

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE
25 NOVEMBER 2025**

PRESENT: M McClintock (Chair), P Lynn (CG), L Wood (CG).
Student Reps: L Brown, C Campbell, K Crossley, and L Manyindo.

Officers: Z Foster (Head of Governance), L McKenna (Director – University Centre), B Robinson (Deputy Principal), O Rodley (Vice Principal) via Teams, and J Sharp (Head of Quality).

KEY: CG – College Governor

1. Apologies for Absence

Z Lewis (Principal)

Introductions and welcomes were shared with the four HE student Reps ((Lexi Brown, Lillian Manyindo, Connor Campbell, and Karl Crossley).

M McClintock gave an overview of the Committee and the role of the student reps

2. Declarations of Interest – none declared.

3. Unconfirmed Minutes of 15 May 2025 – were approved as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising not on the Agenda

L McKenna updated the Committee with regards to the Sutton report item confirming that there had been no recent update. A link to the website had been provided within the Matters Arising document for governors to access any future update.

It was noted that Student Reps had not received the papers for the meeting.

5. Deputy Principal's Verbal Overview and Risk Summary

B Robinson gave a verbal update drawing particular attention to the Post 16 Education and Skills white paper and the Government plan to have two-thirds of young people participating in higher level learning (academic, technical or apprenticeships) by age 25. He detailed a number of opportunities within this policy including: developing the curriculum to suit the local skills needs in partnership with local HE institutions; increased flexibility with lifelong learning entitlement which could increase the accessibility for disadvantaged learners; and clear pathways for L4 and L4 jointly by FE and HE.

Potential risks of the policy included: L4 and L5 courses and related perceptions re higher level skills with the ability to drop in and out of learning; the transitional period; and governance strategic considerations in relation to the potential opportunities.

He also outlined HE recruitment figures which had now hit target (albeit acknowledging that the target was a reduced one) which was positive and improvements with income due to additional money from OfS. Further work was taking place to better align L3 with L4 provision to encourage transition arrangements. Destinations was also highlighted, notably the impact on TEF ratings due to the SOC code reliance on 'appropriate destinations' and B Robinson detailed some work with other colleges to improve this.

B Robinson confirmed that the risks were under control with some real future opportunities available with an initiative-taking approach.

6. Student Voice

M McClintock introduced this item as an essential part of the meeting agenda. Each of the students then gave their perception of the provision as detailed below:

L Manyindo – outlined the mix of teaching, approaches, and expectations by the two teachers on the course and the impact of the variances.

Governors queried what the differences were, and L McKenna encouraged students to discuss any issues with the programme boards. She confirmed the specifics in relation to this course would be picked up outside the meeting. L Brown outlined her transition from L3 and gave an overview of her HE course (travel). She detailed the benefits of small classes and progression, and the balance of university and work which she found effective.

K Crossley detailed how he had found his L4 and L5 work with the increased collaborative nature of the L5 modules and how this had been a difficult transition for some students particularly in small classes. He also outlined teacher approaches and confidence in the changes.

The Committee discussed the increased collaborative approach and the need for this skill for the sector (Film and production), whilst acknowledging this was not always easy for students or some staff. L McKenna outlined reasonable adjustments which could be made for students who found certain approaches problematic (this being tailored via a case by case approach). She confirmed that staff wrote the programmes, and revalidation would allow some consideration of balance on approach.

More generally, both L McKenna and the Committee welcomed the views of HE student reps and encouraged student feedback more widely through the various mechanisms (module evaluations, to teachers direct, via the HE office) as adjustments/changes could be made to ensure modules were as effective as possible.

Action by L McKenna to pick up individual issues post meeting.

The National Student Survey (NSS) was outlined to students. M McClintock acknowledged the phenomenal participation (97%) in an incredibly positive survey overall.

Some discussion took place re comparator institutions against which the College had improved. L McKenna drew attention to the reduced variance in relation to the Student Union question which historically had been higher which was positive.

Governors' further asked students whether learning resources were sufficient for their purposes with all confirming this was the case.

L McKenna outlined a drop across three questions in relation to learner resources noting that this may have been to a mix of reasons e.g. the beginning of the year and timetabling for some students. She informed the Committee that external examiners had always thought that all resources were particularly good.

Governors also discussed IT support and what was in place for HE students, the slight drop for teaching and detail behind the response rates.

L McKenna informed the Committee of a further in-year student survey for all students using the NSS survey as a basis so that a full range of feedback could be elicited (which would be of particular value as the NSS did not include all HE courses).

The Committee concluded that the survey was incredibly positive overall and above the national average (albeit slightly lower than last year overall) which was pleasing.

7. Teaching and Learning

L McKenna gave a brief appraisal of teaching and learning, encouraging Committee members to participate in HE learning walks this year to see the approaches in action. M McClintock confirmed that the HE walkthrough he took part in last year had been extremely useful in this regard.

L McKenna then detailed two areas for development: evidence informed approach (particularly for new teachers) and digital tools usage (for all staff).

It was confirmed that six new staff had joined the department this year (out of 65) and that extra support was available for them in respect of the standards of teaching and learning.

8. Research and Scholarly Activity and CPD

L McKenna drew attention to a highly successful July HE conference and of early planning for the 2026 one which would focus on digital learning.

The Committee discussed where CPD sat in terms of reporting, concluding it should remain within RSA, and the considerable amount of support in place for staff.

9. Academic Board Minutes from 30 September 2025

The Committee received the minutes.

The Committee acknowledged the much improved minutes and their value both internally and as externally available documents. One minor change was suggested – to detail the role of those who attended (e.g. academic/managerial) – action by L McKenna and secretariat lead.

L McKenna detailed the cycle of HE department meetings with the next being Academic Quality Board, the minutes of which would come to the next meeting of the Committee. She drew attention to an additional DAPS devolved working group being set up.

A future action to have an external academic sit on the board was noted and would be actioned when possible.

10. Regulation and Partnership

L McKenna outlined some likely further changes coming through from the Office for Students (OfS) leading on from the recent appointment of Professor Edward Peck as new Chair (as of July 2025).

The Committee noted the reworks submitted to the Access and Participation plan, with confirmation of likely further amendments before sign off.

11. Quality Assurance Cycle Update including KPIs/SAR

L McKenna highlighted the areas for improvement and monitoring of those.

Questions, challenge and discussion included: graduate destinations clarification with confirmation that this had declined for the College with current investigation taking place into the reasons behind this; student outcomes reporting with an explanation of SOC 1-3 given for student reps; work on an in-year dashboard on student destinations to assist with contextualising the future TEF submission which may also result in a change of KPI reporting; the use and availability of the careers service for HE; and possible changes to the current metrics for destinations for FE colleges nationally going forward which the Committee welcomed.

12. Business Planning Update

L McKenna detailed challenges over the past year in relation to recruitment and the resulting conservative target for this year as confirmed by the Governing Body at the strategic planning day in June. She outlined a positive start to this year with a lower dropout rate after 6 weeks, and of HE planning activities.

Clarification was given on the targets tables.

L Manyindo left the meeting at 2.55pm

Questions, challenge and discussion included: the balance between HE department control and department ownership and related responsibilities and influences; the future possibilities/removal of barriers to access particularly if flexibilities could be maximised (such as foundation degrees top ups, evening and weekend, block release, online options) to best compete in the local market particularly in areas of overlap; staffing and financial viability should flexible options be increased; the use of the Employer Advisory Boards to ensure employer preference options best utilised the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) – the early responses to which had been positive with employers recognising and wanting to support their staff; options for developing employer led approaches; the current HE strategy and further consideration over the next 24 months; and clarification on Higher Level apprentice figures with confirmation that HE did not benefit from the income of that cohort.

13. Strategic Plan Update

As the College Strategic Plan was being developed over 2025-2026, and DAPs process was ongoing, the Committee **agreed** it was sensible to retain the current plan for another year. L McKenna confirmed that the faculty would continue to work on the development areas outlined in the current plan.

14. Degree Awarding Powers

A brief update was given, with confirmation that ongoing involvement/dialogue with the HE Committee was key with reporting from the DAPs working party being cited as key to this.

Action by L McKenna to send the Committee the drafted application form ahead of formalising for comment.

The offer to Committee members to attend one of the DAPs meetings was also given.

15. Committee Review of Top Risks

B Robinson reiterated that the College was proactively responding to the risks presented.

The Committee confirmed no change to the risks as identified at the start of the meeting and were reassured by the approaches being taken. They encouraged further awareness of the HE offer to students by the HE faculty and departments.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 14 May 2026 at 1.30pm

17. Any other Urgent Business

The Committee thanked the HE student reps for their fantastic insights to the meeting.

Post meeting note – students were sent thank you letters on behalf of the Principal and Chair of Committee.

The meeting closed at 3.25pm