

Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee
held on 21st March 2017
at the Sheepen Road Campus

Present

David Gask, in the Chair
Alison Andreas
Christopher Bridge

David Gronland
Bryn Morris

In Attendance

Caroline Fritz	Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching and Learning
Hazel Paton	Clerk to the Governors
Jason Peters	Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance
Jill Wognum	Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality

Apologies for absence were received from Tyler-James Collinson.

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

None.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2016 (CIC/CQ/17/1/1) were received and confirmed. The Chair signed the minute book.

3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

None, other than on the agenda.

4. **Performance Measures 2015-16**

CIC/CQ/17/1/3, Performance Tables Summary 2016 (published Jan/Mar 2017), was received and considered. It was noted that the data only covers Level 3 programmes (about one third of the Colleges students); the Government have said that Level 2 programmes will be included from next year. The Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance reported that the results were very similar to the previous year and represented a standstill rather than growth position. This was disappointing given that the in-year predictions at the time of the Ofsted inspection indicated a better set of outcome than was realised. The outcomes were discussed.

The College's average grade for Level 3 applied (all those subjects that can be delivered in a general purpose classroom) was Merit+ compared to the national average of Distinction. It was reported that the top 50% of students would be expected to get a Distinction. The average grade is turned into a points score and value added score (how a student should have progressed from their average GCSE score to final grade); the College is below the national average. The College's value added score was a minus and is not strong enough. The value added score for the majority of colleges in the Eastern region was a minus score, as was the national average for FE colleges (-28).

The College's results for Level 3 technical (programmes with a much greater practical element) were better. The College also did well on the completion and attainment measure compared to the regional FE colleges. The scores for maths and English improved but there is still work to do. The College is doing well on retention and is ahead of the national average.

It was noted that the destination data is for two years previously (2014). This data is based on data matching using unique learner numbers and does not fit with the College's understanding of the student population and local NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) data. The Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance has contacted the DfE to establish which group of students this data is based on.

Governors asked:

- what conclusions could be drawn and were advised that this data is weaker than performance was predicted to be. Level 3 Technical and Applied results were very similar to the previous year; English and maths has improved.
- if the College had a feel for how Levels 1 and 2 performed. It was reported that many Level 1 and 2 qualifications are not graded but are just pass/fail, making it very difficult to measure value added.
- if there was anything in the rules of assessment within the control of the College which is disadvantaging or holding back our learners in comparison to their peers at other institutions, for example are staff using the breadth of marks available. It was reported that with one exception all area heads are using the full range of marks; one Area Head is difficult to shift at the moment. There is a certain amount of external moderation, and increasingly more elements of these courses are being externally assessed.
- if anything could be done through moderation processes or other mechanisms within the College to bring to bear a more challenging mind-set to help improve performance. The Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching and Learning responded that she had seen the first draft of a report undertaken as a result of a quality audit of assessment, specifically how assessment feeds into student actions to improve work going forward, and there does appear to be a lack of that culture which enables students to use the feedback given to them and take it a stage further at the next assessment. This is not universal, but is a recurring theme.

Governors observed that in terms of the benchmarks the College's targets should be much higher and our aspirations should be at the upper quartile. It was reported that the data is not broken down by quartiles.

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

The Vice Principal: Curriculum, Delivery and Performance updated the Committee on in year learner progress (whole College level) using the live data in Scorecard. The data had been reviewed with Area Heads the previous week.

The biggest risk is functional skills. The national averages for functional skills are not available yet, but data based on 280 colleges suggests that the new national average is a pass rate of 40%; this is close to the predicted College performance. One quarter of all entrants are for functional skills (2300 entrants out of a College total of 8100). It is the scale of students doing functional skills which pulls down success rates (Functional skills are pass/fail). Higher achievement rates are expected at GCSE which are graded. Attendance is also an issue, with students not turning up for the examination. Non-attendance is not taken into account in the in-year predications. Governors asked if the system allowed for a discount factor for turn-up rates. It was reported that the College only has one year of data to look at, but this could be looked at in the future. The College is doing a lot of work with functional skills teams, who are now meeting as a group, and putting on extra sessions.

The other big risk at this time is retention which is at 93.76% compared to 93.53% at the same time last year. Last year 5% of entrants (412) left between March and the end of the year. A student will usually have more than one entry (vocational qualification, English and/or maths), making it difficult to convert this into student numbers, but of these 412 entrants, possibly 170 to 200 students left after March last year. A huge emphasis was placed on this at the Area Outcome Review meetings

the previous week and the feedback was consistent that there would not be the same level of withdrawals this year because unlike last year areas are not keeping on roll students who are not attending.

6. **Observation of Teaching and Learning 2016-17**

CIC/CQ/17/1/2, Observation of Teaching and Learning 2016-17 March update, was received and considered. The Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching and Learning reported that an analysis had been carried out against some of the other sources of data that reflects the quality of teaching and learning (overall teaching and learning satisfaction, attendance, and previous year vocational achievements). Although not many conclusions could be drawn it was useful to compare the outcomes of other satisfaction measures. Value added data will probably be looked at at the end of this year (for those areas where value added is measured) as this can be a measure of teaching or learning. Until now, the teaching and learning data has looked at a fixed point (when the observation took place) and subsequent development and what the quality might be now has not been measured. The College's value added might improve because of the outcomes of an observation and subsequent development that might have taken place.

Governors noted that the embedding of maths in Art and Design is poor compared to other areas of the College and asked what was being done to address this. It was reported that this was discussed at Area Outcomes meetings and how the use of numerical language in particular helps students with their GCSEs and Functional Skills. Some of it is to do with the curriculum and there may be areas where the expectations may not be as achievable; for example there are some aspects of music theory where it might be more difficult to embed maths. Also, just because observers are not seeing as much maths development in the classes it does not necessarily mean that the students do not have these skills.

Governors asked for the Management's view on the data and what actions had been introduced to move things forward. It was reported that the data is not representative of the day to day experience of the students in the classroom. The majority of the observations this academic year were carried out by the Area Heads and in the outcomes meetings they suggested that there was more dull teaching than this data would suggest. The College is considering more of a risk based process of observations next year with some areas subjected to central observation and a greater degree of scrutiny. Governors asked if Area Heads were conflicted and less objective. It was reported that a lot of the staff liked the fact that observations have been done in the areas, and that subject specialists have gone in and observed them, but it may not be as rigorous as it needs to be. The process will be reviewed at the end of the academic year.

Governors asked for future reports to this Committee to include more commentary expressing a view on the analysis of the data. The Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching and Learning was thanked for her input.

7. **Quality Improvement Plan and Update on Progress**

CIC/CQ/17/1/4, Quality Improvement Plan 2016-2018, update on progress February 2017, was received and considered. The Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching and Learning reported that the purpose of the document was to provide a judgement on which actions that are being taking are having a positive effect. There is an opportunity to further development the document at this mid-year point, and look again at some of the actions in the light of the discussions with Area Heads. Where progress can be measured, comparative data has been included, for example actions to improve value added. The recent ALPS report tells us the College ALP score is 5. It was reported that this is an area of focus and the work that is going on suggests that the College could be successful in terms of the target for value added (an ALPS Value added score of 4). Where actions relate to outcomes it is more difficult to measure. There has been an improvement in the way the

functional skills group work, and they now meet regularly with the Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance.

Governors asked if the resources were being targeted in the most effective way to implement the plan. It was reported that sometimes the resources, such as CPD, are not fully engaged with or taken up. Some of the data suggested that there is still some work to be done in terms of understanding what it means to take a student up a grade. A lot of work is being done with managers to develop the skills set to drive this activity. It was acknowledged that managers have a broad range of responsibilities, and the recent focus on finance and commercial issues means that they may not have given this the focus it needs. This needs to be addressed going forward.

8. Teaching and Learning Assessment Survey 2016-17

CIC/CQ/17/1/5, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Survey 2016-17, was received and considered. It was reported that areas which have been a focus of targeted work (stretch and challenge and improved feedback) showed improved or equal ratings to the previous year, but other areas did not do so well. Certain questions relating to English and maths are RAG rated red. These correspond to the areas with poorer functional skills results. The College is working with those Area Heads to address the concerns the students have, which include not knowing what their target is or how well they are doing in English and maths.

9. Institutional Annual Review of Courses (ARC) 2015-16

CIC/CQ/17/1/6, Institutional Annual Review of Courses reflecting on the academic year 2015-16, was received and presented by Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality. It was reported that there was an improvement in achievement rates and good degrees in certain areas, but there was some variability and some areas declined. The focus going forward is to make sure there is greater consistency. Student destination data remains strong, with students going into employment or further study. There was an improvement in retention and teaching, learning and assessment is strong and fairly consistent. The National Student Survey results were slightly above the benchmarks for FE/HE colleges.

Recruitment remains a challenge and is impacting most of the College's provision. A lot of work is being done on external marketing and work started last year to try and improve internal progression targets which had very little impact. There is increased activity this year, with a targeted plan in place for Level 3 course tutors and for HE Heads of School to work with FE areas. This has resulted in some improvement in applications from internal courses but is still not having a huge impact. More work needs to be done to change the culture and ensure that FE staff see the value of endorsing the HE provision offered by the College. In some areas there is still a view that students will have a better opportunity if they go somewhere else. It is a very competitive market and the College needs to get its offer right and market it to the right people. There is a lot of reflection in terms of the recruitment strategy in the report. Governors asked about progression rates for students on foundation degrees. It was reported that the progression rate is quite high, but these programmes are not as popular as they were 2-3 years ago and there are not a huge number of students on foundation degrees.

The action plan was considered. The first four areas were carried over from the previous year including internal progression, timing of assessment feedback (an area of concern in the National Student Survey), and to continue to develop programmes going forward. New objectives for this year include looking at a more stepped approach to improving recruitment growth; reducing variability between programme areas; and focussing more heavily on implementing the College's research strategy. The College's HE Strategy 2014-17 is currently being rewritten and will be underpinned by the areas for focus identified in the action plan.

Governors asked if the Cert Ed programme could be used to train College staff using the apprenticeship levy. It was reported that there is a Level 4 higher apprenticeship which will be offered to Cert Ed candidates, which is proving to be very popular. The College also offers a PGCE which will continue to be a taught degree.

10. **Key Performance Indicators 2016-17 (HE)**

CIC/CQ/17/1/7, Key Performance Indicators 2016-17 (HE), was received and considered. This item had been referred from the Resources Committee, which had questioned the target for Student Satisfaction – National Student Survey (NSS), which had been set lower than the 2015-16 actual performance. It was reported that the 2016-17 target (75%) had been set before the actual performance 2015-16 (79%) was known. The College did not wish to change the target in year but would like to be more aspirational for 2017-18. It was reported that the NSS does not provide a wealth of information because the cohorts are small (there has to be 10 final year students for a result to be published) but it is still important and we need to ensure we get the best results we can. It is one of the metrics used in the Teaching Excellence Framework.

11. **Annual Report to the Board**

CIC/CQ/17/1/8, Curriculum and Quality Committee annual report the Board 2015-16, was received, considered and approved for submission to the Board.

12. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday, 27th June 2017 at 4.30pm.

13. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There were no items.