

**Corporation Board
Curriculum, Quality & Students Committee**



Minutes of a virtual meeting held on Thursday 3 March 2022 at 6pm

Present

Victoria Field (Chair)
Jacqui Canton (Principal)
Kathryn Schutterlin
Robert Weavers

In attendance

Laura Grainger (Clerk)
Jenny Craig (Deputy Principal)
Sian Cound (Head of Faculty for Service Industries)
Joanne Milsom (Vice President of Student Engagement)

Apologies

Fay Croft
Sam Wolfe

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

1 – Opening comments

The chair welcomed Laura Grainger to the meeting. Apologies were received from Fay Croft and Sam Wolfe. No new declarations of interest were raised and no matters to be added under AOB.

2 – Minutes of previous meetings

Members approved the public minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 November 2021 as accurate and appropriate for signature, subject to the change below.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Correctly spell Robert Weavers' name	Clerk	asap

3 – Matters arising, written resolutions and action points

All actions are completed or awaiting action from the new Clerk. No other items were raised. The committee noted the paper.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Annual report on student and employer complaints – check the complaints policy and appendices on Governor Portal and add any missing information.	Clerk	By next meeting
Committee self-assessment – Committee Terms of Reference to be reviewed and updated.	Clerk	By next meeting

4 – Services Industries Faculty presentation

The committee welcomed Sian Cound, Head of Faculty for Service Industries. The presentation concentrated on the School of Health & Education (SHED) as they have been piloting the T Levels. Sian talked through the curriculum offer which covers full-time, part-time and Higher Education qualifications from Level 1 – 6 with the added complexity of working with six different awarding bodies.

Enrolments increased from 384 (19/20) to 417 (20/21) and currently at 374 this academic year. It is hoped the target of 391 for this year will be achieved as there are still 4 courses to start with a predicted increase of at least another 35 new students. Attendance rate is at 90.5% and retention at 97.6%.

Next year, the level 2 transition programme will include more foundation science work. The T Level in Health has a heavy science focus, so there is a need to start introducing the level 2 students to this earlier on.

Strengths from delivering the T Level (rather than the Btec) is that it is a more holistic experience that is student led and project based. Issues have included that it has been difficult to find placements (primarily due to the impact of covid); staff recruitment and staff training (need to get staff involved right from the start of the T level process); and exam anxiety (most of the students haven't sat exams for nearly 2 years).

Some photos were shared of the facilities including dummy trunking to replicate a hospital and independent living flats, as well as photos of the enrichment offer and employer links.

- When on the counselling course, does level 4 allow them to practice? What age are the students on this course?
Whilst they can work in industry, they cannot practice on their own. This has probably developed as a result of the pandemic and the way people are feeling about mental health and wellbeing. We could probably put on more courses, but it's hard to recruit staff to that area. They have to be 19 and over – even for level 2 counselling we have been asking for 19+. We have students in their 50s.
- Is the enrolment data across both campuses?
Yes – both areas but only SHED.
- If the slide on student figures is going to be shared elsewhere then the scale should be altered as it looks like we have a third of students this year!
Yes, agree: it will be changed.
- Have you had issues with clinical placements?
Yes and it may be ongoing next year as well. Most colleges have raised this with the DFE as they had hoped to use placements from the T levels to 'plug' the gap in the industry. So everyone is aware of this and trying to resolve.
- The facilities look amazing. Do other institutions offer the same type of things? Are we similar in any ways?
Our nearest competitor is Activate. They offer similar qualifications to us. We have had feedback from parents and students (who have been to both colleges) and they have said they were really impressed with ours. It's also worth noting that some secondary schools have offered classes, but they are also just classroom based (no facilities like ours). We have also had a parent contact us today requesting that their daughter withdraws from Activate at the end of year 1 and joins our year 2.
- What is the gender ratio on these course, and has there been any movement?
The majority on these courses are female. But we have found over the last few years that the male headcount has increased. We do try and promote it as best as we can and quite a few of the males want to become paramedics. I think the stigma around being a 'nurse' is changing and not attributed to being a female anymore.
- Is staff recruitment difficult across the board? How many vacancies are there?
Yes – in HSC and Counselling it is hard. We have got 2 adverts out at the moment.
- Does the college salary scale match the Oxford living wage?
No – unfortunately we cannot yet, but we are moving more towards it. Through the strategic review process we are taking staff pay very seriously.
- Can the presentation be shared?
Yes – it will be sent round.

The committee thanked Sian for her presentation and time, and noted the paper.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Change the scales on the student number slides	Sian Cound	asap
Share the presentation with committee members	Clerk	asap

5 – Curriculum report

Jenny Craig introduced the report and then took questions from the committee.

- You mentioned staff shortages and that Engineering and Motor Vehicle has had issues. Can you give us an update?
The engineering shortages have been resolved but we are still a motor vehicle staff member down, which puts pressure on other staff.
- I was aware about the lease on the Union Building not being renewed – but which buildings are we using instead? And did we lose any staff from leaving that building?
Conversations are ongoing with the Oxford Central library at Westgate, as well as areas at Cowley Road and the normal delivery options. We didn't lose any staff as most were management or administrative staff so we are just moving them to Abingdon or Witney (depending on what suits them most).
- On page 2: you mention the T Level Digital industry placement issues relating to homeworking – what are they?
Yes – it is a problem as the DfE introduced some flexibility and advised that some could be undertaken remotely. I had a meeting with Oxford Health Trust to talk to them about placements, and they were open to offering Digital placements. So there are other avenues we can explore.
- Do you find it difficult to engage with the Health sector?
It can be challenging and they are under their own pressures. But it can be difficult to engage with the right person with the right influence. There is a lot of staff turnover – so even when you do start developing a relationship you then have to start again.

The committee noted the paper.

6 – Quality report

Jenny Craig introduced the report highlighting that retention overall is still good and attendance is improving (a significant portion of low attendance is due to self-isolating). The committee then asked questions.

- Why is attendance at English & Maths (16 to 18) particularly low?
It's a perennial problem – the students don't come to us to choose to study English and maths, it's something they must do. However, our attendance is in line with national figures for English & maths.
- And Gateway is challenging?
Some of those students continues to suffer additional anxiety about coming into college. We have identified a small number of students to invite to an online programme. This will support their transition later in the year and increase their confidence to join back in.
- Interested in the professional development. Last time we spoke it was new – are there any issues emerging?
The 'cubes' which have taken place have gone well. Staff have appreciated the opportunity to visit their colleagues and have benefitted from reflective discussions. It has encouraged ownership of their own development. Logistics have been difficult as it can be harder with part-time staff. This is why we have introduced the Professional Discussion – keeping the element of peer development but not the 'cube' which can still have a very positive impact.
- If there are any performance issues highlighted, how are they dealt with?
It's important to remember that the previous classroom observation process was only part of the evaluation of a teacher's performance (someone may perform very well in a classroom, but not with marking for example). So it's looking at the holistic experience and then following through in a performance plan which their line manager will oversee.

The committee noted the paper.

7 – Students' report

Joanne Milsom introduced the report and then took questions from the committee.

- Are there any Russian and Ukrainian students at the College?
Yes there are and we are offering support.
- Can you tell us about the harassment reporting system, Whispa?
This is an online reporting tool where students can tell us about harassment. It is focussed on peer on peer. It is well publicised around college and in the surveys and it is an ongoing process to promote it. We haven't had any reports yet.
- On the prevent duty self-assessment, are the items rated 3 or a 4 getting priority?
Yes, whilst we are confident we are doing well in most areas, the items that are red or amber were around operational practices around evacuations (not a fire) or 'lockdown'. We are doing some research into practice at other colleges and there has been some sharing of information. It is particularly challenging for us given the layout of our campus and the number of different buildings. So whilst we have a process in place we need to reflect on that when the new H&S manager joins.
- What kind of improvements are there in the area of 'Promoting British Values'? Is it an Ofsted requirement?
Yes, it is an Ofsted requirement and it is in the Prevent documents as well, (we need to do enough to promote fundamental British values). It could be problematic, but we embed it in teaching and learning, and naturally weave it in. Where we need to improve with this is in our adult provision.
- What do the regulations and assessments on promoting these values cover? Can you talk about them as 'generic' values or do you have to use the term 'British' values?
There is an opportunity before the Ofsted inspection starts to tell them that we use different terminology e.g., we say college values rather than British values. They will triangulate information by talking to teachers and students and seeing if it all matches up.
- In that case, is there any intention to update the college posters that currently say British values and replace with college values?
Yes, I think that's a good idea and we will look into it.
- Can you tell us more about the requirement to carry out social media checks on job applicants?
When you read it in detail it states that colleges 'should' rather than 'must' check accounts of applicants, and it does leave it open as to where in the process you can do these checks. However, it feels like it's one more barrier in the way and I was concerned about what they felt we should do with this information.
- I note that they say that 'substantiated low-level concerns' be included in references. I would expect these to be mentioned anyway.
Yes, I agree. That does make you realise that people may not be working to our standards.
- In terms of young people at harm in the LGBTQ+ community, do we have any issues?

We have a group of students who have been getting together and they have got momentum as they have been able to get together online. Although we haven't identified any additional risks –it is obviously on our radar and kept under review.

- Do you have any update on the Oxfordshire County Council consultations?
There are two public consultations on SEN and SEND which have, at times, felt frustrating. They appear to mostly be thinking about schools and not the support we need. The second consultation (on process and systems) doesn't even refer to post 16 settings.

The committee noted the paper.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Investigate updating the value posters with 'college' rather than 'British'	JM	By next meeting

8 – Policies

8.1 – Student voice policy

The Committee reviewed the policy and agreed that a scope and purpose should be added to the start of the document.

Subject to the addition above, the Committee recommend the policy to board.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Add scope and purpose to the policy	JM	Prior to submission to the Board

8.2 – Admissions policy

The Committee approved the policy.

8.3 – Assessment policy

The Committee approved the policy.

8.4 – Student performance management and disciplinary policy

The Committee approved the policy.

9 – Any other business

None raised

10 – Future business and reflection

The committee agreed it would be useful to have another Faculty presentation and it was agreed that Creative Industries should be invited. Recording the faculty presentations (so that other Governors can view them) was discussed.

The committee discussed adding the following to the forward plan:

- Predicted achievement rates
- Updated equality improvement plan
- Revised Office for Students accountability and equality measures.

The committee formally noted that it would be useful to have more committee members and also increase diversity on the panel.

Action	By whom	Deadline
Invite staff member from Creative Industries to the next committee to present on their faculty	Clerk	Asap
Investigate recording faculty presentations	Clerk	Asap
Formally request additional committee member at Board	Chair	Asap

11 – Date of next meeting – 23 June 2022

Approved for signature.....

Signature.....

Date.....