

THE TRAFFORD COLLEGE GROUP

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee
held on Wednesday 01 March 2023, at 5.30pm via Microsoft Teams**

Present: Graham Luccock (Chairperson)
Sarah Drake
Fatema Desai
Emily McIntosh
Marie Temperton (HE Student Representative)
Kurt Allman (Co-opted Member)
Claire Stocks (Co-opted Member)

In Attendance Barry Watson (Corporation Secretary)
Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava (Deputy Principal)
Tracey Wood (AP Adult Skills and Employer Engagement)
Jane Nickisson (AP Higher Education and Skills)
Danielle Judge (AP Apprenticeships)
Alison Duncalf (Deputy Corporation Secretary)

Minute No.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairperson welcomed Marie Temperton and Claire Stocks to their first Committee meeting.

The Chairperson also welcomed the recently appointed Assistant Principal Apprenticeships (DJ) to her first meeting and all members and attendees introduced themselves to the new attendees.

HEC&Q/01/23 Apologies for Absence

The Corporation Secretary (CS) reported that apologies for absence had been received from Colette Fagan (Co-opted Member) and James Scott (Principal and Chief Executive Officer).

It was noted that the Head of Higher Education and Higher Skills (JS) was unable to attend the meeting.

HEC&Q/02/23 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/03/23 Minutes of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee Meeting held on 23 November 2023

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

Minute No.**HEC&Q/04/23 Matters Arising from the Minutes**i) **HEC&Q/39/22 – Teaching Excellence Framework**

The CS reminded members that the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) had been submitted within the required timeframe and that a copy of the completed submission had been emailed to all members and was also included in the supporting documents of the meeting.

It was noted that pressure of time had prevented managers from sending the documentation to members prior to submission and members were invited to make any comments or observations concerning the submission.

Members raised a number of issues as follows:

- A member commented that an extensive amount of work had been put into the submission and offered her congratulations to the members of staff that had put it together. It was further commented that the outcomes from the submission going forward would need to be managed and would impact on the role/agendas of the Committee.

The Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills (APHES) advised concerning the time frame for the outcomes from the submission (September 2023) and commented on the areas for development going forward.

In answer to a point raised by a member regarding the influencing of the matrix going forward the CS advised concerning the Governance arrangements for ensuring the overview and monitoring of the outcomes. It was also advised that a submission needed to be made every four years and that a lot of work would be undertaken to improve the matrix going forward.

- A member asked if there had been a student submission to support the documentation.

The APHES advised that, on this occasion, a student submission had not been made and that there was a need to develop this area of activity with a view to including it in the next submission.

The member asked if the Group had anyone on the TEF Panel and the APHES advised that a number had applied from GM Colleges, but none had been successful but that the Group had very good connections with members on the Northwest Panel and that the Group had worked in collaboration with a number of Northwest Colleges on the submission.

ii) **HEC&Q/44/22 – Future Meetings**

It was agreed that this item would be considered at the end of the meeting.

Action: Corporation Secretary

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The CS went through the other actions arising from the minutes and it was confirmed that they had either been completed, were ongoing 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/05/23 Quality Improvement Plan 2022/2023 – Progress Report

The APHES presented a report which provided members with the progress that had been made against the key actions within the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as of February 2023.

The APHES advised that attached to the report was a copy of the updated HE QIP which consisted of eight key objectives which were addressed through a series of actions during the academic year 2022/23 and beyond.

It was advised that effective progress had been made with regard to six of the objectives as detailed in the report and that the key areas of focus were as follows:

- The student support model needed to be confirmed.
- Student journey process from application to enrolment was still to be progressed.
- Staff conference details were still to be confirmed.

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

- A member asked for an update on the progress that had been made in respect of the review of the model for student support and the appointment of an HE Student Support Officer (SSO).

The AHES advised that the case for making an appointment of a HE SSO was currently being made more robust, and it was hoped that an appointment would be approved and made for the Academic Year 2023/2024.

It was further advised that the model would be built around the arrangements that the Group has in place for its Further Education provision.

The HE Student Representative (HESR) commented that during the current academic year she had seen significant improvement in support to students particularly in SEND and ADHD and provided a detailed account of the improved support service that was being offered.

A member commented that this was a really good selling point in terms of marketing the Group's provision and offer to potential students.

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/06/23 Outcomes from Higher Education CDAR Report 2023 (Draft)**

The APHES presented a report which provided members with a draft overview of the outcomes from the Higher Education Curriculum Development Area Review (CDAR).

The APHES provided members with an overview of the role and function of CDARS and advised that this was the first one that had been undertaken in respect of Higher Education provision at the Group.

The APHES advised that the full report has not yet been completed and that the presented report contained a brief overview of the key aspects of the CDAR activity and outcomes.

It was further advised that the CEDAR had commenced on 6th February 2023 and that the final and completed report would be presented to members at the next Committee meeting.

Action: Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills

The APHES went through in detail the identified strengths of the HE Curriculum together with the areas for improvement in detail.

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

- The HE Link Governor commented that she would pick up on the issues identified in the report at the next link visit particularly with regard to sharing teaching observation. The member further commented around the questions in relation to the journey mapping which could be aligned with the students.

Action: HE Link Governor (EM)

- A member asked the APHES for her views on the identified areas for improvement which were not necessarily around teaching and learning.

The APHES advised that from a practitioner level she would have liked to have seen richer information in relation to Teaching and Learning and that she would like to see the wider use of peer observation in the next undertaking.

It was further commented that the positive feedback from students had been encouraging and that the students had recognised the additional support that had been provided. It was further commented that the future challenge was to ensure consistency of practice across the whole of the provision.

The APHES commented that it would be of benefit to have a HE specialist as part of the observation team going forward but overall, it had been a positive and worthwhile exercise.

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- A member commented that it was very positive that the HE providers had accepted a FE Quality team undertaking the review and hoped that it had been received positively by all staff.
- A member asked about peer reviews and whether they were still being undertaken.

The APHES advised that they were but in pockets and that it would be improved when they were located together.

In answer to a further question the APHES advised that the review did not cover Higher Level Apprenticeships only Higher National Certificates in Construction and Engineering.

- A member asked if the Improvement Plan actions were Group wide and what were the timeframes.

The APHES advised that formal feedback would be undertaken this week which would feed into the QIP.

In terms of timeframes, it was advised that the actions would feed into the current QIP and that by the end of the Academic Year 2023/2024 full progress against the actions would be evidenced.

- A member commented about the finding relating to the need to update equipment and what was being actioned with regard to the matter. He further commented that this went back to two years and that there was an issue in relation to meeting industry standards.

The APHES advised that the issue was now within the Group's remit and given the recent influx of funding there would be a future proofing of resources to deliver the curriculum. It was commented that keeping up with industry was a significant challenge but that the Group now had an opportunity to make it as relevant as possible.

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/07/23**Office for Students Letter- Roll Over of Access and Participation Plan and Publication of Annual Fee Information 2023/2024**

The APHES presented members with a copy of the letter that had been received from the Office for Students (OfS) confirming that the roll-over of the Group's 2022/2023 Access and Participation Plan had been provisionally approved on the same basis of the previous approval.

The APHES commented that it was welcome news and commented that the OfS were still formulating the monitoring arrangements and that it was important that the targets were under continuous observation.

Members welcomed the provisional approval and supported the APHES comments in respect of the continuous monitoring of targets.

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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/08/23 Higher Skills Strategy Action Plan Update

The APHES 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 March 2023.

The APHES 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.

It was noted that HE Alumni was still rated as a RED risk as work had yet to commence on this due to capacity issues within the marketing department.

Members raised several issues arising from the report as follows:

- A member raised the issue of lower than planned student recruitment numbers and asked was this a pattern that was being evidenced across the Greater Manchester region. The member also asked if the pattern and trends from other Colleges would help with portfolio review and validation.

The APHES commented that the same recruitment pattern was being experienced across Greater Manchester and advised of the collaborative activities that were being undertaken through the GMC Forum.

The APHES advised that Construction provision was a substantial opportunity for the Group and outlined the need to have a closer grass root engagement with students in respect of the Group's offer and to build community partnerships and the Group brand.

- A member asked about retention and how the Group was performing and for any insight into the management of the risks of recruitment and retention.

The APHES advised that retention was holding steady at 93/94 % with attendance being impacted on by students taking the opportunity to undertake paid work activities in the current financial climate. The APHES added that overall students were still on track to achieve but that outcomes may be impacted on particularly for degree awards. It was advised that in terms of recruitment there was still work to be undertaken to improve the position and that based on current applications it would probably be the same as last year.

The Assistant Principal Adult and Employer Engagement advised on the work that was being undertaken with Employer Advisory Groups and how this work and information was feeding into the Group's course portfolio and recruitment activities particularly with regard to short courses and green technologies.

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- A member asked about the Group's approach and future plans in terms of delivery in the context of students finding it more difficult to attend in person.

The APHES advised that there were no plans currently in place for remote delivery but that in some areas of provision it was intended to provide bit sized remote delivery.

It was further advised that the Group were supporting those students who found it difficult to attend particularly those who were in financial difficulties through the use of the Hardship Fund.

- A member commented around impact measures and that the apparent lack of relationship between the action plan and the QIP.

The APHES provided an historical background explanation to the position and the Deputy Principal (DP) in discussion commented that it was a very valid comment which managers would take away and review.

Action: Deputy Principal/Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills

- In respect of the opportunities for growth in Construction a member asked where the Group would get the staff from given the real difficulties in recruiting teachers in this area.

The APHES advised that the current staffing complement was very stable and met the requirements with improvements being made in appointments at both Stretford and Stockport Campuses.

It was further added the Group had the appropriate staffing and expertise to deliver the HE provision although assessors were more of a challenge.

The DP advised that if the Group wished to expand its provision in this area it would need to recruit more staff and advised the Committee of the wide range of activities that were being undertaken particularly in the context of internal staff development, the green agenda, working with local employers and social value.

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/09/23 Higher Education National Policy Update

The APHES presented a report which provided members with an update concerning the current HE external landscape and any impact on HE provisions at the Group.

The report covered the following key Policy areas:

- Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE) HE Fee Limits Bill.

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- Office for Students Updates:
 - Revised B3 conditions and prioritisation of providers.
 - Revised Teaching Excellence Framework.
 - Additional Hardship Funding.
 - Designated Quality Body and interim arrangements.
 - Consultation on Access and Participation.
 - Provider Engagement.
- Update on Higher Technical Qualifications.

The AHES provided members with a brief overview of all the areas detailed in the report and members made the following comments arising from the report and overview.

- A member commented that it was an excellent summary and added that the Group faced the challenge of measuring the quality of its provision in the absence of a Designated Quality Body. The Committee had a general discussion around the QAA and future arrangements. A member commented that the CDAR was a useful starting point for the Group.
- A member commented about the requirements of the Hardship Fund and the APHES advised that all the monies would be spent by the required timeframe of July 2023. The HE Student representative commented on how the effectiveness of staff advice and the support from the Hardship Fund that had enabled her to continue with her studies over a difficult period for her.

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/10/23 Office for Students Capital Bid Outcomes and Progress Report

The APHES presented a report which reminded members concerning the Group's successful application to the OfS for the Capital Bid funding for the period 2022-23 to 2024-2025.

The report also advised members that in January 2023 the Group had been awarded a further amount through the Higher Technical Education Injection Fund through the Department for Education (DfE). It was advised that scope of the funding was to focus on the supporting the infrastructure and resources around high value courses, STEM provision, part time and flexible provision and Higher Technical Qualifications.

The APHES advised that the purpose of the report was to update members on the progress of the bids and to provide a copy of the Higher Technical Education Injection Fund confirmation letter and Grant Funding Agreement.

The APHES also provided a detailed verbal update of the progress and impact of the capital bids to date particularly with regard to Digital Infrastructure, the focus on Stockport University Centre and the access to digital points and kit updating.

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The report covered the following key issues:

- Confirmation of Outcomes:
 - On 12 October 2022, TCG received notification of their successful bid for the OfS capital funds to the value of £1,753,130, as per the application detail.
 - On 2 February 2023, TCG received notification of another successful bid from DfE Higher Technical Education Injection fund to the value of £390,909 (£268,750 Capital and £122,159 Resources).

- Capital Bid Working Group

A management Working Group had been established comprising of the Leadership team, curriculum heads and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that all capital bid funding is allocated and managed effectively and in line with the proposed project plan.

The APHES advised that the first meeting of the Working Group took place on 17 November 2022.

- Interim Progress Report for the OfS Capital Bid including the key milestones, finances, risks, procurement activities, generating learner numbers and environmental sustainability.

It was advised that the project remained on track with regard to spend and purchasing plans, but to ensure that the impact of the capital investment could be maximised and effectively demonstrated, the key risk of attracting and retaining learner numbers was being actively addressed early in the project and that the capital rollout would support the campaigns in place to support this.

The CS drew the Committee's attention to the additional funding from the DfE that had been received and advised that the finances of the successful bid would be monitored on a termly basis through the Resources Committee. The APHES commented that the bid was really helpful and provided revenue as well as capital support.

A member offered her congratulations to the team for the second successful bid and asked how long students needed to be retained to ensure funding.

The APHES advised that currently it was based on enrolment data rather than completions, but the OfS had not, as yet been totally clear on the mechanics.

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/11/23**Office for Students Risk Register and Reportable Events**

The APHES presented a report which provided the Committee with a copy of the updated OfS Risk Register (OFSRR).

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The APHES advised the Committee that the Risk Register had been amended to include the following:

- Risk Area
- Control in Place
- Impact and Likelihood Assessment
- Assurances (Internal and External)
- Further action (if required).

It was also advised that the Risk Register sat alongside the HE Quality Improvement Plan and Access and Participation Plan as part of the Group's approach to ensuring the delivery of high-quality provision at Level 4 and above across the Group.

A brief overview of the key issues arising from the update which were as follows:

- One Red Risk had now moved to Green (submission of TEF).
- Three conditions had been assessed as medium risk.
- There were twenty-four ongoing conditions that were 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/12/23 Data Dashboard Update

The APHES advised the Committee that there was no change to the data dashboard as presented at the last meeting.

In discussion the Committee agreed that the CS should meet with the APHES to discuss the future reporting arrangements of the relevant data to the Committee.

Action: Corporation Secretary/ Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills

HEC&Q/13/23 Student Engagement Update 2022/2023

The APHES presented a report which provided the Committee with an update on student engagement activities.

The APHES commented that the report would help Governors ensure that students engage in a meaningful way and provide opportunities for students to be involved in the enhancement of their learning.

The report covered the following key issues:

- Outcomes from the HE Semester Survey 1 and CDAR – Student Voice.

The APHES commented that the response rate was slightly lower than expected and that going forward the Group would look at how it engaged more effectively with part time students.

Action: Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills

Minute No.

A member commented that it would be helpful to know how many students responded in terms of those who were eligible in future reporting. It was agreed that future reporting would include this information.

Action: Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills

The Assistant Principal Apprenticeships commented over some concerns of the outcomes in respect of the Group's Engineering provision which would require further analysis.

The DP commented that the area of provision had had staffing issues this year and it was important that if the Group wished to grow the provision, then it needs to get it right with a priority being looking at student feedback.

A member asked how the Group reflects diversity in its student ambassadors and Group representatives as it did not appear to be reflected in the information provided.

The APHES commented that this issue was currently top of her agenda and would be actioned through the re-energizing of University Centre.

Action: Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills

A member asked for clarification of the issue relating to organisation and management.

The APHES advised in detail of the areas that were covered in relation to organisation and management, including clearer communications, returning assessment by the due date and changes to courses.

The member commented that it would be helpful if the Committee could have some feedback on the actions taken to address the issues raised.

Action: Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills

- Individual Good News Stories for Students.

A member offered her congratulations to all the students involved in the achievements detailed in the good news information.

The APHES advised of the intention to run a monthly student Bulletin, written by students, which could showcase the achievements and of staff and students in HE.

Action: Assistant Principal Higher Education and 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.

Minute No.**HEC&Q/14/23 Any Other Business**

- The APHES advised the Committee concerning the current consultation that was being undertaken in respect of Sexual Harassment within the HE Sector and that a member of staff and the HE Student representative would be attending separate seminars concerning the matter that were due to be held shortly.

The APHES undertook to keep members advised of developments/details of the issues and outcomes in due course.

Action: Assistant Principal Higher Education and Skills

- The Committee considered and discussed the future arrangements of the Committee meetings as detailed earlier in the meeting, and it was agreed that the meetings should continue to be held via Microsoft Teams and with the same timing arrangements as at present.

Action: Corporation Secretary

Members expressed their thanks to the APHES for her excellent contribution and input at the meeting and the Deputy Principal commented concerning the effective balance of the Committee membership and the excellent engagement of members.

There were no further issues raised under any other business.

HEC&Q/15/23 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 14 June 2023 via Microsoft Teams.

Action: Corporation Secretary

The meeting closed at 7.16pm

The Assistant Principal Adult and Employer Engagement left the meeting at 6.37pm.

Kurt Allman left the meeting at 6.32 pm.