

Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee
held on 26th June 2018
at the Sheepen Road Campus

Present

David Gask, in the Chair	Martin Fordham
Alison Andreas	David Gronland
Christopher Bridge	

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

Observer

Terry Smyth

Apologies for absence were received from Christopher Bridge

Part I

1. Declaration of any conflicts of interest

None.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2018 (CIC/CQ/18/2/1) were received and confirmed. The Chair signed the minute book.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

3.1. Student Destination Data

The Committee asked what progress had been made in improving the quality of student destination data. Members were reminded that the destination data in the performance tables published in January/March 2018 comes from various government sources, including UCAS and college enrolments, using the Unique Learner Number (ULN). Because of the time it takes to collect this information, the most recently published data was from summer 2015 (30 months out of date). As part of the annual ILR return the College has to give a destination for every student and over the last few weeks staff have been asking all students what their intentions are when they leave the College. The information recorded on the College's EBS system which provides detailed reports at Area, Course and Learner level was presented to the Committee. It was reported that Area Heads started working on departmental self-assessment reports the previous day and the destination data will feed into those reports. The data is also useful for marketing and curriculum planning purposes.

4. Update on In-Year Learner Progress/Final Predictions for Year-End Outcomes

It was reported that staff last made predicted outcomes at the end of April. The April predictions were discussed at Area Outcome Review meetings led by the Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality, and the Assistant Principal: Quality, Teaching and Learning. Area Heads and their teams continued to work with students throughout May and in the second week of June Area Heads were asked for their final achievement predictions. The data for 19+ learners was still being collected. The data for 16-18 learners was presented to the Committee, from which it was noted that the College was predicting an 8% increase in achievement rates compared to 2017. Members noted that the College has introduced a short course in British Values, and was advised that this is an

area that will be looked at by Ofsted, who are responsible for checking that colleges actively promote British values.

Members asked what conclusions could be drawn from the data, and were advised that the data is representative of what has been observed and reported on during the year. Art and Design has been negatively impacted by disaffected students whose programmes were moved from the College at Braintree. Media is a strong area for the College and numbers are expected to increase in 2018-19. Early Years has improved on its performance in 2017 but still needs to do more. Early Years is one of the areas which has introduced the new technical qualifications at level 2. Its predicted achievement rates at Levels 1 and 3 are good, but are down for the Level 2 technical based course.

It was reported that subject areas that have moved to the new technical qualifications have been negatively impacted. There was a wide ranging discussion on the reasons for this. A number of differences/issues/challenges were reported and discussed:

- the introduction of external examinations and a very different style of examination paper.
- a wide variation in national achievement rates between awarding bodies, for some qualifications as much as 31%.
- inconsistency in the information from the awarding bodies.
- not enough example questions, or information about the weighting of marks for questions.
- differences between awarding bodies in the way the qualification is delivered. One awarding body is 40% course work; 30% synoptic assessment; 30% examination marks. City and Guilds technical qualifications are 60% examinations marks and 40% synoptic assessment; course work does not contribute to the final award.
- nine centres nationally are delivering the Early Years technical qualification this year and the training for staff is on 7th July 2018, one year after delivery of the programme commenced.

Members asked if the College had a choice in awarding bodies, and were advised that this was the case. It was reported that the Head of Hospitality was considering another model for his area, but wanted to understand the reasons for the differences from the current awarding body (City and Guilds) before making a final decision. Also, certain subject areas are traditionally associated with a particular awarding body and it would be a departure for the College not to deliver City and Guilds in some areas in particular. The students in Hospitality studying the technical qualification are those with the highest achievements at school and all have at least grade C in GCSE English and maths, yet their first results, although 12% above the benchmark at City and Guilds, were still below expectations based on the teaching and course work and below the College's normal high standard in this area. It was reported that nationally a number of colleges delivering the hospitality technical qualification are dropping it next year.

In response to a question it was reported that the College chooses qualifications for which it can claim funding. It was believed that this would be the last year that the College would be able to deliver NVQ programmes, and that technical qualifications would have to be delivered from September 2018. Funding for NVQs has now been extended to 2022 when T Levels are due to be introduced.

The proposed new T Levels were discussed. It was reported that the proposal put forward by Sainsbury was for one awarding body for each subject area, but this is now the subject of a legal challenge by the awarding bodies on the grounds that it will create a monopoly.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the improvements in areas that performed poorly in 2017. It was noted that the Learning Shops, which work with adults on basic literacy, numeracy and IT programmes, have achieved high performance rates for their 1000+ enrolments.

It was noted that there is a significant increase in the number of students taking GCSE English and maths this years. Attendance at the examinations was up (91.5%) compared to 2017 (80%), and the College is predicting a combined achievement rate of 66% compared to 45% last year.

It was noted that the College was predicting a 3% increase in achievement rates for main qualifications (excluding English, maths and British Values) compared to 2017. Retention (students who remain on the course after 42 days) is currently at 92% (with one more week to count) compared to 90% in 2017. Attendance is also up compared to the previous year. Retention on apprenticeship programme has improved by about 4% to 94% compared to last year and achievements, which were 5% above the national average last year, should be improved compared to 2017.

5. **Update on One Year Strategic Action Plan**

CIC/CQ/18/2/2, Update on One Year Strategic Action Plan, was received and presented by the Principal. The Committee was pleased to note that good progress was being made against most of the actions in the action plan.

The Committee asked about employer links and were advised that all areas now have some form of employer base because of the requirement for all students to undertake 30 hours of work experience during the year. Employer relationships are better developed and more consistent, but employer panels are not progressing as well as the College would like. Although employer panels meet regularly in some areas, arrangements in other areas are more ad hoc. The College also uses 'pop up' panels for specific needs. The Principal is currently chairing meetings which have been established to consult employers on the Health and Care Centre being developed on the top of South Wing. The panels in HE are better developed and are used to get the views of local employers to inform what is being delivered and as an opportunity to collaborate. More recently a lot of work was undertaken with employers in the development of the new STEM Centre. Regular meetings enabled employers to give an indication of their skills shortages and ask the College to develop qualifications for their workforce.

It was reported that employers engage with the College in other ways, such as sponsorship. Examples were given of companies that now spend less money on marketing stands at major exhibitions, choosing instead to work with colleges. The College's Hospitality Department received equipment to the value of £15k from a company which would previously have been spent the money on a marketing stand.

Opportunities for employer links in the creative arts areas were discussed. It was reported that Creative and Digital Media has strong links with small business in the Knowledge Gateway at the University of Essex and at Tollgate, and that Performing Arts works closely with the Mercury Theatre. The College is also a member of the Creative Colchester Employer Group.

The Committee asked about employer engagement with levy payers and was advised that employers now understand that they need to use the fund. Unfortunately the majority of companies are using their levy account more for CPD activity for existing staff rather than creating new apprenticeship opportunities as intended by Government. There are also difficulties associated with the funding rules. The Committee asked about the likelihood of changes in respect of apprenticeship funding and were advised that non-levy paying employers, who used to be able to access apprenticeship training free of charge, are trying to get the Government to remove the contribution that they are now required to pay as it is believed that this is stopping small companies from engaging in the way that they used to.

6. **Observation of Teaching and Learning 2017/18**

CIC/CQ/18/2/3, Observation of Teaching and Learning 2017/18, was received and presented by the Assistant Principal: Quality and Teaching and Learning. It was noted that observation data was still awaited from some areas. The College is increasingly using more than the formal observation

process to judge the quality of teaching and learning. Members of the College Management Group spend a day in an area doing learning walks to get a flavour of what is going on. Although it is still a snapshot, by and large the experiences observed correlate very closely to the observation data. It is more difficult to validate observations against other data sources. It was suggested that where teaching and learning is strong students will be more motivated to attend, but other factors could impact on retention. Another area where results may correlate, is areas with good teaching and learning and areas with high levels of satisfaction in the student survey.

The observation process was discussed. The Committee was reminded that observations are no longer graded. Observers give feedback on areas that were observed to be working well and what aspects might be impacting both positively and negatively on students. Observation forms are returned to a central office, where a points based system is used to produce the data provided to this committee; these point scores are not seen by individuals. When the observation is finished, a development plan is agreed in discussion between the individual and their line manager. The observation does not feel like an inspection to those being observed. Ofsted no longer do graded observations but do more short (10-15 minutes) walk throughs. In response to a question it was confirmed that staff who perform particularly well in observations are encouraged to share their expertise through peer observations.

7. Principal's Report

CIC/CQ/18/2/4, Principal's Report June 2018, was received and noted. The Committee asked for an update on the College Improvement Groups and were advised that these were just commencing and actions plans were starting to be implemented. A session had been held with the 20 Area Heads the previous day to discuss the key priorities for the start of the new academic year: English and maths; induction; using ProMonitor for individual learning plans and tracking progress and target settings; British Values, Prevent and Safeguarding; Study Programme outcomes; and work experience/work placements. The aim is to remove the inconsistencies that exist across the College.

The Committee asked about the possible timing of the next Ofsted Inspections and were advised that it will definitely be during the next academic year, and quite likely, during the autumn term 2018.

8. Annual Provider Review 2017

It was reported that normally at this time of year the College receives a letter setting out the College performance in higher education, which is received by this Committee. The report is based on metrics such as good degrees, and last year HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) visited the College during the spring term. With the abolition of HEFCE at the beginning of April and the transfer of responsibilities to the Office for Students (OfS) there has been no provider review for this year yet. Colleges have been advised that the metrics previously used by HEFCE will be rolled forward. The College will continue to prepare an annual report on the quality of its higher education provision which will be received by this Committee in the autumn term.

9. Student's Union Annual Report 2017/18

CIC/CQ/18/2/5, Student's Union Annual Report 2017/18, was received and considered. The Committee noted that the activities that the Students' Union (SU) had engaged in during the year were very similar to previous years. Arising from the discussion it was noted that the SU is now run by further education rather than higher education students and that only a very small percentage of the student body tend to be involved with the Union. A Governor referred to their experience as a former President of a Students' Union and said that before standing for election he had to attend a briefing so he was better informed on what was involved. It was suggested that the College considers introducing a similar induction process for prospective candidates for the SU roles.

The Committee was disappointed to note that the links to the Student's Union at the University of Essex had not worked well during the year. It used to be an important marketing point for the College that students were able to get involved in the SU activities at the University. This will be followed up by the College management.

10. **Academic Targets 2018/19**

CIC/CQ/18/2/6, Academic Targets 2018/19, was received, considered and accepted for recommendation to the Board. The Committee accepted the challenges of setting targets for next year before the outturn for the current year was known. The Principal reported that the targets were aspirational and were in line with a good college.

The Committee questioned the targets for attendance and retention, which were unchanged from this year, and were advised that is a stretch target which the College has not yet achieved.

The Committee asked about the availability of national benchmark data for colleges similar to Colchester Institute, ie where there is competition from sixth form colleges who are likely to attract the most able students. It was reported that provider type analysis is still available, but there are not many colleges as highly vocational as Colchester Institute, not delivering A Levels, with large sixth forms locally.

The HE target of an increase in good degrees to 70 was discussed in the context of the national discussion on grade inflation. It was reported that this is an aspirational target for an organisation like Colchester Institute, which has a high level of students meeting the widening participation criteria. The College has seen a steady increase in the number of good degrees over the last five years.

11. **Revisions to Committee Terms of Reference**

CIC/CQ/18/2/7, proposed amendments to the terms of reference for the Curriculum and Quality Committee, were received, considered and accepted for recommendation to the Board.

12. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday, 13th November 2018 at 4.30pm

13. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There were no items.