care provision which she described as "being brilliant".

It was further added that one of the biggest problems had been the transfer to the new building in year and it was commented that moving before the building had been completed was not ideal.

The PCEO advised concerning the reasons why the move had to take place when it did and that it was beyond the Groups control due to the transfer of ownership of the building that was being vacated.

It was also advised that the Group were in receipt of additional revenue from HE Capital Funding and that the intention was to use the funding for improving social space for students. He added that if the students had any ideas/input regarding this then they should let the management team know through the HEHS.

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The DP commented that the Group were very keen to update the area and had the capacity so to do and added that any suggestions from the student body would be welcomed.

Action: Higher Education Student Representative

There were no further items raised under any other business.

HEC&Q/13/22 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 15 June 2022.

Action: Corporation Secretary

The meeting closed at 7.01.pm