



**USP College Corporation
Quality Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 14 October 2025
Meeting held via Microsoft Teams
Meeting commenced: 16.00hrs
Meeting ended: 17.45hrs**

Present

Paul Nutter	Independent Member	Chair
Ashley Garner	Independent Member	
Dan Pearson	Chief Executive	
James Meade	Student Member	
Harrison Catchpole	Student Member	

Apologies for absence

Rachel May	Independent Member
Nick Patterson	Staff Member
Harvey Wayland	Staff Member

In attendance

Clare White	Principal
James Parker	Chief Technology Officer
Cherie Brightwell	Vice Principal Technical & Professional
Chris Murgatroyd	Vice Principal Academic
Hannah Johnson	Assistant Principal Student Experience
Head of HE & Access	Megan Brophy
Andy Shepherd	Head of Student Services (item 10 only)

Clerk

Sue Glover	Director of Governance
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QC.30.25 Declaration of Interest

Members and officers were reminded of the need to declare any personal or financial interest in any item to be considered during the meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

QC.31.25 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from

- Rachel May
- Nick Patterson
- Harvey Wayland

The Quality Committee agreed to accept the apologies for absence.

QC.32.25 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2025
The minutes of the meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

QC.33.25 Matters arising and action points from the minutes of the previous meeting
Members reviewed the action points arising from the meeting, noting that the AoC Charter Pledge will remain on the schedule until this is presented to the Committee.

Comparisons on year-on-year feedback will be included in next year's student survey and the Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy will be presented to the committee in June next year.

Members were advised that the College SAR moderation panel will be meeting on 3 November and the Chair of the Committee confirmed that he will attend this.

It was agreed there were no other matters arising from the previous meeting.

QC.34.25 Year-end Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
The Chief Technology Officer presented a report detailing the KPIs for achievement, retention and pass rates in 2024/25.

Members were advised that

- while there was a dip last year, the College's overall achievement and retention rates show a positive recovery, with pass rates showing consistent improvement and now exceed national averages
- key strengths include Level 1 and Level 3 vocational programmes, which show very high achievement and are well above national averages
- A Level achievement increased by 8% from the previous year
- Access and HE results are very positive
- Level 2 achievement and pass rate saw a drop back down to similar levels two years ago, following a strong performance last year
- Level 2 retention is just below the national average (90% compared to 91%) and the retention target for Level 3 A Levels is set at 95%
- the value-added score increased with a large number of subjects showing improvements in value added
- male achievement was slightly higher than female achievement
- students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) have performed less well than their peers over the last three years, students receiving Free School Meals (FSM) showed a positive increase due to focused additional support and awareness and Looked After Children (LAC) showed a positive three-year trend in achievement

Members discussed the issues raised and, in response to questions, were advised that

- the decline in Level 2 is linked to increasing student numbers, more complexity in the student profile and the introduction of exam components in many Level 2 qualifications, in particular a drop in the Level 2 Animal Management/Care pass rate was attributed to an incorrect qualification route (moving from a certificate to a technical diploma) which has since been reverted
- the new Ofsted framework has a focus on 'inclusion' which factors in SEND, LAC and FSM and work is ongoing to identify student cohorts with multiple risk factors to implement bespoke support

Members agreed that the report had given a clear summary of the achievement, retention and pass rates of students. The Committee asked if some work could be undertaken in identifying the risk factors and the proactive support model in relation to the new Ofsted framework and the area of 'inclusion'.

Agreed

The Quality Committee agreed to

- receive and note the report
- work to be undertaken to identify the risks associated with the new Ofsted framework and 'inclusion' and bring to the committee at the next meeting

QC.35.25 Teaching and Learning 2024/25 and focus for 2025/26

The Chief Technology Officer presented a report detailing Teaching and Learning in 2024/25 and the focus for the 2025/26 academic year.

Members were advised that

- at the end of 2024/25 79.2% of teaching staff were rated good (green) or outstanding (blue), demonstrating strong foundation of practice across the college
- the focus for 2025/26 is a targeted and robust programme of support and development for those rated 'requiring support' (amber); a KPI is to reduce the number of 'amber' rated staff by at least 50% and ensure at least 85% of all teachers are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by July 2026
- teachers identified as underperforming (3% last year; with most no longer employed by the college) are supported through a teaching improvement practitioner (TIP) 6-week cycle followed by formal training and development plans if needed
- new detailed 'lesson visits' will be introduced early next year, these are developmental, teacher-picked and allow staff to seek feedback on specific areas

Members discussed the issues raised and, in response to questions, were advised that

- the new lesson visit process will be more holistic, involving dialogue with students and reviewing students work. If teaching quality complaints are raised, investigations will likely involve student focus groups
- the college uses a whole learner voice cycle, including curriculum level voice, Principal's question time and student union feedback. The lengthy termly questionnaire has been replaced with quicker 'pulse surveys' to achieve wider participation

The Committee agreed that there was a very robust process in place for supporting teachers, which enables the College's quality team to quickly identify where additional support for teachers is required. It was pleasing to note the robust programme of support in place for those rated 'requiring support' with a focus on reducing this and ensuring that at least 85% of all teachers are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by the end of the academic year.

Agreed

The Quality Committee agreed to receive and note the report

QC.36.25 Complaints Summary for 2024/25

The Vice Principal Academic presented a report detailing the College's complaints received during 2024/25.

Members reviewed the detail of the report, noting that

- the number of complaints increased to 64 (from 50 in 2023/24), attributed partly to the college's significant growth with the majority related to the curriculum, with an increase in complaints directed at student services, suggesting a strain on support services
- teaching quality was the major reason, often linked to the variable quality of agency staff used in difficult subjects such as Law and Criminology
- complaints regarding the Medical Technologies area were due to delays in opening new engineering facilities
- poor communication and responsiveness concerning staffing issues were noted as an emerging theme

In discussion, members were advised that the action plan in place to address issues includes

- increased onboarding and learning walks for agency staff
- encouraging direct phone calls over emails to resolve issues quickly
- improved communication with parents regarding college expectations
- a timetable moratorium during the first two weeks of term to stabilise the student experience

Agreed

The Committee agreed that there is a robust process in place to deal with complaints with an action plan in place to address issues, noting that staff levels are in a much better position this year compared to last

QC.37.25 Quality Strategy

The Chief Technology Officer presented, for approval, the College's Quality Framework and Strategy, which sets out the

- Top Line Outcome KPIs for 2025/26
- Key Quality Processes
 - Intent
 - Implementation
 - Key Features
 - Timeline

Members were informed that

- the framework details procedures for 'closing the loop' on teaching and learning lesson visits, performance monitoring and reviews of 'at risk' and 'beacon' course
- internal quality reviews have been adjusted to fit the new Ofsted toolkits
- the framework is centred on the student journey, including transition to college and student progress review weeks

The Committee reviewed the detail of the document, in particular the top line outcome KPIs for 2025/26. It was agreed it was a very comprehensive document that clearly sets out the College's strategy for improvement.

Agreed

The Quality Committee approves and recommends to the Corporation Board for approval the College's Quality Framework and Strategy for 2025/26

QC.38.25 College Improvement Priorities

The Chief Technology Officer presented a report to consider, for approval, the priorities for quality improvement.

Members were advised that the College's self-assessment report (SAR) for 2024/25 is currently in progress and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2025/26 is under development. The following key priorities have been identified through a comprehensive review of the previous year's performance indicators.

- Priority 1: Consistency and Progression – focus on strengthening performance at Level 2, improving progression pathways between levels, increasing A level high grades and boosting GCSE English and Maths
- Priority 2: Future Skills - Continue development work with the Thames Freeport, expanding apprenticeship offer with high quality, demand led programmes and creating a whole-college framework for meaningful employer engagement and co-design
- Priority 3: Enhancing Equity and closing persistent achievement gaps – moving beyond current strengths to address remaining disparities, involving implementing a targeted strategy to close the gender achievement gap and embedding a new, multi-factor data model to provide proactive, predictive support for high-risk students from enrolment
- Priority 4: Driving operational excellence through innovation and systems – a dual focus on tackling low student attendance through enhanced monitoring systems and a college-wide culture campaign, while accelerating the adoption of digital and AI tools to automate routine tasks, increase efficiency and empower staff to focus on high-impact teaching and support

Members reviewed the detail of the report, noting the approach being taken to develop priorities and that these areas require focused attention to enhance the college's overall educational outcomes and student experience.

In discussion, members agreed that the areas for improvement were appropriate, clear and concise and are clearly linked to priorities.

Agreed

The Quality Committee approves and recommends to the Corporation Board for approval the College Improvement Priorities as presented

James Parker left the meeting

QC.39.25 Higher Education

The Head of HE & Access presented a report which provided an update on the college's HR provision.

Members were advised that

- total HE enrolments currently stand at 195 students, a 10.5% increase from the previous year, slightly below the target of 200
- despite a 5.3% increase in overall enrolments this year, there is a decline in enrolment numbers across 50% of programmes which is reflective of a combination of factors, including shifting student interests and possible external influences such as recruitment strategies (both internal and external) and local demographic changes

- specific programme results showed that
 - Sport and Exercise Science saw positive recruitment with a 41.2% increase in year 1 learners and achieved 100% progression from level 3 students onto the programme
 - Games development year 1 was not feasible to run this year due to low numbers
 - Early years has continued to show a steady decline in student numbers
 - Public services is a new year 1 cohort and the college's subcontracting partners, Docklands and Arts One showed growth, contributing to the overall positive enrolment figures

In discussion, members were informed that

- Enrolments are predominately progressing Level 3 students or external applicants, with Sport and Exercise Science typically drawing Level 3 progressors, while Games Development and Public Services split half and half, Early Years generally enrolls older, external individuals who are already employed and may be seeking leadership roles
- Games development curriculum is being redesigned to align better with Level 3 progression cohorts
- The college is exploring alternatives for Early Years to make the course more appealing locally due to its sustained decline

Freedom of Speech Statement

Members were informed that the statement has been created to meet the requirements of the 2023 Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act and the updated guidance from the Office for Students.

The statement addresses concerns about the reluctance in teaching controversial subjects and affirms support for academic freedom. Members reviewed the details of the statement and agreed this was appropriate with no changes required.

Future termly reports will include details of any freedom of speech activities that have occurred during the term.

Members thanked the Head of HE for a very comprehensive and informative report but asked if future reporting could focus more on improving the quality of the provision and outlining main strategies rather than going into detail.

Agreed

The Quality Committee agreed to

- Receive and note the report
- Approve the Freedom of Speech Statement
- Future HE reports to be reframed to focus more on improving the quality of the provision and main strategies
- Future termly reports to include details of any freedom of speech activities during the term

QC.40.25

Careers and Skills Education

The Vice Principal Technical & Professional presented a report, detailing the proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2025/26 to help monitor employer engagement, student career progression and overall student experience.

Members were advised that

- the college reaffirms its commitment to remain a career-focused college and enhance employer engagement for learners

- key performance indicators (KPIs) showed improvement: Sector Boards increased from 74% to 78%. Work Experience finished at 97% following a drive to move learners back to physical placements. College Companies achieved a 95% achievement rate.
- the first cohort of T-Level learners (Health, Early Years, Digital) achieved a 100% pass rate. Health learners performed exceptionally well, with 25% achieving a distinction grade, significantly exceeding the national trend of 8-9%.
- Nine KPIs are proposed for the current academic year. Continued focus includes growth in Sector Boards and Work Experience, increased exposure to Employer Events, and improving Career Support, especially for learners progressing to HE (where there is a national dip). New targets involve integrating the ISA and LSIP into the curriculum redevelopment strategy.
- the KPIs are strategically designed to enhance student outcomes, foster industry partnerships and drive the college progress with focus on employment engagement, student career development and the overall student experience
- key objectives include raising learner destinations into HE, apprenticeships, workforce or further training

The Committee considered each of the KPIs proposed for 2025/26 and agreed these were appropriate and that the targets suggested were realistic to ensure they were achievable.

The Committee thanked the Vice Principal for the update, which has helped to demonstrate that the College has strong partnerships and collaborations across schools, community and employers. There is strong alignment to priority skills needs supported by a strong pipeline of employer partnerships.

Agreed

The Quality Committee agreed

- to receive and note the report
- the nine KPIs and targets for 2025/26, which will be monitored by the Committee at each termly meeting

Andy Shepherd joined the meeting

QC.41.25

Annual Safeguarding Report for 2024/25

The Head of Student Services presented, for consideration and acceptance, the Annual Safeguarding Report for 2024/25.

Members were advised that

- the annual safeguarding report reviews the work undertaken in relation to Safeguarding including Prevent throughout the year
- the report provides assurance to the Board that the College is compliant with its responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding including Prevent and that appropriate actions are being taken in relation to safeguarding students, staff and visitors to the College

Members reviewed the detail of the report, noting

- the significant drop in the overall number of individual interactions, noting that 2023/24 was exceptionally high
- a drop in lower-level mental health work was noted, potentially due to post Covid recovery and strategies empowering students (e.g. Peer or peer work, conversely much more complex situations have significantly risen, requiring continued engagement with external partners and parents

- the safeguarding team received the Essex Award and the National Award for supporting young carers

Members commended the report, particularly the level of support that is given to students by the Wellbeing Team. The Committee recognised the high level of training undertaken by the safeguarding team against a whole range of activities and considered that the report gives a level of confidence to the Board that statutory duties relating to safeguarding are being met. It was pleasing to note the Essex Award and the National Award for supporting young carers and asked that congratulations are passed to the Safeguarding Team. The Chair of the Committee advised that, in his capacity of Link Governor for Safeguarding, he had visited the College to review the central records and to meet with the Safeguarding Team before the end of last term and would be visiting again in November and will report into the Board

The Committee asked that thanks are passed to the Safeguarding team on behalf of the Board for the tireless work they do to ensure the safeguarding of all students.

Agreed

The Quality Committee agreed to accept and recommend to the Corporation Board for acceptance the Annual Safeguarding Report for 2024/25

Safeguarding Policy

The Head of Student Services presented the Safeguarding and Prevent policy for approval.

Members were advised that the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy has been updated to reflect the latest changes in the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' document

Members reviewed the detail the policy and agreed the changes were appropriate with no further changes required. The Committee was reminded that governor's responsibilities in terms of safeguarding are fulfilled through participating in the safeguarding updates provided and through the Link Governor Safeguarding reporting to the Board, who meets with the Head of Student Services.

Agreed

The Quality Committee agreed to recommend to the Corporation Board for approval

- the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy

QC.42.25

Committee Effectiveness

The Committee reviewed the outcomes from the Committee's self-assessment for 2024/25.

Members were reminded that the Board had conducted its annual self-assessment over the summer, which included a self-assessment of the performance of each of the committees. The Board reviewed the outcomes at the meeting held on 30 September and agreed that each Committee should consider the outcomes of its own self-assessment at the autumn meetings.

The Committee reviewed the outcomes, noting

- the overall assessment of the Committee's performance is very good
- the impact the committee has made in the last twelve months
- the areas suggested of how performance might be improved

In discussion, members concluded that the Committee continues to fulfil its function as a key committee of the governing body. The Committee will continue to play a proactive role in enhancing the student experience through its oversight of challenging targets for student retention and achievement as well as other appropriate curriculum development and management activities.

QC.43.25 Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business.

QC.44.25 Schedule of Quality Committee meetings 2025/26

Wednesday 3 December 2025

Tuesday 3 March 2026

Tuesday 16 June 2026

As there was no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed.

SIGNED AS A CORRECT RECORD:

DATE: 3 December 2025

