

Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee
held on 10 November 2021

Present

Kevin Prince, in the Chair
Alison Andreas
Pam Donnelly

Brenda Rich
Jenny Thorpe

In Attendance

Maeve Borges	Vice Principal: Student Services and Support
Caroline Fritz	Assistant Principal: Quality and Teaching and Learning Improvement
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**

Apologies for absence were received from Terry Smyth.

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 16 June 2021 (CIC/CQ/21/3/1) were received and approved as an accurate record.

5. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

5.1. **Timeliness of completion 2020-21**

A small number of learners (about 10%) in Salon Studies had not been expected to finish their course by the end of the summer term (22 June 2021). In response to questions from Governors it was confirmed that these students completed in July.

The Committee asked for an update on the number of apprentices who had not completed by the end of the 2020-21 academic year. It was reported that 105 learners had rolled over into this academic year and were working through the rest of their programme.

Governors noted that Foundation learners had been particularly impacted by the cyber incident and questioned the Executive on backup arrangements for access to contact details in the event of a similar breakdown in IT facilities in the future. It was reported that the issues with this student group were not that they could not be contacted following the cyber incident. The College had frequent contact with the students and their parents. The issue was that these students, who typically have access to an LSP (Learning Support Practitioner) in the classroom, had struggled to engage with remote learning in a less supported environment during campus closures. It was confirmed that a back-up of student contact details was held securely in line with data protection requirements by the Vice Principal: Student Services and Support for safeguarding and emergency purposes.

5.2. FE Professional Development Grant Programme

The Assistant Principal: Quality and Teaching and Learning Improvement updated the Committee on the FE Professional Development Grant Programme. Harlow College, as Lead Provider, had submitted a successful group bid for funding for seven providers, including Colchester Institute. The money under this strand was for the development of the teaching workforce, in particular new and inexperienced teachers, and the continued development of learning and teaching online. The expected outputs include CPD programmes to give new teachers skills and confidence; guidance and support for learning and teaching activities; network activities; and developing advanced practitioners. The funding has to be spent by March 2022.

6. Self-Assessment Report 2020-21 and Quality Improvement Plan

CIC/CQ/21/3/2, Draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2020-21 and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), was received and considered. The Principal reported that the SAR, which was briefer than previous years, was an honest analysis of the situation in 2021. The QIP addresses issues identified in the SAR and arising from other recent events such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Arising from the discussion, Members:

- Commented that it was good to see so much good work going on at the College but would like to see more content on Intent and Impact in the section on Quality of Education.
- Noted that one of the areas where the College was still improving was in respect of the effectiveness of the apprenticeship initial assessment process, but there nothing further about this in the text.
- Felt that there was little commentary under Leadership and Management about the impact of the teaching and learning programme and what was good about teaching and learning.
- Suggested that the SAR was a little too brief in places, and that it was not clear what had been done, and the impact, in areas such as the challenges of Covid, and the support for staff and their wellbeing. The Executive were challenged on staff wellbeing and workload, in particular how staff respond to the Ofsted staff wellbeing questionnaire, and how does the Senior team know that staff feel supported.
- Questioned, given that the last two years were not normal due to the pandemic, whether the College was doing itself a disservice by comparing performance (in particular on Adult programmes) to national averages, and suggested that this was reconsidered.
- Were asked by the Senior Team for feedback on the section on Adult Learning Programmes. The Committee noted that achievement in this area was still high and questioned whether this area should be graded Requires Improvement. It was reported that in assessing the grade Staff had looked at a range of factors. The Committee noted that lots of things had impacted on adult learners over the last 18 months some of which were outside the College's control such as the pausing of construction programmes as a result of Covid, which needed to be taken into account.
- Questioned what impact the grade of Requires Improvement for Adult Learning would have on the grade for Overall Effectiveness.
- Welcomed the focus on destinations in the report.
- Questioned whether there should be more in the SAR in respect of the Braintree Campus. The response of the Executive that it was their policy to talk about one College was accepted.
- Noted the reference to Colchester Institute's ranking against other colleges and what it would have been in more 'normal' years and questioned whether this was appropriate as all colleges had gone through an unusual year. The Principal agreed to rewrite this to make clear that everything was going well before the pandemic and Colchester Institute had improved its rank from the low point on which the 2018 Inspection was based to 11th out of 170 general further education colleges. The Committee accepted this but suggested that that rank no longer exists because no national achievement rate tables have been published and the reference should be to similar levels of achievement.

- Questioned the evidence base to support the statements that teaching is good. The Committee was reminded that since moving to a developmental approach the College no longer grades teaching and learning observations, so those data were not available. The impact of teaching is evidenced through student retention, achievement, attendance levels, the progress that students make and the skills that they acquire. It was suggested that impact could be measured by identifying strengths and areas for improvements for each learning walk/observation by area and activity.
- Noted that Ofsted was moving away from just measuring achievement through qualifications and towards development of knowledge and skills and asked how the College keeps up to date with employer needs. It was reported that the College has many ways of keeping up to date with employer needs including:
 - Relationships with apprenticeship employers through assessors and curriculum managers
 - More formal employer panels (often temporary for a particular purpose) in a few areas to inform curriculum development
 - Establishing links with large organisations. The College is currently working in partnership with the local hospital trust.
 - Work experience activities
 - The many contacts through ex-industry and current industry teaching staff who sit on various bodies and other large anchor institutions
 - Labour market intelligence reports produced often for the local authorities
- Noted the drop in the number of learners doing Level 1 courses and asked the reasons for this. It was reported that the number of Level 1 learners was previously artificially high because of the large number of learners taking Level 1 awards in British Values.
- Observed that nationally, GCSE results were inflated over the last two years and suggested that students on Level 2 and Level 3 programmes may be weaker in maths than would have been the case in the past. The Executive was asked what was being done to help and support these students. It was reported that assessments were being used to identify students and put measures in place. The issues were mainly on Level 3 programmes where learners in the bottom tier are struggling with the programme. The College was putting on a number of tuition groups. As well as the academic differences the College has seen socialisation differences this year. This intake of students have spent a large proportion of their time outside of school and college over the last two years and are struggling to adapt to being in class. More students have been excluded this year than in previous years.
- Questioned the Executive on what was being done to address the behavioural issues this year. It was reported that localised initiatives were being used. An example was given of one area with a lot of disruptive behaviour in class, where a set of expectations around behaviour, based on the College expectations, had been put in place which the teachers run through at the start of every session. There was also a lot more parental engagement for these students. The impact of these measures was starting to be seen. Overall, it is a good cohort of students, and it is only a very small percentage of students that are causing concern.
- Noted that the behavioural issues being seen in College were a reflection of what was being seen in mainstream society. It was reported that Colchester Borough Council were planning a range of interventions to remedy behavioural issues in the town centre.
- Asked the Executive whether they had considered or were using mentors to help with the behavioural issues. It was reported that the College does not use mentors but students are referred to the services provided by Student Service and Support. There were a record number of students taking advantage of the support services this year. The disciplinary policy was also being consistently used.

ACTION:

- the College Executive were asked to revisit the SAR and add more content on Intent, Implementation and Impact in the Quality of Education section and consider other feedback from this discussion.
- The Committee asked to be circulated with a copy of the final draft for information/further comment before being submitted to the Board for approval.

Subject the above, **the Committee Recommend the Self-Assessment Report 2020-21 and Quality Improvement Plan to the Board for approval.**

7. Compliments and Complaints 2020-21

CIC/CQ/21/3/3, Comments and Complaints Summary 2020 – 21, was received and noted. The Assistant Principal: Quality and Teaching and Learning Improvement reported that the number of complaints were declining year on year, and it was difficult to identify trends in the complaints received.

8. Learner Surveys

8.1. NSS (National Student Survey) analysis 2020-21

CIC/CQ/21/3/4, NSS 2021 review, was received noted. Overall results were very positive.

8.2. FE Student Induction Survey 2021-22

CIC/CQ/21/3/5, Student Induction Survey, was received and noted.

9. Start of Year Update

9.1. Education Programmes for Young People

The Vice Principal: Curriculum Delivery and Performance reported that:

- overall, the students were broadly in line in with where the College would expect them to be at this stage. Predicted achievement after the first round of programme reviews was about 92.5%.
- Attendance was just over 90%; the College would like to see this slightly higher.
- The first round of progress reviews shows that overall, students are slightly behind where they should be in terms of skills and knowledge. Areas Heads had just received these data and were working with course leaders on how to address this.
- The number of young people doing GCSEs (2077) was down on what the College would normally expect (c.3000).
- Attendance at GCSE Maths and English was good at 75%; this was 10% higher than attendance had ever been for on campus lessons. It was thought that the higher attendance was because there were fewer students, who had been identified and monitored earlier.
- 16-18 students recently completed a student survey the data from which shows that 90%+ agree that they are developing new skills and knowledge.

Arising from the questioning by the Committee it was reported that:

- at each progress check learners are scored on a nine-point scale against a benchmark for what the student should be able to do at that point. The skills and knowledge or target grade which the student is scored against is subject specific. At the first progress check students were ahead of where the College wants them to be in terms of behaviour but just under target for skills and knowledge.
- the average GCSE group size was about 20 students compared to 24 in prior years.

9.2. Apprenticeships

The Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality reported that:

- apprenticeship recruitment was buoyant.
- 105 apprentices did not complete last year, mainly because they had not been able to complete the End Point Assessment, and had rolled forward into this year.
- Retention was good.
- A number of assessors left over the summer having decided to retire or go back into industry. The College had found it difficult to recruit replacement staff and at the start of the year there were key staff shortages in four areas: Engineering; Groundworks and Construction; Hairdressing; and Early Years. As staff cover has been put in place the College has worked to ensure that every element of the apprentice has been delivered.
- The system used to carry out initial assessments had been revamped. Last year, to close the achievement gap between learners with learning difficulties and those without, the College used a cognitive system to give students techniques which they could use in their learning. A review found that not all apprentices were utilising the system and staff found it very labour intensive.

In response to a question, it was reported that the pass rate for End Point Assessments was very high, with very few fails.

A Member noted the work that had been done over the last two years to get apprentices to reveal disabilities or other needs and asked what impact this had had. It was reported that the impact last year was good as seen through higher achievement rates. The College has seen some impact from the initial assessment, which is designed to draw out information much earlier and suggest things that might help the student, but this information cannot be revealed to an employer without the student's consent. Systems needs to be put in place to encourage apprentices to talk to their employer.

9.3. Adult Learning Programmes

The Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality reported that adult learning includes main adult programmes (Access to HE, accounting, ESOL), Learning Shop provision, and a range of short training programmes in Engineering and Construction. It was reported that:

- Recruitment to main programmes was slightly lower than anticipated, partly because the Access course did not recruit. This is a national issue. It was thought that the reducing demand for access courses was to do with more universities offering programmes with foundation years.
- There had been a slow start in the Learning Shops. Recruitment was 13% of target, lower than anticipated at this point in the year.
- The adult curriculum in the Learning Shops, which had been very focussed on Job Centre Plus referrals coming on to campus to work on low level skills which would prepare them for interviews for particular job sectors, had been revamped. The Learning Shops had been particularly impacted last year by the lockdown and the cyber incident. The new curriculum is delivered through an online platform and offers a wider range of Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications which will give adults more progression pathways. The College will be able to reach more adults now that they do not have to come onto campus to attend formal classes.
- The College had anticipated more students coming forward for retraining and upskilling but unemployment in this region is lower than expected post-pandemic.
- No major issues had been identified by the recently completed progress check and students were where they were expected to be against knowledge and behaviour.
- The needs for all adult learners to have very clear careers guidance and purposeful programmes had been identified last year. All adults are offered a National Careers Service interview, which is done inhouse. This is the first year that these interviews have been offered widely and feedback suggests that they are very helpful.

The Corporation Chair reported that he had attended a webinar on careers education the previous day where it had been reported that careers guidance has a significant impact in terms of achievement because it motivates students to achieve.

9.4. **Vulnerable Learners**

The Vice Principal: Student Services and Support reported that the Scorecard system enables managers to run reports on vulnerable groups (high needs students; students with Education, Health and Care Plans; students in care; care leavers; students who qualify for free school meals; students with learning difficulties and disabilities) and make comparisons against overall performance. It was reported that at the first progress check vulnerable learners, with the exception of care leavers, were predicted to achieve at the same level as their peers. Attendance, retention and achievement was also in line with or exceeding their peers. The College had six care leavers, of which two were currently shown as not on track to succeed. Further investigations of these individuals shows that there are no noticeable areas of concern.

9.5. **Higher Education**

The Executive Vice Principal: Curriculum, Planning and Quality reported that:

- HE recruited to target for full time students but was below target for part time students.
- The number of HE students on traditional degree programmes was reducing year on year and had reduced significantly over the last five-year period. There were various reasons for this. Some programmes in the Arts areas are reducing significantly, which is also being seen nationally. There was also increased competition from other HE providers.
- A strategic review of the HE curriculum was being undertaken and would be shared with Governors in due course.
- There had been a large increase in the number of higher and degree apprentices in areas such as engineering, business and education.
- The flexible teaching and learning introduced during the Covid pandemic was still in place and will remain in place. Students have a mix of remote taught sessions and on-site delivery. The mix varies by course but is about 40% remote delivery for most courses. Practical courses have a higher proportion of time on site. Feedback from the students during the first term was generally positive.
- Assessment for HE students had continued throughout the summer into September. Due to the no detriment policy put in place by the university, which permitted second and third attempts at assessments, there are quite a few students who could potentially need more support than previously.
- There were still twelve learners who had not yet passed last year. They were mostly in their final year and had until Christmas to complete their modules.
- By September 76% of students had gained good degrees (first class or upper second) compared to 72% in the previous year. This was because students had had the opportunity to be reassessed without penalty.

The Committee questioned the impact of the online teaching on the results of the NSS, for example access to library and IT resources. It was reported that the largest proportion of negative feedback in the NSS was not necessarily in those areas that would be using library resources. Last year the learning was fully remote, and staff were getting used to using the new systems. This year there are remote sessions and opportunities to come on to campus, and staff are now familiar with online systems.

10. **Approach to Quality Assurance/Improvement for 2021-22 including process for Teaching and Learning Observations**

CIC/CQ/21/3/6, Approach to Quality Assurance/Improvement for 2021-22 including process for Teaching and Learning Observations, was received and noted.

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

CIC/CQ/21/3/7, update on Strategic Plan goals, was received and noted. This was the final update for the first year of the Strategic Plan Action Plan, which covered the calendar year 2021. The Senior Leadership Team were due to meet the following day and would be asked to consider revised one-year targets and actions for year two of the Plan.

12. **Policy Review**

The Committee received, considered and **AGREED** to recommend to the Board for approval:

- CIC/CQ/21/3/8, Harmful Sexual Behaviour – Peer on Peer Sexual Abuse Further Education Students
- CIC/CQ/21/3/9, Dealing with Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment at College, Policy and Procedure for Further Education Students.

Given the importance of these two policies, the Executive were asked how they would be disseminated to staff and whether staff would confirm that they have read them. It was reported that, once approved, the policies would be added to the Portal, and they would be referred to in the fortnightly briefing to all staff. At the start of the academic year there had been an all staff briefing on safeguarding and a focus on harmful sexual behaviour and sexual violence. Other actions to promote this include mandatory training on peer on peer sexual abuse and online safety. This year staff were also required to confirm through their own record on the HR online system that they had received, read and understood Keeping Children Safe in Education. The HR system is also used to record annual declarations of criminal convictions.

The Committee **AGREED** that the policies, marked as subject to approved by the Board, could be published on the website in line with statutory requirements.

13. **Link Governor Scheme**

CIC/CQ/21/3/10, Link Governor Scheme, was received and discussed. The Board has had a link Governor scheme for many years but given the disruption over the last two years as a result of the pandemic and Governors not being on site, many of the links had broken. In the past Governors have been linked either with curriculum delivery areas or with particular themes. The College Executive felt that thematic links would be helpful when the scheme is reinstated and proposed a number of areas for 2022.

After discussion the Committee **AGREED** to reinstate the link Governor scheme in 2022 and accepted the thematic links proposed by the College Executive, subject to adding maths and English. The Clerk was asked to invite Governors to indicate their preferred link areas.

14. **Review of Meeting**

The Committee considered:

- Items/papers to be reported to the Board: SAR, policies, start of year update
- Items to be treated confidentially: - none
- Effectiveness of meeting and potential areas for improvement: it was agreed that an update on curriculum matters should be a standing agenda item at Board meetings irrespective of whether this Committee has met prior to the Board meeting.

- Feedback on papers: to ensure consistency, it was suggested that the Executive agree a checklist of things to be covered in the reports for types of provision. The Committee asked for reports to be more forward looking rather than looking back at the past, and suggested a 'what went well, even better' model.

15. **Date of Next Meeting**

There will be a virtual meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee on Wednesday, 2 February 2022 at 4.30pm.

16. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There were no items