

Minutes

Curriculum Quality Assurance Committee

Governance 2024-2025

Date	05/12/2024	
Time	17:30 - 19:30	
Location	Microsoft Teams Meeting	
Present	Mike Sutcliffe (MS)	Chair
	Vincent Neate (VN)	Governor
	Jenny McLaughlin (JM)	Governor
	Keith Smith (KS)	Ex-Officio, CEO
	Dylan McTaggart (DM)	Group Principal
	Shane Woodhatch (SW)	Chief Financial Officer
	Jo Withers (JW)	Chief of Business Strategy
	Julie Amory (JA)	Chief People Officer
	Alex Denley (AD)	Chief Technology Officer
	Louise Southam (LS)	Deputy Principal Uxbridge & HRUC Student Ambition
	Clive Hodge (CH)	Harrow College Principal
	Gavin Hughes (GH)	Richmond upon Thames College Principal
	Asif Khan (AK)	Assistant Principal - IoT, Engineering and Technologies
Absent	Mario Michaelides (MM)	Vice-Chair
	Sofia Barbosa-Boucas (SB-B)	Governor
	Joe Swindells (JS)	Governor
Clerk	Perry Perrott (PP)	
Note Taker	Nataliia Tymkiv (NT)	

Agenda

1 - General disclaimer statement at start of meeting:

The meeting was recorded for the purpose of minuting.

2 - Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were noted from Joe Swindells, Mario Michaelides and Sofia Barbosa-Boucas. The meeting was quorate.

3 - Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest recorded for:

- KS and ND, regarding their recent educational trip to Nepal and was recorded on QHub.
- Jo Withers for a professional trip to China, to be recorded on QHub.

ACTION 1: Ensure Joe's recent trip to China is recorded in Governor Hub. - PP

4 - Minutes of the last meeting dated: 3 October 2024

Minutes were reviewed and approved as factually accurate.

5 - Actions from last meeting

The committee reviewed the actions arising from the previous meeting:

- i. AI Plan Development:
AD confirmed that the cross-functional working group for the AI Plan is operational, focusing on integrating artificial intelligence into teaching methodologies. AD mentioned active collaboration with peer institutions and technology providers. MS enquired about the expected timeline for deliverables, and it was confirmed that preliminary results are expected by Easter 2025, with a completion date by summer 2025.
- ii. Immersive Classrooms Deployment Plan:

The immersive classrooms project was reported as progressing well. A consultancy review had been completed, and phase two of the deployment plan was presented to senior leadership. MS requested assurance that prior technical issues encountered during trials had been resolved. AD confirmed that vendor support had been intensified and that most identified issues had been addressed effectively.

- iii. **Research on Inclusivity and Equity in Classroom Technology:**
The committee was informed that SB-B, the lead researcher, had begun working with a Brunel university on the study. PP committed to obtaining a progress report soon. MS emphasised the importance of receiving preliminary findings by Easter 2025 to guide ongoing projects.
- iv. **Learning Walks Documentation System:**
PP confirmed that the learning walks documentation system is fully operational and auditable. He assured the committee that all learning walks are logged systematically through the new QHub platform. MS requested that Governors should be provided with access to the system, which Perry agreed to facilitate via a QR code link.
- v. **Staff Recognition and Retention:**
It was reported that staff contributions during the OFSTED inspection would be recognised through a one-off 'Thank You' payment of 0.5% and letters of appreciation.
The committee also noted that staff morale had visibly improved following the positive OFSTED outcome. The importance of ensuring the recognition process was communicated effectively to all staff was highlighted.
- vi. **Governor Recruitment and Resignation:**
The committee was updated on the recent resignation of Staff Governor Hannah Talabany due to internal promotion. Perry reported that a replacement recruitment process had been launched promptly, it was requested that Hannah's contributions be formally recognised, and PP confirmed that the action is in progress.
- vii. **Governance of Industry Advisory Boards:**
The committee reviewed the governance structure of industry advisory boards, with JW sharing initial feedback from sector representatives. It was agreed that further consideration would be given to formalising governance within these boards while maintaining industry-led structures.

ACTION 2: Provide a QR code for easy access to the documentation of learning walks. - PP

ACTION 3: Follow up with Sophia Barbosa-Boucas regarding the timeline for the research paper on inclusivity and equality in the classroom. – PP

ACTION 4: Review the Industry Advisory Board structure and discuss potential Governance involvement. - PP, JW

6 - State of the Nation

The committee received a detailed presentation from Dylan McTaggart on the outcomes of the recent OFSTED inspection, reflecting on both successes and areas requiring improvement. DM began by acknowledging the collective effort that led to the college receiving a "Good" rating overall, with "Outstanding" features in Behaviour and Attitudes and Personal Development.

Dylan emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum and striving for 'Outstanding' in all areas.

DM praised the staff's preparation and confidence during the inspection, noting high morale and student participation.

Key strengths identified by Ofsted included leadership, quality assurance, CPD, and student progress.

Areas for improvement were noted and were further discussed in the next agenda item.

The committee was assured that ongoing efforts were in place to address these areas, with a focus on enhancing the high needs curriculum and supporting Richmond College's progress.

The Chair expressed gratitude to all committee members for their hard work and dedication throughout the year, particularly emphasising the efforts made during the Ofsted inspection.

The Chair acknowledged the contributions of the curriculum team, highlighting their significant role in achieving a positive outcome with Ofsted.

The Chair extended thanks to everyone within the committee for their support in helping the College reach its goals with Ofsted. The sentiment was one of appreciation and acknowledgment of the collective efforts that led to the successful outcome.

7 - Outcome and Steps to Outstanding

DM continued with the outcome and steps to outstanding, emphasising the need to build on the positive Ofsted feedback. He outlined specific areas for improvement, including providing more developmental feedback to students, setting ambitious targets for apprentices, and enhancing the high needs curriculum.

DM outlined the specific areas that OFSTED highlighted as requiring development. These included:

- The need for more consistent use of developmental feedback from a small number of teachers
- Ensuring that apprenticeship targets were sufficiently ambitious.
- Enhancing curriculum design for high-needs students, particularly at Richmond College
- Small minority of students did not achieve

DM clarified that while these issues affected only a minority of staff and students, addressing them would be critical for achieving an “Outstanding” rating in the next inspection cycle.

The committee discussed how the noted improvements would be embedded into the updated Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), with clear timelines and accountability measures. Performance would be monitored through strengthened quality assurance processes and detailed KPIs.

In response to Governor’s question about how apprenticeship targets would be made more ambitious, it was explained that a new target-setting and monitoring framework would be developed, involving deeper collaboration with employers to align student outcomes with industry standards. It was noted that pilot projects were already being planned with selected apprenticeship providers to test this approach.

In response to a Governor query about the lack of specific OFSTED feedback on the Institute of Technology (IoT), given its strategic importance, it was noted that while OFSTED did not single out the IoT in its report, inspectors were impressed by its facilities, employer partnerships, and student outcomes, which were assessed under broader curriculum criteria. JW and AK confirmed that the IoT had been positively highlighted during site visits, particularly in engineering and construction programmes. The committee agreed that future SARs and QIPs should explicitly reference the IoT’s contributions.

In response to a Governor question about how the College would monitor progress toward achieving an “Outstanding” rating while ensuring Governors remained informed without too many operational details, DM explained that the college uses a multi-layered monitoring framework linked to corporate goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), supported by regular performance reviews and milestone tracking, highlighting the robust quality assurance process, which includes in-depth self-assessments, internal audits, and performance reviews, all praised by OFSTED.

Additionally, DM described how performance expectations are integrated into staff appraisals, ensuring that department leaders and teaching staff remain accountable for specific outcomes. The committee was assured that the leadership team would continue to track progress through quarterly updates and performance reviews, with results shared transparently during governance meetings. To support strategic oversight by Governors, DM committed to providing quarterly KPI dashboards that summarise key metrics, including attendance, student progress, and apprenticeship targets. DM also welcomed feedback from the committee on how the dashboard reports could be further refined for clarity and relevance.

Staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD) was identified as critical, particularly for Richmond College. A Governor asked about targeted training, and it was clarified that CPD gaps would be closed by extending best practices from Uxbridge and Harrow campuses, with training milestones integrated into the updated QIP.

ACTION 5: Incorporate OFSTED recommendations on developmental feedback, apprenticeship targets, and high-needs learner support at Richmond College into QIP. – DM by 13th March 2025

ACTION 6: Strengthen quality assurance with frequent reviews linked to KPIs; provide quarterly progress updates to the committee. – DM by 13th March 2025

ACTION 7: Conduct a resource assessment prioritising high-needs learner support and staff training and provide an update at the next CQA. – DM by 13th March 2025

ACTION 8: Develop a new target-setting and monitoring framework for apprenticeships with deeper employer engagement and provide update at the next CQA. – JW by 13th March 2025

ACTION 9: Prepare formal feedback on OFSTED's employer engagement process after the final report is released. - JW

8 - Update on Skills post STRONG

The discussion on the update on skills post-STRONG focused on building upon the achievements and feedback from the OFSTED inspection. The inspection was thorough, involving 20 curriculum deep dives and additional evaluations across various levels and provision types. Classroom visits, staff and student feedback, and employer interactions were part of the process. The aviation program received high praise for its uniqueness.

The importance of strong partnerships with employers, such as Heathrow, was emphasised. Collaboration with employers in creating specialised workshops and apprenticeship programs was highlighted as a key strength. The challenges of planning and executing the inspection week, with 32 scheduled calls and balancing deep dives, were also noted. A formal recognition event would be organised in March 2025 to thank partners and reinforce collaborative ties.

In response to Governor's query about next steps in scaling up industry partnerships and aligning them with the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), JW confirmed that the development planning process for the next academic cycle was already underway, focusing on expanding sector-specific advisory boards and integrating employer feedback into curriculum reviews. AK added that advisory board meetings he chaired had been productive, with employers appreciating the chance to contribute directly to the curriculum.

The next steps involve focusing on the 7% of courses that need improvement to exceed the minimum expectations set by Ofsted. There is also a plan to enhance engagement with industry advisors and stakeholders.

ACTION 10: Strengthen industry advisory boards by formalising structures, increasing employer participation, and integrating feedback into curriculum planning. - JW

ACTION 11: Incorporate employer engagement targets and advisory board outcomes into the updated QIP to ensure continuous improvement in skills provision. - JW

ACTION 12: Provide a comprehensive update on employer engagement, advisory board developments, course improvements and governance involvement at the next committee meeting. - JW

9 - Self Assessment Report

It was noted that the SAR accurately reflected the college's performance and aligned with OFSTED's findings.

The two areas rated "Outstanding" by OFSTED—Behaviour and Attitudes, and Personal Development—were highlighted as major successes. These outcomes validated the effectiveness of the college's curriculum, student engagement strategies, and quality assurance processes, which follow a rigorous 15-phase cycle. This cycle includes self-assessments, performance reviews, and other key quality assurance activities to drive improvement.

It was highlighted that the SAR identified key strengths such as high student achievement rates, effective lesson planning, and a strong culture of inclusivity.

The ongoing areas for improvement were noted, including the need for more ambitious apprenticeship targets, consistent developmental feedback from teachers, and enhanced curriculum design for high-needs learners, particularly at Richmond College. The committee was reassured that these issues were being addressed through targeted interventions and staff training.

The KPI dashboard was presented, which revealed several positive trends, including a significant 5% improvement in attendance at Richmond College, which now stood at 84%, as well as high retention rates across the group. The lower-than-expected predicted achievement rates for adult learners at Richmond were flagged. It was explained that this discrepancy might stem from a data entry issue and noted that a review was already underway to validate the figures.

In response to Governor's question whether the lower predicted achievement for adults signalled a systemic problem or isolated challenges, LS clarified that the issue was likely an anomaly but committed to ensuring accurate data reporting.

A Governor's challenged the SAR and QIP link to the IoT's strategic role, noting its absence from headline reporting. In response, DM assured the committee that future reports would explicitly reference the IoT's contributions to student outcomes and employer engagement.

The committee also discussed the need to automate the QIP to streamline data collection, enhance reporting accuracy, and support more efficient monitoring of improvement activities.

RESOLUTION: The committee agreed on the importance of this initiative, and an action was set for the leadership team to develop a plan for automating the QIP.

ACTION 13: Complete the review of adult learner achievement data at Richmond College to resolve discrepancies. – LS by 13th March 2025

ACTION 14: Develop and implement the QIP automation for real-time tracking and streamlined reporting. - AD by 13th March 2025

10 - HE Report

The Higher Education (HE) report was presented, focusing on the performance and strategic direction of HE programs across HRUC. Key highlights included a 98.1% achievement rate for HNC and HND programs and a 99% success rate for IoT programs in digital engineering and construction. The overall HE performance has shown an upward trend over the last three years.

The Access and Participation Plan was discussed, with a three-pronged strategy focusing on supporting students in STEM subjects, Level 2 and Level 3 students, and recruiting mature students. The concept of educational gains and extracurricular activities is being embedded into the programs.

An exciting new partnership with College Online was mentioned, with the launch of a new HNC Leadership and Management program scheduled for January 2025. This program will utilise an adaptive canvas-type platform to enhance learning experiences.

The strategic direction of HE within the organisation was considered, particularly in light of potential changes in government policy. The importance of having a clear strategy and infrastructure to support HE programs was emphasised.

11 - Teacher Vacancy Plan

Julie presented an update on the deployment of Reed Recruitment and its impact on reducing teacher vacancies.

The update highlighted the progress made and the challenges faced in filling vacancies. A significant decrease in the time to hire was noted, which has improved the college's responsiveness, especially during the Ofsted period. However, JA also pointed out the risks associated with the increase in headcount, which impacts the overall wage bill.

The agreement with Reed Recruitment has been in place since September 1st, and a review is scheduled for the week commencing 8th of December 2024 to assess costs and track progress. The aim is to convert some casual staff to permanent positions to meet long-term financial security needs. Additionally, external risks such as changes to visa schemes and increased sponsorship fees were mentioned, which could add substantial costs to the college.

Questions were raised about the accessibility of the recruitment process. JA responded by outlining the college's disability confidence scheme and the upcoming implementation of a new applicant tracking system to improve the process. The system will allow candidates to self-serve, track their applications, and join a talent pool if not immediately successful. The committee expressed support for these improvements and emphasised the importance of ensuring the recruitment process is accessible and efficient.

JA also addressed concerns about financial savings not being fully realised, explaining that the college is working to push more agency and short-term roles through the Managed Service Provider (MSP) process. Some legacy arrangements with second-tier agencies, which have higher rates, are being phased out. Hiring managers have been informed that circumventing the MSP process is a breach of contract, and efforts are being made to sever relationships with second-tier recruiters and hire staff through the MSP at lower rates.

The discussion concluded with a recognition of the progress made in reducing vacancies and the ongoing efforts to improve recruitment processes and financial efficiency.

12 - Update on AI Plan

AD presented an update on the AI strategy, emphasising a structured and strategic approach. The project, running from January to March, aims to deliver a new AI strategy as a sub-strategy of the main Technology Strategy.

The project will have four phases:

1. Assessing the organisational and technology landscape
2. Conducting workshops with key stakeholders
3. Performing a gap analysis
4. Drafting the AI strategy

The strategy will include AI governance, use cases, and actionable recommendations. An AI policy and guidance document, developed with Engine AI, is under review and will be presented to the newly formed Technology and Information Systems Internal Board in February.

AD highlighted the importance of data maturity and security, mentioning a comprehensive data maturity assessment with Jisc starting in January. This assessment will evaluate the accuracy and usability of current data sets to ensure secure and appropriate AI deployment. The broader AI strategy will integrate governance, ethics, and organisational preparedness, leveraging frameworks and outcomes from ongoing assessments.

Questions were raised about involving parents in the AI strategy workshops.

The importance of raising awareness about the risks of using AI tools, such as compromising intellectual property, was also discussed. AD assured the committee that guidance and training would be provided to ensure secure and responsible AI usage.

ACTION 15: Organise workshops with key stakeholders as part of the AI strategy project. - AD

ACTION 16: Provide guidance and training to staff on secure and responsible AI usage. - AD

12.1 - Inclusivity and Equity in Classroom Technology

AD provided an update on the college's commitment to accessibility and inclusivity in classroom technology. The college is working towards Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) compliance, with assessments underway across all three colleges. Investments have been made in various tools and software to support accessibility, including lap safes, read-write software, immersive readers, and dictation software. Additionally, the college is exploring the possibility of providing discounted technology to students through vendor partnerships and payment plans.

JM raised a point about the European Accessibility Act, which requires compliance for new digital spaces by June 2025. AD acknowledged this and assured the committee that the college is working towards achieving compliance.

ACTION 17: Ensure compliance with the European Accessibility Act for new digital spaces by June 2025. - AD by 1st June 2025

ACTION 18: Explore vendor partnerships and payment plans to provide discounted technology to students and provide an update to the committee. – AD by 13th March 2025

12.2 - Immersive Classrooms Deployment Plan

AD provided an update on the immersive classrooms' deployment plan. Progress has been made, but there is still a need to increase the number of timetabled classes. The college is aiming to have 90% of classes timetabled, with 60% of teaching staff currently trained. Efforts are being made to reach close to 100% by January.

The college is also seeking iTransform Gold accreditation and collaborating with other colleges to share content creation and best practices.

MS mentioned the importance of having staff champions to generate a community of practice and enhance the impact of immersive classrooms on students. The committee acknowledged the progress made and looked forward to further developments.

The committee endorsed the AI Plan's progress and emphasised the importance of maintaining a balance between technological innovation and safeguarding educational values.

Regular updates on the pilot projects and their impact on teaching and learning were requested for future meetings.

ACTION 19: Increase the number of timetabled classes for immersive classrooms to 90%. – AD by 31st of January 2025

ACTION 20: Train the remaining teaching staff to reach close to 100%. - AD by 31st of January 2025

ACTION 21: Provide an update on AI Plan's progress. – AD by 13/03/2025

ACTION 24: Provide regular updates on the pilot projects and their impact on teaching and learning - AD

13 - Safeguarding

GH presented the annual safeguarding report, highlighting key statistics and areas of concern. The college had 107 serious safeguarding incidents, 909 secondary registers, nearly 500 children looked after, and a significant number of students with declared mental health issues. Domestic violence, neglect, and other key areas remained prominent. One student was referred to the Channel process for deradicalisation.

GH assured the committee that the college is meeting all legal obligations and providing best practices in supporting students. An audit conducted in March resulted in actions that have been completed and verified through a mini audit. The committee was satisfied with the safeguarding measures in place.

The committee will be updated on the West Wittering incident as more information becomes available.

RESOLUTION: The Committee noted the Annual Safeguarding Report 2023-24.

14 - Any Other Urgent Business (AoUB)

A revision to the committee was received and discussed.

MS proposed a review of the committee's focus, and a potential name change to better reflect its strategic role.

The suggested new name is the Curriculum Strategy and Quality Enhancement Committee. The aim is to shift from operational details to a more strategic approach, ensuring the curriculum informs decisions on space and resource allocation. The committee supported the proposal and agreed to work on a revised remit to be implemented in February.

The committee acknowledged the need for terminology change from 'deep dives' to 'enhanced reviews' to align with Ofsted's preferences.

RESOLUTION: The committee agreed to change the committee's name to the Curriculum Strategy and Quality Enhancement Committee.

ACTION 23: Work on a revised remit for the committee to be implemented in February. - PP by 15th February 2025

ACTION 24: Consider the terminology change from 'deep dives' to 'enhanced reviews' to align with Ofsted's preferences. – DM by 12th March 2025

15 - Dates of the next meetings

The dates for the next meetings were noted as 13th March 2025 and 8th May 2025.