

CORPORATION BOARD CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STUDENTS COMMITTEE



Minutes of a virtual meeting held on Tuesday 23 June 2020 at 2pm

Present

Di Batchelor, Principal
Fay Croft
Vicky Field, Chair
Tony Petruso
Stephen Vickers

Other governors attending

Howard Dodd

In attendance

Jacqui Canton, Deputy Principal
Jenny Craig, Vice Principal
Jo Milsom, Vice Principal
Ruth Reavley, Clerk
Fiona Gay, SMT PA, workshadowing

Governor questions are represented with bullet points, and management responses are italicized.

1. Election of Committee Chair

The Committee elected Vicky Field to serve as Chair for a two-year term of office.

2. Opening comments, apologies for absence and new declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Committee. Apologies had been accepted from Eduardo Pereira, who was in College lectures as part of his apprenticeship.

Noting a vacancy on the Committee, Fay Croft, a member of the Nominations Committee, noted that steps were being taken to recruit an FE specialist governor.

There were no new declarations of interest.

Members were invited to take note of the Committee's Terms of Reference (provided in item 7), in their discussion.

3. Quality headline report

Jenny Craig highlighted matters from her report. The impact of Covid-19 causing College closure and different routes to the achievement of qualifications resulted in an absence of the data which this committee would usually consider on for instance attendance and predicted achievement grades.

She outlined current arrangements for qualification achievement. The transition to GCSE centre-estimated grades had been challenging for the reasons set out in the paper. Working to the requirements of Awarding Bodies for vocational and technical qualifications had not been straightforward; guidance for centre-assessed grades had changed, often in response to the requirements of the regulator, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and sector feedback.

The College Quality Improvement Plan reflected that it was more difficult to provide information because moderation outcomes were not known until August.

Governors welcomed the report as a clear summary.

- Does the data quoted from the Sutton Trust, that two-thirds of pupils nationally have not taken part in online lessons, include the FE sector, or is it solely for schools? The College engagement level of 85% is creditable. *The Sutton Trust data is drawn from the entire spread of young people's education and indicates shockingly low participation. College teachers have shown great flexibility and creativity. Student engagement is creditable, especially given that the learning they are now doing does*

not contribute to this year's qualification, though it will support progression to the next level of qualification, or into work.

- *Do we know how the 85% engagement compares with local competitors? There is no comparative data in FE. Anecdotally, the FE sector has been quicker and more proficient at moving to online learning than is typical for schools. FE typically has been using digital platforms for blended learning for longer prior to Covid-19. Schools were also challenged by Ofqual guidance indicating that no additional work needed to be set after 23 March with respect to centre-estimated and centre-assessed grades.*
- *Does the College have mechanisms to support engagement where students are not participating? Yes, particularly in the Fast Forward curriculum area, and more students will move onto campus from the last week in June.*
- *What expectation does the College have on English and maths? For GCSE English and maths, the team worked hard to demonstrate the evidence necessary for centre-estimated grades. It had been a rigorous process. Teachers assessed students' knowledge and skills. Students' aims are to gain a Grade 4. For many, exam performance had been an issue in the past rather than knowledge attainment. The College's internally moderated data indicated a cohort achievement 10 percentage points above last year's data reflecting improvement in teaching approach and more focused formative assessment throughout the year.*
- *The Awarding Bodies will be aiming for standardisation of results comparable to previous years, but College cohorts vary in potential year on year. For GCSEs, most students have a grade 3 on entry and are hoping for a grade 4. The Association of Colleges (AoC) is working with the Awarding Bodies on ensuring resit students are not disadvantaged by the statistical standardisation methodology. For GCSEs the Awarding Bodies consider the trajectory over several years of the College's data, and the progress of students.*
Awarding Bodies in the past have taken note of the accuracy of College estimates, and used to be less likely to challenge in-year estimates where previously the estimates had been reliable.
- *Is there an update on apprenticeship endpoint assessment? There is not much flexibility though some progress has been made. AAT exams will be resumed on Campus soon. City and Guilds exams will be available once students are in College. Achievement of endpoint may therefore come later in the timeline. The challenge is to keep students motivated. There is a small benefit, in that income will trickle over into 2020/21.*

The Chair had received feedback from the student governor on his peers' experiences of the transition to online teaching. It had been swift and good. Individual tutors had been outstanding. But in one case, the turnaround on marking of assignments had been slow, and no explanation had been offered. *This point would be followed up.*

- *There are students without the technology necessary for online learning. What is the College doing about that? How many were affected? When the College moved online, a survey was used to identify technology needs. The IT team had recalled all college laptops and rebuilt them in record time, for issue to staff and students in need. Over time, it has become clear some students had underestimated their access, for instance in households where several people shared a single device. The College was working on providing resources for these learners. As of September, with blended learning, an early survey would identify learners' access to devices. More staff would be on campus, so an additional number of laptops could be rebuilt and made available. The Bursary fund could be used for laptop purchase. Abingdon and Witney Campuses would have bookable spaces in the Learning Resource Centres for online learning.*

- How many devices will be needed? *That will not be known until students register.*
- The Department for Education (DfE) catch-up package has been announced since the paper was written. What are your thoughts? *The Principal responded. In the embargoed press release, the catch-up fund applied to 16-18 learners. Two hours later, that age-group was removed from scope. The tutoring scheme is unsuitable for FE. Background lobbying for 16-18 funding is being co-ordinated by the AoC. Sector leaders accepted that a volte-face by politicians would be difficult.*
- On the QUIP, what was the outcome likely to be on the amber rating for Gateway? *A clear curriculum intent had been developed. Qualification outcomes are difficult to predict. Many Gateway students are studying Functional Skills, with results subject to the Awarding Body decision-making process.*
- Is there an update on the red RAG-rating for computing students achieving the necessary grades to progress from L2 to L3? *The rating had previously been amber. Moving it to red is a reflection of Covid-19 impact. Students need to achieve a Merit to progress to L3. A number of them needed to resit external exams in term 3, which has not been possible. The Awarding Body, Pearson, does not offer a centre-assessed grade route instead determining a centrally driven estimated grade based on previous attainment. The College considers it highly unlikely that 80% will achieve a Merit.*

The report was noted.

4. Curriculum headline report

Jenny Craig drew attention to changes since the report was written. Government announcements made that day on reduction from 2 metres to “1 metre plus” would have impact. Schools were all to be completely back in operation by September. The expectation for the FE sector was not yet clear. Curriculum intent statements indicated progress to date.

Governors welcomed the report as a clear summary.

- Research in the United States of America shows that the most disadvantaged students fail to engage. What remedial plans are being developed for those joining, or continuing on courses given such evidence? *It depends on a combination of level of course and individual need. In HE, for instance, students are typically able to respond well to a significant online component. In Access to Learning and many vocational courses, there will be a higher on-campus component, and additional support will be available. The Induction process will be rigorous to ensure the right student is on the right course, and that the starting point of each individual is well understood.*
What of Year 2 returners who struggled to engage in term 3 of their Year 1 course? *Most Level 3 Year 1 students due to progress to Year 2 have engaged well with online learning. Appropriate support would be available.*
- The Committee notes that the Board has approved a capital bid of £1,820,000 to support the delivery of T Levels in the Digital, Health and Education routes. When T Levels were first discussed, the work experience element was of concern. What is the situation now? *The requirement is for 315 work experience hours. There are current trials in Landbased, Engineering, Healthcare and Early Years in 2019/20, with Digital and Business being added in 2020/21. This year it has not been possible for those students to undertake industry placements during Term 3. The Government has agreed that there will be no penalty for those students. The College will not offer T Levels until 2021/22, and continues to develop capacity in anticipation of offering them.*

- Considering the Curriculum Intent statements for Adult Education and Community Learning, the flexibility to recognise a thirst for knowledge, fulfilment of interest and advancement of social cohesion, as well as the instrumentalist outcome of progress in careers, is welcome. In Family Learning, a wider outcome in the past has been a child's re-engagement with mainstream education. *The intent statements will capture wider/unintended outcomes such as the example given.*
- What implications are there for the College in relation to the AoC Skills Recovery Plan? *Some curriculum areas are well positioned to develop additional re-training courses. The key will be the local Oxfordshire economic context.*

The report was noted.

5. Student Engagement headline report

Jo Milsom drew attention to key messages. Student engagement work had been dominated in term 3 by Covid-19, and the College focus on student wellbeing. Continuity of service had been achieved through moving services online. This had enabled staff to engage with vulnerable students. Operationally, student services worked on a student risk basis.

In addition, the work of Student Voice continued, though online. The Careers newsletter was an illustration of its online provision. Updating the report, governors had received the full Matrix report, which was a very pleasing outcome for the College.

- Commenting on governor participation in the Matrix assessment process, a governor observed that the assessor had been complimentary about what had been found. The Head of Student Engagement's leadership of the process had been most effective. *As the assessment had been a virtual one, student evidence had not been collected. In the next annual review, the usual light-touch would be amplified with the collection of first-hand student evidence.*
- Given concerns about the sample adult community learning students' awareness of Prevent and British Values in the last Ofsted inspection, what progress had been made? *It was a challenging area. The migration of Student Services online made resources more accessible, and improved staff opportunities to reach students on the satellite campuses and taking part-time and evening classes. A thorough review of learner and employer safeguarding and prevent documentation had been undertaken alongside the review of the Safeguarding Policy.*
- The experience of participating in the Student Conference had been most encouraging. Around 60 students had been involved, with very high levels of engagement throughout. The opportunity to close the event had been welcomed. The Pulse Newsletter "shout outs" gave a very positive message.
- What response had there been from students about the *Black Lives Matter* campaign? *The Vice Principal was aware of one student raising the matter. The Senior Management Team and the Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes (PDBA) team had considered the College response. There were AoC resources available. The College had not made a direct statement. A current marketing campaign focussed on broader aspects of inclusion. The College would plan a programme of education for staff and students.*
- The Careers Newsletter was very good. How was it circulated to students? *It was emailed directly to students. Class Representatives were encouraged to circulate it. In normal circumstances, hard copy would also be made available in public areas of campuses.*
 What student reaction had there been? *The newsletter had only been published a few days prior, so it was too soon to gauge student response, however student reaction was not routinely collected to this one piece of work, although careers education does feature more generally in the student surveys. With such a broad*

range of students in the College, response would naturally vary. There may be benefit in differentiating the message and the distribution in future.

- *How many students have needed financial support (free meals, for instance)? The numbers will be reported back. The College has gone beyond the minimum requirements. It is not clear whether Year 11 students with free school meals moving from school to College are the school's, or the College's responsibility over the summer. Though nationally there are organisations giving grants for summer activities and nutrition, none is in Oxfordshire.*
- *How is the collection of student views structured? Classes elect a representative. If recruitment is difficult, one rep does sometimes cover two classes. Their role is to collect feedback, and to meet regularly in groups with the Student Voice Lead. Student Reps develop the content for the Student Conference, and their ideas give rise to student initiatives, such as the Green Team and environmental sustainability work. Staff expect that the Black Lives Matter response will be channelled through student reps. Other plans for 2020/21 include student involvement in College Self Assessment Report (SAR) moderation, student involvement on the Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes committee.*
- *The development of an electronic version of the Adult Learner end of course survey was welcomed.*

The report was noted.

6. Policies

Safeguarding

- *Is the College planning to incorporate provision for epidemics into the Safeguarding policy? The College, in collaboration with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, had issued a Covid-19 arrangements supplement, which would remain in place for as long as necessary. The Policy has not been amended. It was thought the Health & Safety Policy covered the College response to epidemics in general.*
- *Did the protected status of a victim refer to protected characteristics? No, it referred to identity protection.*

Subject to correction of typographical errors, the policy was recommended to the Board.

Managing and Preventing Student Harassment and Bullying

- *Was the focus on student to student harassment and bullying? Yes, the policy would be amplified to make that clear*
- *Could the policy be strengthened by the inclusion on psychological bullying? Yes, that would be done.*
- *How is awareness of the policy sustained amongst students and staff? It is covered in student Induction and touched on at points in the year during student Core sessions. There is a strong pastoral structure with staff aware and responsive.*

Subject to amendment the policy was approved.

Student Financial Support

Governors noted that the policy had been simplified to emphasise what the College is permitted to spend. It will be supplemented by further material designed to support students to apply for support. There had been no amendments required following impact assessment.

The policy was recommended for approval by the Board.

Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Expression

Governors noted the document was not easy to read, but acknowledged it was an adapted template from Eversheds Sutherland. The Vice Principal was meeting with the convener of the Impact Assessment group to discuss feedback received from that group. Some updating of job titles and other operational matters would be completed before the policy was submitted to the Board in July.

Subject to the revisions indicated, the policy was recommended for approval by the Board.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Release the updated policy on managing and preventing harassment and bullying for College use	Clerk	Immediate
Add Safeguarding, Student Financial Support, and Freedom of Speech etc. policies to Board agenda for July	Clerk	immediate

7. Committee Business Plan 2020/21 and Reflection

A business item covering in-year response to Covid-19 would be added to the November list. It was confirmed that the Committee would undertake the review of the College SAR, which had been the task of a Working Group in 2019.

Governors reflected that the headline reports had been most helpful, and were a good basis going forward. Having the Committee Terms of Reference had been useful. The virtual meeting had been effective and had allowed the Committee to fulfil its responsibilities.

Governors were united in agreeing that the College staff had managed to respond to student needs and to provide effective teaching and learning in unprecedented circumstances, and that they were proud of what had been achieved by staff. This was to be passed to staff by Jenny Craig.

Di Batchelor was thanked for involvement in her first and last Curriculum, Quality and Students Committee, and for all that had been achieved by it, and its predecessor governor Committees. She responded that she, too, was proud of the College turning itself into an online business at two days' notice, building on a good IT infrastructure and prior use of online delivery through Teams.

The meeting closed at 3.10pm.

Date approved for signature10 November 2020.....

Signature

Date