

Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee  
held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Present**

Kevin Prince, in the Chair  
Peter Cook  
Angela O'Donoghue  
Brenda Rich

Terry Smyth  
Dawn Swainson  
Jenny Thorpe  
Caroline Williams

**In Attendance**

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 Alison Andreas.

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. Items that were not starred were noted and/or approved by the Committee without discussion.

4. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (CIC/CQ/23/3/1) were received and approved as an accurate record.

5. **Action Sheet and Matters Arising from the Minutes**

CIC/CQ/23/3/2, Curriculum and Quality Committee action sheet, was received and noted.

6. **Curriculum and Quality Update Report**

CIC/CQ/23/3/3, Curriculum and Quality Update Report – Summer 2023, was received and discussed.

Governors questioned the Executive on the predicted achievement rates in Sport which appeared to be low compared to other subject areas. The Vice Principal reported that he had met with the Area Head earlier that day, and that there would be an improvement in the final achievement rate, although it would still be lower than the College would like. Sport are reviewing their forms of assessment and are examining using more practical assessments alongside written ones.

It was reported that GCSE attendance at the exams was good, with the number of students attending the second best recorded by the College. Almost all the students that did not attend were on a terminal course, which impacted the College's ability to influence attendance.

In response to a question, it was reported that Cidori provides an online teaching platform. The College has a large number of adult learners doing teaching assistant qualifications with this new provider and may expand into construction qualifications. Performance was being closely monitored.

Governors observed that it would have been useful if achievement data for the previous year had been included alongside the predicted achievement data for the current year. **Action:** the Executive Vice Principal agreed to circulate the data.

Governors noted the factors that could impact the final apprenticeship achievement rate. Noting that at this point in the previous year the College had predicted an apprenticeship achievement rate of 67.3% and finished with an achievement of 58.7%, Governors asked what interventions were in place to prevent the figure dropping to the same extent this year. It was reported that between June and 31 July last year, a large number of learners counted in the June predicted achievement data were at gateway (ie completed their learning by the due date) but were not able to complete the End Point Assessment (EPA) by end of July, so moved out of the reporting year into the next academic year. This deteriorated the achievement rate significantly. This year the Director of Apprenticeships and Business Solutions has been meeting with Areas Head every four weeks since Easter to look at individual apprentice progress. It was reported that the predicted achievement was as realistic as it could be, based on retained learners and Area predictions about achievement date of the End Point Assessment, but last-minute issues could arise in the final weeks which would change this. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the 53 apprentices were already identified as needing to roll into next year's reporting. A question was asked as to whether all of these would no longer be timely, and the Executive Vice Principal said that she would provide analysis on this.

The current position of End Point Assessment results for academic year 2022/23 was considered. Governors noted that the EPA pass rate overall was 98%, but that 63% only achieved a Pass and said the College needed to be ambitious for more learners to achieve with a Merit or Distinction.

Governors asked about the focus on embedding the 'stakeholder informed curriculum'; what it means in operational terms; and how this linked to curriculum boards. It was reported that 'stakeholder informed curriculum' means working with industry to ensure the curriculum is relevant and contemporaneous, and ensuring that for each course the learners have contact with people from their destinations (employers or HE). It was reported that the 'Boards' concept of Curriculum Advisory Boards had largely failed because it was impossible to bring together employers, others, and Area Heads at the same time, but Area Heads were engaging with individual employers as 'Curriculum Advisors.' Given that Governors were not aware that Curriculum Advisory Boards concept had been removed, it was suggested that this should be a topic for a future pre-Board briefing, to update the Board on the structure in place and give assurance that a range of people were being consulted.

**Action:** Clerk

#### 7. **Update on Progress against Quality Improvement Plan**

CIC/CQ/23/3/4, Update on Progress against Quality Improvement Plan, was received and considered.

Governors noted that none of the targets under Goal 6 had been achieved and asked what the College would do differently to have a positive impact next year. It was reported that:

- Student outcomes in Early Years remained disappointing. The curriculum and all assessments had been reviewed but more needed to be done to prepare young people for going on placement. Retention had been a problem this year with students leaving in early December/early January when they first took public examinations, and when they encountered placements. In response to a question, it was reported that the students that leave go into an apprenticeship or into employment, which may be outside the sector.
- There had been a complete turnover of staff in Health and Social Care and only one member of the team has taught for more than one year. The College continues to work with this inexperienced team and is encouraged they have remained for a further year.
- The attendance target in Motor Vehicle had been missed. This was part of a wider College, and national, issue. The improvement to achievement target should be achieved.
- Challenges with the Construction apprenticeship programme last year, mainly due to staffing issues in Groundworks, meant virtually none of the apprentices went through the EPA. Some learners did not continue this year, impacting the achievement target. Although the target set at

the beginning of the year had been missed, there had been a significant improvement this year, which it was hoped would continue next year.

A Member asked if the College could use its industry contacts to help resolve some issues and suggested, for example, that ESNEFT (East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust) could potentially provide some support to the inexperienced teaching team. The Vice Principal agreed to take these points back to the Area's Management Team.

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

CIC/CQ/23/3/5, Update on Strategic Plan Goals – June 2023, was received and noted.

Governors noted that the College was currently looking for people to join the EDI Steering Group and were interested to know how they were being recruited and who would Chair the Group. It was reported that the Steering Group would be chaired by the Principal. Staff interested in joining the Steering Group, or one of the five Special Interest Groups, had been asked to put themselves forward. The next step would be to ensure that there is a clear representation on each group and to target people to become members as appropriate.

Given the earlier comments that the Boards feature of Curriculum Advisory Boards (CABs) were not operative, a Member questioned the reference in the paper to attendance at CABs, and was advised that these were examples of where CABs had worked in the year. For the next academic year Area Heads had asked for the concept of CABs to be set aside and move to a concept of curriculum advisers.

To aid Governors understanding, a Member asked if the authors of reports could identify key points in the Executive Summary. **Action:** all authors of Board papers.

9. **Safeguarding Report**

CIC/CQ/23/3/6, Safeguarding Report, was received and noted. The Designated Link Governor for Safeguarding reported that he had attended a Safeguarding Officers which he had found very instructive. Governors' attention was drawn to an additional section in the report, included at his request, summarising the process for record checking, carried out every half term, and the relationship between Student Service Counselling Service and the Colchester Institute Counselling Services.

10. **FE, HE and Apprenticeships Academic Targets 2023-24**

CIC/CQ/23/3/7, Academic Targets 2023-24, was received and discussed.

Governors challenged the targets, some of which were lower than the current year, as not being sufficiently aspirational. The Executive responded that the targets reflected the current year, which was not like any other year, and national data and were realistic. Governors were advised that there was still a strong element of ambition in the targets. The College had found it extremely hard to keep students on programme this year, and information from local Head Teachers is that the students that will be joining the College next year will attend less, and continue not have to have good academic habits. CPD on how to communicate with and support the post Covid learner would be part of the staff development programme at the end of term. It was reported that the College was losing more students than it would normally as a result of the cost of living crisis, and the numbers leaving had accelerated since February.

Governors accepted that there was a tension between being ambitious and realistic, but were of the view that, with the impact of Covid on students starting to fade, some of the targets should be higher, or alternatively the terminology is changed, and they become floor targets. Picking up on the point on the impact of Covid, the Chair reported that he had attended a meeting recently at which the DfE had openly admitted that attendance was not just a problem with older children in

secondary schools but was also an issue in primary schools. Society has changed and parents have a different attitude post Covid.

**Action:** the Principal was asked to review the targets, having regard to the discussion at this meeting.

11. **HE Students' Unions – arrangements from September 2023**

CIC/CQ/23/3/8, UCC Students Union, was received and noted. It was reported that HE student numbers had dropped dramatically in recent years. The College had struggled over a number of years to engage learners, who tend to be local and mostly adult, in a formal Students' Union, and in the current year the Union had existed in name only. A proposal to close the Students Union at the end of this academic year and put in place new arrangements based on the student voice was supported by the Committee.

Governors questioned how the new approach of student reps, student champions, and an online survey would work. Members also observed that HE students are over-surveyed, which might result in a poor response to the online survey. With the smaller number of students in HE it was suggested that, instead of creating new student posts, a member of the Management Team could meet with each course each semester as part of a timetabled lesson to talk to the students about their experience and concerns and follow up with a written response on what the College is doing in response. It was reported that this direct feedback from students is seen positively by the Office for Students. **Action:** the Executive Vice Principal agreed to feedback the Committee's suggestions to the Dean of Higher Education.

12. **Update on Self-Assessment 2022/23**

CIC/CQ/23/3/9, Update on Self-Assessment, was received and noted. The paper provided an overview of how the College would continue with the quality framework after the significant staffing changes to the senior team, which had resulted in roles associated with quality being removed for financial reasons.

Arising from the discussion Governors reminded the Executive that they would like the Quality Improvement Plan to include actions that can be measured. The Committee would also like to see measurable targets within departmental quality improvement plans, which were going to be reviewed four times each year. **Action:** Vice Principal.

Governors asked about the timeframe for the development of the Self-Assessment Report. It was reported that the first meeting would be held the following Tuesday. The Principal and Vice Principal would draft the whole College SAR and the first draft would be written by the end of July/early August. The draft would be developed as the data is officially confirmed and should be complete in early October. The Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24 would be modified in light of the SAR. Areas were starting their own review process which would be completed by mid-September.

13. **Governor Link Scheme 2023/24**

CIC/CQ/23/3/10, Governor Link Scheme 2023/24, was received, considered and APPROVED. The role of the link Governor was discussed.

Peter Cook reported that he met with the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) team each term. The conversations had been positive. The College's Matrix accreditation was coming up for renewal in the autumn.

The Chair thanked Governors for the time that they put into the link scheme.

14. **Review of Meeting**

The Committee reviewed the effectiveness of the meeting and agreed the items to be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

15. **Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair reported that the next meeting, date to be confirmed, would be held in person at the Colchester campus.

16. **Any Other Urgent Business**

The Committee extended its thanks to Jenny Thorpe for her contribution to the work of the Committee and wished her well in the future.