

Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee
held on 27th June 2017
at the Sheepen Road Campus

Present

David Gask, in the Chair
Alison Andreas

David Gronland
Bryn Morris

In Attendance

Maeve Borges	Vice Principal: Student Services and Support
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 Christopher Bridge and Tyler-James Collinson.

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

Bryn Morris declared an interest in items 7.1, Institutional Review, and 7.2, Institutional Validation University of Huddersfield.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2017 (CIC/CQ/17/2/1) were received and confirmed. The Chair signed the minute book.

3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

None, other than on the agenda.

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

The Vice Principal: Curriculum, Delivery and Performance updated the Committee on in year learner progress. It was reported that since the last meeting of this Committee the national achievement tables had been published, and it was a disappointing comparative picture for Colchester Institute.

The Vice Principal presented the achievement data (2015-16) for the College, which was unchanged from that presented in the autumn term. It was anticipated that the national averages might drop due to the pressure of the condition of funding for English and maths, but other institutions had done better than Colchester Institute in these subjects. Governors asked why the College had not done as well. It was reported that this was largely due to English and maths results.

The Vice Principal presented the latest update from Area Heads for each subject area for main qualifications in the last academic year. It was noted that Health and Social Care was not doing as well as other areas and predicted outcomes had declined since the last review five weeks earlier. This is being pursued with the Director of Faculty and Area Head. Music had improved by five points compared to the previous year, but should still be much better. Art had also improved. Hospitality had declined slightly, but was still the best area in the College for student outcomes.

Governors asked if there were any sub level benchmarks to compare these results against and were advised that national benchmarks by learning aim were available, and the Quality Office was currently undertaking that work.

It was noted that Accounting had been impacted by a year of problems with the Level 4 AAT and the College is in process of drafting a strong letter of complaint to AAT.

It was noted that Business, Computing, and ESOL were improving. It was reported that a lot of work had gone into Public Services and Sport this year which it is hoped will result in improvements. Performance in Construction and Engineering is mixed. Brickwork is looking low, but Electrical and Plumbing are improving. Governors asked why outcomes in brickwork were down and were advised that it was a mixture of retention and performance. Retention in this area is very good but a number of the students that are still with the College are predicted to fail.

In response to a question, it was reported that the predicted outcomes for Health and Social Care are the biggest surprise; results were expected to be 10% higher at the previous review five weeks earlier. This is being followed up to identify the reasons. It was noted that this area has an acting Head of Area who has not been previously involved in the prediction process to the same degree as other area heads.

It was reported that retention rates in the three faculties is very similar (about 90%), but the gap between retention and predicted achievement on main qualifications is lower in Construction and Engineering than in the other two faculties. The possible reasons for this were discussed. It was reported that learners on lower level programmes are attending less, which is an issue of engagement. This is an area which is hard to recruit to, and which has the most teaching staff vacancies. As a consequence both the Area Head and Assistant Area Head have had heavy teaching loads this year. The Director of Faculty is reviewing the curriculum for next year. As an example, every student one Level 1 brick is on a Diploma and maybe some of those students should be doing smaller qualifications such as an Award and employability skills.

Maths and English was discussed. It was noted that the predicted pass rate for Functional Skills was 40% (1793 entrants). This year, every student who joined the College with a GCSE Grade D, re-sat the GCSE. Students with a Grade E were put on Level 2 Functional Skills, which is quite a stretch, and far too many are not achieving a pass. Next year, students who would previously have been put on a Level 2 Functional Skills will do the GCSE. This change is not to the detriment of students and it is hoped that as well as the students improving their GCSE grade, the College's achievement rate will also improve as, unlike Functional Skills which are either Pass or Fail, a GCSE grade 1 to 9 is a positive outcome. Had the change been introduced this year, the whole College achievement rate would have gone up by 5%. The main priority is to get the students to attend their GCSE examinations. Last year attendance was 70%; this year the College got attendance up to 80%, but has to get attendance up to 90%. It was noted that two to three years ago a number of colleges took the decision to move to iGCSEs, which are easier to get better grades in. For various reasons the College did not make that change, and were effectively penalised. The College considered making the switch last year, but did not want re-sit students to be disadvantaged. Governors asked if the College was still considering moving to iGCSEs and were advised that it is no longer an option and that everybody has to do the new qualifications.

5. **Quality Assurance and Improvement 2017-18 (Study Programmes)**

CIC/CQ/17/2/9, quality assurance and improvement 2017-18, was received and considered. The Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance, reported that the College needs to spend less time looking at recruitment and finances next year and focus instead on quality and teaching and learning. The key areas of focus will be:

- Increasing the number of passes in literacy and numeracy

- Improving attendance at GCSE examinations. The site will be closed for the morning of the examinations so that the whole College resources can be put into getting the students in and incentivised.
- Learning walks – these were good in the build up to Ofsted but were not able to be sustained. These will be undertaken by Area Heads/Assistant Area Heads and the Senior Leadership Team.
- Lesson observations – there will be an increased focus on Directors of Faculty talking about the data with their staff.
- Talking to Area Heads about training needs.

A Governor observed that it looked like more of the same rather than a new path. The Vice Principal responded that it is a series of actions that were getting better results, but the College has not been as rigorous this year due to the focus on financial health. Some structural issues are being discussed, and In-sted (going out to areas in a much more systematic way similar to Ofsted) is a new initiative. Governors asked if the College had the resources and capacity to sustain this renewed focus throughout the year. It was reported that there were a number of factors this year which took a lot of management time and prevented the level of quality monitoring that the Executive would have liked to have done. This included being without a Dean of Higher Education for most of the year, requiring quality colleagues to focus on HE; the focus on apprenticeships and the changes that have taken place; and the Area Review.

Governors asked what measures would be put in place next year to enable the Executive and Governors to have confidence that the actions were starting to work. It was reported that supporting Area Heads would be fundamental to this. There will be a greater focus on what is happening at programme level than in previous years. There will be regular communication with programme level leads and making those people accountable. A large programme of management development is planned. Governors asked for a follow up report next term.

Governors asked if the right systems were in place to ensure that all curriculum areas have a consistently rigorous focus of attendance. It was reported that there was a mixed model. About one third of areas have Progress and Destinations Tutors (PDTs). PDTs have an important pastoral role and their responsibilities include contacting students and group tutorials. This year was an initial pilot year and has not been consistently a success. PDTs came in on temporary contracts and retention was only about 50%. It has been agreed to move PDTs into a more permanent role and the College is currently recruiting again.

Governors asked how quickly students are contacted if they do not attend. It was reported that this is currently under review. Over the summer the College wants to relaunch a number of things including the expectations launched three years ago. The absence reporting process and attendance policy, which magnifies the number of non-attendances, are also under review. The PDTs role is to encourage attendance and from 9.15am they are making contact with students who are absent. Governors asked if there were actions outside the management chain which could be taken. It was reported that the University of Essex uses student peer mentors to good effect and it was suggested that recruiting learners to build peer pressure into the College's structures in a systemic way may help, particularly in areas such as attendance at examinations.

It was reported that the College was trying to improve timetabling so that students do not come in just to do English and maths, because they often do not attend when this is the case. The College is also looking at making better use of phones so that students have their timetable on their phone. Governors asked about use of text reminders and were advised that it is expensive (4p for every text). The College's EBS software management system does have the facility to automatically generate a text when an absence is recorded, but there a number of negatives to this facility so the College will not be using it, but is looking to develop an in-house system. The message about high expectations and attendance needs to be instigated from day one, commencing with the welcome days being held in week commencing 3rd July.

The Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality provided an update on apprentices. It was reported that last year national benchmarks dropped dramatically due to the way students who took a break from learning were recorded. The regulations were changed and the students were counted as a withdrawal if they did not return after a year. This impacted all providers. Colchester Institute's success rate dropped from about 72% to 69% compared to the national average for apprenticeships of 67%. It is expected that the national achievement rate will go back up this year. The College's success rate should be around 76% this year, which is a good improvement on last year. Retention for new starts is 95% this year. The College would like to get that higher.

6. **Principal's Report June 2017**

CIC/CQ/17/2/2, Principal's Report June 2017, was received and noted.

7. **Annual Provider Review 2016**

CIC/CQ/17/2/3, Annual Provider Review 2016, was received and considered. It was reported that a new quality regime for HE provision came into effect last year and these matrices provided the College's performance data over the three year period 2012-13 to 2014-15. It was noted that the College was ahead of the national benchmarks in terms of employment data destinations and satisfaction data but slightly behind on retention data, mainly due to a dip in retention in 2013-14. There were no major issues around the matrices which were quite close to the national benchmarks. It was reported that the matrices formed part of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) measures which were published the previous week. Colchester Institute was awarded silver, which is where it thought it would be when it put in its submission to TEF. This award is for the next three years.

The next part of the Annual Provider Review will be a visit by two representatives from HEFCE (scheduled for week commencing 2nd July) to talk about the College's quality processes and systems. A report will be produced following the visit, which will be brought to this Committee.

Another change under the Annual Provider Review will be the replacement of the QAA reviews which took place every five to six years. HEFCE are working out the details for the reviews, which will be risk based.

Governors are now required to give an assurance statement in December each year that they are satisfied with the quality of HE provision. Instead of waiting for the Institutional Review document, which is produced in February, headline information will be brought to the autumn meeting of this Committee so the Board is in a position to make judgements and give full assurance.

It was reported that what the Government tried to do with the TEF is to develop a set of specific benchmarks which indicate what should reasonably be expected of that provider given the type of students that they have. It is trying to give a value added measure across these three areas and the College should be focussing on making sure its performance is ahead of benchmark.

8. **Validation Reports**

8.1. **Institutional Review**

CIC/CQ/17/2/4, report of the Institutional Review of Colchester Institute on 22nd March 2017, was received and noted. It was reported that it was a successful revalidation, subject to one condition (to update the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy) and some recommendations, which are underway in liaison with the University of Essex.

8.2. **Teacher Training Provision – Institutional Validation University of Huddersfield**

CIC/CQ/17/2/5, report of an Institutional Validation by the University of Huddersfield, was received and noted. It was reported that in agreement with the University of Essex, the College had planned to move the validation of its teacher training provision to another provider because the University of Essex does not have its own education department. The College looked at a number of different providers and decided to go for validation with the University of Huddersfield Consortium, which is a Centre of Excellence and can provide access to the latest research and additional things which the College can benefit from in teaching education going forward. It was a successful validation with lots of commendations and two conditions in relation to making sure the College's provision can be mapped to the University of Huddersfield's processes and systems, which is underway. Current students will remain on the University of Essex award.

8.3. **BA Games Design – programme validation**

CIC/CQ/17/2/6, Validation report for the BA Games Design, was received and noted. It was reported that it was a successful validation, subject to ratification and meeting the conditions. One condition related to revisiting the course title. Another condition was around staffing because at the time of the validation there was no full time core member of staff to be Course Leader. That role has now been advertised and will be in post in time for recruitment to the programme. Additional marketing is taking place this week to attract progressing students. Governors asked if there were a lot of providers locally and were advised that this programme is around 3D animation and is complementary to what is being offered elsewhere.

9. **Students' Union**

9.1. **Annual report to the Board 2016-17**

CIC/CQ/17/2/7, Students' Union (SU) Annual Report to the Board 2016-17, was received and noted. The report provided a summary of what had happened over the last academic year and the recommendation for 2017-18. It was noted that the SU is keen to focus on getting more student feedback and improving learner voice activities. There was not much HE involvement during the year and there were no candidates for the role of HE representative in the recent SU elections. A further election will be held at the start of the autumn term.

Governors asked about the SU's role in turning Colchester Institute into a place that students want to come to. It was reported that one of the key activities is around Freshers, which is held to fit in with when HE students start. This is a little late for the engagement of FE students and the College needs to do something within the first week for FE students, when they still want to engage, and there is a role for the Student's Union in that.

The Vice Principal: Student Services and Support reported that every year there are a good number of people who are interested in becoming student representatives but are either not given an opportunity to have a voice within their area to feedback or they drop out. A focus for next year is further development and engagement of curriculum staff in actively supporting the representatives.

Governors noted that the budget was not large in terms of the College's turnover and asked if this was an issue. It was reported that the Union is fairly small and the budget was not thought to be an issue.

A Governor reported that the Students' Union at the University put on a series of things during the examination period that created a buzz and which became another reason why students might want to be on campus during examinations. Given the importance of people attending examinations the College might want to put a small amount of money into the Students' Union to run something

during a particular point in the year, and use the students to help with College objectives. For example, Tweeting top examination techniques. The Management welcomed the suggestions.

9.2. **Students' Union Constitution**

CIC/CQ/17/2/8, Students' Union Constitution, was received, considered and approved for recommendation to the Board. The most significant change was the addition of a facility to remove somebody from office.

10. **Safeguarding Policy**

The Committee received and noted CIC/CQ/17/2/10, summary of changes to Safeguarding Policy, and approved for recommendation to the Board CIC/17/2/11, Safeguarding Policy.

A comprehensive review of the Policy had been carried out. The Guidelines for good practice, which was previously a standalone document, had been renamed Protocol for staff and incorporated as an appendix in the policy. The other changes were around scope and terminology, drawing on good practice documents and reflecting legislative changes. The section on relationships between staff and students is now much more explicit.

Governors asked how many safeguarding officers there were across the College and were advised about eight. The majority of the safeguarding officers are term time only staff.

11. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday, 28th November 2017 at 4.30pm.

12. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There were no items.

PART II – these minutes are not confidential but the supporting papers are confidential

13. **Part II Minutes of Meeting held on 21st March 2017**

CIC/CQ/17/2/12, Part II minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2017, were received and confirmed. The Chair signed the Minute book.

14. **Safeguarding**

14.1. **Safeguarding Report**

CIC/CQ/17/2/13, Student Safeguarding Report June 2017, was received and noted. The College's response and actions in response to the national threat levels was noted.

14.2. **Single Central Record (SCR) Report**

CIC/CQ/17/2/14, SCR Report 02 June 2017, was received and noted. It was reported that two face to face safeguarding sessions would be held later that week as part of the summer staff development programme. This will provide an opportunity to look at the new policy, which has some quite significant changes that will impact on staff.