

Minutes
Curriculum Strategy & Quality Enhancement Committee
(CSQE)

HRUC Governance

Date	05/03/2026	
Time	17:30 - 19:30	
Location	Microsoft Teams Meeting	
Present	Mike Sutcliffe (MS)	Chair
	Mario Michaelides (MM)	Governor
	Sofia Barbosa-Boucas (SB-B)	Governor
	Vincent Neate (VN)	Governor
	Cherry Horton-Edwards (CH-E)	Staff Governor, Uxbridge College
	Keith Smith (KS)	CEO, Ex Officio
	Dylan McTaggart (DM)	Group Executive Principal
	Gavin Hughes (GH)	Principal, Richmond College
	Clive Hodge (CH)	Principal, Uxbridge College
	Jo Withers (JW)	Executive Director – Business Partnerships and Growth
Clerk	Clare Mitchell	Interim Director of Governance
Note Taker	Nataliia Tymkiv	

Minutes

1 - General disclaimer at the start of the meeting

The meeting was recorded for the purpose of minuting. No objections were raised.

2 - Apologies for absence

Apologies were noted from Jenny McLaughlin, Niran Mothada, Gary May, Tieran Morton and Asif Khan. Keith Smith would be joining the meeting late.

3 - Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 - Minutes of the meeting on 4 December 2025

Resolution: The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2025 were unanimously approved.

5 - Actions from previous meetings

The Committee reviewed the actions arising from previous meetings and received an update on the following items:

Action 1 - The Institute of Technology branding had been discussed further at the recent Governor strategy session. The direction of travel was now towards shaping the Institute of Technology offer around clearly defined sectors aligned to the emerging industrial strategy.

Action: Action list to be updated regarding progress on IoT branding.

Action 9 - student destination tracking. DM reported that the College Group had, for a considerable period, captured destination data for all leavers and that, for the previous year, 96% of students had progressed to a positive destination; either higher-level study, further study or employment. A more detailed “gold standard” measure, which tracked whether students progressed into the same sector as their course of study was also used, with 80% of students meeting this standard.

The Committee agreed that the action relating to student destination tracking for 2025/26 should be treated as completed. However, further work was needed to explore enhancements to this approach for 2026/27.

It was agreed that the DM would review this further with the Director of MIS and clarify the proposed next steps and timing with the Chair and Director of Governance.

Action: DM to discuss enhancements to the Group’s approach to destination tracking with the Director of MIS and confirm a revised proposal and timeline with the Chair and Director of Governance.

Action 10 - In relation to alumni, DM reported that there had been no substantive progress since the previous meeting, as the team had been focusing on other workstreams.

The Committee noted the update.

6 - Committee effectiveness proposals

The Committee received a verbal update on the proposals arising from the recent review of committee effectiveness. Discussions had taken place between the Committee Chair, Vice-Chair, Director of Governance, and senior leaders to consider how the work of the Committee could be strengthened and better focused.

The main themes arising from those discussions included the volume and content of papers being brought to the Committee, particularly in the context of the relatively short meeting length; the need to secure an appropriate balance between strategic discussion and quality assurance; the possible introduction of a thematic focus at individual meetings to ensure full coverage of the Committee’s remit over time; and the need for greater transparency in relation to risk. The Committee noted that changes had already been made to the papers for the current meeting and that a specific agenda item on risks relevant to CSQE had now been introduced, with a similar approach to be adopted across committees.

The Committee discussed the proposal to involve student governors more directly in the work of the Committee. It was noted that student governors had previously attended the Committee, but this had fallen away.

Governors discussed the value of student governors’ contributions, both in informing the Committee’s work and in enabling students to understand governance processes more fully. At the same time, the Committee questioned how best to structure this so that student participation was meaningful and not overly burdensome or intimidating. The Committee agreed that student governors should be invited to future meetings.

Governors discussed whether students should be invited for those parts of meetings where their contribution would add most value, rather than expecting attendance throughout, and agreed to adopt this approach. The Committee also discussed the importance of ensuring that any confidential or sensitive business could still be handled appropriately.

The Committee indicated support for continuing to refine the structure and content of meetings so that papers were more focused, discussion was richer and a broader range of members could contribute. The Committee also supported the principle of student governor involvement, subject to appropriate meeting design and agenda planning. Work would continue on agenda planning, the balance of business brought to the Committee, and the practical arrangements for student governor participation.

The Committee discussed the update and thanked officers for the report.

Action: Work to continue on agenda planning, the balance of business brought to the Committee, and the practical arrangements for student governor participation at CSQE meetings from the start of the 2026/27 academic year.

7 - State of the nation report

The Committee noted that the revised format of the report included a new dashboard intended to provide a clearer, more accessible overview of performance across the Group. The new format was designed to give governors a single high-level view of the key quality and performance themes, aligned to Group KPIs and areas of focus emerging from the new Ofsted framework.

The Committee was advised that participation remained amber overall, with attendance broadly at target, although English and maths attendance remained lower than in vocational areas. Retention was reported to be very strong, including for vulnerable and inclusion groups, and overall achievement predictions were also reported as positive.

Both student experience and skills contributions were rated as amber overall. The Committee noted that participation in work experience had historically been an area that required improvement and questioned whether this continued to be the case. CH responded that there had been significant improvement in this area. Participation in work experience was on track to meet the Group KPI, but the position shown in the report was lower than actual figures because of a lag arising from the phasing of data capture and recording.

The Committee also received positive assurance in relation to skills development and employer responsiveness, whilst noting that a minority of curriculum areas still needed to strengthen the extent to which employer requirements were fully embedded within the curriculum. EMT also highlighted a strong outcome for the first year of participation in recent Pan-London skills competitions.

The Committee welcomed the new dashboard as a useful step forward in improving visibility of the key issues. Governors also discussed the need for the dashboard to include the underlying benchmark figures and specific data points, rather than relying primarily on descriptive terms. Detailed figures were presented elsewhere in the paper, but not sufficiently easy to identify in the summary view. EMT accepted this point and agreed that future versions would include the key benchmark figures both in the detailed sections and in the summary dashboard itself.

The Committee also discussed the relationship between the state of the nation report, the quality improvement process, and the wider risk framework. Governors questioned whether the themes and concerns highlighted in the dashboard were sufficiently connected to the formal risk reporting arrangements, noting that the Committee needed a clear and consistent line of sight from operational quality concerns through to Committee and board-level risk oversight. EMT acknowledged the point and advised that much of this activity was already being monitored through the internal Curriculum Quality Board but accepted that the

presentation should be better aligned so that the narrative remained coherent across the different reporting mechanisms.

Action: State of the nation summary dashboard to include underlying benchmark figures and specific data points and align to the risk framework.

Governors considered whether a future meeting should take a deeper look at student experience, student support, and inclusion, particularly in light of the emerging inclusion strategy and the significance of this area to risk, retention, and achievement. EMT advised that the inclusion strategy was nearing completion and that it would be helpful to bring a fuller paper to a future meeting, drawing together both student services and curriculum dimensions. The Committee supported this approach.

Action: EMT to bring a report on student experience, student support, and the emerging inclusion strategy to the 6 May 2026 meeting.

In concluding the item, the Committee welcomed the direction of travel in the revised reporting format and the stronger emphasis on concise, discussion-led reporting.

8 - Curriculum roadmap review

The Committee received an update on the curriculum strategy and was presented with the proposed priorities for future curriculum development. The strategy continued to focus on the priority sectors of health, construction, aviation and digital, with decisions now taken on the main areas of specialism for the next academic year.

Discussions at the recent governors' strategy session had included the potential for the Group to develop clearer specialisms, particularly in health, which could support a future Technical Excellence College application. This aligned with the proposed repositioning of the Institute of Technology towards an Institute of Health Technology model, which could then be rolled out to other specialisms e.g. digital and creative.

In relation to construction, the Committee was advised that the focus would remain on core areas of strongest demand, particularly electrical and plumbing, with more modest expansion in retrofit technology and welding. This approach reflected market demand. The Committee noted that additional construction space would be available at Uxbridge College from September to support this growth.

The Committee received an update on developments in health, aviation, and digital provision. Health provision would expand into a broader range of specialisms, aviation would focus on logistics and operations, and digital development was progressing positively, including through partnership work with Amazon Web Services. The Committee also welcomed the update that the Group had been selected as the West London Regional Construction Technical Excellence College hub.

Governors discussed the rationale for the sequencing of growth, the process for launching new initiatives, and the challenges of recruiting and developing staff in specialist areas. EMT provided assurance that recruitment, viability, and enrolment targets were monitored throughout the year and that staffing capacity would be supported through both targeted recruitment and staff upskilling, including through employer-led CPD.

The Committee also noted the Group's ambition to progress towards university centre status through developing level 6 delivery in partnership with universities.

The Committee welcomed the strategic direction of the curriculum strategy and noted the update, thanking EMT for the report.

9 - HE update

The Committee noted that the HE update, including the Group's ambition to progress towards university centre status, had been covered in the previous discussion and all relevant points regarding HE had been addressed.

10 - Safeguarding update - February 2026

The Committee received the safeguarding update, highlighting the figures and trends for the year. Harrow had already surpassed the number of serious cases compared to the full year last year. Mental health cases at Uxbridge were significantly higher than the full year last year. However, the Committee was assured by GH that all Colleges were appropriately staffed and coping with the numbers. One student had required prevent intervention. Niran Mothada, the new safeguarding lead, was noted to be performing the role well and it was noted that she is now a member of CSQE Committee.

The Committee noted that safeguarding figures were usually higher in the first two terms compared to the third as issues tended to be identified earlier in the year. There had been a notable increase in the number of safeguarding cases among young people since the pandemic. A Governor suggested analysing safeguarding data as a percentage of the student population and reviewing trends over the past five years.

Action: Analyse safeguarding data as a percentage of the student population and review trends over the past five years

Governors raised questions about the disparity in the number of looked-after children and care leavers between Uxbridge, Harrow, and Richmond Colleges. It was explained that the majority of looked-after children were studying on ESOL courses at Uxbridge and Harrow and were asylum seekers who had recently entered the country. This was particularly the case at Uxbridge due to its proximity to Heathrow. Richmond had fewer young people enrolled on ESOL courses.

The discussion also covered the Impero monitoring and filtering system, which alerted staff to potentially harmful keywords typed by students. It was clarified that many alerts were false positives and the actual numbers requiring follow-up were much lower.

The Committee noted the importance of staff complying with the policies and procedures in place when dealing with safeguarding issues and asked if more frequent external audits of compliance were necessary. It was confirmed that the next external audit of safeguarding was due in November 2026. The CEO noted that the Group had an internal compliance function and asked whether this function could provide some additional assurance on policy compliance in this area.

Action: Investigate whether the internal compliance function could provide additional assurance on compliance with safeguarding policies

The Staff Governor from Uxbridge College shared her perspective, noting the spike in safeguarding issues among students who started secondary school during COVID. She praised the College's safeguarding arrangements and expressed the view that staff felt confident and knew how to deal with safeguarding issues.

11 - Strategic risk register update

The Committee received the strategic risk register update and considered the principal risks within its remit.

SR10 related to the risk to implementation of the curriculum strategy of insufficient growth capacity, particularly in construction. This was rated as acceptable; it was anticipated that increased capacity in the estate would mitigate this risk. However, the continuing challenge of staff recruitment, both in specialist curriculum areas and in maintaining sufficient staffing capacity more generally meant that there was a significant risk in this area.

SR9 related to securing a strong outcome at the next Ofsted inspection, with the Committee noting the importance of maintaining robust quality controls in advance of a likely inspection by 2028. This risk was rated as acceptable.

SR5 - Safeguarding was a continuing area of significant risk. Although mitigations were in place and the risk was actively managed, safeguarding would remain a significant risk because of the nature and seriousness of the issues involved.

The Committee discussed the strategic risks and the mitigating actions in place and agreed that safeguarding would remain a tolerated high risk requiring continued scrutiny and assurance.

12 - Policies

12.1 - Student Admissions Policy

The discussion on the Student Admissions Policy focused on the need to provide support for students affected by course closures. Governors pointed out that the current policy appeared punitive and suggested adding wording to emphasise the duty of care towards students, including efforts to find alternative suitable courses and referring HE students to the Student Protection Plan policy. EMT agreed with the proposed changes, noting that the policy should reflect a more supportive approach. There were no further comments, and the policy was approved to the suggested amendments.

Resolution: The Student Admissions Policy was approved subject to amendments to emphasise the Group's duty of care towards students affected by course closures and including provisions for finding alternative suitable courses and referring HE students to the Student Protection Plan policy.

Action: Student Admissions Policy to be amended to emphasise the Group's duty of care towards students affected by course closures

13 - Any other business

There was no other business raised.

14 - Date of next meeting

- Wednesday, 6th May 2026, from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm online.