



CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER 2020

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14 October 2020
Author: Clerk
Action: Approve
Status: Open

Present: David Mitchell (Chair)
Aneela Ali
Andy Cole (Interim Principal / CEO)
Sarah Stewart
Chris Toon

In attendance: Deni Chambers
Tracy Foreman
John Gray
Helen Hepple
Ivan Jepson
Kevin Marston
Keith Oxspring
Andrew Robson
Suzanne Slater
Richard Ward
Emma Moody (Clerk)
Suzanne Clark (Minutes)

CQ/01 Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Sarah McBean. The Clerk advised that the Chair of the Corporation had also sent apologies although not a formal member of the Committee, indicating that as part of the review of governance it may be a future plan for him to become a member of this committee.

There were no conflicts of interest declared at this stage. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the meeting.

CQ/02 Minutes of the last Teaching & Learning Committee meeting dated 24 June 2020

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

CQ/03 Matters Arising

The Chair indicated that the item on Apprenticeship Minimum Standards, T/326, should be open and not marked as confidential. This information would be publicly recorded so should be marked as such. It was confirmed that the paper presented to the Committee at the meeting in June 2020 was marked as closed but the minutes will be amended.

The Chair questioned the lack of commentary in relation to Higher Education, T/328. The Clerk indicated that any debate would have been recorded so this is likely due to no specific questions being asked when the report was presented. The Clerk agreed to check this with her colleague who clerked the meeting on her behalf.

Action: Clerk to follow up with her colleague re T/328.

CQ/04 Committee terms of reference

The Clerk presented the committee terms of reference.

The Chair advised that the terms of reference have been approved by the Board. They are broadly similar to those previously in place for the Teaching and Learning Committee. The Clerk summarised the key points including the remit of the committee and the inclusion of curriculum planning. The Clerk suggested that one of the planned training days for the Board may be a good opportunity for governors to understand what goes into curriculum planning activity. The Interim Principal / CEO agreed with this suggestion. A member asked, given the provision for co-opting members, whether it was appropriate for the Committee to consider who they may want to co-opt externally. The Clerk indicated that the membership of the Curriculum and Quality Standards Committee would benefit from having focus from the new Governance Committee. There is also additional work planned as one of the FEC recommendations relating to Governor recruitment so there is likely to be an opportunity to appoint from new membership.

The member also asked whether the terms of reference should make specific reference to the curriculum plan being presented to the Board on an annual basis, in addition to the College's self-assessment report. It was felt that the curriculum plan is a key document which should go to the Committee for approval. The Interim Principal / CEO was very supportive of this highlighting key issues around sub-contracting and how collaborative work can be articulated. The Chair indicated that the spring term meeting of the Committee may be an appropriate time for the Committee to receive the plan which can then be shared with the Board at a strategy day. The Clerk agreed to take this away and check against the calendar of meetings.

Action: Clerk to work with the Interim Principal / CEO and Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality to plan timings for how the plan can be presented to the Committee / Board.

The terms of reference were noted.

CQ/05 Getting the New Academic Year Up and Running – COVID-contextualised report

The report was presented by Deni Chambers – Assistant Principal.

The Chair commented that the actions detailed within the report had resulted in a fantastic achievement by staff and students. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality confirmed that the DfE have cited some of the actions taken by the College, including the campus return videos, as best practice. A member asked what is in place for students who are not in a financial position to buy kit to access virtual learning and for learners who do not feel safe studying at home. It was confirmed that there is a bursary fund that students can apply to for help in purchasing items including laptops and Wi-Fi dongles. In response to a question

from the Chair, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that the bursary scheme is funded through the College's learner support fund. The Interim Finance Director added that once the fund is exhausted the College may look to then use funds from the Foundation to meet this charitable need. It was confirmed that where learners don't have the necessary equipment at home they can attend College physically or use library spaces. It was also confirmed that the College have offered a safe place for vulnerable learners to attend since re-opening in June. Vulnerable learners have been attending during the summer period.

Another member commented that it was excellent to see the number of teams who have come together to start the new academic year. She recognised that the report included some positives in terms of better ways of carrying out activity including registration of learners and asked whether there were other examples of alternative approaches that will be taken forward. The Assistant Principal advised that activity around student keep warm events and online interviews has made registration much more accessible to learners and their parents stressing that it is good for working parents to have the opportunity to get involved. The College will continue to use this to complement 'in person' activity rather than replace it. The experience was felt to be much more personal than in previous years and the team would look to continue to do this over a longer period of time. There has been a significant increase in the development of digital skills of staff to adapt to different ways of working. There is a need to monitor developments to ensure progress is made at an equivalent level to previous years. The Chair recorded his appreciation for the efforts of all involved in getting off to such a good start.

The report was noted.

CQ/06 Recruitment Update

The report was presented by the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

The Director of Business Development asked whether there was an opportunity for the ESFA to advance funding in 2020/21 based on the additional growth of 16-18 learners questioning whether there was a threshold to meet. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality indicated that growth would need to be in excess of 10% of the plan. The Interim Finance Director added that he wasn't aware of any colleges receiving in year funds as a result of growth. The Principal advised that if the College achieved 15% above planned learner numbers the ESFA may consider this. The Principal indicated that he would discuss this with John Taylor from the ESFA. It was felt that the ESFA may consider a request based on the current circumstances. In response to a question from the Interim Finance Director, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that the College is within its allocation for adult learning loans. The allocation is approximately £800,000 and the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality was confident on the income lines associated with this and that the predicted out-turn will be achieved.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality indicated that the College is awaiting further detail on the recent announcement of the skills guarantee. He is currently considering the type of programmes the College may want to offer. It is very much hoped that the government will recognise that shorter intervention is more preferable to many adults rather than a 2-year programme. The Principal reiterated that further detail is needed highlighting that there is potential for this to create a difficult scenario in relation to adults who may have taken a loan to fund their programme. The market for this initiative is likely to be the 19-23 age group. Funding is not expected to be available until April which may result in the programmes being short courses or delivered spanning across academic years.

The Clerk indicated that data within the report suggests that the College will be in a relatively positive position indicating that the Finance and General Purposes Committee need to fully understand this. The Interim Finance Director confirmed that there will be no impact on 16-

18 numbers this year. Additional funding from this activity will be received in 2021/22. The forecast has excluded any potential benefit from increased numbers as the College did not want to be seen to be over optimistic. This is likely to result in an additional £800,000 next year. The increase in apprentice activity gives some comfort. The Committee was advised that information from the ILR that will be included in the management accounts for October and should show the annualised benefit and the impact in the current year. A member commented that it would be helpful to have reassurance that the increase in 16-18 learner numbers can be delivered without additional costs. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality confirmed that the curriculum plan was built to accommodate growth. Currently around £1m of teaching resource is casual so can be switched on and off as required. The plan has been built on demand. The management accounts should show that the College is on profile with staffing costs. Curriculum teams are delivering at or under plan. The member welcomed this assurance. The member recognised the current difficulty in planning due to the ongoing pandemic and asked whether there are specific concerns around apprentices and AEB. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that he was very positive about apprentice recruitment as the College has continued to recruit during lockdown. Digital provision has grown and this is likely to continue. He was confident in exceeding the planned budget but indicated that there are some risks, particularly in automotive provision. If activity is not delivered to plan there would be some savings in terms of staffing costs. The Interim Principal / CEO added that funding streams are very complex. AEB funding is associated with high levels of subcontracting activity. The budget comes from a number of sources and there is a need to create a report which will keep governors updated on a monthly basis. Once an accurate reporting mechanism is in place information will be shared. The Chair thanked the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality for the report commending staff who have worked hard on the recruitment of learners.

Action: Interim Principal / CEO to contact John Taylor, ESFA, re in-year funding for growth in 16-18 provision.

The report was noted.

CQ/07 Self-Assessment Report

A verbal update was given by Andrew Robson – Assistant Principal.

It was reported that activity takes place throughout the year to monitor performance and identify strategies for improvement. The self-assessment report reflects the end of year point. The process for self-assessment has changed this year. There are 2 stages to the process, departmental self-assessment which then feeds into the overall College report. The process for the departmental stage has been changed and the team have looked to implement early discussion with Heads of Department by way of 'challenge meetings'. The meetings have been focused on a number of indicators and discussion takes place around emerging key strengths and key weaknesses. This is felt to have better prepared managers and feedback to date has been very positive. Managers have found the meetings supportive. The challenge meetings have now concluded and departmental self-assessment should be completed by the end of the week. These will be subject to checking before being used to inform the overall College report.

The Chair questioned whether the outcome will be a document broadly similar to that presented to the Committee previously. It was confirmed that the format is fairly similar and the report will be aligned to the inspection framework. The team are looking to be more concise and for the report to be written in a more effective way. The process is very similar but there are some refinements which will hopefully improve the quality of the reports. The Chair recognised the responsibility of the Committee to review the self-assessment report and make a recommendation to the Board and asked whether there was a date planned for this. The Clerk agreed to work with colleagues to plan for this to take place prior to the Board meeting in December.

Action: Clerk to discuss with Interim Principal / CEO, Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality and Assistant Principal a realistic timeframe for the Committee to receive and review the College's self-assessment report for 2019/20.

The report was noted.

CQ/08 Maths & English Update

The report was presented by Andrew Robson – Assistant Principal.

In response to a question from the Interim Finance Director, it was confirmed that the pass rate included in table 2 is a percentage. It was also confirmed that a leaver, as defined by Pro-achieve, is someone who would have taken the exam at the end of the year. Some of the learners have returned for the second year of their programme and will have an opportunity to take the exam in the current year. The Assistant Principal confirmed that the provider rate is for colleges and is the national rate for the FE sector. The national rate quoted is for all providers including schools, colleges, sixth forms and independent schools. This is felt to be a very broad range. 2019/20 data was felt to be higher than previous years as a result of centre assessed grades. The Committee was advised that the College would have welcomed the opportunity for students to sit exams to see the impact of initiatives including the College's Centre of Excellence for Maths. A member commented that it will be difficult to see the degree of progression as a result of centre assessed grades this year and felt it would be important to bear this in mind when reviewing 2020/21 data.

The Chair asked whether the intention for November resits is that there will be real exams that learners can sit. It was confirmed that this is the plan for the first and second week of November. There are lots of learners who want to take the exams. Some learners were borderline grade 4 so want to demonstrate their improvement. There are 84 learners due to take GCSE English and 175 due to take GCSE maths in November. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality confirmed that logistics for this is manageable. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality highlighted that many learners had their learning interrupted in March and are being engaged in a different way so 2020/21 was unlikely to be a normal year. GCSE and A level exams have been pushed back by 3 weeks but it was felt that the data may take up to 3 years to have a like for like comparative. The Chair recognised that this is a very challenging area of work but the report shows a very positive direction of travel. He commented that it was good to see progress and it is hoped that this will continue. He commended the efforts of the Maths & English team.

The report was noted.

CQ/09 A Level Update

The report was presented by Helen Hepple – Assistant Principal.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Principal for a very comprehensive report and asked whether centre assessed grades had had an impact on results in this area. The Assistant Principal advised that the A level team have gone through a rigorous assessment process with learners over the last 3 years so staff have a very good awareness of learner performance. There is high confidence that staff have been assessing learners at the right level and predicting performance accurately. The Chair was supportive of the departmental ambition to achieve outstanding in the future. A member recognised that this was an area of close scrutiny and commented that the report shows tremendous progress. She commended the work of the Assistant Principal and the A level team. In light of the recommendation of the SPA to review A level provision the member asked how it was proposed that the College do this. The Assistant Principal advised that all departmental activity is reviewed as part of curriculum and business planning. The team consider local and sector demand and part of the focus is on why A level provision is needed. This

approach will continue. The Chair indicated that he had discussed this prior to the meeting with the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality. He felt that it is an area of the College that is performing very well. Recruitment is good and financially the department is covering costs. The Chair felt that he needs to understand better what the FE Commissioner is looking for and what the team are trying to achieve. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality added that there is a need to explore what all potential parties want to get involved in and what the appetite for collaboration is. Some discussions have taken place with **THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION**. There appears to be some interest around the sharing of staff. **THIS ITEM IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR PUBLICATION** are also interested in virtual learning as some of their A level subjects are delivered from the south. Members recognised that some learners are attracted to the College due to its location. Some research is needed to fully understand the objective. A member commented that the future plan should be a combination of continuing to build on current progress and looking to further enhance and improve provision. The Interim Principal / CEO concluded that the College needs to fully understand what is on offer. A level programmes need a critical mass to be able to offer a broad range of subjects. He felt that there may be some mileage around considering distance learning and combining groups. This will be reported on regularly across the year.

The report was noted.

CQ/10 Performance Report

The report was presented by Andrew Robson – Assistant Principal.

The Committee was advised that some amendments have been made to the Music & Performing Arts data in table 1 and the actual data is higher than stated. The Clerk indicated that this could be circulated after the meeting. The Clerk referred to the investigation in October 2019 focused on ILR data and asked whether the rates quoted in the report are accurate rates informed by the ILR. It was confirmed that the data is from Pro-achieve and the College, as a result of the investigation, now has a more thorough approach particularly for learners who span over an academic year. The College is making absolutely sure that all apprentices who are rolled forward are valid learners who are progressing. It was also confirmed that monthly apprenticeship review meetings take place where withdrawals are considered and approved. The Interim Principal / CEO highlighted an issue with the data in table 3, overall apprenticeship rates. The data seemed to be incorrect for advanced manufacturing and a cross check of the data was requested. The Chair commented that whilst it had been a difficult year, the data presented showed that the College is continuing to make good progress. He was very much looking forward to achieving the final data set for 2019/20.

Aneela Ali left the meeting at 18.05.

Action: Updated table 1 to be circulated to members.

The report was noted.

CQ/11 Apprenticeship System & Process Improvements

The report was presented by Suzanne Slater – Assistant Principal.

The report was noted.

CQ/12 Key Performance Indicators

The report was presented by the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

Emma Moody left the meeting at 18.15.

It was reported that the table presented set out the previously agreed set of KPIs that had been regularly reported to the Teaching and Learning Committee. Information presented to the Committee is very data rich and members were asked to consider if the KPIs were appropriate and identify if there were any additional items to be included.

The Head of Quality Improvement suggested that the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality may wish to review the KPI for observation of teaching and learning given the plan to reduce the number of formal observations. This is a result of the expansion of the College's enhanced programme that has been previously discussed by the Committee. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality reminded members that it had been previously agreed to reduce the number of observations on staff who perform consistently well. These staff are now on the College's enhanced programme but the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality indicated that there would still be a way to measure performance. The Chair commented that he will be very interested to see the impact of this approach. A member stated that the KPIs seemed a very good place to start, but recognising that the Committee is now Curriculum and Quality Standards, asked whether there is a need for a different focus or a broader set of KPIs. The Chair asked that this be given some thought. The Interim Principal / CEO felt that the KPIs were absolutely appropriate from a quality view but thought there should be some additions around curriculum planning and contribution rates with an early assessment of this. He also suggested some softer KPIs around teaching and learning, digital literacy, AEB, apprenticeship budgets and performance against profile. In response to a question from the Chair the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality agreed that he would speak with the Clerk outside of the meeting to feedback points raised with a view to determining the intention of the KPIs and clarifying whether they will be reported to the Board.

Action: Clerk to discuss KPIs with the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality outside of the meeting. As part of this discussion the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality will look to determine the intention of the KPIs.

The report was noted.

CQ/13 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

CQ/14 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 24 February 2021 at 4.00pm.

The meeting closed at 18.25