

Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee
held on 15 March 2016
at the Sheepen Road Campus

Present

David Gask, in the Chair
Alison Andreas

Christopher Bridge
Bryn Morris

In Attendance

Caroline Fritz	Assistant Principal: Quality and Teaching and Learning Improvement
Hazel Paton	Clerk to the Governors
Jason Peters	Assistant Principal: Curriculum
Tom Toolan	Dean of Higher Education (item 8 only)
Jill Wognum	Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality

Apologies for absence were received from Will Chapman.

1. **Declaration of any conflicts of interest**

None.

2. **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016 (CIC/CQ/16/2/1) were received and confirmed. The Chair signed the minute book.

3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

None, other than on the Agenda.

4. **Ofsted Inspection February 2016**

The College has received and commented on the draft report and is waiting for the final report to be published. The Inspectors indicated the report would go through a moderation process but there is no reason to believe that there will be any significant changes to draft report. There was nothing in the draft report which did not emerge during the week, and which the College was not already aware of. Areas for improvement include student attendance and the way the College sets targets for students and supports them to achieve those targets. The areas for improvement were heavily outweighed by the strengths that were found.

The Inspectors observed 128 classes during the week. They visited the Learning Shops more than once, spent a full day at Clacton, and four Inspectors also spent a day at Braintree. The Inspectors met all four sub-contractors, visited the premises of two, and went to 20 different employers. They spent very little time in the base room.

The Inspection started well and when issues arose the staff responded rapidly to provide the evidence requested. The question of how much impact attendance was going to have on the College's results was discussed quite a lot during the week.

The two areas the College has been asked to focus on is attendance and English and maths. The Inspectors did recognise that the College's GCSE teaching was very high quality.

It was noted that moving the College from a Grade 3 to 2 under the new framework was not easy. The Corporation Chair thanked Governors for their contribution to the Inspection and recognised the efforts of all staff during the week of the Inspection. He had taken the opportunity to thank staff on behalf of the Board following the feedback session on the Friday.

The Assistant Principal: Curriculum updated Governors on the current performance of students as reported through Scorecard.

- Retention is currently close to target at 93.53% but the target (93%) is under threat. FEBOS (FE Board of Study) meetings are being held this week and Area Heads are indicating that there are students in the pipeline that are not going to stay. Area Heads are being asked to ensure that where a student is on the verge of leaving firm action is put in place to try and stop it. Governors asked why students are leaving at this stage of the year and were advised that there are a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is due to mental health or behavioural issues. In some cases the students are apprentices.
- Attendance is currently running at about 88% and is predicted to end the year at between 85%-87%. The poor attendance in maths and English is a sector wide problem.
- Functional Skills predicted success rate (currently 66%) will be slightly higher than last year and higher than the national average.
- The predicted success for GCSE English and maths (30%) would be a significant improvement on last year, but this figure is possibly inflated. Some over optimistic predicted grades have been seen in one area.
- The predicted grades (excluding English and maths) were noted. For courses without differentiated grades the College is doing very well against national averages. It was noted that about one third of students are on courses with differentiated grades. Due to curriculum changes all students will be on courses with differentiated grades by 2018.

It was reported that the most significant change at the FE Board of Study meetings is the knowledge and understanding that the Area Heads have of the data for their area.

It was reported that the FEBOS meetings do not look at apprenticeships. The College has tried to include apprentices in the past but they do not fit well in the FEBOS process. Separate Apprenticeship Board of Study meetings will be held after Easter looking at the same level of predicted outcomes and progress, but not through Scorecard. In 2014-15 73% of apprentices achieved the whole framework. This figure is predicted to be slightly up this year. The Inspector who had looked at apprenticeships had been very complimentary. The only negative comment was that the College needed to put more learners on to high level maths and English, particularly maths. It was recognised that the College puts learners on English and maths above their framework, for example if they are on a Level 1 framework the student is put on Level 2 English and maths, but in order to provide a skilled workforce, particularly in the STEM areas, the learners should be on high level (Level 3) maths. This will be looked at in the post inspection action plan.

Governors noted that at College level all areas of predicted success were green but asked if there were any areas of underperformance that they needed to be aware of. It was reported that out of the FEBOS meetings held to date (Construction and Engineering and Business and Services), Hairdressing is the most disappointing area. Staffing in this area has been a particular problem this year. English and maths figures are weaker in the more craft based areas. Another area of concern at this point, again due to staffing issues, is Health.

Governors asked if there was any correlation between the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes and were advised that the College now looks at the correlation between teaching and learning and attendance and exploring whether a change to way things are delivered and targets are set would encourage learners to come in more.

In the context that it appears to be inherently more difficult to achieve the same level of performance in the more craft based disciplines, Governors asked if there would be any advantage to having differentiated targets by discipline rather than setting targets at College level which by definition some areas will be a long way from achieving. The Principal said that they had moved away from that model and she did not think that there were any areas that were that far off the targets. The College has to move forward the targets as a whole if it is to be an outstanding college.

5. **Principal's Report**

CIC/CQ/16/2/3, Principal's Report March 2016, was received and noted. Governors asked if there was any more detail on the recent announcement by the Secretary of State for Education in relation to giving college staff access to secondary schools to give advice on professional and technical routes and apprenticeships. The Principal said that she would raise this at a meeting with Will Quince MP later than week.

6. **Update on In-Year Learner Progress**

This item was covered under item 4 above.

7. **Institutional Annual Review 2014-15**

CIC/CQ/16/2/4, Institutional Annual Review 2014-15, was received and presented by the Dean of Higher Education. It was reported that no action points had been rolled over from the previous year because they were not thought relevant to the new and emerging HE landscape.

The Dean of Higher Education ran through the risks and issues in section 2 of the report.

- Reductions to the Student Opportunity Fund have been proposed. As a widening participation College (66% of learners are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or have learning difficulties or disabilities) Colchester Institute should not see a significant reduction in this funding, but it could drop by as much as 20%-25%. Governors asked if this would impact on student numbers and were advised that the impact will be terms of the support that the College can provide. It may impact on retention, progression and employability, which are the areas where the Student Opportunity Fund is mainly used.
- Recruitment continues to be a risk. The College has not seen the 10% increase in recruitment based on internal progressions opportunities it had hoped for. There are some programmes which are not getting the same level of applicants as in previous years. Musical Theatre is down by 79 and other areas are down by about 30.
- Retention was just below target. Students leave a course for a range of reasons, predominantly ill health and financial reasons. A range of interventions have been implemented and the withdrawal level is below that of last year.
- There was a 1% increase (from 66% to 67%) in the achievement of good degrees. Overall achievement increased from 79% to 87%.
- 94% of graduates got a job within six months. The number in full time work dropped by 1% but the number in part time jobs increased, reflecting the economic climate. All of the College's programmes have employability at their core.
- Progression remains a challenge. Because of the number of withdrawals the college is unlikely to reach its target this year.
- The College failed to validate one programme last year. It is anticipated that this year's periodic reviews will go through. A number of new programmes are due to be validated this year.
- The rebranding of the HE Centre as the University Centre Colchester will help with marketing, as will the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection.

Governors asked about course fees and were advised that the current fee is £7950 but to give the College future flexibility it is proposed that this is increased in the Access Agreement to £9k for 2018-19. Students tend to be price insensitive, but employers are very price sensitive.

The Dean of Higher Education was asked for his view on applying a scorecard type regime to HE provision similar to that used in FE. The Dean responded that they were going to use ProMonitor and although they do not undertake in year prediction of outcomes in the way they do in FE using Scorecard, they do hold HE Progression Boards and Boards of Study which look at individual performance. What is missing is stretching the individual to achieve the best outcome possible.

It was reported that work has started on the Curriculum for 2020 so that it is in the prospectus by 2018-19 and ready to run. Four new programmes are being developed this year and higher apprenticeships are being developed.

Tom Toolan was thanked for his presentation.

8. Code of Practice – Freedom of Speech

CIC/CQ/16/2/5, Code of Practice – Freedom of Speech, was received, considered and approved for recommendation to the Board.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 14 June 2016 at 4.30 pm

10. Any Other Urgent Business

There were no items