

MORLEY COLLEGE LIMITED

QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2010

Present:

John Stephens	(Chair)
Margaret Andrews	(Governor)
Linda Gainsbury	(Governor)
Ian Gorman	(Student Governor)
Beryl Griffiths	(Student Representative)
Kathy McLauchlan	(Staff Governor)
Ela Piotrowska	(Principal)
Jenny Scribbins	(Chair of Governors)

In attendance:

Cass Breen	(Deputy Principal)
Nicola Milham	(Head of Marketing and Communications) – <i>Item 8</i>

Clerk:

Graham Cooper	(Clerk to the Governing Body)
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1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Linda Linehan. The Chair welcomed Ian Gorman to his first meeting of the Committee, and thanked Margaret Andrews for her stewardship of the role of Chair during his recent absence.

2. Minutes and actions of meeting held on 14 June 2010.

The minutes were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising other than on the agenda

a) Complaints.

The Deputy Principal noted that ordinarily she would have updated the Committee on complaints in her usual report, but as such had been deferred until the next meeting, with the focus of this meeting on the College's draft Self Assessment Report, she provided a verbal update. Complaints overall were down on the previous year, but of concern was an increase in the proportion of complaints (44%) that related to teaching and learning, and the number of these that were upheld.

The Staff Governor noted that, notwithstanding procedures in place, there remained some lack of understanding of roles between staff in Curriculum Areas and Quality. The Student Governor observed that the complaints process appeared to work effectively. However, although the process was set out in the Student Handbook, complaint forms were less freely available around the College than had previously been the case, and had to be specifically requested from the front desk. The Principal acknowledged that information could be more widely distributed and available throughout the College, though she assured the Committee of the rigour with which complaints were investigated, and highlighted the open discussions that she held with Class Representatives. The CLT also regularly reviewed actions arising from the SEC and other student Committees.

The Chair stressed the importance of investigating the underlying reasons for complaints, particularly where these were focused on individual areas. He also questioned whether the increase might in part be due to improved procedures and students being encouraged to raise issues.

b) Access to Music. The Deputy Principal advised the Committee that, following a concerted effort, sufficient students had been recruited to enable a full Access to Music programme to be run. This was extremely pleasing, given its important aspect in the College's offer and that, as reported to the previous meeting, the programme had been at risk of failure.

c) Course Outlines. The Chair of Governors raised the importance of good course outlines and effective procedures for putting these in place, particularly as a feature of the College's web presence, as discussed at the previous meeting. The Deputy Principal was asked to provide the next meeting of the Committee with an update on steps being taken and progress achieved

Actions:-

- i) Complaints Process – Principal to consider greater distribution of material around the College.**
- ii) Course Outlines – Update to be provided to next meeting on steps being taken to improve quality of course outlines and progress to date.**

4. College Self-Assessment Report 2009-10 - First Draft (EP/CB)

The Principal and Deputy Principal presented the first draft of the College's Self Assessment Report for 2009-10, advising that this was based on the revised Common Inspection Framework for Further Education and Skills 2009. The draft included a summary of key judgements relating to Outcomes for Learners, Quality of Provision and Leadership and Management, and also key judgements for curriculum and support areas. The Principal noted a shift in approach from previous years, to focus much more on impact on students. The process for producing the SAR, as explained by the Deputy Principal, was similar to the previous year, with managers consulting their teams on narratives and key judgements, which had then been moderated in a series of meetings with the CLT.

The Committee noted the variable quality of the SARs across different areas, and also that there were aspects of some that were more descriptive of what takes place rather than being qualitative judgements. The Principal acknowledged that some staff were less experienced than others in appropriately forming and expressing judgements and that this was an area for further development. The Committee suggested that using a good example or 'model' SAR as an illustration might be an effective way of helping staff to understand what is required. The Committee also observed a tendency in some individual area SARs to attribute blame or weakness to other areas, and whilst not strictly speaking self-assessment, this did help to identify areas of weakness and actions for improvement, which the Principal stressed was the underlying purpose of the SAR process. The Student Governor asked how student feedback was captured, and whilst the process for obtaining student feedback at the end of every course was discussed, the Principal noted that it may be appropriate next year to get Class Representatives to provide further input. The Chair of Governors suggested that it might be

particularly useful to obtain feedback from new students, given their fresh perspective, to help better appreciate whether their expectations are met.

The Principal brought to the Committee's attention the College Performance Report attached to the back of the draft SAR. This was compiled not by the College, but by its funding bodies, and compared the College's success rates with national benchmarks based performance of other similar specialist colleges. She advised that there were inaccuracies in the 2006/07 and 2007/08 data that were known to the funding bodies. However, the 2008/09 data revealed a significant number of areas where the College's performance was shown to be below the national benchmark. New data for 09/10 would be published in January 2011, and it was possible that might give rise to an inspection of the College. She highlighted some of the individual success rates and advised that there were many actions being taken across the College to bring about quality improvements to increase success rates. These would be reported in detail to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee reviewed the overall grades in the draft report. The Principal highlighted that she had not included a commentary on Governance, nor graded Governance, and that that was something for the Committee to consider. The Committee asked the Principal and Clerk to review the output from the Governing Body Self Assessment, bringing into the overall SAR any key issues emerging, and to consider from that what grade should be recommended. The Committee also noted that the College's improved capacity and capability to identify and manage risk, as recognised by the Audit Committee, was not reflected in the Leadership and Management section of the current draft of the report.

The Principal recommended an overall grade of Satisfactory for Leadership and Management and sought views of the Committee. The progress that had been achieved by the College's leadership across many areas was acknowledged, and the Committee debated whether it might be appropriate to give a higher 'Good' grading, though also challenged whether that would be seen as correct whilst Leadership and Management was mostly graded Satisfactory in individual areas. After debating this issue, the Committee agreed a 3, Satisfactory, grade for Leadership and Management, but suggested that this was a very strong 3. The Committee also agreed a grade of 2, Good, for Capacity to Improve. With regard to Overall Effectiveness, the Principal considered that a Grade 2 might be appropriate but advised that she would review the criteria for this judgement and make a recommendation when presenting the completed SAR to the full Governing Body at its December meeting. In closing the discussion, the Chair of Governors suggested that the CLT might wish to reflect on whether a too self-critical approach was being taken in some areas, observing a Satisfactory grade for Equality & Diversity in the HR SAR and questioning what would need to improve for this to be graded as Good.

Actions:-

- i) Next meeting of the Committee to be provided with further detail of measures taken to improve success rates.**
- ii) Principal and Clerk to ensure output from Governing Body Self-Assessment is captured in overall SAR and recommend a grade for Governance for the final report.**
- iii) Principal to review the criteria for overall effectiveness and to recommend a grade for the final report.**
- iv) Final draft SAR to be submitted to the December meeting of the Governing Body for approval**

5. KPI Register Outcomes 2009-10 (EP)

The Principal presented her report on the final outcome for KPIs relating to Quality & Standards for 2009-10. The Committee reviewed individual measures, and, whilst noting that overall targets appeared to be particularly challenging, the Principal advised of the necessity of setting targets that were not below national benchmark levels.

The Committee noted with some concern the reduction in success rates on accredited programmes from the prior year. The Principal advised that issues were being addressed in

relation to retention, poor register keeping and students having been inappropriately placed on wrong courses. Steps were being taken in an effort to significantly improve quality. The Committee noted that, in order to gain a better understanding of the underlying issues, it would be necessary for management to see the figures broken down to a greater level of detail.

The Committee reviewed the data in relation to the number of Observations of Teaching and Learning, 190 observations having taken place in 2009-10. The Principal advised of efforts that had been undertaken to drive up the quality and effectiveness of OTLs, and noted that these were being focused on areas of concern. The importance of rigorous and focused OTLs in improving quality and outcomes for learners was emphasised.

6. Curriculum Review & Development Nov 2010 (EP)

The Principal had provided the Committee with a copy of the brief for the forthcoming Curriculum Review and Development process, together with the template designed to get CAMs to think about a range of options to manage the impact of a decrease in funding. All departments, with the exception of Skills for Life including Community Learning, and Access, had been asked to explore ways of achieving a 24% increase in fee income for 2011/12 (with the 2010/11 increase included within this percentage increase). SfL and Access had been asked to look at managing the impact of a potential 10% budget reduction. Various options and approaches were to be considered, including the introduction of new courses and shortening of existing courses. Having explored options, financial modelling would then be undertaken to look at the overall effect. The Principal advised that the extent of funding cuts that the College would face remained uncertain, though with the impending announcement of the Skills Investment Strategy, it was possible that there may be greater clarity by the time the CRD meetings took place.

The Committee considered the implications for the College of funding for non-accredited courses being withdrawn, observing that this would have a dramatic impact. Whilst consideration might be given to changing some non-accredited courses to accredited, this would require substantial additional investment in resources, with no guarantee even then that funding would continue.

The members of the Committee reinforced the need to ensure that the College's mission is preserved, and they remained very concerned regarding the impact of funding cuts. The CRD process was rightly focused on exploring ways of managing through this. The Chair observed that the brief clearly set out the background and the Challenge, and advised that he and other Governors looked forward to participating in the CRD process.

7. Equality & Diversity Steering Group Report [QSC 10/09] (EP)

The Principal presented her report, covering items discussed at the most recent E&D Steering Group together with the most recent E& D data. The latter, for the first time, showed the breakdown of ethnicity across different curriculum areas, and the Committee noted in particular that Visual Arts had traditionally not included strong representation from BME communities, as well as having the largest proportion of older students. The CAM for Visual Arts was to develop strategies to increase participation rates of both BME and younger and new learners in 2010-11.

The Committee noted the challenge to increase fee income whilst retaining older and disadvantaged students. Focusing on the task of attracting new students generally, the Chair advised that, as a result of funding cuts, the University of the Arts London had recently decided to discontinue all FE provision. Students on degree courses would nevertheless still need that additional support from somewhere and this might be a significant opportunity for the College.

The Principal also advised that, whilst it was clear that there had been a significant improvement in managers' understanding of the importance of impact assessments, as a result of training and individual coaching, an insufficient number of impact assessments had been undertaken for 2009-10. It was for this reason that Equality & Diversity had been graded as 3 in the draft SAR.

8. Communications Strategy First Draft (EP/NM)

The Head of Marketing and Communications provided the meeting with an update on progress on the development of an Internal Communications Strategy. Aside from the importance in getting staff involved and to take responsibility, effective internal communication was a key consideration in Investors In People accreditation, and had been observed by a consultant engaged by the College as being an aspect in need of improvement. An initial analysis of internal communication across the College had been completed. A draft template, as provided to the Committee, had been designed as the basis for a consultation exercise with staff, which would be the next step. The Committee welcomed the fresh perspective of the recently appointed Head of Marketing and Communications and supported the work being undertaken. The importance of electronic communication and the part played by systems such as the College website, intranet and S Drive were noted, but so too was the challenge of communicating with a staff complement that included a large number of part-time hourly paid tutors for whom access to electronic means of communication varied widely. The Committee thanked the Head of Marketing and Communications for the update, and advised that it looked forward to being informed of progress in due course.

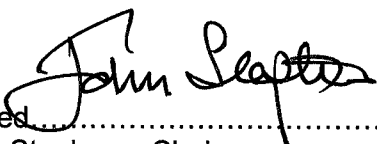
9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is due to take place at the College on Monday 28 February 2011.

Graham Cooper
Clerk to the Governing Body

Signed 
John Stephens, Chair