Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee
held on 16th June 2021

Present

Keith Moule, in the Chair	Brenda Rich
Alison Andreas	Terry Smyth
Pam Donnelly	Jenny Thorpe
Kevin Prince	

In Attendance

Maeve Borges	Vice Principal: Student Services and Support
Nils Franke	Dean of Higher Education
Caroline Fritz	Assistant Principal: Quality and Teaching and Learning Improvement
Hazel Paton	Clerk to the Governors
Jason Peters	Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance
Adam Ward	Assistant Principal: Braintree Campus and STEM
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. **Agreement to Starred Agenda Items**
   Members were invited to indicate any items which they wished to star for discussion or question. No additional items were starred. Items that had not been starred were noted and/or approved without discussion.

4. **Minutes**
   The minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2021 (CIC/CQ/21/2/1) were received and confirmed as an accurate record, subject to amending the date of the meeting to read 2021 instead of 2020.

5. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**
   None, other than on the agenda

6. **Current Performance including predictions for year-end outcomes and timeliness of completion**
   The Principal reported that 2020-21 had been a particularly challenging year. Despite the disruption as a result of the pandemic and more recently and significantly in relation to student outcomes the cyber security incident, all the staff and students had demonstrated a high level of commitment and engagement. Although there was some variation, the predicted outcomes were strong and befitting of a Good college. Despite the challenges, overall achievement rates were in the high 80s and most students had appreciated and benefited from their time at the College over the last twelve months.

6.1. **Education Programmes for Young People**
   The Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance introduced his oral report by emphasising the damaging impact of the cyber security incident on data monitoring and the challenges in getting the data together.

It was reported that the predicted overall achievement rate for 16-18 learners was 89%. The achievement rates in ESOL (English for Speakers of other Languages) and Foundation and Supported Learning were 5%-10% lower than would normally be expected. Both these areas involve lower level learners undertaking qualifications with no significant practical elements which learners have to complete without the challenge or advantages of TAGs (Teacher Assessed Grades). In subjects where there are low level learners predominantly assessed through practical work the results are strong, and many subject areas have achievement rates in the high 80%/low 90%. A Member asked about non-TAG qualifications and was advised that the predicted achievement rates were very similar to those achieved in the last 'normal' year.

It was reported that with the exception of some individuals in Salon Studies (about 10% of those learners), all students were expected to finish by 22nd June. The remaining 10% of students in Salon Studies would complete by the first week of July.

Governors noted the 89% predicted achievement rates and asked about any groups significantly below that. The two groups were 16-18 ESOL and Foundation and Supported Learning. There were 16 ESOL learners. The predicted achievement rate in Foundation and Supported Learning was 83%, compared to 92% in 2018-19 (the last 'normal' year). The Manager of this subject area believed that outcomes had been impacted by the cyber incident rather than the lockdown. During the five-week period of disruption following the cyber incident staff did not have access to personal details to contact students who stopped attending. Between 25-30 students who it was thought would achieve were lost during this five-week period.

Governors asked if GCSE outcomes were in line with expectations. It was reported that expected achievement in a normal year would be 83%; last year it was 92%, this year 91%. Each year about 200 students refuse to attend the examinations and therefore fail the qualification. These less committed GCSE students benefit from the TAG, receiving a Grade 1 or 2. Governors observed that, given the high volume of entrants for GSCEs, overall achievement rates could decrease next year when examinations resume. It was reported that in 2018/19, the College had 3000 entrants in British Values, which had an achievement rate of 99%. As well as the impact of a return to examined GCSEs, leaners no longer take the qualification in British Values; overall achievement was expected to be in the mid 80% next year.

Governors asked about high grades for GCSEs. It was reported that high grades would be c.30% for both subjects, the college benchmark in a normal year, but far below what was achieved by colleges in the previous year.

6.2. **Adult Learning Programmes**
The Assistant Principal: Braintree Campus and STEM reported that the predicted overall achievement rate was 80%, a few points lower than the previous year. Adult provision had been impacted by the need to work remotely. Where students were in College undertaking practical activities and staff were able to maintain contact with them, achievement rates have been much higher than in the previous year. The Learning Shops, which are reliant on being able to access the VDI, were severely impacted by the disruption to IT services following the cyber security incident. It had also been difficult to maintain contact with adult learners working remotely during the period of lockdown.

Governors asked if sufficient interventions had been put in place in order to maximise achievement. It was reported that lots of work was being undertaken in order to bring these adults back into learning, although the College was finding that many of these students have now moved on to other things and into employment. The data for some of the practical programmes is strong, for example brickwork had an achievement rate of 95%.

6.3. **Apprenticeships**
CIC/CQ/21/2/2, Current performance including in-year progress – Apprenticeships, was received and presented by the Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality. It was reported that the College had retained the majority of learners who started their apprenticeship this year, but there had been an increase in the withdrawal rate for learners continuing their programme. The main reasons for student withdrawal were related to the pandemic. Some learners had been made redundant, and a number had decided not to pursue their programme because they had seen the impact of the pandemic and social distancing on their chosen career path. The examples given were dental nursing and hospitality.

It was reported that the achievement rate for this year was expected to be slightly better than the previous year, but the impact of the pandemic on achievement rates would be seen for at least the next three years. At the time the report for this meeting was prepared, 61 apprentices had been identified as not going to complete this year. Within the last week a further ten learners had been identified as not ready for their End Point Assessment and will move into next year. This will have a negative impact on achievement rates.

In response to questions from the Committee it was confirmed that the figures for apprentices moving into 2021/22 included learners on furlough, and learners carrying on from end dates in previous years. It was reported that a lot of learners had gone quite a way over their planned end date due to the disruption from the pandemic.

The Committee asked about the grade profile for End Point Assessments and were advised that there were a very high proportion of Distinctions, and a lot of Merits. Many learners had been promoted as a result of their End Point Assessment. In response to a question it was confirmed that this was the first time pass rate.

6.4. **Higher Education**
The Dean of Higher Education reported that progression from year 1 to year 2 was predicted to be in line with the previous year (low 90%) and that good degrees (first class or upper second class) would again be in excess of target (mid 70%). The normal completion date was June, but for those students who need more time to achieve the period for the submission of final year course work had been extended to August, and a small number of students would take longer than that. The College had received 80% of the coursework expected by this point in the academic year Two to three programmes had been impacted by staff sickness/resignations. Students on these programmes had been given the choice of making their first submission in either June or August; only 20% of students had decided that they needed the extension, indicating high levels of engagement.

7. **2020-21 Applications and Curriculum Plan**

7.1. **Further Education**
The Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance reported that:

- The College had planned for a curriculum of just over 4000 learners, and expected to achieve this.
- Student applications at May 2021 were 500 higher than at the same point in the previous year
- Learner numbers at the Braintree campus were still not adequate.
- The decline in applications in hospitality continues, exacerbated by the pandemic. A restructuring of the lecturing team in CH&FS was underway, to take account of a sharp fall in student numbers for 2021-22. Student numbers in other subject areas were holding up.

Governors asked about the impact on staffing of an increased student intake next year. It was reported that the College needed to make new appointments in maths, health and science, otherwise staffing was adequate.

Governors asked to what extent the increase in applications related to the growth in demographics. It was reported that in the current year (2020/21) there had been 150 additional year 11 leavers/year 12 starters; this year the growth was slightly smaller, but applications were up. Governors asked where these additional students would otherwise have gone. It was reported that numbers this year at the sixth form college were also up suggesting that the additional leavers had joined Colchester Institute or the Sixth Form College. Some smaller providers had ceased trading over the last couple of years, and school sixth forms had not grown.

Noting the restructuring in CH&FS, a member cited an example from another part of the country where staff employed by hospitality organisations had been very successfully redeployed into the health sector. Given the skills shortage in health and care in North East Essex, this may be an option.

7.2. **Adults**
The Assistant Principal: Braintree Campus and STEM reported that there were three categories of adult learners:

(i)   Adult learners who are put into Study Programmes
(ii)   Adult learners on long programmes (18 to 36 weeks)
(iii)   Adult learners on short programmes, largely delivered through the Learning Shops. These programmes service economic recovery.

It was reported that the short programmes delivered through the Learning Shops were going to be redesigned into vocationally specific pathways which led to progression and jobs in skills shortage areas.

7.3. **University Centre Colchester**
The Dean of Higher Education reported that there were just under 400 applicants. Around one third of new students would be late applicants (applying and enrolling between now and September). There had been an unusually high level of staff turnover in UCC (12%-15% of core staff) and a major recruitment campaign was due to start.

7.4. **Apprenticeships**
The Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality reported that applications were in line with what would normally be expected. Target numbers had been reduced by 35% in the previous year; but increased by 140 this year. Most of these numbers were associated with work that had been requested by large levy-paying employers. New programmes include Level 7 HR practitioners, and Level 5 coaching and mentoring practitioners. It was reported that there had been a large number of staff resignations in Engineering and Construction and the challenge would be to recruit into these hard to fill areas for September.

The Committee asked about the strategies in place for staff recruitment. It was reported that the College struggles to recruit in areas such as Engineering and Construction because competitors and industry pay significantly more. A Governor suggested looking to see if there were opportunities through some of the wider partnerships, to attract people taking early retirement who might want to use their skills and experience in a positive way.

8.   **Key Updates FE Provision**
The Committee received and noted:

CIC/CQ/21/2/3, Access and Participation Plan – final version
CIC/CQ/21/2/4, Report to OfS on progress against APP targets

9.   **Update on Progress against Quality Improvement Plan**
     The Committee received and noted CIC/CQ/21/2/5, Update to the Quality Improvement Plan. A member noted that the College was doing a lot, notwithstanding the interruption of the lockdown, but commented that it was difficult to see what impact these actions were having. The Assistant Principal: Quality and Teaching and Learning Improvement reported that for longer term actions it would be necessary to wait until the end of year to measure the impact.

10. **Update on Strategic Plan One Year Action Plan**
     CIC/CQ/21/2/6, Update on Strategic Plan Goals (Goals 1 to 6 and Goal 8) was received and presented by the Principal. It was noted that the one-year success indicators were for the calendar year 2021, rather than the academic year. It was reported that good progress was being made in the majority of areas, although some areas had been adversely impacted by the disruption arising from the lockdown and the cyber-attack. It was reported that:

     * the momentum around teaching and learning was being maintained (Goal 1)
     * There had been a lot of work recently in the areas of developing the whole person and students for appropriate destinations (Goal 3). A whole College approach to Career Readiness, Enrichment and Wellbeing (CREW) was about to be launched.
     * A lot had been planned for the Braintree Campus, although the impact was not being seen just yet (Goal 8). The College would like to see more applications from younger learners than there are currently.

11. **Principal's Report**
     CIC/CQ/21/2/7, Principal's Report – May 2021, was received and noted.

12. **Online Teaching and Learning Survey Spring 2021**
     CIC/CQ/21/2/8, Survey of Online Teaching and Learning March 2021, was received and noted. The Committee noted that some of the areas with lower scores were large, and asked what had been done to look at the reasons and the lessons to be learnt. It was reported that the areas where there were concerns included:

     * Mechanical and Electrical Services – there were some concerns about the general approach to learning online
     * Access, Health and Social Care- some students were less comfortable with the switch to entirely learning online. There were also some concerns about continuity of teaching and learning and cover arrangements in the absence of a member of staff.

     A member asked about the CI Connect App and was advised that had been newly introduced in the autumn term. It provides access to a lot of information for students (email, timetables, messages etc). It had been heavily promoted at the beginning of the year but take up was mixed. The App is very good for giving updates to students and came into the fore following the cyber-attack when the College did not have access to the email or the ticker-tape. The proposal for next year is to get more staff and students using the App, and this will be built more robustly into the induction process. Noting the average score for use of the CI Connect App was just 67%, Members asked if learners were getting the information they need from elsewhere. It was reported that the App was a commercial package, and it is difficult for managers to monitor whether a group has joined it. The College was in discussion with the external developer about usage data. This would make it easier to talk to groups not engaging with the App to understand the reasons why.

13. **Student Equality Report**
     CIC/CQ/21/2/9, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Report 2019/20, was received and noted. It was reported that the most significant changes to the report this year were the removal of staff data (reported separately) and the change of title (from equality and diversity to diversity, equity and inclusion) to reflect the updated approach and new DEI policy.

The main conclusion was that there were no known major achievement gaps by protected characteristic. The one area self-assessed as having an achievement gap was apprentices with and without a declared disability. It was reported that work was being undertaken to address that gap but the full impact would not be seen until further cohorts were enrolled.

14. **FE and Apprenticeships Academic Targets 2021-22**
CIC/CQ/21/2/10, College Targets 2020/21 – FE and Apprenticeships, was received and presented by the Principal. It was reported that the most recent national benchmarks (2018/19) and the College's performance in the most recent 'normal' year (2018/19) had been used to inform the targets.

Arising from the discussion the Committee:

- Noted the target for GCSE maths and English and asked if consideration had been given to setting a target for high grades. It was reported that this target used the English and maths average progress generated through the league tables. The Principal felt that this was a fairer target to set given our unusually low profile of GCSE grades, with many students arriving with Grades 1 and 2. High grades are only a measure for those students who arrive with a Grade 3. Colchester Institute will consistently fall below the national average because it is not a national average college for intake.
- Suggested using the MIDES English and maths progress report which takes into account starting point.
- Noted the targets based on progress measures and asked how many students fell into those categories and whether consideration had been given to internal measures of progress.
- Questioned the proposal for overall achievement rate for apprenticeships (68%) which did not align with the target for apprenticeships achievement rate (Higher) (65%)
- Questioned the applied average grades, and whether the College wanted to set a target of Distinction given it was likely that students would have knowledge/skills gaps following two years of disruption to their learning. It was reported that the College was not able to calculate the grades itself, but had to wait for the national performance tables to be published.
- Asked how many Level 3 students were on an applied qualification and how many were on technical qualifications

  ACTION:
  - **The Principal** to consider using MIDES data as opposed to performance tables this year and consider the value-added grades of Distinction.
  - **The Principal** to review the overall target for apprenticeships
  - **The updated target paper** to be circulated to the Committee for approval for recommendation to the Board.

15. **Students' Union Annual Report to the Board**
CIC/CQ/21/2/11, UCC Students' Union Annual Report 2020-2021, was received and noted.

Keith Moule left the meeting for another engagement. Kevin Prince took the Chair

16. **Update on Self-Assessment 20/21**
CIC/CQ/21/2/12, Self-Assessment Report Process for 2021 was received and the self-assessment timeline, including the suggested panel meetings with Governors, noted.

17. **Policy Review**

17.1. **Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy**
The Committee received and considered CIC/CQ/21/2/13, Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy. In response to a question, it was confirmed that compliments and complaints are reported

annually to this Committee. The Committee asked for the reporting process to be included in the policy. Subject to this amendment, the Committee **AGREED** to recommend the Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy to the Board for approval.

17.2. **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy**
CIC/CQ/21/2/14, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy, was received, considered and **APPROVED** for recommendation to the Board.

18. **Review of Meeting**
The Committee considered:

- Items/papers to be reported to the Board: the Acting Chair to discuss with the Committee Chair
- Items to be treated confidentially: - none
- Effectiveness of meeting and potential areas for improvement: none
- Feedback on papers: comprehensive and well written

19. **Date of Next Meeting**
Wednesday, 10th November 2021 at 4.30pm at the Sheepen Road campus.

20. **Any Other Urgent Business**
There were no items