

Minutes
Curriculum Strategy and Quality Enhancement Committee
(CSQE)

[HRUC Governance](#)

Date	04/12/2025	
Time	17:30 - 19:30	
Location	Microsoft Teams Meeting	
Present	Mike Sutcliffe	Chair
	Mario Michaelides	Governor
	Vincent Neate	Governor
	Jenny McLaughlin	Governor
	Sofia Barbosa-Boucas	Governor
	Gary May	Staff Governor
	Keith Smith	CEO, Ex-Officio
	Dylan McTaggart	HRUC Group Executive Principal
	Clive Hodge	Harrow College Principal
	Gavin Hughes	Richmond College Principal
	Jo Withers	Chief of Business Strategy
	Kiran Rami	Director - Student Services and School Engagement
Absent	Eduard Niga	Staff Governor
Clerk	Clare Mitchell	
Note Taker	Nataliia Tymkiv	

Minutes

1 - General disclaimer at start of meeting

The meeting was recorded for minuting purposes; no objections were raised.

2 - Apologies

Apologies were received from Cherry Horton-Edwards, Tieran Morton, and Jo Swindells.

3 - Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 - Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2025

Resolution: The minutes of the CSQE meetings on 23 October 2025 were unanimously approved.

5 - Actions from the last meeting

The Committee received an update on actions. Most actions were confirmed as completed or ongoing with no further reporting required.

The Committee discussed the response to the action to provide assurance that a fully costed model had been used to underpin the reduction in part time HE fees, noting that the due diligence previously requested had not been fully completed because the update provided was not signed off by the finance team. The Executive confirmed that the update provided was based on discussions with finance but acknowledged that written confirmation from finance had not been included.

The Committee agreed that written confirmation from Finance would be required to conclude the action.

Action: Provide written confirmation from Chief Financial Officer that a fully costed model had been used to underpin the reduction in part time HE fees – DMcT

6 - Committee self-assessment and terms of reference

The Committee received the results of the Committee's self-assessment, noting that five responses had been received. The general view was that the committee was functioning effectively, with 'somewhat effective' being the second-highest rating.

Comments highlighted areas for improvement, including the need for more focus on training and addressing the balance between strategic and operational aspects of the committee's terms of reference.

The Committee discussed the balance between strategic and operational scrutiny within the Terms of Reference. The Committee noted the updates made, including format changes, membership updates, and adding reference to working with the Strategic Transformation Committee. The Safeguarding Lead Governor was now explicitly included as a member of the Committee.

The issue of training needs for committee members was raised and it was suggested that members provide feedback on areas where training could enhance their effectiveness.

The discussion emphasised the importance of continuous improvement and collaboration to ensure the committee's effectiveness in fulfilling its responsibilities.

Resolution: The Committee agreed to recommend the revised Terms of Reference to the Full Corporation for approval.

Action: Chair, Vice-Chair and CM to meet before next meeting to review Committee effectiveness and bring proposals to address the comments and suggestions in the paper

Action: Revised CSQE terms of reference to be recommended to the Corporation for approval - CM

7 - State of the Nation

The Committee discussed the information provided in the state of the nation update, focusing on the final KPIs for 2024/25, 2025/26 performance to date and an update on the curriculum strategy.

There had been a further 1% increase in 16-18 achievement rates, up on last year's highest achievement rates for this age group. 16-18 achievement rates had improved across all three Colleges. Special Educational Needs (SEN) achievement was strong and there had been a 3% improvement in apprenticeship outcomes. HE achievement was very high at

98%. Adult achievement was strong overall, with the exception of adult achievement rates at Richmond.

For the current year, positive trends were reported, including a 2% increase in overall student attendance, a 3-4% improvement in English and maths attendance, and retention rates above 99%, up by 0.1%. Year to date the big four enrichment activities were rated as amber as was the total number of stage 3 and 4 disciplinaries.

The Executive reported that disciplinaries were higher than in the previous academic year, explaining that this reflected firmer and more proactive engagement with students in order to avoid exclusions, while also noting emerging behavioural issues. The Committee noted that work experience remained a challenge, with approximately 85% achieved in the previous year and further improvement required.

The Executive advised the Committee of recent contact from West London Business regarding a possible application for a West London Digital Tech. It was noted that digital was identified as a top-band subject area within the curriculum strategy but was not currently growing at the College. This opportunity would be explored further and Governors would be kept informed and involved as discussions progressed.

Regarding the curriculum strategy, progress in the discovery phase was outlined, which involved benchmarking against best practice providers and employers. Action taken to optimise existing spaces for plumbing and electrical courses was highlighted, along with the need for long-term investments in construction and green skills. The discussion also addressed balancing short-term optimisation with long-term strategic decisions. JM offered to share information on timelines for construction sector skills demands. This would be followed up outside the meeting.

The Committee asked for information about student retention metrics. The Executive explained that students must remain enrolled beyond the 42-day funding threshold to be included in official retention data for funding and Ofsted purposes, and that withdrawals prior to this point were not counted in those statistics, although they were tracked internally for student experience and support reasons.

The Chair thanked staff for their contribution to improved performance, noting that achieving a 2% increase in attendance year to date was a significant achievement and thanking staff for their work.

The Committee then discussed performance in GCSE English and maths. The Chair questioned why achievement at Richmond upon Thames College continued to lag behind Harrow and Uxbridge Colleges, and asked what was being done to close the gap. The EMT reported that performance at Richmond had improved by approximately five percentage points compared with the same point in the previous year. A range of actions were in place, including the introduction of progression passports to motivate learners, cross-college sharing of effective practice, and alignment between classroom delivery and tutorial messaging on the importance of English and maths within the study programme. This remained a key priority area for improvement.

The Chair acknowledged the progress reported and emphasised the importance of ensuring that improvement continued at pace. No further questions were raised.

The Committee discussed the report.

Action: Liaise with JM to obtain a specific data on construction skill requirements for the coming year. - DM

8 - Draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2024/25 and Quality Ambition & Improvement Plan (QAIP) Headlines

The Committee received the draft SAR for 2024/25 and the QAIP for 2025/26. The Committee noted that self-assessment formed part of the annual quality calendar, operating from course through to Group level, with the Group SAR acting as the lead document for submission to Ofsted in February. While the organisation had previously worked towards an “outstanding” judgement, the revised Ofsted framework now described the highest performance using the descriptors “strong” and “exceptional,” moving away from a best-fit model. The Committee noted that the College was self-assessing as “good with outstanding features,” consistent with Ofsted’s judgement in November 2024, and that the number of outstanding features had increased.

The Committee noted that headline strengths including strong student achievement, teaching as a key asset, nationally recognised progress in English and maths, and student behaviour being judged as outstanding by Ofsted. Key areas for improvement were identified as 19+ achievement at Richmond upon Thames College, the effectiveness of industry advisory groups (IABs), and reducing the percentage of teachers whose lessons were not assessed as consistently good or better.

For 2025/26 there was a shift from a traditional quality improvement plan to a Quality Ambition and Improvement Plan, to reflect a broader focus on ambition and Ofsted-driven change, as well as addressing areas for improvement. The Committee noted that the majority of areas for improvement were now rated green.

The Committee questioned what was being done to address the 11% of teachers not yet consistently good. The Executive responded that the College had taken a deliberately robust approach to judging teaching quality. The Committee noted that all staff within this group had an allocated leader in learning with appropriate expertise, targeted support, and resources, and that this was monitored through the quality cycle, including re-observations, appraisal objectives and, where necessary, escalation through HR processes.

A Governor challenged the apparent disconnect between the SAR’s positive narrative on student behaviour and the introduction of visible security measures at Colleges. The EMT clarified that the behaviour judgement in the SAR was based on a broad evidence base including Ofsted feedback, disciplinary and exclusion data. Behaviour and attitudes had been graded as outstanding by Ofsted.

The Executive reported that within a student population of around 17,000, a very small number of individual students presented higher levels of risk. These students were actively monitored. Security measures were being implemented on a risk-based rather than volume-based assessment, reflecting the potential impact of a single serious incident. Security measures were designed to be proportionate and minimally intrusive, and communications with students had been carefully managed, with generally positive feedback reported. A Governor raised concerns about parental perception of safety and stressed the importance of clear messaging. A Staff Governor reported that while by far the majority of students behaved well, an increased emphasis on security did improve staff confidence and feelings of safety. The Chair highlighted the importance of Staff Governor’s contributions in providing this insight.

The Committee then considered the effectiveness of IABs. The Committee challenged how impact was being measured beyond activity levels and sought assurance that engagement translated into improved learner outcomes. The Executive responded that impact was measured through progression to positive and sector-aligned “gold-standard” destinations, Ofsted’s assessment of employer engagement, and evidence of curriculum change resulting from employer input.

A Staff Governor questioned whether destination tracking sufficiently captured longer-term outcomes, particularly where students did not sustain employment or higher education. The EMT confirmed that destinations were tracked at exit and through a sampled follow-up in January or February, acknowledging that this would not capture later outcomes and that extended tracking carried resource implications.

Action: Executive to explore options for strengthening longer-term destination tracking, including sustainability of employment and higher education progression, and to follow up offline with the Staff Governor - DM

A Governor highlighted the absence of a systematic alumni strategy, noting missed opportunities to engage former students and the potential value of alumni data in understanding longer-term outcomes and strengthening employer engagement. The Executive acknowledged that this had been discussed previously and undertook to revisit the issue.

Action: Revisit the development of a more systematic alumni approach to assist with longer term destination tracking and strengthening employer engagement - DM

The Committee also discussed inclusion and SEND. The EMT reported that a plan to improve the consistency of SEND provision was underway outside the QAIP, focused on improving alignment across the three colleges, and that early progress was evident. Governors stressed the importance of SEND being embedded as a golden thread within curriculum strategy and quality improvement. The Committee noted links to wider inclusive talent and youth employment initiatives and the positive Ofsted recognition of existing practice, alongside the need to extend this more consistently.

At the conclusion of the item, the Chair proposed that written input be sought from a Governor with recent Ofsted experience who was unable to attend the meeting. Subject to receipt of that input, the Committee agreed to recommend the draft SAR and QAIP to the Board for approval. The EMT confirmed that earlier feedback had been received on a previous version and that comments on the current draft would be sought.

Resolution: The Committee recommended the draft SAR and QAIP to the Corporation for approval, subject to written input from JS.

Action: Obtain written feedback from JS on the SAR and QAIP and finalise the documents for Corporation approval – CM/DMcT

9 - Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Annual Report 2024/25

The Committee received the CEIAG Annual Report and noted that inclusion was a central theme, with targeted CEIAG interventions in place for students with SEND, Level 2 learners and those identified as vulnerable or at risk. Initiatives included SEND-specific careers fairs. The Committee noted that this work aligned with the College’s wider inclusion priorities.

The Committee noted positive social mobility outcomes, particularly progression of disadvantaged learners into higher education. Robust data was available for higher education destinations, while further work was underway to strengthen data collection for apprenticeships and employment outcomes. The Committee also noted that alumni engagement, including the use of LinkedIn to highlight former students' career journeys, was being used to inspire current learners.

Governors challenged the effectiveness of school engagement within CEIAG delivery. Concerns were raised that some schools appeared disengaged from careers activity, and it was suggested that earlier intervention with younger cohorts, particularly in Years 7 and 8, could help build awareness of vocational and apprenticeship pathways. A governor offered assistance re engaging with hard to reach schools and proposed that IABs could be used more strategically to strengthen communication between schools and the College.

Action: discuss how to engage with hard to reach schools – JM/KR

The Committee questioned how the inclusion strategy addressed learners with multiple forms of vulnerability. A governor questioned how intersectionality was being reflected within the strategy and sought assurance that measurable targets would be in place to close gaps in attendance, retention, achievement, and progression. KR confirmed that metrics and improvement targets were being developed and that data reporting would track enrolment and outcomes for vulnerable learners. It was acknowledged that intersectionality added complexity and that specific gaps, including retention for looked-after children, were already being actively addressed.

The Committee further discussed the importance of CEIAG to social mobility. A governor emphasised that barriers to social mobility extended beyond socio-economic disadvantage to include cultural and aspirational limitations. KR agreed that social mobility was a core thread of the College's work and that this should be more explicitly articulated within external-facing materials and strategic documents.

The Chair thanked KR for the report and invited Committee members to submit any further comments via Governance following the meeting.

10 - Any other business

The Chair thanked staff and fellow members for their contribution to HRUC's achievements during 2025.

No other business was raised.

11 - Dates of next meetings

- Thursday 5 March 2026 5pm - 7pm
- Wednesday 6 May 2026 5pm - 7pm