Preston College

Redacted and Abridged[1] Minutes of the Quality and Standards Committee Meeting held on 26 February 2026 at 5.30pm, Preston College

Present:

Mrs Laura Mason	Chair
Mrs Helen Curtis	
Ms Giulia D'Ambrosio	
Mrs Sylwia Jurasz	Until Minute 16

Apologies

Mr Simon Nixon	Principal and Chief Executive
Miss Katie Malyon	
Miss Scarlett Woodruff	

In attendance:

Mrs Michelle Bibby	Director of Quality and HE
Mrs Marie Haworth	Vice Principal - Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support
Mr Mick Noblett	Vice Principal - Curriculum Delivery and Planning
Mrs Clare Rayner	Director of Governance

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Director of Governance welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

The Committee noted that apologies had been received from Miss Katie Malyon, Mr Simon Nixon and Miss Scarlett Woodruff.

2. Appointment of Chair

The Director of Governance asked for nominations for Chair. The Committee appointed Mrs Laura Mason as Chair for a term of two years.

Resolved: The Committee appointed Mrs Laura Mason as Chair.

3. Declaration of Interests

Mrs Helen Curtis declared her interest as an employee of the University of Lancashire and undertook to leave the meeting for any related discussions, if required.

No other declarations were made.

[1] Please note that any matters which the Corporation is satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis have been removed from these minutes.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

With a minor typographical amendment to Minute 5, the minutes from meeting on 19 June 2025 were approved as a correct record.

Resolved: With a minor amendment, the Committee approved of the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025 as a correct record.

5. Matters arising

The Committee noted that matters arising report which detailed outstanding actions from previous meetings.

In response to a query, Mrs Haworth, Vice Principal - Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support, gave an update on the Centres of Excellence project which had been deferred and would be progressed.

Resolved: The Committee noted the matters arising report.

6. Performance against Key Performance Indicators

The Committee noted that as the presentation on Performance against Key Performance Indicators had been delivered at the recent Board Deep Dive, it would not be repeated in full at this meeting to allow more time for governors' questions.

Mr Noblett, Vice Principal - Curriculum Delivery and Planning, reported that:

- the report included a breakdown of attendance by provision;
- management continued to consider attendance management from a different perspective, particularly as the College now had access to some data from schools with individual student attendance starting points. The College could see that some students with lower attendance had actually significantly improved their attendance since joining the College;
- management, teachers and student managers continued to support students at an individual level alongside ongoing general College communications on the importance of attendance;
- overall attendance had increased three percentage points on the same time the previous year;
- the presentation included ongoing challenges, opportunities and risks;
- staff sickness had been a challenge during 2025/26 and had created some strain on delivery which management were trying to address.

Members recorded congratulations to the College management and staff on the positive apprenticeship qualification achievement rates (QAR) which were ahead of the national average, particularly for 19-23 provision. The Committee noted that the significant improvement in apprenticeships QAR had been discussed at the Board Deep Dive.

The Chair referenced the slight decline in 16-19 (class room based) achievement rates and queried if any specific reasons for this had been identified. It was noted that management were aware of the slight decline and strived for continual improvement. Management provided some context to the result and explained that the 16-19 student numbers had grown in 2024/25 and 2025/26. They explained that this cohort included Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 students with a higher portion of students resitting their Maths and/or English GCSE and if the College was able to contextualise QAR they would be higher.

The Chair highlighted the importance of governors being able to contextualise the College's QAR in discussions with Ofsted inspectors.

Members commented that at the recent Board Deep Dive on Stakeholder Engagement with members of the College Management Team, directors had consistently shared with governors the need for greater capacity of teaching staff to cover for staff sickness. Members discussed:

- the impact on staff wellbeing if staff were continually having to cover classes as it reduced preparation time for their own classes;

- that in particular Curriculum Leaders were having to teach a significant number of classes to cover for staff which had a knock-on impact on progress of their own work.

A staff governor commented on the potential impact on students' learning experience and potential knock-on effects on their learning experience the next year. She emphasised that it should be recognised that staff were working together to provide teaching cover for students.

In response to the comments raised the Committee noted:

- that the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) was mindful of staff workload;

- the challenges related to the growth in student numbers and that there had been more sickness than usual in the autumn term due to flu which had exacerbated the issue;

- the impact of the shift from a custom and practice approach to the new Workload Strategy approach;

- that despite the challenges, management and teaching staff were still working hard to achieve challenging KPIs;

- that agency costs were increasing and other initiatives were being considered to address this including: asking part time staff if they wanted to increase their hours and building a directory of staff who could provide short term sickness cover;

- that ELT would continue to consider cover arrangements as part of forthcoming curriculum planning and business planning cycles in readiness for the new academic year;

- that teaching staff wanted to make an impact and wanted to teach students;

- that the UK culture and attitude to work was shifting and this could impact the College's policies going forward.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Performance against Key Performance Indicators.

7. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Mid-Year Report

The mid-year report on teaching, learning, and assessment was discussed in detail. Mrs Haworth and Mrs Michelle Bibby provided an overview of the report, highlighting key findings and areas for improvement. They reported that:

- all learning walks should be completed by the end of March;

- a whole College "School approach" had been taken for learning walks which supported a team dynamic within Schools;

- key themes were identified and individual or School Continuing Professional Development (CPD) was informed by those themes;

- individual teachers could be referred for CPD following learning walks and some teachers self-referred;

- there would be further staff CPD at the forthcoming Digifest.

The Chair thanked management for the additional detail requested by the Committee at previous meetings which had been included in the report and would help inform governors' discussions with Ofsted inspectors. The Chair suggested that it would be helpful for the next report if management explored:

- including updates on subject specific pedagogy and including some examples of where some subject specificity or subject specialist teaching had been particularly appropriate;

- including references to sustainability in the report;

- potential inconsistencies in strengths and potential weaknesses e.g. positive learning environments characterised by high behavioural standards and then a weakness of inconsistency in behavioural management. However, it was recognised this might be explained by the College's diverse curriculum.

The Committee discussed the report with management, in response to queries from members, the Committee noted:

- that generally, student behaviour was good. However, as the academic year progressed some students started to test boundaries;

- the remit of security officers on campus;

- whilst management did not want to overstate it, there was still a legacy impact from Covid;

- that Maths and English learning walks had been deferred as had been arranged too close to Christmas and that learning walks for the remaining three Schools would be completed by the end of March 2026;

- that feedback from staff indicated that staff preferred the School approach for learning walks and there were benefits for the Director of Schools and Curriculum Leads to be present and listen to the feedback on all the teaching staff in that School at one meeting;

- that the new Director of Quality would review the learning walk process.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Teaching, Learning and Assessment.
Action: Ms Haworth to explore the suggestions for the next Teaching, Learning and Assessment report.

8. Progress and Performance against the Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26

Mrs Haworth presented the Progress and Performance against the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2025/26. She reported:

- that the QIP focused on six key areas for improvement with some new and some carried over from the previous year: apprenticeships, teaching learning and assessment, curriculum design, value added and inclusion and culture;

- that whilst progress had been made in apprenticeship QAR, it remained an area for improvement;

- that attendance had improved but remained an area for improvement. The College now used attendance data from schools and could compare students' College attendance to their school attendance;

- on teaching, learning assessment in terms of academic progress monitoring, particularly for technical and employment programs;

- on the importance of recognising “value added” when a student made progress relative to their starting points;

- on the focus on curriculum design and that some new qualifications had not taken off nationally to date;

- that a significant number of students needed to resit their maths and English GCSE during 2025/26 and this had a huge impact on overall achievement;

- that the College had a very inclusive curriculum and culture and celebrated inclusivity. It was important that the College was able to showcase this to Ofsted and demonstrate the achievements of students from diverse backgrounds.

The Committee discussed the report with management, in response to queries from members, the Committee noted:

- that it had not been possible to include the attendance for English and maths GCSE due to a technical issue which was being investigated;

- the challenges with attendance for GCSE maths; often from Level 1 students and the challenges for teaching staff when teaching a range of differing abilities. Alternative approaches would continue to be explored to address this;

- that consideration was being given to introducing student sets by different GCSE grades;

- that it was important that the Board had a good understanding of the key aspects of the QIP and the recent Board Deep Dive on KPIs had been helpful. It was noted that the QIP would be shared with the Board as additional reading as part of the pack for the March Board meeting.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the performance and progress against key Quality Improvement Plan milestones for 2025/26.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Student Review 2024/25

Mrs Haworth presented the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Student Review 2024/25. Mrs Haworth reported:

- that the report showed the diversity of the College’s students and the achievements of those students in terms of both retention and achievement rates;

- that there was a small number of gaps which were closing;
- that 42% of students came from areas of deprivation;
- on the achievements of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and that the College's high needs provision continued to grow.

A member highlighted that there was much discussion in the sector at the moment about the importance of having an inclusive curriculum and queried how the College enhanced diversity in curriculum design. Management explained that the College had taken a phased approach rather than a linear approach.

In response to queries from members, the Committee noted:

- how students could progress through the curriculum at the College and that overall destination data was positive. However, there were challenges with the data on students from the Caribbean, which was currently being explored;
- how the College supported vulnerable students, including students with illness. Examples of students successfully studying remotely were highlighted.

The Committee commended management for the level of detail provided in the report and agreed that the report evidenced equality of opportunity for students at the College, regardless of protected characteristics.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Student Review 2024/25 report.

10. Student Voice/Student Council Update

Mr Noblett presented the update on the Student Voice and Student Council report.
Mr Noblett reported:

- that the membership of the Student Council had increased in recent years and the membership of 20-30 students were highly engaged and getting involved in College activities;
- that management were currently reviewing the data on student induction and College courses;
- that the College now received impactful feedback from students about their courses which provided opportunity for management to quickly intervene;
- that the College was exploring how to gain more feedback from adult students;
- on the importance of quality and consistency of opportunity;

- that the report was embedded and considered at the College Management Team meetings to identify any common emerging themes.

Members commented positively on the report and agreed that the issues raised by students had progressed beyond practical arrangements in College.

During discussion of the report, members suggested:

- it would be helpful if future reports could include an update on the actions taken in some schools and areas as a result of the surveys;

- that consideration was given to providing other areas other than the refractory for students to eat lunch;

- questions on curriculum guidance could be more specific e.g students could be asked in future surveys about whether they thought the guidance they were given when choosing a course was useful.

Mr Noblett explained the focus on guidance to students including ongoing work between enrolment and students coming into College to ensure students were fully briefed on the requirements of their course and the focus on human as well as written interactions with potential students. However, it was acknowledged that this guidance was inconsistent at present.

The student governor provided feedback that on her course it would be helpful for students to have more support from the College when finding work placements, particularly because it was more challenging to write a portfolio without having had work experience. Management responded that there was co-ordinator in place to support students. However, resources were being reviewed in this area as there could be over 100 students requiring placements.

In response to a query on career development and advice to students once the qualification had been achieved, management highlighted that alongside other initiatives the College had recently held a careers fair with over 15 universities and 30 employers present and that further opportunities to find out more about career progression would also be provided in the second year.

Mr Noblett undertook to further review placement and career support, particularly how part-time students could better access all the experience available to full time students.

The Director of Governance reported that governors were invited to attend the Student Voice Conference on 12 March 2026 as detailed in the report.

The Committee noted the 'You Said We Did' initiative at Appendix 1 which showcased how student feedback had been addressed and acted upon.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Student Voice/Student Council Update report.
Action: Mr Noblett:

- **to add the information requested on action taken by management in response to students' feedback to the next report;**
- **to review the work placement support provided to students;**
- **to review the advice to students on courses.**

11. Higher Education Update

Ms Haworth presented the HE Update report. Mrs Haworth reported that:

- a pilot for a module exploration programme had been completed in December;

- evidence from the National Student Survey (NSS) and Student Voice Meetings confirmed a strong relational and academic learning culture across HE provision;

- the report included a student experience and NSS results some were positive in terms of teaching and support, but there were also some development areas in terms of organisation and management of learning resources;

- there had been feedback of inconsistent use of HE learning spaces during estate refurbishments;

- although there were other HE students at the College; the NSS report related to dance and counselling students;

- national tuition fee caps would receive inflationary uplifts for 2026/27 and 2027/28, subject to Parliamentary approval;

- the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) would launch from January 2027, enabling modular funded study. The College was actively engaged in DfE Provider Readiness activity and was progressing modular curriculum, registry and student support preparation;

- Penny Mackay, HE Manager, had been appointed as the Vice Chair of the University of Lancashire's Partnership Forum;

- partnership work with the University of Lancashire was ongoing;

Following a query, Ms Haworth confirmed that all staff and the majority of HE students had completed the sexual harassment awareness training required by OfS Condition E6. It was noted that new HE students had not completed the training but there was a plan in place to address this.

The Committee recorded congratulations to Penny Mackay on her appointment as Vice Chair of the University of Lancashire's Partnership Forum. Members commented that the HE report was consistently clear and detailed.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the HE Education Update.

12. Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25

Mrs Haworth presented the Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25. Mrs Haworth reported that:

- the report had been deferred from the previous meeting and had since been updated;
- the College had received 62 complaints during 2024/25 which was a slight increase on the previous year;
- there were fewer complaints in construction during 2024/25 and there continued to be complaints from students in iSTEM due to the use of agency staff;
- three complaints were not dealt with within the 20 working days and outlined the reasons;
- no complaints had been referred to the Office of Adjudication;
- the College had introduced new staff training including conflict and use of inclusive language;
- the College had introduced new progress and monitoring and parent reporting processes which had been well received;
- the College had expanded its health and well-being initiatives to support students that became overwhelmed in class and the well-being room was well utilised by students;
- the number of well-being first aiders had been increased which had been positively received by students.

The Committee noted that details of individual complaints had been removed from the report because, even with redactions of names, it was difficult to maintain anonymity. The Committee requested that the format and content of the annual report was further revised for 2025/26 to allow the Committee to have better oversight and to allow the Committee to better understand if there were any trends or common issues without moving into operational discussions.

The Committee noted that whilst a high number of compliments had not been recorded, it was evident from the number of cards in staff rooms that students appreciated the staff at the College.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: the Committee noted the Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25.
Action: Management to revise the format for the next annual report to allow the Committee to have better oversight.

13. Curriculum Strategy Update

Mr Noblett presented the Curriculum Strategy Update. He reported that:

- the curriculum strategy was aligned to the College's Accountability Statement and strategic plan;

- the introduction of Combined Studies at Level 3, was designed to increase breadth of opportunity, whilst enabling the College to prepare for the proposed 'V Level' provision to be introduced in 2027/28;

- consideration of curriculum pathways for students and how this linked to inclusion;

- there was more interest from students in T Levels but this might not convert to enrolments;

- on the responses of employers.

The Committee reviewed the effectiveness of the current curriculum and proposed enhancements to better meet student needs and industry requirements. In response to queries the Committee noted:

- the combined studies opportunities should go live the following week;

- information on the rationale for the combined studies package;

- the government's plan was to "switch off" diplomas from March 2026 but it was unlikely that this would happen at this stage;

- the importance of not mis-selling qualifications to students during this period of uncertainty;

- a green skills summit would be held on 6 March 2026 as part of Colleges Week and governors were welcome to attend.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Curriculum Strategy Update Report.

14. Forward Work Programme

The Director of Governance referred members to the Forward Work Programme 2025/26 report which had been deferred from the previous meeting. The Director of Governance reported that the Committee regularly reviewed reports relating to student inclusion and this would continue during the 2026/27 and it would be helpful in terms of preparation for Ofsted that the new terminology was used.

The Chair requested that it would be helpful for the Committee to review the curriculum strategy for 2026/27 at its next meeting. The Committee noted that the curriculum strategy for 2026/27 and the Accountability Statement would need to be aligned to the College's new strategic plan.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme report 2025/26.
Action: The Director of Governance to ensure that curriculum strategy for 2026/27 was included on the agenda of the next meeting.

15. Review of Quality and Standards Committee Related Risks

The Director of Governance referred members to the Review of Quality and Standards Committee Related Risks report and explained the reasons the Committee was being asked to review the Quality and Standards related risks.

The Committee reviewed the existing risks related to Quality and Standards and considered whether there were any other risks that should be added.

The Committee suggested that a risk relating to increased staff sickness and cover could be included. Although it was noted that this might fall into the risk of: *"Hard to recruit areas - Skills shortage and the impact on learners:"* It was noted that it was important the wider Board understand the challenges and could then support from a budget perspective.

The Committee noted that based on the information received today, the Adult Skills Funding contract was going to be similar to 2025/26.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report and agreed its feedback on the risk register.

16. Governance in the Renewed Ofsted Inspection Framework

The Director of Governance referred to the Governance in the Renewed Ofsted Inspection Framework report. She shared insights from on a recent Ofsted webinar she had attended on governance oversight responsibility in the FE and skills sector and also shared feedback from another member that had attended.

The Chair and the Director of Governance reported that the feedback included:

- making sure governors were clear about outcomes for students and understood the barriers some students faced;

- governance in the framework related to the wider concept of ensuring effective arrangements were in place rather than focusing on governors;

- governors should consider how leaders reassure governors on how well the College met the new criteria, particularly for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) student and disadvantaged students;

- inspectors didn’t necessarily need to see a SAR or QIP document but needed to understand how colleges understood their strengths and priorities for improvement;

- guidance on the role of the Director of Governance in the meeting with inspectors and governors during an inspection was inconsistent;

- governors should be able to articulate what inclusion means in practice at their college;

- governors should be aware of subcontracting arrangements. It was noted that the Quality and Standards Committee and the Board received an annual report on this and it would be helpful for the Committee to allocate further time to this;

- there was a focus on grading criteria and about how governing bodies challenged and monitored the quality of provision. The balanced scorecard linked to the refreshed three-year plan would be a critical part of that. Ongoing re-ordering of the Board meeting content to include more discussion of curriculum and quality earlier in the meeting would also help to address this;

- Ofsted views on the different grading compared to the previous framework;

- governors should consider what the data told them, what actions had been taken by management in response and what was the impact of those actions;

- it was unclear at this stage which governors the inspectors would meet with, but they might meet with the safeguarding link governor.

The Committee discussed the Ofsted inspection framework and its implications for governance with management and the Director of Governance.

Members highlighted the importance of all governors being able to articulate the College’s strengths and areas for improvement and how governors had been challenging management on improvements.

Members discussed that the Board Deep Dive had been very helpful in ensuring that all governors understood achievement data and it was important to continue to hold these sessions.

A member suggested that it would be helpful if a crib sheet could be developed to support governors as part of the preparation for Ofsted under the new inspection framework.

During discussion members noted that:

- case studies were being developed by marketing and would include information of initiatives such as the College of Sanctuary and would be particularly helpful for those governors not familiar with FE;

- Ofsted would publish webinars on YouTube specifically for managers and governors;

- in the new framework “value added” could be much wider than high grade success. e.g. being able to evidence progress of GCSE maths and English students;

- there was debate within the sector about whether or not it was important to have an inclusion strategy.

The Committee discussed with management that there were some uncertainties in the level of knowledge governors were expected to have on SEND and whilst it was impossible for governors to have an in depth, working operational understanding of SEND, but it would be helpful for governors to have a CPD training session on SEND. The Committee noted that Ms Haworth had suggested a SEND themed learning walk would be beneficial. It was noted that in time SEND training would be a regulatory requirement.

The Committee noted the report.

Mrs Jurasz left the meeting.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report.

Action: To continue to progress materials to support governors’ preparation for Ofsted under the new inspection framework. E.g. the development of a crib sheet to support governors as part of the preparation for Ofsted under the new inspection framework.
To progress a CPD session for governors on SEND and to progress SEND themed learning walks.

17. Matters to draw to the attention of the Board

The Committee agreed to highlight to the Board:

- that the Committee had reviewed and constructively challenged management on the progress of the Quality Improvement Plan;

- that the Committee had reviewed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Student Review 2024/25 and commended management for the level of detail provided in the report and agreed that the report evidenced equality of opportunity for students at the College, regardless of protected characteristics;

- when discussing the Ofsted report, the Committee discussed the importance of all governors continuing to develop their knowledge and understanding of the College's approach to inclusion. This should include awareness of the barriers some students faced including those students with SEND. The Committee had agreed that learning walks on SEND would be beneficial.

Mrs Bibby, Mrs Haworth and Mr Noblett left the meeting.

19. Date of next meeting - 18 June 2026

The Committee noted that the next meeting will be held on 18 June 2026.