

Present: Prof Mary Dunning (Committee Chair)  
Mr David Bavaird, Governor Norham  
Mr Jim Coltman, Governor John Spence  
Mr Ian Gordon, Governor John Spence (until 6.40 pm)  
Mr Jon Vincent, Principal TyneMet  
Mr Karl Ward, Governor TyneMet  
Mr Fran Done, Marden Governor  
Mr Neil Richards, Governor Marden  
Mr Jim Stephenson, Head Teacher John Spence  
Ms Sophia Puliasis, Associate Member  
Mr Tim Downing, Associate Member  
Ms Lydia Wysocki, Associate Member

In attendance: Mrs Rosamund Moore, Clerk to the Corporation  
Mrs Ann-Marie Crozier, Deputy Principal: Finance & Corporate Development  
Mrs Audrey Kingham, Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Business Development  
Mrs Denise Bolton, Head of Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College  
Mr Lee Patterson, Head of Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College designate

*[The meeting started at 5.30 pm]*

## **ACTION**

Committee Chair Professor Dunning welcomed Mr Patterson and, congratulating him on his appointment to the Head of Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College (Creative Studios and Access) invited him to remain for the whole of the meeting.

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Mrs Helen Bower, Mrs Tracy Hush, Mr Steve Watts and Mr Peter Smith.

### **2. Declarations of interest and possible resolutions**

None.

### **3. Presentation QA Sixth Form – The Next Stage**

Mr Patterson gave a presentation on his vision for the next stage of the QA Sixth Form's development. The introduction of 'linear' A levels from September 2015 was having ramifications on how the College would shape its curriculum offer. UCAS anticipated a substantial decline in student applications for A level programmes over the next five years and the College may need to move towards a more sophisticated blend of academic and vocational programmes in order to maintain student numbers. Added to this challenge was the reduction in funding for post-16 education and the increase in competition between providers. Mr Patterson felt that these factors made it even more important than at present for providers to collaborate while focusing on their unique qualities. For QA Sixth Form, this was that students were able to have a 'college' experience where they were in a more adult environment than a school could offer.

Mr Patterson commented on the remarkable transformation that QA Sixth Form had experienced in such a short period of time under the leadership of Mrs Bolton and explained the ways in which he would seek to sustain this progress. Highlighting the changes in the Ofsted inspection framework which would come into effect from September 2015, Mr Patterson outlined the priorities for staff to achieve outstanding classroom practice. He felt that there was a sound platform on which to take this to the next level and was ambitious for the staff to be known

in the region as subject specialists. Collaboration in developing the curriculum with the QA partner schools was a priority, for example in respect of a digital learning strategy and an opportunity for students to switch from academic qualifications onto ones that had a greater vocational focus (Y model). Mr Patterson outlined the ongoing processes for undertaking robust quality assurance and providing pastoral support as well as working collaboratively with the QASFC partner schools' year 10 and 11 pupils to support their next steps. He also stressed the importance of leadership at every level.

Mr Patterson responded to Committee members' questions about the proposed 'Y' model, stating that this was only an option in specific subjects, e.g. Law. In response to Committee members' questions, he gave assurance that the decision about which route a student should take would be made in consultation with staff, students and parents.

Mr Patterson reminded those present that Curriculum 2000 had introduced a modular approach to A levels whereas Linear A levels would mean a return to students being examined at the end of a two-year period, mostly through written exams and involving much less course work. There were mixed views about the introduction of Linear A levels amongst educationalists and Committee members expressed concern that this change might lead to some students not achieving any qualifications at the end of the two years. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Business Development gave assurance that the College would continue to monitor students' progress very closely through the Pastoral, Performance & Progression Tutors in order to avoid this risk. It was noted that Linear A levels would be phased in over three years from September 2015.

Prof Dunning felt this was an important time to review how the QASFC partnership could be developed further and requested a further report on the views of QASFC staff and students about the Linear A levels one year following their introduction.

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**Prof Dunning thanked Mr Patterson for his presentation on behalf of the Committee.**

#### **4. Minutes and Matters Arising of the Meeting of 17 March 2015**

The minutes were approved as a true record and duly signed by the Committee Chair.

Under *Matters Arising, item 9, Any Other Business*, Ms Wysocki commented that workshops with year 9 pupils were taking place next week at the University of Newcastle and one of the QASFC partner schools would be participating. One school had dropped out of the project, which was on the subject of a First World War soldier from North Shields, and there was an opportunity for another school to take up this place.

Under *Matters Arising, item 2, Committee Membership*, the Clerk to the Corporation indicated that a Governor nomination was awaited from Norham High School and she also drew attention to the terms of office that would end on 31 July 2015 and that both Mr Downing and Mr Smith were eligible for reappointment as Associate Members of the QASFC Committee. This was being considered by the Governance, Performance & Search Committee. It was noted that Ms Puliassis would conclude her studies in the Sixth Form this academic year.

Under *Matters Arising, item 5, Holocaust Memorial Presentation*, Prof Dunning commented on the presentation given on the visit to Auschwitz at the last meeting and the fact that a memorial had been created. She asked if it would be possible

for the song written by staff member Alistair Hain to be performed at some stage.

All matters had been, or were being, taken forward as agreed.

#### 5. **Report from Head of Sixth Form**

Mrs Bolton presented her final report for the year which summarised the overall performance of the Sixth Form and developments in the period from March to June 2015. In particular, the report covered staffing changes, applications to date and feedback from the Higher Education Review.

In terms of new developments, Mrs Bolton highlighted two new courses on offer and being marketed for a September start (Applied Science and AS Accounting). In encouraging students to consider new curriculum, Mrs Bolton was conscious that class sizes should not be reduced.

Information about applications from the QASFC partner schools as well as other schools was provided. While the percentage of applications from the QASF partner schools was the same as last year, the actual numbers were lower due to the year 11 cohort being smaller. Discussion followed and Mrs Bolton highlighted the increased level of marketing activity taking place. In response to questions, Mrs Bolton indicated that although 16-18 student numbers would be lower than last year, the Access programme was attracting a greater number of level 3 learners due to the availability of 24+ learning loans. There would be a significant focus on converting as many applications as possible to enrolments. It was noted that the number of 16-18 students would not decrease any further, but that competition from Kings Priory Academy Sixth Form was a concern and Academies with sixth forms had been established in the Blyth area which was having an impact on application numbers. Added to this was Northumberland County Council's decision to withdraw travel support for post-16 learners. In response to questions, it was confirmed that some students did decide near the start of their first term that a school sixth form was not for them and so there was some migration to the QA Sixth Form by late starters.

Apart from the appointment of Mr Patterson to the Head of QA Sixth Form, Creative Studios and Access to Higher Education from 1 August, a Chemistry teacher had been appointed as maternity cover for one academic year. The Innovation and Improvement Practitioner (IIP), Eve Maxwell, had taken up post as Head of Innovation & Learning for the College and her successor would be appointed before the end of term.

With regard to progression, Mrs Bolton observed that higher level apprenticeships were a valued pathway for some QA Sixth Form students. One A level student was in the middle of the selection process for an army officer training bursary at Sandhurst. **Prof Dunning requested a presentation on progression pathways as part of next year's programme of meetings.**

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Mrs Bolton highlighted the outcome of the QAA Higher Education Review in which some of the staff at QA had been involved. The report, issued on 10 June, had cited a number of examples of good practice.

Linear A levels had been discussed earlier in the meeting, but from September 2015 these would cover: Psychology, Sociology, History, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Business Students, English Literature, English Language and Combined Language and Literature. Mathematics had been delayed until 2016. It was recognised that the transition years would be a challenge for staff and students as students would be following Linear and AS courses as part of their programme of study.

With respect to the Curriculum Development Group, Mrs Bolton drew attention to the continued developments with QASFC partner schools and wished to record her thanks for the time, energy and contribution which Mr Jonathan Logan, Deputy Head of John Spence had given to the group. Mr Logan would be moving on to take up the headship at another school from September. Committee members wished Mr Logan all the best in his new post.

**On behalf of the Committee, Prof Dunning thanked Mrs Bolton for her report as Head of the QA Sixth Form.**

**6. Presentation on Development of TyneMet 2015-18 Strategic Plan as it relates to QA Sixth Form**

Mr Vincent provided information on the development of TyneMet's Strategic Plan 2015-2018. The new plan was being created against a backdrop of great change (GCSEs, A levels, funding cuts and increased competition). TyneMet's Board and management team had been considering the development of the new plan over several months and the Board had agreed to retain the College's current mission, vision and values.

Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College sat within TyneMet's overarching strategic plan but Mr Vincent reminded the Committee about the vision which had laid the foundation for the collaboration with the three schools without sixth forms in the south east part of the borough. He felt that significant progress had been made on that journey and the vision remained contemporary. Nevertheless, there was a degree of drift in achieving the vision as approximately 50% of the students at the QA Sixth Form were from other parts of, or from outside, the borough.

Mr Vincent reminded the Committee about Ofsted's very positive view of the jointly governed and managed QA Sixth Form which had resulted from the May 2014 inspection, commenting that the partnership should continue to develop through reciprocal arrangements for the benefit of the students.

The basis for the current strategic plan was that growth would stem from achieving excellence and developing strong partnerships. While standards had been raised and partnerships forged, this had not necessarily equated to growth across the board. While it was proposed to retain the same drivers (Excel, Partner, Grow), 'Excel' and 'Grow' would be the key drivers underpinned by 'Partner'. Mr Vincent then elaborated on the key features of these drivers and where the College would focus its attention. He acknowledged that aspirations to grow needed to be realistic and growth should not just be for its own sake.

It was vital to cushion the learners from funding cuts and give them the best possible learning experience.

Mr Vincent stated that the College would consult on the detail of the new Strategic Plan over the summer following Board consideration of the draft on 8 July. It was anticipated that the Board would approve the final 2015-18 Strategic Plan on 9 September.

Committee members then commented on the presentation, with one member stressing the importance of leadership to help guide the QA partnership. Mr Vincent responded stating that the College's Public Value Statement, which was linked to the Strategic Plan, showed how the College served its community. It was important for Boards as well as staff of the College and the schools to come together to ensure greater leverage while still acting in the best interests of the students borough-wide.

Responding to a question about whether growth would put pressure on some

areas of the campus, Mr Vincent indicated that this was more an issue for TyneMet than for the QA campus.

*Mr Gordon left the meeting at 6.40 pm.*

Prof Dunning concluded by asking Committee members to email any questions or comments regarding the development of the new Strategic Plan either via the Clerk to the Corporation or to the Principal direct.

**Committee members noted Mr Vincent's presentation on the development of a new three-year Strategic Plan for the College.**

**7. 2015/16 Committee Meeting Dates**

Committee members were asked to note the dates of the meetings for next year:

- 3 November 2015
- 15 March 2016
- 21 June 2016

All meetings are on Tuesdays and start at 5.30 pm. Venue: Hawkeys Conference Room, QA campus.

**8. Any Other Business**

Prof Dunning drew the meeting to a close by thanking Ms Puliassis for being part of the Committee and wishing her all the best in her gap year and for the future.

On behalf of the Committee, Prof Dunning also thanked Mrs Bolton for her hard work and commitment to the success of Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College. Mrs Bolton had been able to turn the QA Sixth Form around and it had been a pleasure seeing the progress made under her leadership. She was leaving a fantastic legacy for Mr Patterson. For her part, Mrs Bolton thanked the members of the Committee for their support over the five years she had been in post. She had always planned to retire at this point and had felt that in these five years she would be able to make the Sixth Form sustainable. She could confidently say that working at QA had been the happiest time in her management career and she had a great team of colleagues. She was glad to know that Mr Patterson was taking over the reins and wished him every success.

Mrs Bolton concluded by inviting Committee members to visit the art exhibition at Creative Studios. She commented proudly on one student who had been at the College for five years; having started on a level 2 programme and just completed his two-year HND in Fine Art, he was now going on to university to do a top-up degree.

Prof Dunning thanked Committee members for their support throughout 2014/15 and looked forward to seeing everyone next academic year.

**9. Any items to be designated as non-confidential or no longer exempted following this meeting and conversely any items to be designated as exempted/confidential**

None.

**Next meeting: Tuesday, 3 November 2015, 5:30pm**

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm.