USP College Corporation
Quality Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 6 October 2020
Meeting held via Microsoft Teams
Meeting commenced: 16.00hrs
Meeting ended: 18.00hrs

Present

Ian Hockey	Independent Member	Chair
Ralph Henderson	Independent Member	
Vikki Liogier	Independent Member	
Trevor Hutchinson	Co-opted Member	
Dan Pearson	Principal and Chief Executive	
Julie Snelling	Staff Member	
David O'Donovan	Staff Member	
Cameron Root	Student Member	

In attendance

Gordon Haines	Chair of the Corporation
John Revill	Vice Principal Partnerships, Funding & Business Planning (VP P,F&BP)
Clare White	Deputy Principal Corporate & Student Services
Mark Silverman	Interim Quality Consultant
Stuart Coussins	Head of Higher Education
James Parker	Director of Education Improvement
Andy Shepherd	Head of Student Services

Clerk

Sue Glover	Clerk to the Corporation

The Chair welcome everyone to the meeting, and in particular the new student member for the Palmers campus, Cameron Root.

QC.38.20	**Declaration of Interest**	

Members and officers were reminded of the need to declare any personal or financial interest in any item to be considered during the meeting.

Ralph Henderson advised that he is a Director of Rugby at Thurrock Rugby Club, President of William Edwards' Alumni and a member of the William Edwards' Trust.

There were no other declarations of interest.

QC.39.20 Apologies for absence
There were no apologies for absence.

QC.40.20 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2020
The minutes of the meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

QC.41.20   **Matters arising and action points from the minutes of the previous meeting**
Members reviewed the action points arising from the meeting, noting the items that would be picked up under this agenda and those that would remain on the schedule as ongoing.

Members agreed there were no other matters arising from the previous meeting.

QC.42.20   **Learner Voice**
The Chair welcomed the student member for the Palmers campus to his first meeting of the Committee and invited him to give some feedback on student events since the start of term.

The student member advised that a social media campaign has been launched on Instagram to communicate with students during lock down, which has worked well.

In response to questions, members were advised that

- Teaching and learning online has been received very positively by the students who feel that the standard of teaching has been unaffected and remains good
- Students have been accessing lessons as a live stream, which has enabled students to ask questions during the lesson and is working very well
- The new Student Champions have been helpful with ensuring that the induction process for new students has gone smoothly and the student governor advised that has made himself available to new students for any help

The Committee thanked the student governor for his contribution.

Higher Education

QC.43.20   **Docklands Academy (DAL)**
The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the Corporation Board the previous week, the following recommendations were agreed to mitigate the issues at DAL:

- Current learners are allowed to continue with the programme of study, approximately 94 learners
- Learners who have just completed their HNC's (approximately 80 learners) are allowed to enrol and progress onto the HND programme
- No new starts are allowed on to the HNC programme
- A revised contract to ensure that there are financial penalties against any further breaches of conditions
- Following a full investigation, a report is to be produced to inform the Board on the situation at DAL, how it came about, the current status and the measures in place to ensure that a similar situation does not occur with any other partner with the College in the future

The Head of HE advised that DAL have been informed of the recommendations and have confirmed they are willing to work within the terms set out by the Board. Draft contracts have been issued and it is expected these will be in place by next week, with continuing learners starting this week and progressing learners in January.

Agreed

The Quality Committee agreed to receive and note the update and asked that the Committee is kept informed with regard to those students continuing their study programmes with DAL

QC.44.20   **Partnership Arrangements with Oxford Business College (OBC)**

The Head of HE advised the Committee that

- Following approval by the Board to proceed with the partnership arrangement with OBC, a contract was put in place with them from 1 August 2020
- Pearson validation was approved on 26 August 2020, which meant that there was insufficient time to recruit a viable cohort for OBS starting in late September
- Recruitment is planned for the first week of January 2021
- A collaborative operational delivery plan has been put in place with OBS to give oversight of the quality of provision when it commences in January

In discussion, members were advised that, although it has been disappointing recruitment had not been able to commence at the start of the new academic year, good progress is being made for recruitment to start in the January. It was important for the Board to have assurance on the quality of provision with OBC and it was agreed that an outline of the quality assurance mapping in place with them would be presented to the Committee at the next meeting.

Agreed

The Quality Committee agreed to receive and note the report.

QC.45.20   **Achievement/progression**

The Director of Education Improvement presented a report detailing the achievement, retention and progression in 2019/20.

Members were advised that

- Overall college achievement is 2% above national average
- Overall college retention is 1% below national average, A level year 1 to A level year 2 had the greatest impact on retention
- Of those students retained 98% passed their qualifications, 4% above national average
- Level 1 achievement is 5% below national average, with retention being the main issue
- Level 2 (GCSE and Vocational) achievement is 7% above national average
- Level 3 (A level and Vocational) achievement is 3% above national average
- All ethnic groups achieved higher than national average
- All 'at risk groups' achieved higher than the college average (88.4%) with the exception of 'Looked After Children' (86.7%)
- Male and Female students achievement is higher than national average. Both groups increase by 2% from last year
- GCSE English and maths had an increase in grades 4-9 from previous years
- Progression from level 1-2 and level 2-3 is approximately 10% higher than previous years

Members discussed the issues raised and, in response to questions, were advised that

- Initially there were some students impacted by the assessment grading system introduced during lockdown with their grades pushed down. However, following a change in government guidance, all assessment grades initially submitted were subsequently accepted
- The issue with A levels had predominately been at Palmers, but progression from year 1 to year 2 this year has been much stronger with a 10% improvement on this time last year in terms of retention
- A level improvement remains a priority and is one of the key improvement priorities in the College Quality Improvement Plan
- The student governor agreed to raise the issue of further improving the experience of A level year 1 students through Learner Voice at induction
- There are no significant differences in ethnic groups and overall these students achieved better than the national average. Members commented that it was difficult to make any comparisons without having the actual figures for context and asked if this could be contained in future reports
- The College's safeguarding team continue to work closely with vulnerable students, particularly during lockdown to ensure they are well supported
- Male achievement was 3% higher than female achievement. The College continues to work towards closing the achievement gap between male and female and, as an example, highlighted a teaching and learning initiative in sports and engineering bringing more competitive tasks into lessons to help close the male achievement gap

Members agreed that the presentation had given a clear summary of the achievement, retention and progression of students and it was pleasing to note that, overall, achievement has increased, particularly the increase in male achievement. The areas of concern are retention for level 1 and retention for A levels from year 1 to year 2, which will be picked up in the College's Quality Improvement Plan.

Agreed
The Quality Committee agreed to receive and note the report.

QC.46.20   **Quality of Teaching and Learning**
In the absence of the Head of Teaching and Learning, the Director of Education Improvement presented a report, which provided an update on the quality of teaching and learning.

Members were advised that
- The Teaching Improvement Practitioners (TIP) team continues with 10 team members from the previous year; a New Teacher Programme is being implemented to provide support to all new staff with a rolling programme to enable access to sufficient support at any time of the year for all new staff
- Prior to the changes in the 2019/20 academic year delivery method, there were 7 'red' RAG rated staff, out of the 7 only one remains at the College with an 'amber' RAG rating due to improved performance, the other 6 staff no longer work at the College
- The initial teacher RAG rating for 2020/21 conducted by each area's Head of Learning has indicated there are 20 'blue', 97 'green', 52 'amber' with no 'red' rated
- The outcome of the 'Teacher Self-Assessment', completed by all delivery staff against the teaching and learning strategy, indicates a high level of performance with a number of positive strengths

- An area of focus is the digital development of staff in relation to their streaming skills and virtual lessons

Members discussed the issues raised and, in response to questions were advised that

- focused learning walks are conducted by HOL's outside of the area of 'amber' staff to monitor performance and support needed
- 22 new teachers have started with the College and are accessing support through the New Teacher Support Programme
- 30 'amber' staff who are not considered new are receiving various lines of support, such as individual TIP support, HOL support with enhanced learning walks, review dates in line with the first performance panel as indicated in the Quality Cycle to determine next steps for each staff member
- all teacher self-assessments have been provided to HOL's to help inform discussions relating to development and to plan appropriate HOL area CPD
- all CPD and development sessions are planned to have a digital element included to enable transfer of skills to live streaming sessions

It was pleasing to note that out of the previous 'red' RAG rated staff, the remaining staff member has improved from 'red' to 'amber' and that the initial RAG rating for 2020/21 indicates no 'red' ratings, demonstrating the robust processes and procedures in place to ensure continual improvement with teaching and learning. The 'blue' and 'green' rated teachers continue to share best practice during weekly team meetings.

Agreed
The Quality Committee agreed to receive and note the report.

Q.47.20   **Complaints Summary for 2019/20**
The VP P,F&BP presented for consideration a report detailing the College's complaints received during 2019/20.

Members reviewed the detail of the report, noting that
- 91% of complaints were resolved informally (42 of 46)
- 2% of complaints were escalated to formal level (1 of 46)
- 4% of complaints were resolved post policy deadline (2 of 46)

In discussion, members were advised that
- the formal complaint was against the College regarding significant clashes in a student's timetable that were unresolved. The complaint was treated as formal as it had not been resolved locally, the timetables were amended and the outcome was satisfactory
- the recurring complaint themes have been around
  - Admissions – not qualifying for bursary
  - Lack of teach or cover – predominately at the Palmer's campus in Humanities as the College had been unable to recruit a permanent member of staff and consistently let down by agencies. This has now been resolved
- The areas with the largest number of complaints have been Creative Arts and Finance/Admissions with no real patterns emerging

Agreed
The Quality Committee agreed to receive and note the report.

QC.48.20   **Quality Strategy**
The interim Quality Consultant gave a presentation on the College's quality strategy, which set out
- Key Performance Indicator targets
- Key Quality Performance measures of
  - Intent
  - Implementation
  - Who and when
- Key Quality timeline dates

Members were advised that the College's quality strategy is designed to ensure the improvement priorities for student facing services, predominately teaching and learning, are met.

In discussion, the Committee agreed it was a very comprehensive document that clearly sets out the College's strategy for improvement. It was acknowledged that a number of elements within the strategy would be incorporated into the self-assessment report and subsequent quality improvement plan.

Members commented on the targets set out in the Top Line Outcome KPIs and were advised that these were indicative at this time. As it was for the committee to approve and recommend to the Board for approval the targets to be achieved, it was agreed that these would be finalised and presented to the committee at the next meeting for approval.

Members were invited to submit any further comments to the Director of Education Improvement outside of the meeting for incorporation into the final document.

Agreed
The Quality Committee agreed that the College Quality Strategy was an excellent document, but asked that the targets are finalised and a final version is presented for approval at the next meeting

QC.49.20   **College Improvement Priorities**
The Interim Quality Consultant gave a presentation to consider for approval the priorities for quality improvement.

Members were advised that the College 2019/20 self-assessment is in process and the Quality Improvement Plan in development. The key priorities for improvement identified are:

- Distance/E-Learning
- A level provision
- Improve percentage of teaching, learning and assessment
- Improve student SMART target setting
- Student attendance
- Embed Career Focused Learning
- Level 1 provision to improve attendance, retention, progression and overall experience

In discussion, members agreed that the areas for improvement were appropriate, clear and concise and are clearly linked to priorities.

Resolved
The Quality Committee approves and recommends to the Corporation Board for approval the College Improvement Priorities as presented

QC.50.20 **Annual Safeguarding Report for 2019/20**

The Head of Student Services presented, for consideration and approval, the Annual Safeguarding Report for 2019/20.

Members were advised that
- the annual safeguarding report reviews the work undertaken in relation to Safeguarding including Prevent throughout the year
- the report provides assurance to the Board that the College is compliant with its responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding including Prevent and that appropriate actions are being taken in relation to safeguarding students, staff and visitors to the College

Members reviewed the detail of the report, noting
- there is a continuing trend in high levels of various mental health referrals, which is in line with the national trend
- that cases are divided between 'Safeguarding', a student who requires intervention which if not provided could escalate and result in the impairment of their safety, health and development, and 'Wellbeing' intervention to promote a more positive and happy life, these would normally be shorter and deal with issues such as relationship difficulties, stress, low self-esteem
- there have been no referrals to Prevent, nationally the referral from education to Prevent reduced during lockdown with a total of only 11 referrals nationally
- all wellbeing support from the start of lockdown was remote and there was an increase in wellbeing cases in March and April due to remote contact of students who had previously sought wellbeing support
- the measures in place for the Corporation Board in relation to its responsibilities for Safeguarding including Prevent

The Chair of the Committee suggested that as he is also the Link Governor for Safeguarding, it would be a good opportunity for him to meet with the safeguarding team and review the processes and procedures in place and report the outcome to the committee at the next meeting.

Safeguarding Policy

The Head of Student Services presented for consideration and approval the safeguarding policy, which had been updated to include latest changes in the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' document.

Members reviewed the detail of the policy and agreed there were no further changes required.

Resolved

The Quality Committee agreed to approve and recommend to the Corporation Board
- the Annual Safeguarding Report for 2019/20
- the Safeguarding Policy

QC.51.20   **Any Other Business**
The staff governor, David O'Donovan, advised members that the Head of Teaching and Learning would be going on Maternity Leave and he would be taking over her role during her period of absence. Members agreed that when presenting relevant teaching and learning reports to the committee, he would remain impartial so as to avoid any conflict of interest.

There were no items of any other business

QC.52.20   **Schedule of Quality Committee meetings 2020/21**
Tuesday 17 November 2020
Tuesday 23 February 2021
Tuesday 15 June 2021

All meetings commence at 4pm

As there was no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed.

SIGNED AS A CORRECT RECORD:

DATE: 9 December 2020