

Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee
held on 30th November 2020
using the Zoom platform

Present

Keith Moule, in the Chair	Pam Donnelly
Alison Andreas	Kevin Prince
Tyler Burgess	Brenda Rich
Zainab Domingue	Terry Smyth

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

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of any conflicts of interest

None

3. Self-Assessment Report Draft 2019-20

The Committee received and considered CIC/CQ/20/5/1, Self-Assessment Report Draft (SAR) 2019-20.

Governors asked if the benchmarks used to inform the judgements had been adjusted as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and if so what criteria had been used. The grading decisions were made against 2018-19 benchmarks; no account had been taken of national data for 2019-20. This is no different to previous years, as national benchmark data is never available at this point of the year. The data for 2019-20 includes a significant number of programmes for which calculated grades were submitted. The College took seriously the Government's guidance that providers should take historical performance into account and did not see much grade inflation. The College was in a strong position when the campuses were closed in March. The judgements reflect a strong year in 2018-19 that continued into 2019-20. There will be little detailed benchmark data available for 2019-20. The national performance tables, normally published in January and March, will be not issued.

It was particularly difficult to make judgements for adults and apprenticeships, where the achievement rate was not good compared to the most recent national average data. These areas of provision were particularly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which had to be taken into account. The College used the criteria in the Education Inspection Framework and considered a range of evidence sources, not just achievement data, in making its judgements.

Governors questioned if the grading for apprenticeships (Good) was sufficiently robust. It was acknowledged that, given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, tangible evidence sources were more limited. Evidence of outcomes such as destination data and high grades in End Point Assessment, support the grade.

Governors sought more information on the statement “Learners’ underpinning English and maths skills are not always routinely improved in vocational sessions, and opportunities to make full use of learning support are sometimes missed. As a result learners do not learn to identify or correct their mistakes.” This reflects feedback from the December 2019 monitoring visit where Inspectors observed a teacher writing a word with incorrect spelling, and an error in the English on a poster in a classroom. The College’s actions to address this include (i) using learning support to help students improve their English and maths in vocational classes; (ii) written feedback on students’ written work to also address English grammar and spelling. This has been a core theme over a number of years and the position has improved but practice is variable. The embedding of English and maths in vocational sessions is done reasonably well but it is not consistent and needs to be further developed.

Governors observed that the SAR was very detailed and robust, and set out the intention of the College and its position in the local community very clearly. The introduction clearly sets out the characteristics of the College’s student body (prior attainment, economic background etc) and Governors questioned whether the body of the SAR made sufficient reference to the challenges and examples of distance travelled. The College may wish to comment on how it aligns opportunities with the economic situation in Colchester and North East Essex and the readiness of the College to understand and respond to the skills shortages in some areas and the demand that will come through as a result of the pandemic. The College Executive welcomed and will consider the Committee’s comments.

Governors asked if there were any areas of the College with a significant number of elements that were close to be outstanding which could be rolled out across the institution as examples of best practice. Given the way that qualifications were awarded this summer (calculated results) it would be more difficult this year to identify particular areas of the College. In previous years the SAR has included a table of grades for subject areas but for reasons of fairness it was decided not to do that this year.

Governors noted that the College’s balance of adults to young people (28%) is atypical against the national profile of general further education colleges (48%) and questioned if this needed to be commented upon in the report. Colchester Institute has a smaller adult allocation by percentage than many colleges, particularly those in the north. Colchester has a large local adult community college which delivers a lot of work that is carried out in general further education colleges in other parts of the country. Much of Colchester Institute’s adult provision is delivered through the Learning Shops. The College also has quite a large number of younger adults (19-21 year olds) on full time Study Programme that want to do Level 3 programmes. The College often uses sub-contractors to fully spend its adult allocation. It is hoped to develop a broader adult programme within the College post Covid-19/Brexit. The balance of adults to young people has a negative impact on the College’s overall all-age outcomes compared to colleges that have an equal number of adults to young people because adults nationally have much higher achievement rates than young people. This is made clear in the SAR.

The two Student Governors were invited to comment on any improvements that they have seen at the College which they would like to see captured in the SAR. It was reported that the Covid-19 measures that had been put in place were very good and the students felt safe. The move to online learning during the lockdown had been a difficult time. It was done well, and the Student Governor did not think that it could be improved, but it is an area where some students struggled and still do.

Governors noted and accepted the quality improvement plan, and agreed it contained the appropriate level of detail for the SAR. The plan will be developed and monitoring reports provided to this Committee during the year. Governors noted that professional development was largely directed at teaching staff and teaching and learning and asked about personal development

opportunities for senior leaders. This has not been a priority area. Further information will be included in the more detailed plans which will be brought to this Committee.

The Committee agreed to recommend the Self-Assessment Report 2019-20 to the Board for approval.

4. **Date of Next Meeting**
Wednesday, 27th January 2021 at 4.30pm.
5. **Any Other Urgent Business**
There were no items