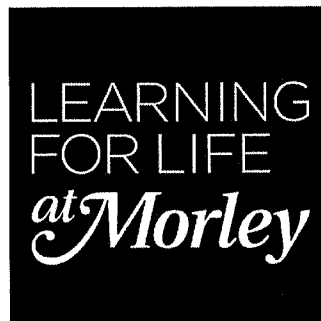


MORLEY COLLEGE LIMITED
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 JUNE 2011



Present:

John Stephens	(Chair)
Linda Gainsbury	(Governor)
Beryl Griffiths	(Student Representative)
Linda Linehan	(Governor)
Kathy McLauchlan	(Staff Governor)
Ela Piotrowska	(Principal)
Jenny Scribbins	(Chair of Governors)
Mark Windisch	(Student Governor)

In attendance:

Mike Lake	(Governor)
Cass Breen	(Deputy Principal)

Clerk:

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

There were no apologies for absence.

The Chair welcomed Mike Lake, recently appointed Governor, to the meeting.

2. Minutes and actions of meeting held on 15 March 2011.

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

3. Matters arising other than on the agenda

a) **Course Outlines** – The Deputy Principal advised that the vast majority of tutors were proving responsive to encouragement to improve the quality and completeness of course outlines, albeit that she was due, the following week, to see one tutor whose co-operation had not been forthcoming. All course outlines for the Summer School had been completed and preparation of those for September was under way, with a full review scheduled with CAMs to review quality. Particular focus was being given to clarity of Learning Outcomes and whether introductory paragraphs were sufficiently well written to attract enrolments. In addition to face to face activity, changes had been made to the Tutor Handbook in order to stress the importance of these issues.

b) **Measures to improve quality** – The Committee re-emphasised the benefits of ensuring a mechanism for analysing measures that have been effective in bringing about improvements, and of spreading the use such measures as an integral part of the SAR process.

c) **Assessment Policy** – The Deputy Principal confirmed that the policy had been amended as appropriate and made available to staff.

d) Restructuring and Changes to Leadership and Management

CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE

4. Deputy Principal's Report (CB)

The Deputy Principal presented her report, which the Committee reviewed, with the following matters arising:-

a) Retention Rates

The Committee reviewed the retention rate data presented, noting that in some areas rates were slightly down on prior year. This was particularly the case in Term1, less so in Term2, but the Committee was concerned nevertheless to try to understand the underlying reasons. The Principal advised that there was alarming anecdotal evidence of situations where new students to the College, who were increasingly of a younger age profile, were not becoming well integrated into classes, particularly classes that had been running for a number of years and exhibited characteristics more akin clubs. Efforts to make new students feel welcome in those situations did not always overcome the issues. The Chair of Governors highlighted the importance of curriculum design, and of courses having specific learning objectives and outcomes. It was courses available to students of 'all levels' that often acted in a 'club-like' manner. The Deputy Principal acknowledged that awareness and management of this issues varied across departments. The Principal also highlighted however, the importance of managing the issue sensitively so as not to lose existing students.

b) Observation of Teaching and Learning ('OTL')

The Chair enquired regarding actions taken by way of feedback and follow-up to OTLs, noting that 33% of those undertaken during 2010/11 had resulted in a grade of 3 or 4, though acknowledging that the Committee was aware of the increased rigour with which OTLs were being carried out. The Deputy Principal advised that during the Ofsted Inspection earlier in the year, Inspectors had suggested a degree of over-grading, and whilst she did not consider that to be a major issue, she did believe that key judgements were not sufficiently evaluative. Work was ongoing to improve this. The Committee emphasised the usefulness of identifying best practice and sharing this. It was emphasised that the College should make full use of advancing technology, and the Deputy Principal advised that Moodle was increasingly being used to make available models of good practice. Whilst major staff development events also played a part, smaller more focused groups were also being used as a means of sharing best practice.

d) Success Rates

The Deputy Principal advised that, whilst the College had not received a Notice To Improve during the year, there were nevertheless ongoing issues with success rates in Access courses. Some predictive work on current year success rates had been undertaken, which suggested a below minimum level of performance in some areas. She advised that whilst front-end processes had been improved, the CLT remained of the view that there were still issues in respect of a number of learners who were not sufficiently academically able. Against a background of students being tested more acutely, minimum levels of performance being continually raised, and changes being introduced to eligibility for benefits, there were concerns regarding this aspect of the College's future provision, and whether the recent recruitment of a new Section Head, with a good grasp of the issues, would lead to the problems being overcome. The Committee noted that rates reported were adversely affected by a fall-out of students from the previous year's cohort, who had enrolled prior to the recent improvement in processes, and that any judgements needed to take this into consideration. The situation would continue to be monitored closely by the CLT.

e) Class closures

The Chair of Governors highlighted the level of class closures, a breakdown of which was included in the report, bringing to attention that in some areas this was as high as 20-30%, and enquiring what steps were being taken to tackle the issue. The Deputy Principal advised that the CLT were reviewing the effectiveness of the SAR and CRD processes. Whilst the CRD process had been useful, it had been very time consuming and not wholly successful in terms of formulating development plans. Going forward, the CLT were looking at how to change the focus of the SAR away from compliance with the Common Inspection Framework and a common set of issues looked at by all, to be driven by more specific inputs/areas for improvement as relevant to individual departments. Noting the wasted resources and reputational damage arising from a high level of class closures, the Committee endorsed the importance placed by the CLT on tackling this issue. It also noted that Governors stressing the need for this when setting strategic priorities might help to drive the process.

The Committee also highlighted the importance, when looking at class closure rates, of distinguishing between those closures that arose from measured risk taking in the form of unsuccessful attempts to bring about innovation to the curriculum, and those that were part of a historic pattern of year on year closures. The Committee was keen to see reporting split if possible, though the Principal reflected on the fact that managers in some areas remained relatively inexperienced and that the CRD process had not driven them to differentiate the curriculum product offering in this way. The Committee acknowledged the steps taken to improve the College's marketing capability, but also stressed that this would only help to deliver success if the underlying product offer was right. The Principal highlighted the need for the College to be responsive and flexible, remarking upon the steps being taken to expand the curriculum offering in Fashion.

f) Adult Learners Week 2011

The Chair commended the CLT on the ALW events that had taken place at the College, and the Deputy Principal advised that the programme had been very well put together by the Head of Marketing. Taster sessions had gone well, and whilst attendance levels were variable, 73 attendees were new students to the College. She also noted, however, disappointment at the College not having any Regional or National award winners, with insufficient nominations having been made. This would be an area of greater focus next year.

g) Community Forum

The Committee also noted the success of the recent Community Forum. The Deputy Principal advised that this had been extremely successful, attended by representatives of 43 organisations. A great deal of enthusiasm and interest had been forthcoming in the opportunities for growth and resource-sharing that closer collaboration and partnership could bring. The Principal also advised that the College was in the process of bidding for development funds from NIACE in partnership with those who attended, to take this initiative forward under the stewardship of a co-ordinator for 6 months. If the bid was unsuccessful, it might be that the College would commit some of its own resources. The Committee confirmed that it was highly supportive of this work, which underlined the principle of community engagement that was at the heart of the College's mission and values.

5. Review of Quality & Standards Committee Terms of Reference (GC)

The Clerk presented the Committee's Terms of Reference for periodic review, with a number of suggested minor amendments. The Committee considered that there were a number of quite appropriate aspects of its recent focus of attention that were not reflected in the TOR. In particular, it was suggested that reference should be added to the Committee's focus on development of the curriculum. However, the Committee was also keen to ensure that its own

work and that of the Finance and Resources Committee together covered all appropriate areas, and that nothing was overlooked as a result of reviewing TORs separately. It was therefore suggested that a small panel of Governors, to include the Chair of each of the Committees, should undertake a joint review of the TORs side by side. The Committee also highlighted the outdated nature of some of the language used in the TOR, and also the importance of ensuring that certain common principles, such as those relating to Equality & Diversity, were taken account of when undertaking the review.

Action:- Clerk to liaise with Committee Chairs to undertake a joint review of Committee Terms of Reference.

6. AOP Key Performance Indicators Update (EP)

The Principal noted that the majority of the measures included in the KPI report had been reported upon in the Deputy Principal's report, though the Chair commented on the usefulness of having these set out in the schedule presented. The Principal advised that fee income had now exceeded the prior year's, though remained below target. Enrolment performance varied significantly across curriculum areas.

7. Equality & Diversity Steering Group Report (EP)

The Principal presented her report, including details of discussions at and actions arising from the current term's E&D Steering Group, together with current E&D data, and a draft Single Equality Scheme for comment and discussion.

a) E&D Steering Group

The Principal advised that, as part of a rolling programme of CAMs being invited to attend the meetings, Julia Woods, CAM for Access, Humanities and Health had provided input on the promotion of E&D and challenges within her department. The department had seen a large increase in Access students declaring a disability. Bespoke training on mental health issues had been provided for tutors and as a result of discussion, it was agreed that drop-in sessions for tutors would be arranged for 2011-12 to support informal discussion of issues that arise in the classroom around learning difficulties and disabilities. The Principal noted that this would have implications for the ALS department.

Julia had also reported that, with the increase in female learners, attendance was sometimes affected by children's health. Furthermore, changes in funding for learners over the age of 25 in receipt of benefits may also affect attendance, as students might need to take up employment alongside their full-time studies. With regard to curriculum planning, it might be necessary to undertake a review of the timings of programmes to respond to these changes.

The Principal advised that a new College Employee Handbook had been published (distinct from the Tutor Handbook).

b) Equality & Diversity Data

The Committee observed that there was now a wealth of data being produced, and that it would be helpful for Governors to be provided with an interpretation of some of key data against stated aims and objectives, in order that trends and progress could be evaluated. The Principal advised that, now that the College was getting used to working with the data, such objectives would emerge as part of the development of a new Equality & Diversity Action Plan.

b) Single Equality Scheme

The Principal presented a draft Single Equality Scheme for comment and discussion. She advised that it was intended to distribute this for consultation during the week commencing 13 June, and that it would then be submitted to the full Governing Body meeting in July. In reviewing the draft, the following issues emerged:-

- The Principal confirmed that the College would be able to meet the requirement to publish information by 31st July.
- The Principal highlighted that the SES provided a framework and that in parts was expressed in a very general way. Following consultation, an Action Plan would be drawn up in order to more specifically articulate the College's priorities.
- Pages 10 and 11 included a repetition of the College's responsibilities as an employer – to be corrected.
- Page 15 – Slight correction required relating to all sexual orientations.
- Appendix 2 – Morley College Commitments – Race Equality Commitments to be expanded to include additional aspects included under other areas. Also each section to be reviewed to ensure that generic issues, such as a commitment to Impact Assessments, are applied consistently.
- Protected Characteristics Definitions – The Principal noted the changing nature of some of the definitions and undertook to check further that those included were the most current and appropriate.

Action:- Principal to take forward Single Equality Scheme, with amendments as suggested and any matters arising form the consultation, to the July Governing Body meeting.

8. Any Other Business

The Chair noted that this would be Jenny Scribbins's last Quality & Standards Committee meeting, and expressed the Committee's thanks for all her help, guidance and support, both at and outside of formal meetings, wishing her well for the future. Jenny commended the Committee and the CLT on the improvements that she had witnessed in terms of the quality of reporting to the Committee and the difference that this had made to the Committee's effectiveness.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Committee had yet to be confirmed.

Graham Cooper
Clerk to the Governing Body

Signed.....
John Stephens, Chair