

Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee
held on 28th November 2017
at the Sheepen Road Campus

Present

Christopher Bridge, in the Chair

Alison Andreas

Martin Fordham

Christopher-Alan Churley

David Gronland

In Attendance

Caroline Fritz Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching and Learning [attended from item 11]

Jason Peters Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance

Jill Wognum Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality

Linda Waylen PA to Principal (on behalf of Hazel Paton)

Part I

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from David Gask and Bryn Morris.

2. Declaration of any conflicts of interest

None.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27st June 2017 (CIC/CQ/17/3/1) were received and confirmed. The Chair signed the minute book.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

None, other than on the agenda.

5. Update on In-Year Learner Progress (Scorecard)

The Vice Principal: Curriculum, Delivery and Performance updated the Committee on in year learner progress. He confirmed the November predictions did not provide a complete picture. In some areas staff shortage meant that these were not all complete, but the other issue is that it is a very early point in the year and historically we have learned that student retention and withdrawal is very low in this first term. The Scorecard data shows current achievement at 98.6% against a college target of 88% and a predicted achievement rate of 92.6%.

The Vice Principal confirmed meetings had taken place with FE Area Heads to set realistic improvement strategies whilst reviewing last year's data.

6. Student Enrolments 2017

The Principal provided an update on enrolments year to date for:

FE - recruitment is currently 4167 against original 16-18 full-time target, prior to the additional 97 for sub-contract with VLUK. This means that we are around 100 students short of our full target number. Recruitment has been fairly strong, given the demographic dip that we are still in.

The Executive Vice Principal Curriculum, Planning and Quality provided an update for:

HE – the college had achieved financial and number targets over 3 years. In order to achieve full number the college will require more sub-contract numbers with VLUK and OLC. The Executive Vice Principal confirmed the part-time numbers were down by 20.

WBL and Adults – there is a different profile this year. The college took a deliberate decision to alter the balance of adult provision towards skills priority areas which will pave the way for growth in key sectors but in the short term has reduced income by around £100,000, but has improved efficiencies. There are good numbers of adults on full-time programmes, in fact, more than anticipated. Achievement of this particular target is particularly dependent on recruitment into the Learning Shops. Noted a shortfall of 19+ adults in Construction. The college has linked up with the Military Corrective Training Centre again and is providing funding for training for the Building Heroes project, for which we hope to commence a cohort in Braintree. At this stage there is nothing to suggest that we will need to seek additional funding, but we have an arrangement in place with Essex County Council should this be necessary.

Apprenticeships – 387 starts as of last week against a total of 873 for 2017-18, however numbers are not a good indicator of income because of the variable funding amounts for different standards and frameworks. The Executive Vice Principal confirmed numbers slowing down for many reasons and the college was trying to target the higher cost apprentices. The financial income is in arrears due to funding mechanisms and paperwork.

The college is currently bucking the national trend. However, concerns were expressed about companies locally and nationally not signing up to Apprenticeships and the availability of suitable students. It was noted that a huge campaign in June and July had assisted with recruitment.

7. HEFCE Visit – Letter following meeting on 21 June 2017

CIC/CQ/17/3/2 was received and noted. The Executive Vice Principal Curriculum, Planning and Quality provided an update of the findings and recommendations of the Annual Quality Visit in June 2017 where HEFEC representatives discussed the college's quality controls. The college received a positive letter regarding the outcomes of this visit and there were no concerns raised.

The Executive Vice Principal confirmed this visit forms part of the Quality cycle and is combined with other quality measures, including a statement from the Governing Body in December confirming satisfaction of quality. The Governors agreed the letter to be a useful summary of HE quality.

Partnership Agreement with University of Essex and Colchester Institute

The Governors requested an update on the partnership agreement with the University of Essex.

The Principal confirmed discussions with the University of Essex had taken place. Under the current partnership agreement Colchester Institute UCC students will be able to enrol up to and including September 2019, meaning that there will be students graduating up until 2022 with University of Essex degrees.

The Chairman agreed that the College Executive, on behalf of Colchester Institute, should look at the options of (i) seeking an alternative partner and (ii) gaining Degree Awarding Powers (DAP) ourselves. It was noted that to become a self-awarding body might be easier, but this is not a quick or straightforward process. It was agreed to seek information and report back to the Governors with proposals for consideration at the Spring meeting.

It was noted the Principal and the Executive Vice Principal Curriculum, Planning and Quality have scheduled a meeting with University of Essex representatives on 8 December 2017 to discuss aspects of the separation.

8. Teaching and Learning Strategy

CIC/CQ/17/3/3 was received and considered. The Executive Vice Principal Curriculum, Planning and Quality confirmed the Strategy had been re-written in line with the revised College Strategic Plan – Better Careers Begin Here.

Within the Strategy, key developments will include innovative approaches and the use of digital resources. The Executive Vice Principal confirmed the Strategy reflects the actions the college are following and re-stating principles. It was agreed to recommend to the Board for approval.

9. Principal's Report – November 2017

CIC/CQ/17/3/4, Principal's Report November 2017, was received and noted.

The Principal agreed to share notes from the AoC Annual Conference and will append to the December edition of the Principal's Report. Key headlines from the AoC Conference included Budget, Apprenticeships, Skills ahead of Brexit, key role of colleges for Media, English and maths, college reputation and skills reputation including T Skills.

10. Performance against High Level Targets 2016-17 and Targets 2017-18 (incl Success Rates 2016-17)

CIC/CQ/17/3/5 was received and noted.

The Principal noted there were some disappointing results under student outcomes. Although the targets were ambitious and in many areas improvement had been seen, there were some areas containing significant student volumes areas where results were nowhere near good enough, resulting in an overall reduction of one point in vocational qualifications achievement rates. Functional Skills were particularly disappointing, falling well below the national average as currently published. As there were so many entries for functional skills (c2500) this impacted overall success. GCSE pass rates and high grades were improved on the previous year, but still not quite at national average.

The Chair asked the Student Governor for feedback on student attitudes to English and maths. It was suggested that the mindset of students to continuing to study formal qualifications in maths and English was a hurdle to jump rather than seen as an opportunity. It was noted there were challenges with students not engaging with English and maths and that this is evident in attendance at classes and at examinations.

The Vice Principal Curriculum Delivery and Performance reaffirmed the need to get a message to students regarding aspirations and value much earlier in the academic year. Other colleges have done better, and we must improve in this area. It was noted that the nature of the College's offer – with no A level provision does reduce the average point score on entry of our students, meaning that we have a larger percentage of students requiring English and maths resit opportunities and therefore more of our exam results overall are in these subjects. It was also noted that approximately 400 students progressed to HE in autumn 2017.

11. Draft SAR 2016-17 including QIP 2017-18

The Committee received and noted paper CIC/CQ/17/3/6.

The Principal reported that given the outcomes discussed earlier it was important the SAR grading was honest and accurate. Following consultation and noting that Study Programme qualifications including maths and English remain statistically very significant, it was agreed to grade Outcomes for Learners as 'requiring improvement'. After further discussion the committee endorsed all SAR gradings including Leadership and Management. Grades reflect college data on qualifications, which reflects 15 improved areas and 14 which have not improved – including three or four areas with significant numbers of students. Governors had previously been made aware of this, and expressed disappointment and concern that rapid remedial actions must be taken.

It was reported by the Principal that there had perhaps been too great a focus on financial and commercial aspects last year in light of the notice of concern for financial health. It was noted that there was a significant upward movement in Engineering within one year but not the same in Construction. Two areas with significant staffing problems also saw a decline in outcomes.

It was recommended to accept the SAR Report and pass to the Board for final approval. However, it was agreed to acknowledge what needs to be done and review trends after Christmas. It was noted that the focus of the Staff Training Day on 2 January 2018 would be for areas to review the SAR and ensure that appropriate actions were underway. It was noted that many actions to address these grades are already in place to mitigate risk.

The Chair requested a progress report at the next meeting and requested the Committee to endorse the document and forward to the Board for approval.

12. Update on One Year Strategic Plan Action Plan

A paper was presented outlining progress on the plan, against each of the actions under the first two priorities which cover teaching and learning excellence and curriculum development. Although most activities are underway, it is early in the year and governors asked for further feedback later in the year.

13. Compliments and Complaints 2016-17

CIC/CQ/17/3/8 was received. The Assistant Principal Quality Teaching and Learning confirmed the complexity of the issues reported is constantly changing. Many items recorded tend to be longer term issues due to external influences.

14. Teaching and Learning Observations 2017-18

Teaching and Learning Observations will be carried out in the Spring Term and an update will be provided by the Assistant Principal Quality Teaching and Learning at a future meeting.

It was confirmed by the Assistant Principal that Learning Walks are taking place on a regular basis. A good standard of teaching was noted on many occasions. The Chair requested feedback to Governors following the learning walks.

15. Learner Surveys

15.1 NSS analysis 2016/17

Paper CIC/CQ/17/3/9 was received. This represents only the views of a minority of final year students. It was noted from the analysis that organisation and management, along with learning resources, had been identified as an issue. The Executive Vice Principal Curriculum, Planning and Quality confirmed learning resources had been identified as an issue by student feedback earlier in the year. From the student feedback it was identified that more work may need to be done with students around perceptions. The Executive Vice Principal emphasised the challenges of not having a Dean in post during last year and that it was positive that a new Dean is now in post to lead on addressing these issues

15.2 Induction Survey

Paper CIC/CQ/17/3/10 was received and noted. The areas scored in red on the survey are around student services and it was apparent that second year groups were recording feedback measuring against past induction. It was confirmed by the Assistant Principal Quality Teaching and Learning that results had been discussed and action had already taken in the recent Area Outcome Review meetings.

16. HEFCE Annual Quality Assessment Report

The Executive Vice Principal Curriculum, Planning and Quality confirmed HEFCE, the Assuring Body, are satisfied with the Quality Assessment Report. In the past the only document produced was the Self-Evaluation Report in February. This quality assessment process provides a comprehensive report of all the quality mechanisms that exist in the college HE provision. The Executive Vice Principal confirmed this is a useful document and the results were good.

It was noted University Centre Colchester had recently been inspected and received the TEF silver award. The Committee accepted the Quality Assessment Report and authorised the Principal to sign it on behalf of the Board.

17. Link Governor Scheme

17.1 Link Visits 2017

Link Governor Reports were received for:

CIC/CQ/17/3/12 - Apprenticeships (David Gronland)

CIC/CQ/17/3/13 - Braintree Arts (David Gask)

CIC/CQ/17/3/14 - Business (Karen Tarling)

CIC/CQ/17/3/15 - CIBS (Mark Davies)

CIC/CQ/17/3/16 - Plumbing and Associated Trades (Richard Wainwright)

CIC/CQ/17/3/17 - Trowel Operations (David Kerridge)

It was noted that Governors visiting curriculum areas is advantageous. It was agreed there is merit in Governors visiting curriculum areas of the college as it allows Governors to see students in the learning environment.

Discussion took place and a suggestion of looking at the option of a visiting day for Governors took place twice a year. It was agreed to seek feedback from Area Heads initially before changing the current system. It was agreed by the Principal that the college did not want to lose the Link Scheme process but have better control on feedback. The Chair agreed to raise the matter with Board members.

18. Date of Next Meeting - Tuesday, 20th March 2018 at 4.30pm.

19. Any Other Urgent Business -There were no items.

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

20. Safeguarding

20.1. Safeguarding Report

CIC/CQ/17/3/18, Student Safeguarding Report November 2017, was received. It was noted that the college was dealing with increasing volumes and severity of safeguarding issues. A high proportion of cases are mental health issues. The reason for this may be due to more openness and recording of safeguarding incidents. The Chair was pleased to see the resources are being used and confident that the necessary policies and procedures are in place.

The Principal confirmed the Board need to be aware of the impact on staff dealing with safeguarding issues and had received a request for an additional member of staff to cover in Welfare and Counselling. The system needs to allow for referral for specialist staff. The Chair noted it is a growing problem and this will need to be monitored. Noted a lot of time is spent on pastoral care. The Chair thanked Maeve and her team for their work.

20.2. SCR Report

CIC/CQ/17/3/19, Safeguarding Compliance Report November 2017, was received. It was noted there are some people who are not DBS checked but only where there is no requirement to do so. Others whose checks are pending are all risk assessed. This information is included in the Management Dashboard so that managers are aware of any outstanding matters in their own areas.