

TRAFFORD & STOCKPORT COLLEGE GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee held on Tuesday 5 March 2024, at 5.30pm via Microsoft Teams

Present:	Emily McIntosh	(Chairperson)
	Sarah Drake	
	Fatema Desai	
	Claire Stocks	(Co-opted Member)
	Marie Temperton	(HE Student Representative)
In Attendance	Rebecca Clare	(Corporation Secretary)
	Alison Duncalf	(Deputy Corporation Secretary)
	Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava	(Deputy Principal)
	Jane Nickisson	(Assistant Principal Higher Education & Skills)
	Danielle Judge	(Assistant Principal Apprenticeships)
	Andrea Ormisher	(Head of Higher Education Quality and Standards)

Minute No.**HEC&Q/1/24****Apologies for Absence**

The Corporation Secretary reported that apologies for absence had been received from Graham Luccock and James Scott.

Kurt Allman was not in attendance at the meeting.

HEC&Q/2/24**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 items on the agenda.

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that there was one item to be considered under Any Other Business.

HEC&Q/3/24**Minutes of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee Meeting held on 22 November 2023**

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

It was noted that on Page 13 of the minutes, item 45/23, New Student Voice Initiatives, a date was incorrectly reported as October 2034. This will be amended to October 2024.

HEC&Q/4/24**Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Members were referred to the previously circulated Action Proforma and information on progress against actions from previous meetings of the Committee.

The following additional updates were provided:

31/23 Resignation of Co-Opted Member of the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee, in the context of the Chair of the Committee and the Co-Opted

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Members to consider potential applicants and to share these with the Corporation Secretary.

The Corporation Secretary confirmed that progress had been made and the Search Committee would be making a recommendation to the Corporation at the next meeting. The Chair of the Committee stated that it would be beneficial to have a person with experience of apprenticeships on the Committee.

37/23 & 47/23 Future meetings of the Committee in the context of seeking opportunities to align a future meeting of the Committee at the Stockport Campus with another meeting or Governor Link visit.

The Corporation Secretary confirmed that a meeting will be scheduled to be held in-person at Stockport during the autumn term. Details of meetings will be shared upon production of the calendar of meetings during the summer term.

38/23 Higher Skills Strategy 2021-2024 – Action Plan and Progress Update
The APHES confirmed that the Principal/CEO will provide an update following the Strategic Planning Day with governors and progression of the overall TSCG Strategic Plan, with the Higher Skills Strategy to follow and complement the overall strategy.

Action: Principal and CEO

45/24 Student Engagement Update in the context of reviewing opportunities and/or mechanisms to address adult student representation from a governance perspective.

The Corporation Secretary confirmed that mechanisms could be expanded to market the student governor roles more widely to ensure that the adult students were being included in opportunities to be a governor. This will be addressed in the autumn term when new governors will be recruited.

It was agreed that actions 14/23, 35/22 and 42/22 would be closed and the actions will be removed from the proforma.

Action: Corporation Secretary

The remaining actions will be covered within the proceedings of the meeting.

There were no further actions.

HEC&Q/5/24**Higher Skills Strategy 2021-2024 – Action Plan and Progress Update**

The APHES referred members to the Higher Skills Strategy 2021-2024 and provided an update on the progress of the Higher Skills Strategy Action Plan for 2023-2024.

It was noted that positive action had been taken in respect of the overall progress measured in the action plan. The APHES stated that the plan had been updated and would be reviewed further at the next committee meeting in June 2024.

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Progress against each of the 5 objectives was presented and the following was highlighted:

- Strategic Action 1 – Strategic Aim 1 (SA1): Adapt and grow the Higher Skills offer in line with national/regional policy developments

Significant progress was reported against this aim following the strategic decision to hold the majority of provision at Stockport College. The only programme to sit outside of Stockport College was part-time Engineering. Higher skill funding has been utilised to support curriculum pathways from Levels 3 to 4 to 5 and this will progress to Level 6 in the future. A new Green Skills Hub has been created at Stockport College and the launch for the renewal technologies had taken place.

- Strategic Aim 2 (SA2): Maximise recruitment opportunities through penetration into key market areas

There was confirmation that the team had been working hard on outreach activity, particularly around the curriculum offer, how we are communicating the offer and how we share this with the adult community to increase student numbers. This has resulted in a 68% increase to applications. The brand-new prospectus has been launched and enables greater accessibility for applicants.

- Strategic Aim 3 (SA3): Provide a curriculum that was employment-focused through effective partnership working

It was reported that good progress had been made against the objectives. Members noted that the Group was employer focussed and the Employer Advisory Boards are now well established and support the widening of higher skills. The HEQs for Level 2 and Level 3 are expanding. Two events have taken place in the last week which have supported the communication and delivery of the offer and upskilling for digital.

- Strategic Aim 4 (SA4): Develop innovative and flexible models to better meet the needs of students and employers

It was reported that good progress had been made on producing a detailed and clear Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to support the underpinning of the curriculum offer and create a flexible plan to meet the needs of students and employers.

- Strategic Aim 5 (SA5): Support the development of regional and local collaborative arrangements to enable increased recruitment and progression

It was noted that the Group had made great progress within the last 12 months in developing collaborative arrangements. The new prospectus is being launched and significant activity for recruitment is underway. Higher Education and Apprenticeship teams are working together to ensure a seamless approach

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across the organisation for all levels. The HE Engagement Officer is helping with activity.

The APHES reported that the team continue to drive action and most actions are either completed or progress is continuing to be made.

- A question was raised from a Member in relation to the staffing around the healthcare qualification being slow.

The APHES confirmed that the Group was working with a new awarding body and prior to approval from Pearsons, the Group were required to have clinical staff in place. The clinical practitioners are now in place and the Group will deliver this from September. It had taken time to recruit and develop the clinical practitioners. A plan is now in place to support the recruitment of future practitioners. This will support delivery and practice.

- A question was raised in relation to an update being provided on the Teaching Education provision.

The APHES confirmed that the previous qualification had been removed and provision to work with another provider was in the pipeline. A proposal had been made to the Deputy Principal to approve for September 2024.

- A Member confirmed that she had visited the clinical ward for T Levels at the Altrincham campus and asked if there were opportunities for the HE students to use those facilities.

The APHES confirmed that funding had been used to develop clinical delivery at both Cheadle and Altrincham. The Altrincham work has been completed ahead of Cheadle, due to Cheadle not being quite ready. There are plans in place for the clinical spaces to be used for block activity and for T Levels students to work with Level 4 and 5 students.

- A question was asked in relation to the increase in internal progression.

The APHES confirmed that 69% reported was for applications.

- A question was asked in relation to applications and what had been done differently to achieve the increase in applications.

The APHES confirmed that strong and accurate course information had been provided. There had been campaigns to support HE externally and internal activity with the Group's own students had been stronger and better communicated. The APHES reported that there had been greater engagement with the Heads of HE and Programme Leaders with a focus on pathways. The positive satisfaction results last year had supported positive recruitment and been woven into campaigns to promote HE. The Group has also worked with the DfE for HTQs activity that combined school and career engagement.

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- A member shared a scholar programme initiative that was being delivered by a few colleges in the region and included a bespoke programme delivered over a few weeks. The member explained that there is an assessment at the end of the programme and it is helpful in keeping students 'warm' until enrolment.
- The Deputy Principal stated that the HE Provision is of strong quality. Successful Open Events and HE specific events, particularly the HE Graduation had proved successful.
- The Student Governor explained that her own personal experience had been positive and communication from her lecturer had been strong, creating a personalised approach.

The Chair of the Committee explained that she was looking forward to visiting the cyber lab and immersive suite upon her next visit. **It was noted that a lot of the actions are green, and any outstanding actions could be carried forward to the next action plan.**

Action: APHES

There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was agreed that the progress against the action plan be received and noted.

HEC&Q/6/24**Higher Skills Strategy 2024/2027 - Verbal update on the approach being taken**

The APHES provided a verbal update on the Higher Skills Strategy 2024/2027 and the approach being taken. It was explained that the Higher Skills Strategy 2024/2027 would be progressed following the production of the next Strategic Plan but was likely to build on the previous strategy with slightly different ambitions.

The APHES reported that this would include:

- Technical qualifications
- Mapping to T Levels
- Long and medium sized courses
- Modular delivery
- Upskilling of students
- Work with employers
- Working with schools
- Strategy around GM Group to upskill staff to industry standards – knowledge, experience and skills that are research focussed
- Working with a partner university won't be a large focus because it doesn't yield much benefit for the Group

The Student Governor shared feedback from fellow students for Level 7. It was explained that 3 students visited one provider but chose TSCG due to pedagogy and how it was being delivered.

The APHES explained that there were currently 40 Level 6 students, and they would hopefully continue to PG FE Practitioners.

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There were no further questions or issues raised by members. It was agreed that the verbal update in respect of the approach to be taken in creating the HE Skills Strategy 2024-2027 was received and noted.

HEC&Q/7/24 HE Quality and Standards Report – including the Quality Improvement Plan – Progress Update 2023/2024

The Head of HE Quality and Standards (HHEQ&S) referred members to the previously circulated HE Quality and Standards report and a progress update in relation to the Quality Improvement Plan 2023/2024.

The HHEQ&S provided the following update on key areas:

AFI1 – Student recruitment

A large amount of time had been spent on student recruitment. There were currently 5 out of 7 actions that were amber and 2 were green. There had been recent campaigns that had resulted in successful recruitment in construction and computing. The new HE prospectus had been published and at a recent event other providers had stopped to take a copy. The team were attending the UCAS Convention today and tomorrow where the prospectus will be shared more widely. Open nights were planned for next week and the week after. Communication plans had been produced at course level for specific marketing. An incentive for a loyalty scheme had been introduced for progressing students. Level 3 classes were planned for after Easter across all five campuses to support wider marketing. There are 26 HE courses planned for September of which 8 are new. The course information had been reviewed and the website had been updated accordingly with only a couple of minor updates required.

- A Member asked if the Group had considered updating information in relation to the announcement that apprenticeships will count for UCAS points in the future.

THE HHEQ&S confirmed that information will be updated accordingly once there is confirmation around standards and what they will be worth.

Action: HHEQ&S

- A Member asked in relation to the 8 new courses was there anything that the Committee need to be aware of.

The HHEQ&S stated that the new courses were in Engineering, Construction and HN in Fine Art, Film and Media.

AFI2 – Outcomes for students

It was reported that progress had been made in this area with all actions being green and amber, except 1 outstanding red action. It was explained that over the last two weeks members of staff have taken part in a CDAR and are now awaiting the report which will inform staff CPD to improve outcomes for students. A number of students are being supported by the Disability Officer. It was explained

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that any weaknesses arising from the CDAR will be reviewed and if there are any barriers to achievement for underrepresented groups then a timeline will be set to address this.

- **A Member confirmed that she had information for underrepresented groups and would look to share this information.**

Action: Chair of the Committee

- A Member questioned if HE Professionals had conducted the CDAR.

The HHEQ&S reported that two very experienced Programme Leaders with fellowship, four HE strong experts, in addition to quality experts conducted the CDAR to ensure Higher Education provision was reviewed to HE professional standards.

AFI3 – Effective capture, monitoring, and analysis of student data

It was reported that significant progress had been made in this area with actions being amber and green. During semester two there is a planning session on markbook to be implemented by the exam board. Operational meetings with Programme Leaders and Heads of Study centred around the review of the QIP to raise the profile of HE. There is still progress to be made around the use of markbook in preparation for semester 2 exam boards.

AFI4 – Moderation process

Timely progress was reported around 1:1 meetings to drive compliance with the outcomes of the CDAR to flag any further non-compliance. Pre-boards had taken place with Sheffield Hallam University for Early Years and Creative and they were reported to have gone well. Collaborative moderation days will be considered in the future around moderation and sharing of best practice.

AFI5 – Reaching and assessment design, planning and feedback mechanisms

Good progress was reported in this area with actions being rated amber. Actions will arise out of the CDAR. Three CPD sessions have been completed with Sheffield Hallam University, with the final session taking place tomorrow on AI. The Academic Misconduct procedure has been updated, in relation to the use of AI.

AFI6 - Academic leadership and rigour within HE curriculum processes

It was reported that significant progress had been made in this area and programme information had been reviewed and updated accordingly.

AFI7 - Establish bespoke CPD framework and community of practice for HE tutors

It was reported that there was still progress to be made in this area but the CPD calendar is progressing. There was CPD planned for the next two months dealing with students with learning needs.

AFI8 – Establish a clear student engagement strategy and support model

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It was reported that this will be covered further under the Student Engagement item on the agenda. The Student Engagement Officer has carried out a lot of work in this area and been a brilliant advocate. A mid-term survey, student voice meetings and an open office for an hour each week had taken place.

- A Member questioned, given Student Engagement is proving successful, can you provide an example of how this has influenced something?

The APHES provided an example of the communication in relation to the hardship fund, where students that were hard to reach and had no understanding of HE Curriculum have now been reached and opportunities have been taken up by students.

There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was agreed that the HE Quality and Standards Report including an update on the Quality Improvement Plan update 2023-2024 be received and noted.

HEC&Q/8/24**Higher Education regulatory update**

The APHES referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to key regulatory updates, details around consultations, HE reforms and other essential information from the Higher Education sector. The APHES explained that two items had been merged on the agenda to ensure that members understand not only the OfS environment but how it directly impacts on TSCG. The APHES explained that OfS communications and consultations are being received on a regular basis and it can be a challenge to respond as a small institution.

Access and Participation Plans Update

Providers have been asked to provide a new Access and Participation Plan. However, most colleges have been allowed to roll this over for a further year. The focus for the Group is to ensure the equality of opportunity register is completed for underrepresented groups. In the meantime, there are many groups and webinars for the members of staff to take part in. Also, as part of Greater Manchester Higher Education Group, the Group will be a part of the APP Group with Sheffield Hallam University.

Publication of Annual Fee Information

All students entering Higher Education can use the modular funding. Modular funding will commence with HTQs, and eligible students will be able to access the funding.

Freedom of Speech Act

The freedom of Speech consultation is ongoing and due to be completed next week. An update will be provided to the National Policy Group to give feedback.

Mental Health Awareness

OfS pledged a major commitment to support mental health. Mental health awareness week is taking place next week.

Recent report on the NAO about franchising for university partners

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There has been a recent report where numbers are significantly growing, and fraudulent activity could have taken place. Where more than 50% of fraudulent activity has taken place, this has been with larger providers. The Group has a small subcontracting partnership with OLC Europe, who do not have their own registration. The Group entered this partnership around a year ago for a Diploma. The successful partnership has supported widening participation. In terms of quality assurance, the partnership has the same scrutiny as internal courses and a CDAR was also undertaken. This included a desk-based and class-based review for quality assurance for the partner. The Committee was assured that there are no risks with the partner and each participation form has been scrutinised. The future of this partnership is under review as the qualification is being discontinued.

HTQ Updates

The analysis deliberately tracks how HTQs are being delivered and the outcomes. This is a move forward in support of HTQs.

OfS and DfE Capital Bid Progress Report

The Group is fully on track with spend for the bids. The Group has been praised for effective management of spend for the bids which have included the immersive suite and CAVE. Revenue spending has been a critical part of HTQ promotional activity and for CPD for staff to widen knowledge and understanding. The remaining spend will be on the IT infrastructure and university update for 2024/2025.

Next steps

Next steps include attendance at the OfS webinar and attendance at the AoC Annual HE Conference. The Group has been asked to host the ATC network by Pearsons. The Group is also working alongside MIS to meet the requirements of ONE and CDAR process.

- A Member commented on the positive position of the Group.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was agreed that the Higher Regulatory Update be received and noted.

HEC&Q/9/24**Student Engagement Update**

The HHEQ&S referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the Student Engagement Plan 2023-2026 and Student Voice Report 2023-2024.

The HHEQ&S shared the following update on the Student Survey Report and framework:

- There has been a huge amount of student activity including forums, student voice activity, student engagement hub, open voice and you said we did.
- Although it is early days, the impact of the student voice work has been a more creative curriculum, further mental health support including the Disability Support Officer keeping in touch with students and staff CPD sessions.

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- Students voicing matters has raised the profile of HE. Specific examples of this are where students in Early Years requested opportunities to connect and learn from each other, Programme Leaders have put this in place. Also, where student representatives requested further social spaces to eat together these have been created.
- Compared to the low response rate for the induction survey this has increased significantly for the mid-year survey resulting in more meaningful data.
- Support has been provided to ensure students can access the hardship fund and links to bursaries.
- Work has been done to raise awareness of the OfS survey.

The HHEQ&S confirmed that the next steps are to continue to feedback to students through you said we did. There will be an end of year survey conducted. There is a student conference planned for May. **A further update will be provided at the next meeting.**

Action: HHEQ&S

The HEEQ&S confirmed that the Student Engagement Plan was for consideration in draft form. There was a discrepancy in relation to the numbering and this will be revised.

- A Member commented on the lower number of response rates compared to the first survey.

The APHES confirmed that this was due to withdrawals and that Early Education students had not completed the survey.

- A Member questioned if a date had been decided for the Student Conference in May and for a governor to be invited.

The APHES confirmed the date will be shared with the Corporation Secretary once finalised.

Action: APHES/Corporation Secretary

A discussion took place surrounding the most suitable date for the conference and the Student Governor suggested for it to be held during the final week when dissertations would have been submitted.

- **A Member commented that Sheffield Hallam University was spelt incorrectly on pages 2 of the Student Voice report and page 10 of the plan.**

The HHEQ&S confirmed that this will be corrected.

Action: HHEQ&S

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- A Member raised employability progress and questioned if the results in the survey were employability rates.

It was explained that this related to progress and developing future employment and the results were from the 20 questions within the survey. The results indicate how a course is enhancing practices and career prospects. Positive results reflect curriculum offer and delivery.

- A Member questioned if the improved response rate could be broken down by curriculum area and if they are being shared with the areas that are not performing as well.

The APHES confirmed that the response rates are shared with curriculum areas. The CDARS will also share some common themes. The internal HE Committee considers the internal governance structure and agree actions accordingly.

- A Member questioned whether people within the local community are contacted several times in relation to different initiatives the Group runs.

The APHES explained that the Employer Responsive team liaises with the different teams to triangulate the approach.

- The Chair of the Committee raised the NSS results for sample size to qualify percentages and sizes.
- The Chair of the Committee also raised belonging and community building for mature learners to be included in the next version of the HE Strategy. **The Chair of the Committee confirmed that she is happy to contact David Gilani from The University of York on behalf of the Group to speak to students about belonging that may support flexible pathways.**

Action: Chair of the Committee

The Chair of the Committee also agreed to share some information relating to the Scottish model for EMI student support that may support with questions for the new HE Strategy.

Action: Chair of the Committee

The Committee supported the APHES to share and progress the Operational Plan with the Management Committee.

There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was agreed that the Student Engagement update be received and noted.

HEC&Q/10/24 Office for Students Risk Register Update

The APHES referred members to the previously circulated report and a copy of the Operational Risk Register for Higher Education.

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In relation to the controlling requirement to meet regulations and financial implications, the following update on the key operational risks was provided:

- There is a current shortfall of income against the overall financial target. However, a stronger position was reported compared to the previous academic year. There have been a number of January starts that have generated income.
- Delivery of student outcomes is in line with B3 conditions. Activities have taken place to listen to students and the CDAR Review of Programme Level. A lot of work is being undertaken organically but is assuring students that they can access wraparound care. This has been a very positive step forward.
- CMA Guidance around public information for HE resulted in collating, producing, and sharing information about courses during the first semester. The planning cycle for 2024/25 is currently going through final checks.

A further update will be provided at the next meeting.

- A Member questioned the high-risk rating for financial viability and sustainability.

The APHES explained that this related to the greater financial impact for the Group if the overall financial position was not met, resulting in a high rating.

There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was agreed that the Office for Students (OfS) and Risk Register update be received and noted.

HEC&Q/11/24 Any Other Business

The Chair of the Committee reported that the APHES will be leaving TSCG in May 2024 to become Dean for HE at Reaseheath College. The committee thanked the APHES for her contribution to the Group and the Committee and acknowledged that she will be leaving the HE provision in a good place.

The Deputy Principal echoed her congratulations and thanks to the APHES. The Deputy Principal confirmed that an interim plan was likely to be put in place for Term 3 with an alternative arrangement in place from September onwards. This will be communicated to governors and members of staff across the Group.

The APHES confirmed it had been a pleasure to work with the Committee.

The Chair of the Committee also congratulated CS as she had been appointed as Head of Academic Practice at the University of Chester.

HEC&Q/12/24 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 5 June 2024 via Microsoft Teams.

The student representative forwarded her apologies for the next meeting. Members thanked the student representative for her contribution.

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Action: Corporation Secretary

The meeting closed at 7.18pm.