Minutes
Curriculum Quality Assurance Committee
Governance 2024-2025

Date	03/10/2024
Time	17:30 - 19:30
Location	Microsoft Teams

Present		
	Mike Sutcliffe (MS)	Chair
	Mario Michaelides (MM)	Vice-Chair
	Sofia-Barbosa-Boucas (SB-B)	Governor
	Vincent Neate (VN)	Governor
	Jenny McLaughlin (JM)	Governor
	Keith Smith (KS)	CEO, Ex-Officio
	Dylan McTaggart (DM)	Deputy CEO
	Jo Withers (JW)	Chief of Business Strategy
	Clive Hodge (CH)	Harrow College Principal
	Gavin Hughes (GH)	Richmond upon Thames Principal
	Alex Denley (AD)	Chief Technology Officer

Guest Attendee	Jo Swindells
Clerk	Perry Perrott
Note Taker	Nataliia Tymkiv

Agenda

1 - Election of Chair and Vice Chair
The meeting commenced with the election of the Chair and Vice Chair.

PP initiated the process by expressing gratitude to SB-B and JM for their contributions.

MS was elected as the new Chair. Subsequently, MS nominated MM as Vice Chair. Despite MM's absence at this part of the meeting, his nomination was accepted as he had sent his apologies for running late for the meeting. PP called for a vote, and MM was unanimously elected as the Vice Chair for the upcoming year.

Additionally, the meeting saw the introduction of JS, Executive Director of the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), a HRUC governor elect. JS provided a brief overview of her background in further education and her role as an Ofsted inspector, which was noted as beneficial for the committee.

DECISION: MS was elected as the Chair.
DECISION: MM was elected as the Vice Chair.

2 - Apologies for absence
MM joined the meeting at Item 7.

3 - Declarations of Interest
No declarations had been received in advance and none were declared during the meeting.

4 - Minutes of the last meeting dated: 20 June 2024

The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed for any issues of factual accuracy.

PP reported that no issues had been received in advance, aside from minor typographic errors which would be corrected. The minutes were accepted by the committee after a vote, and PP confirmed they would be sent for digital signature on GovernorHub.

5 - Actions from last meeting

PP provided an update on the actions from the last meeting, particularly several completed items and ongoing tasks.

Among the key updates was the approval of the new risk register by VN, Chair of Audit and Risk, which would be fully populated ahead of the Governor Strategic Day on the 23rd of October 2024.

During the discussion, MS queried whether the committee had sufficient time to fully analyse the new risk register before its deployment. In response, PP reassured the committee that while the risk register was still being refined, it would be completed by the set date, and a more comprehensive analysis could be performed during the upcoming strategic session.

The committee was reassured by PP's explanation, accepting the timeline and recognising the need for ongoing oversight.

The committee discussed various updates, including the introduction of a new risk policy and register, the completion of AI-related tasks, and the status of several other actions.

MS acknowledged the updates and thanked PP for the detailed report.

6 - State of the Nation

DM presented the 'State of the Nation,' detailing strategic objectives and key performance indicators.

DM highlighted two main objectives:

- Achieving an outstanding learner experience
- Becoming the College of Choice

DM reported significant progress, including a notable increase in enrolment and improved achievement rates, especially at Richmond upon Thames College.

The committee expressed their heartfelt commendation to all staff for their exceptional efforts, which have been instrumental in achieving these outstanding learner successes.

DM highlighted certain risks that could hinder the institution's goals, such as teaching vacancies and insufficient student social spaces, particularly at Uxbridge. The committee discussed measures to mitigate these risks, focusing on recruitment investments and the development of additional student spaces.

DM stated that the college was on track to achieve a "Good" Ofsted rating by July 2025 with the aim of achieving an "Outstanding" rating by July 2026.

DM noted the importance of monitoring attendance and engagement in relation to risks, and these will be reviewed monthly within the Corporate Goals sheet and transferred to Risk Register.

Several committee members raised questions about the observations and the lower grades shown in some cases for teaching quality, in addition, the impact of continuous professional development (CPD), and the robustness of improvement measures. DM reassured the committee that teaching quality remains a central priority, with CPD under continuous review.

ACTION 1: Develop a detailed plan to address teaching vacancies and improve student social spaces. - *DM*

ACTION 2: Monitor the impact of CPD on teaching quality and report findings in the next meeting. *- DM*

7 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment Reporting - Template

The Vice-Chair, MM joined the meeting and confirmed that this agenda item was deferred to the next session.

8 - Student Digital Experience

AD provided a comprehensive update on the student digital experience, covering several key areas:

1. **Immersive Rooms**: AD outlined the phased approach to implementing immersive classrooms, starting with one immersive room per campus was being used for pilot testing. In the first phase, these rooms are being used to gather feedback and evaluate their potential. The second phase will focus on integrating augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) into the classrooms, with plans to either develop internal capabilities or partner with external providers. The final phase will involve the full deployment across all campuses and exploring commercial opportunities, such as offering corporate training using the immersive technology.

While utilisation had begun, AD acknowledged that the immersive rooms were not yet fully optimised, and a detailed rollout plan would be necessary to ensure their full integration.

In response to questions about the current usage of the immersive rooms, AD acknowledged that while the rooms were operational for pilot classes, they were not yet delivering at full capacity.

AD confirmed that more information would be at the Governor's Strategy Day on 23rd of October.

AD also acknowledged that there wasn't precise data on which specific classes were using the immersive classrooms at the time but committed to following up with further details.

The committee expressed a need for a clear timeline on when these classrooms would be fully utilised for teaching.

2. **Classroom Technology**: Investments in classroom technology were highlighted, including Wi-Fi 6 and improved data security. Plans to transition to more collaborative and flexible teaching environments were discussed, emphasising alignment with workplace requirements.

3. **AI and Implementation**: AD outlined the development of a comprehensive AI plan, including staff and student guidance on AI adoption and plagiarism considerations. A cross-functional working group, co-led by AD and DM, will focus on preserving academic integrity while developing AI skills. The group will also support the development of AI-enabled workplace skills and enhance staff efficiency through AI.

The commitment to safe, ethical, and responsible AI use was emphasised. Initial versions of related policies are expected by November, with collaborations with peers like LSEC to develop a sector-wide approach to AI integration.

AD noted the importance of addressing plagiarism concerns with AI tools such as Turnitin, but MM raised concerns about the effectiveness of AI plagiarism detection tools, noting that AI capabilities often outpace detection technologies. MM suggested that the institution should focus on prevention by redesigning assessments to reduce the risk of AI misuse. AD agreed, emphasising the need for ongoing sector-wide collaboration and frequent policy reviews.

AD also mentioned ongoing collaboration with external groups like Jisc to develop best practices for AI integration and ethical use in education.

4. **Digital Signage**: AD suggested integrating digital signage with marketing strategies to provide useful information, such as workstation availability and gym equipment bookings. AD acknowledged the

significant work done over the summer by a relatively small IT team, which has laid a strong foundation for future developments.

SB-B added that inclusivity and equity must be considered when implementing technology in the classroom, particularly for neurodivergent students. AD acknowledged this, stating that guidance and awareness would be integral to the AI policies being developed.

The session concluded with a commitment to revisit the topic during the Governor Strategy Day, where the integration of AI and digital tools into the curriculum and infrastructure will be one of the focus areas.

DECISION: The topic of AI and digital tools integration within the curriculum and infrastructure will be revisited during the upcoming away day.

ACTION 3: Develop a comprehensive AI plan, including staff and student guidance on AI adoption and plagiarism considerations. *- AD*

ACTION 4: Establish a cross-functional working group to focus on AI skills development and academic integrity. *- AD, DM*

ACTION 5: Collaborate with peer institutions like LSEC to develop a sector-wide approach to AI integration. *- AD*

ACTION 6: Develop guidance and awareness policies for inclusivity and equity in classroom technology implementation, particularly for neurodivergent students. *- AD*

ACTION 7: Prepare a detailed rollout plan for immersive classrooms. *- AD*

9 - OFSTED vs. Enhanced Skills and Curriculum Intent

JW led the discussion on the positional statement on enhanced skills, particularly in terms of OFSTED readiness, emphasising the importance of demonstrating strong skills outcomes aligned with curriculum quality.

JW provided an overview of the progress made in the past year, highlighting key achievements such as the engagement of 88% of students in employability activities and the involvement of over 3,500 unique employers in providing work experience and T-level placements.

JW noted that while Richmond's engagement was at 43%, significant progress had been made since the merger, with a focus on expanding employer interactions and deepening their involvement in the curriculum. The Skills Builder program was highlighted as a key tool for developing employability skills, with the college exceeding its target and receiving a silver award.

For the current academic year, JW outlined plans to expand industry advisory boards and enhance the depth of employer engagement. The recruitment of a new Assistant Director for Enhanced Skills is underway, with an interim internal staff member set to focus on this area immediately. The goal is to create strategic pipelines for apprenticeships and ensure that all courses have multiple employer engagements.

JM offered to extend an invitation to the Lower Thames Crossing Skills Hub launch, which JW gratefully accepted.

JW also mentioned the importance of preparing for OFSTED inspections by ensuring that stakeholders, including civic, community, education, and employer partners, can provide positive feedback on their engagement with the college.

The discussion underscored the need for a cohesive strategy that aligns curriculum intent with enhanced skills outcomes, ensuring that the college is well-prepared for OFSTED evaluations.

JS appreciated the orientation provided by JW and highlighted the importance of being concise and impactful when presenting to OFSTED inspectors. JS emphasised the need to prepare stakeholders to understand the types of questions inspectors might ask and to embed these questions within their narrative to ensure they are well-prepared.

JW responded by explaining that the organisation is already signposting potential OFSTED questions to stakeholders to ensure they are familiar with them well in advance of any inspection. This preparation is intended to make the stakeholders' responses more natural and integrated rather than rushed and superficial.

MS agreed with this approach and added that it is crucial to help employers understand their role and the importance of their input without dictating what they should say.

MS also pointed out that many statements in the current documentation appear to be more about intent rather than demonstrating tangible impact. JW clarified that there are two separate measures being discussed: the engagement of students in employability activities and the involvement of employers with the courses.

JW explained that 92% of courses have employer engagement, while 88% of students participate in additional activities, with 65% of these involving external work experience.

JW highlighted the organisation's efforts to scale these activities according to the level of the courses, ensuring that even entry-level students gain relevant industry exposure.

MS stressed the importance of presenting data in a clear and impactful manner, focusing on the tangible impact and outcomes of the initiatives. JW mentioned that the organisation is working on new impact measures to report on the effectiveness of student engagements and is planning to present case studies to illustrate these impacts. MS appreciated this approach and suggested that it would be beneficial to share some of these case studies with the governors.

The discussion concluded with MS thanking JW for her presentation and the valuable insights shared by the participants. The focus remained on ensuring that the organisation is well-prepared for OFSTED inspections and that the impact of their initiatives is clearly demonstrated.

ACTION 8: Expand industry advisory boards and enhance the depth of employer engagement. - *JW*
ACTION 9: The recruitment of a new Assistant Director for Enhanced Skills will be prioritised to oversee enhanced employer engagement. - *JW*
ACTION 10: Stakeholders, including employers, will be prepped on potential Ofsted questions to ensure they provide effective, meaningful feedback. - *JW*
ACTION 11: Share case studies illustrating the impact of student engagements with the governors. - *JW*

10 - SAR Reports and Upcoming Curriculum Planning

DM introduced the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and the upcoming curriculum planning process.

DM explained that the SAR is a critical component of the organisation's strategic objectives, focusing on providing an outstanding learner experience and promoting economic growth and prosperity. The SAR process involves multiple phases, culminating in a college-level report that will be published to OFSTED around January.

DM highlighted the curriculum planning process, which aligns strategic aspirations with skills needs based on extensive data analysis. This process includes several phases, from initial planning to detailed portfolio meetings where the viability, growth potential, and resource requirements of proposed curriculum changes are discussed. DM emphasised the importance of this detailed process in ensuring that resources are allocated wisely and that curriculum targets are realistic.

MS raised a point about ensuring internal consistency within the SAR and other documents, particularly in terms of presenting both positive outcomes and potential downsides. DM acknowledged this and mentioned that the SAR would include detailed discussions on areas that need improvement, such as the impact of increased enrolment on the quality of learning.

The discussion also touched upon importance of celebrating the organisation's achievements, particularly the positive results from the previous year. The committee formally recognised these accomplishments and conveyed their congratulations to the staff.

The agenda item concluded with MS and DM expressing their commitment to maintaining a rigorous and transparent curriculum planning process and ensuring that the organisation's strategic objectives are met.

ACTION 12: Communicate formal recognition of the previous year's positive results to the staff. - *PP*

11 - Governors' Learning Walks

PP provided an overview of the enhanced governance initiatives, specifically the increased presence of governors on campus through learning walks. PP thanked the governors who participated in these visits and reported positive feedback from both governors and staff. The learning walks are designed to provide support and gather insights into the educational environment, with all visits being documented through a new digital engagement form.

MS commended Perry for implementing this process and emphasised the importance of making the learning walks as effective as possible. PP mentioned that the documentation from these visits would serve as valuable evidence of the governing body's support and challenge activities.

The discussion concluded with PP expressing his gratitude for the support from the governors and the Executive Management Team (EMT) and highlighting the positive impact of the learning walks on the organisation's governance.

ACTION 13: Ensure all governors' learning walks are documented through the new digital engagement form on QHub. *- PP*

12 - Any Other Business (AoB)

During the Any Other Business segment, JW informed the governors about the launch of a new MIT competition, emphasising the importance of this initiative.

KS suggested that the governors consider sending a letter of thanks to the staff, which PP agreed to discuss with the Chair of the Corporation and the Vice Chair. The committee supported this idea, recognising it as a meaningful way to acknowledge the hard work of the staff.

MS thanked everyone for their contributions and reiterated the importance of celebrating the organisation's achievements.

MS reminded the committee members about the upcoming away day and encouraged their participation.

The meeting concluded with MS expressing his appreciation for the productive discussions and the ongoing efforts of the staff and governors.

ACTION 14: Discuss the suggestion of sending a letter of thanks to the staff with the Chair of the Corporation and the Vice Chair. *- PP*

13 - Dates of the next meetings

The dates for the next meetings were confirmed as follows:

- 5th December 2024 (Virtual)
- 13th March 2025 (Virtual)
- 8th May 2025 (Virtual)

The meeting ended with a reminder for members to confirm their attendance and any necessary arrangements for the upcoming meetings.