

## TRAFFORD &amp; STOCKPORT COLLEGE GROUP

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee  
held on Thursday 13 November 2025, at 1.30pm via Microsoft Teams**

<b>Present:</b>	Graham Luccock	(Vice Chair)
	Fatema Desai	(Co-opted Member)
	Olivia Bussey	
	Sarah Drake	
	James Scott	(Chief Executive Officer)
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Rebecca Clare	(Corporation Secretary)
	Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava	(Group Principal)
	Danielle Houghton	(Vice Principal Apprenticeships, HE and Skills)
	Andrea Ormisher	(Head of Higher Education, Quality and Standards)
	Hammad Ahmed Mirza	(HE Student Representative)
	Yvonne Riley	(Assistant Corporation Secretary)
	Tracey Wood	(Chief Commercial Officer)

**Minute No.****HEC&Q/32/25 Apologies for Absence**

The Corporation Secretary (CS) reported that apologies for absence had been received from Emily McIntosh and co-opted member Nurun Nahar and Claire Stocks.

A welcome was extended to Hammad Ahmed Mirza (AHM) the recently appointed HE Student Representative and introductions were made. It was noted that AHM was currently studying for an HND Computing (Cybersecurity) alongside work as a Learning Facilitator at the Group.

**HEC&Q/33/25 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of either direct or indirect interest in any of the meeting's business items.

**HEC&Q/34/25 Minutes of the Higher Education Curriculum & Quality Committee Meeting held on 5 June 2025**

**The minutes of the meeting were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting subject to two minor typographical amendments which had now been updated.**

**HEC&Q/35/25 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.

It was noted that the majority of the actions had been closed or that updates had been provided in the proforma where actions remained open.

**Action: Corporation Secretary**

**Clarification was sought and the Vice Principal Apprenticeships and Adult Skills (VPAAS) confirmed that UCAS points had been awarded for apprenticeships with the allocation**

**Minute No.**

of points based on the level of the apprenticeship, rather than the grade. It was confirmed that the action could be closed.

**Action: Vice Principal Apprenticeships and Adult Skills**

In relation to the offer of a Belong masterclass, the VPAAS advised that initial conversations had taken place with the Link Governor but that there was a need to align with the Group's strategic approach to belong and further discussions would need to take place to avoid duplication. It was confirmed that the VPAAS would pick up the matter during the next HE Link Governor meeting.

There were no further matters arising from the minutes.

**HEC&Q/36/25 HE and Skills Strategy Action Plan Update**

The Vice Principal Apprenticeships and Adult Skills (VPAAS) referred members to the previously circulated report and final version of the Higher Education and Skills Action Plan.

It was confirmed that the Action Plan underpinned the Higher Education and Skills Strategy (2025-2030).

Supplementary documentation included:

- Higher Education and Skills Action Plan 2025-2030
- Higher Education Action Plan – Greater Manchester Institute of Technology (GMIOT) Marketing Update

Progress against each of the Strategic Objectives were included in the report.

The VPAAS highlighted the following:

- **Shape our local community through an employer-aligned and inclusive curriculum:** Targets set for improving employer engagement and flexible course offerings, with proposals including online delivery and new course proposals. The VPAAS advised of a working group meeting that had been scheduled with employers to discuss the LLE modular selection ahead of submission in spring term for September 2027.
- **Position the University Centre as the employer of choice for the HE workforce:** Support provided to a number of staff members to apply for HEA fellowship membership. The VPAAS advised of the priority in the QIP 2025/2026 (Afl 8) to build a HE culture through staff development and scholarly activity.
- **Transform student experience and outcomes:** Student experience and outcomes to be driven by the Access and Participation Plan (APP). The VPAAS advised that the Group would be working with David Hillier (consultant) on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission and preparatory evidence collection. The Committee noted the strong NSS results.
- **Maximise recruitment opportunities:** Recruitment above last year but below target with work to boost January recruitment and marketing initiatives highlighted.

**Minute No.**

- **Innovate curriculum delivery models, supported by outstanding digital and physical learning environments:** Emphasis on digital transformation, online and hybrid delivery, and improved physical learning environments.
- **Support collaborative arrangements:** Work to strengthen existing partnerships and look to expand offer with (SHU) to include Social Work, Youth Justice, and Level 5 apprenticeship in Health. It was noted that a new partnership had been explored but that it was not viable at this time. The VPAAS highlighted collaboration and work with GMIOT and drew attention to the GMIOT marketing update appended to the report.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair of the Corporation commented on the positive progress with GMIOT.

**Action: Vice Principal Apprenticeships and Adult Skills**

**The CEO suggested that under collaborative arrangements, the action plan should reflect the developing Greater Manchester Tertiary Project (GMTP). It was noted that the GMTP aimed to bring colleges and universities closer together. The CEO detailed three strands: a unified LLE offer, mapping current FE to HE pathways, and researching structural models for FE and HE collaboration. The VPAAS undertook to reflect the collaborative arrangements to the action plan and highlighted upcoming meetings with Manchester partners to discuss the research piece.**

A member enquired if students were being made aware of LLEs and related courses and the VPAAS clarified that current marketing focused on the traditional HE offer as LLE modular units would not be available until 2027. It was confirmed that once approved, LLEs would be promoted through usual channels.

A member questioned the confidence in meeting January recruitment targets, especially for courses like photography, and asked about the viability of these courses given sector wide recruitment challenges. The VPAAS acknowledged the ambitious target and noted a shift from traditional HE to apprenticeships, particularly in construction. It was noted that the photography course may not run if numbers remained too low.

The VPAAS highlighted that whilst the Committee focused on traditional, HE recruitment, the overall higher skills figure (including higher apprenticeships and other qualifications) was more representative of the Group's KPI and noted discussions with MIS in relation to including the total number of around 450 students on higher level qualifications, suggesting it might be useful to show this broader figure alongside traditional HE numbers.

**Action: Chief Commercial Officer**

**The Chief Commercial Officer further highlighted the trend of students moving from traditional HE to higher and degree apprenticeships and suggested that this shift could be mapped and brought to the Committee.**

The CEO provided the Committee with assurance that the financial risk was fully mitigated against the budget which had been set lower than the curriculum plan.

**Minute No.**

There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the HE and Skills Strategy Action Plan update be received and noted.

**HEC&Q/37/25 HE Self-Evaluation Document, Quality Improvement Plan and Access and Participation Progress Update**

The Head of HE, Quality and Standards (HHEQS) referred members to the previously circulated report and HE Self-Evaluation Document, Quality Improvement Plan and Access and Participation Progress Update.

It was confirmed that the following documents were appended to the report:

- HE Self Evaluation Document 2024/25 and Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26
- Annual Impact Report – Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2022/23 to 2026/27
- Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25 - Final Update

**Annual Impact Report**

It was noted that the Annual Impact Report outlined the progress against each target set out in the APP. The HHEQS reported that evaluation of impact was restricted by the size of the HE population, the comparatively large number of targets, questions over the validity of comparisons pre/ post-merger and changes to measures of HE participation.

It was confirmed that positive progress had been made against 4 targets, some progress based on limited data against 3 targets, unclear progress due to limited data against 3 targets, and more progress required against 2 targets. It was noted that areas still requiring improvement had been carried forward to the new QIP.

**HE Self Evaluation Document and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2024/2025**

The HHEQS advised that the Self Evaluation Document (SED) 2024/25 provided context, scope and an overview of provision and student profiles. It was noted that strengths and achievements were highlighted with reference to targets and QIP actions, weaknesses and challenges, for each of the 7 areas for improvement.

Positive student outcomes for 2024/2025 were noted with duration achievement 93.8%, continuation 93.6%, in-year retention 94% and high classification achievement 31.5%.

The VPAAS highlighted that details of the subcontracting arrangement for the L5 Diploma in Education and Training with OLC had been included in the SED under Appendix A.

**Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2025/2026**

It was confirmed that the QIP outlined eight strategic Areas for Improvement in Higher Education provision for 2025/26. It was noted that each area had been informed by the 2024/25 Self-Evaluation Document, the Higher Education and Skills Strategy 2025/2030, the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration, particularly the B Conditions, and the objectives set out in the existing and renewed Access and Participation Plans.

Questions and comments were invited.

A member asked the HHEQS to expand on the points in respect of challenges remain in the consistency in programme review and departmental communications and the weaknesses in the feedback from construction students. The HHEQS advised that this

**Minute No.**

was due to staffing and organisational issues which has now been addressed through the transformation programme and the move of construction HE classes to the dedicated university centre. It was confirmed that a new programme leader was in place in construction and that some early positive feedback had been received from students. The HHEQS noted that work continues to promote consistency throughout HE.

A member raised a question as to why the 21 HNC construction students did not progress to HND. The HHEQS advised that HNC was employer sponsored and whilst some students continue to HND top up most typically cease studying at HNC. It was acknowledged that last year's negative experience may have impacted progression. The HHEQS advised that students had been contacted prior to the summer break to confirm their next steps and that plans were in place to follow up.

A member raised a question in relation to quality processes, staff CPD and confidence in HE practices, referencing feedback. The HHEQS outlined plans for individualised CPD, combining tailored support with common sessions, and noted the challenge of staff teaching across provisions. The Member suggested utilising university partners for HE focused CPD, which was acknowledged to be effective for university validated provision but less so for Pearson courses.

Members commented positively on retention rates and the usefulness of the SED.

**There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration and deliberation it was unanimously resolved that the HE Self Evaluation Document 2024/2025 including Quality Improvement 2025/2026 be recommended for approval to the Board of the Corporation.**

It was further resolved that the Access and Participation Plan Annual Impact Report 2022/2023 to 2026/2027 and the final outcomes of the Quality Improvement Plan 2024/2025 be received and noted.

**HEC&Q/38/25 HE Performance Update 2025/2026**

The Vice Principal Apprenticeships and Adult Skills (VPAAS) referred members to the previously circulated report and information on the current financial performance in relation to student recruitment and possible income implications. It was noted that the report also provided an update on in-year retention.

An overview of the recruitment position by department was presented as follows:

- Recruitment for 2025/26 was reported to be mixed.
- Health and Early years recruited well and above target. It was noted that the new HTQ Assistant Practitioner had been well received with 12 starts.
- Construction area of biggest concern, with the largest gap between business plan and actual starts. It was reported that this was due in part to the increase in employers funding through the levy and using the apprenticeship as an alternative route.
- Number of courses, through early viability review removed from the September 2025 offer due to low or no interest.
- Two HNC photography and HNC Business courses delayed until January 2026.
- Currently nearly all the contingency utilised if further recruitment does not materialise.

**Minute No.**

In relation to the current retention position, the APAAS advised that the retention metric was very strong (100% for 2025/2026) with only 6 progressing learners not retained.

Key next steps were highlighted in the report.

There were no questions or comments from members and following consideration it was resolved that the HE Performance Update be received and noted.

**HEC&Q/39/25 HE Regulatory Update**

The Vice Principal Apprenticeships and Adult Skills (VPAAS) referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to key areas impacting upon the HE provision at the Trafford & Stockport College Group.

Supplementary Documentation included:

- Regularity Update Presentation
- TEF Consultation and Proposals
- Draft Access and Participation Plan Summary Document
- Lifelong Learning Entitlement

The presentation covered the following key areas:

- AoC Forum Feedback
- Freedom of Speech and E6
- Teaching and Excellence Framework
- Lifelong Entitlement Update
- Access and Participation Plan Update
- OfS and DfE Capital Bid Progress Report
- OfS Annual Fee Return (Verbal Update)
- Update in Readiness 2027
- Any Further Updates

The VPAAS drew attention to the following key points:

- Freedom of Speech Act (August 2025) – updates to the code of conduct and website with ongoing staff training and mechanisms for reporting issues.
- Harassment and Sexual misconduct (August 2025) – policy updates completed with a focus now on ensuring all staff receive training and understand reporting mechanisms.
- Government Announcements – noted new targets for HE participation and higher technical education/ apprenticeships, as well as changes to funding models and maintenance grants.
- Subcontracting and recent DfE consultations.
- Skills policy move from DfE to the Education to the Department for Work and Pensions.
- AOC UK Report and summary of sector findings on Post-16 Education capacity, LSIPS, LLE, and other policy areas.
- Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) consultation closes on 11 December 2025 with review of the application process.
- Access and Participation Plan submitted with only one minor query received regarding a rewording of a sentence for clarity which has since been updated and resubmitted.
- OFS capital monitoring return 2024/25 completed and submitted. The VPAAS advised that the Group had not been successful in the capital grant bid for 2025/26 due to

**Minute No.**

significant competition but were awaiting confirmation of some monies through a funding formula.

- HE Graduation ceremony and guest speakers.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

**Action: Vice Principal Apprenticeships and Adult Skills**

**A member raised a question as to whether a key TEF measure still included progression into high paid employment, expressing concern that not all students go into such roles and that this does not take into account social value. The CEO confirmed that progression into highly skilled employment was previously a key measure and that this had impacted the Group's rating in the past. The VPAAS advised that confirmation would be sought as it was unclear if this was still the case under the current consultation. The Group Principal advised that sector comparisons may be outlined to make the measure fairer, considering differences between professions and regions.**

**Action: Chief Executive Officer**

**The CEO confirmed the formal inclusion of higher education providers in the LSIP as confirmed in the white paper. The CEO commented that the question had been raised with the DfE as to whether HE providers would be subject to annual accountability agreements in the same way as FE colleges but that this had not yet been confirmed. It was noted that the CEO would keep the Board updated on the situation as it progressed.**

The CEO observed that the white paper's FE section was generally well received, whilst the HE section was seen as more demanding, with expectations for increased accountability and performance.

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

**HEC&Q/40/25 Student Engagement Update**

The Head of HE, Quality and Standards (HHEQS) referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the impact of student engagement activity in 2024/2025 and the first months of 2025/2026.

It was confirmed that the report also provided analysis of the 2025 NSS results published in July 2025.

The report contained the following supplementary documentation:

- 2024/2025 Student Engagement Impact Statement Q4
- 2025/2026 Student Engagement Impact Statement Q1
- 2025 NSS Analysis Report

The report highlighted the following:

- 2024/2025 higher response rates than the previous year, in all in house surveys and in the NSS survey (97%). Financial support supported 86 recipients, of which 82% completed their studies. Students were supported by the Engagement and Enhancement Officer, who received 106 mitigating circumstances requests, resolved outstanding tuition payments and carried out student voice activities, which has led

**Minute No.**

to several initiatives and improvements to the student experience. It was noted that a total of 227 interventions had been carried out by the Disability Support Officer, providing academic and SEN support.

- The NSS results were positive both in terms of participation and positivity, and a significant improvement on the previous year. It was noted that the Group outperformed the sector in 6 of the 7 themes, with particularly strong results in Teaching on my course (93%), Assessment and Feedback (95%) and Academic support (93%). Internal surveys in 2024/25 highlighted some disparities in the student experience between departments. The HHEQS highlighted the value of the internal surveys which had been aligned to the NSS themes and questions, in the early identification of issues and provided opportunities to mitigate and resolve issues in a timely fashion.
- That the first 7 weeks of the academic year had seen the DSO support 24 students in 55 interactions, more than double that in the same period last year. It was confirmed that significant efforts had resulted in a reduction in the volume of outstanding tuition fee loans and invoices compared with the same period in 2024/25 with early hardship payments made to 3 students.
- Start of Course Survey 68% response rate with results highlighting strengths in many areas but also concerns which need to be addressed in the short term.

The HE Student Representative reported on positive feedback on student engagement, highlighting supportive teachers and opportunities like the upcoming GM Institute of Technologies conference.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Vice Chair commented on the positive NSS results, especially the improvement in learning resources. The HHEQS confirmed that students now felt that they had the resources they needed. The HHEQS also referenced financial support and interventions which had contributed to high retention, completion, and continuation rates.

**Action: Head of HE Quality and Standards**

**In response to a suggestion in relation to analysing survey results by student demographics and specific needs, the HHEQS advised that this would be considered and the Group Principal confirmed that demographic data was available and could be broken down and analysed.**

A member commented on a recent link visit to Stockport campus and raised concerns about student and staff reactions to changes in art room allocations. The HHEQS provided the Committee with information on the rationale behind resource challenges and changes, the work to support students and staff involvement in discussions. The Group Principal commented on the challenges of balancing space needs and communication.

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

**HEC&Q/41/25 Office for Students (OfS) and Risk Register Update**

**Minute No.**

The Vice Principal Apprenticeships and Adult Skills (VPAAS) referred members to the previously circulated reports and an Office for Students (OfS) risk register update.

Members were advised that the Risk Register should not be seen in isolation and that it sits 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.

The key operational risks were confirmed to be:

- Financial Risk against 2025-26 income position
- Delivery of successful student outcomes in line with B3 conditions for 2025-26 (Achievement for 2024-25 is strong)
- Compliance with CMA guidance around public information for HE

The following changes to risk scores since June 2025 were reported:

- D-Risk decreased from 16 to 12. It was noted that whilst still currently below target, there had been an increase of 10-15% of starts for Term 1 when compared with the previous year. Ongoing recruitment and marketing activities for January 2026 though still some risk to meet enrolment target with contingencies in place to mitigate risk.
- A1-Risk decreased from 6 to 3. APP for 2027 onwards submitted and awaiting outcome.
- Introduction of risk E6. Harassment and sexual misconduct.

The Vice Chair of the Committee asked the VPAAS to elaborate on the targeted interventions mentioned in the risk register cover paper, specifically regarding recruitment for January and improving income position. The VPAAS advised of the processes in place and the follow up with applicants, marketing events, social media and employer engagement to boost recruitment.

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

**HEC&Q/42/25 Any Other Business****Emerging Sector Risks (Item considered under Regularity Update)**

The Vice Chair of the Committee/Chair of the Corporation referred members to previously circulated information and letter to Chairs from Office for Students November 2025 in relation to emerging sector risks.

**Action: Chief Executive Officer**

**The CEO highlighted the key sector risks as identified in the letter, including financial pressures, significant change programmes, third party/subcontracting and off campus delivery, misuse of public funds, and legal compliance related to freedom of speech. The CEO advised of the intention to liaise with the Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) to ensure that the risks were captured in the Group's strategic risk register.**

The CEO clarified that there were no immediate cause for concern, but the Group should remain proactive.

**Minute No.**

The Chair of the Corporation noted that governance was a central focus in the OfS communication, and the Group should be prepared for increased scrutiny. It was confirmed that the CEO's update and inclusion of the identified risks on the risk register would provide the Committee and Board with assurance.

There were no further matters raised under any other business.

**HEC&Q/43/25 Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be held at 10.30 on 5 March 2026 in the Boardroom at Stockport Campus. It was noted that a tour of the University Centre would take place prior to the meeting.

Fatema Desai Left the meeting at 2:27pm

The meeting closed at 2.59pm