

COLCHESTER INSTITUTE CORPORATION

CURRICULUM AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

held on

**Thursday 3 April 2025 at 4.30pm
at the Colchester campus**

Present:

Alison Andreas - Principal & CE
Lisa Blake - Corporation Chair
Adam Fair – Staff Governor
Marco Iciek - Governor (Safeguarding link)
Nicola Jay – Staff Governor
Sally Messenger - Governor (Skills & Careers Link)
Caroline Williams – Committee Chair

In attendance:

Alison Bennett – Head of Governance
Ali Davies – Deputy Principal
Mark Emerson – Vice Principal
Suzanne Kinsey – Assistant Principal

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Lee Bingham, Angela O’Donoghue and Sanjeev Arya. Tim Triffitt was not present.

2. Declaration of any conflicts of interest

None.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 January 2025

CIC/CQ/25/2/1, Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2025, were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendments:

ACTION: Page 2, item 5 - Head of Governance to include the response to Governor’s question on the difference between those with a diagnosed difficulty and those learners who consider themselves as having one.

ACTION: Page 4, item 5 - Head of Governance to include the response to the Governor’s question on why the safeguarding system being used does not deliver data in a timely manner.

ACTION: Page 4, item 5 - Head of Governance to include action, including owner and date, on reporting back of supported experiments at a subsequent meeting.

ACTION: Page 5, item 8 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Head of Governance to include action to be linked to Governors request that ‘where possible, more detailed information be included in the report to provide additional context.

4. Action Sheet and Matters Arising from the Minutes

CIC/CQ/25/2/2, Curriculum and Quality Action Sheet, was received and it was noted that there were no outstanding actions.

Governors **QUESTIONED** the discussion that took place at the 30 January meeting around the difference between diagnosed learning difficulties and those learners who consider themselves to have a difficulty, and what the outcome of this was. The Deputy Principal explained that this is being reviewed with the aim of having a more robust system around the enrolment form and how the data is integrated, in place for September.

5. Curriculum and Quality Update Report

CIC/CQ/25/2/3, Curriculum and Quality Update Report, was received for discussion.

It was reported that:

- Overall attendance in FE continues to be good at 87.1%, a 1.5 percentage point increase on the same time last year.
- Attendance at GCSE English and Maths continues to improve and is now 77.4% for English and 76.2% for Maths. This shows a gradual continuous improvement over the last two years however it recognised that this is still too low.
- Adult attendance is currently sitting 1.2 percentage points above this point last year (84.2% vs 83%).
- Attendance among our 16-18 learners remains at a similar level to last year at 87.4% compared to 87% last year.

It was explained that Engineering is one of a small number of areas where English and Maths is delivered in area (as a pilot) and is the only area where this approach is working.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) adults is low at 80% attendance. Adult only groups have lower attendance. Governors **QUESTIONED** what is being done to improve ESOL adults' attendance. The Deputy Principal said that this is being looked at in Area Monitoring Meetings and is reviewed by age and provision type. Areas with serious concern will have an action to support improvement added to their Area Management Plans, however it is recognised that in some areas there are limited actions that can be put in place due to the learners' circumstances. Governors commented on the link between motivation and quality of delivery. If learners do not feel motivated, they will not attend the lessons.

Retention:

- Overall retention is up on last year at 93.4% against 92.8%. Retention is highest within higher education programmes at 97% and lowest within apprenticeships at 81.7% .
- Retention rates for High Needs Students, those with EHCPs and students in care are above the college average.
- For Care Leavers, Free School Meals and Students with a Declared Learning Difficulty or Disability retention is below the college average.

Governors **ASKED** whether retention refers to in-year retention or overall retention for apprentices. It was confirmed to be overall retention (retention across the apprenticeship programme and not within the current year of study). Governors requested that future reports state whether retention refers to in-year or programme rates.

ACTION: Future reports to state whether retention figures relate to in-year or overall programme retention.

Achievement:

- The overall FE predicted achievement rate currently sits at 81.9%.
- Predicted achievement for most students in vulnerable categories is on, above, or significantly above the college predicted achievement rate. The exceptions are learners in care and those with a declared learning difficulty or disability. Governors **QUESTIONED** the gap between predicted achievement and retention. The Deputy Principal said that this is worst-case scenario, and the college is employing the same strategies as previous years to close the gap.

It is recognised that the Summer term often sees a reduction in retention, with those learners who have not been making progress not returning to college for the final term.

Student groups:

High needs students, those in care and students with EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plans) are achieving well compared to their peers. Areas of concern are care leavers and those on free school meals where predicted achievement rates are low due to them being a hard-to-reach group who are often disengaged. Governors **ASKED** about the predicted achievement of 77.8% for those with disclosed learning difficulty/ disability which they felt looked lower than it should with the amount of support in place for these students. The committee was assured that work is being carried out through Area Management Meetings to review this.

Governors **ASKED** whether care leavers are provided with any additional support. It was explained that within the safeguarding and welfare team a member of staff has an overall responsibility for all students in care and care leavers. This member of staff remains in contact with all care leavers and continues to offer support including advocacy for internal and external meetings. Governors commented that the report states the uptake of support is low and **QUESTIONED** whether anything different is being looked at to increase uptake. The college continues to work to engage with this vulnerable category, being aware of the risk of low attendance, retention and achievement. A review of Additional Learning Support is being undertaken and will cover value for money, who does what, the level of support and impact of support.

Governors **ASKED** if there is any data available on Young Adult Carers (YACs). The Deputy Principal said that there will be a change to the way data is collected for the new academic year to include YACs.

Governors **NOTED** that learners with EHCPs are achieving better than their peers.

BTEC:

Level 2 Health and Social Care BTEC results: disappointing whilst there is a small improvement in the number of learners achieving a level 2 pass this is at the expense of merit and distinction grades.

Level 3 exam results: overall the grade profile is broadly in line with the results last January. Business and Health & Social Care results are very positive with higher grade profiles overall. Health and Social Care and Business are the largest areas and show a higher profile.

Governors **ASKED** what the college does with students who achieve a 'near pass'. It was explained that previously the college paid for re-sits in Early Years. All areas are now encouraged to submit for a re-sit however it is at the student's discretion. It was clarified that a near pass is in fact a low pass in terms of score. .

Apprenticeships at R08

Overall, 587 are due to achieve this contract year. This includes those who have already achieved, failed or withdrawn. Planned end date is now the end of their practical period at which point they enter gateway. 250 (I had 272) of the 587 are currently in learning (not yet withdrawn or achieved) taking the predicted achievement rate to 78.1%. Governors recognise that national rates for apprenticeships are much lower than for FE. Current GFE 2023/24 achievement rate for apprenticeship provision is 62.3% and ALL Provider rate is 60.5%. This is a significant increase on previous years.

ACTION: Reports to show those apprentices, who are expected to complete in the current contract year and therefore complete their End Point Assessment, as a percentage of the 41% (this is apprentices still to achieve in 2024/25).

The committee were informed that the college is above income target for this point in the year. Discussions are taking place with Cambridge Fire and Rescue to take on a small cohort of apprentices on the Fire Fighters apprenticeship. Met with Buckingham Fire and Rescue and have shared the programme and methodology to support them in the delivery of the programme.

Teaching and Learning Observations

- Round 1 of the new teaching and learning observation process has been complete and the overall outcome shows that 92% of lessons observed were classed as mastery or secure, this is against a college target of 90%.
- The appointment of the new Head of Learner Engagement and Progression has already had a very positive impact on the learner experience including the addition of a wide range of enrichment and employer engagement activities, full participation in College's Week and activities that have raised the awareness of equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Curriculum Planning has been reviewed and a new more rigorous process put in place that ensures the curriculum plan is robust and meets the needs of all stakeholders.
- Round two of the area monitoring meetings was undertaken in January/February with urgent actions being followed up within one to two weeks of the initial meeting. This has resulted in significant progress being made more quickly than has been the case previously.
- Discussions have taken place about the teaching and learning observation system and as a result training is being provided for observers to build confidence in feedback techniques and standardising the writing of forms.
- A full review of teacher training, teacher development, quality assurance and quality improvement is being undertaken. It hoped that staff recruitment and staff retention will be improved as a result of this work.

Governors **COMMENTED** that this is very positive and provides assurance to the committee of the quality of teaching within the college.

6. Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

CIC/CQ/25/2/4, Quality Improvement Plan, was received for discussion and an update on progress was provided by the Deputy Principal, saying that good progress is being made against most aspects of the Quality Improvement Plan, although impact for some actions and performance against the Final Targets will not be seen until later in the year. Governors **QUESTIONED** the deadlines for the milestone actions and how they are reflected in the QIP. It was agreed that the deadline should reflect the completion of the milestone. It was agreed that a summary of progress would be provided against each action going forward with the summary format being provided to the Board.

ACTION: Going forward a report on the progress made towards the achievement of the QIP would be provided to the C&Q Committee. With a report in summary format being provided to the Board.

7. Safeguarding Report

CIC/CQ/25/2/5, Safeguarding Report, was received and the Deputy Principal provided an update since the last meeting. It was reported that:

- Staff Safeguarding update including SCR, DBS checks indicates 100% compliance.
- Mandatory staff training compliance ranges between 97.8% and 99.6%
- There have been no staff safeguarding allegations.
- A number of behaviour related matters have been reported in recent weeks including a spate of vandalism all of which are being managed.
- Campus security team are fully staffed and are now able to provide a positive presence around the campuses.
- Between 10 October and 28 January the Colchester security team conducted 8 stop and search searches. In Braintree across the same period 4 searches were carried out.
- The college has seen an increase in poor behaviour towards staff by parents/guardians.

- Mental health remains the top theme in terms of student safeguarding incidents with an increase of 10 cases over the same period last year (97 compared to 87) however the breakdown of reported incidents varies from the previous reporting period.

Governors **COMMENTED** on the total number of safeguarding reports.

The college informed the committee that a part time counsellor is funded by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and this will be continuing on a rolling contract. The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) have delivered training to staff on how to deal with high levels of anxiety and learners showing suicidal thoughts. Senior safeguarding staff are provided with external supervision.

8. Teaching and Learning survey 2024/25

CIC/CQ/25/2/6, Teaching and Learning Survey 2024/25, was received for discussion.

The committee **COMMENTED** that the report was very comprehensive and triangulates with much of what has been heard.

9. Higher Education Module Evaluation Semester 1

CIC/CQ/25/2/2, Higher Education Evaluation Semester 1, was received and noted.

10. Policy Review

CIC/CQ/25/2/8, Prevent Strategy, was received for approval.

The committee requested that the following amendments:

- Policy to make reference to College Staff and Governors and outlines how Governor Prevent training is monitored to hold governors to account.
- Sect 7.14 to refer to consistency of development across the college.
- Critical incident procedures to state how many activities take place each year.
- Flow chart to be added as an appendix to ensure transparency of process.

DECISION: The Committee **AGREED** to recommend the Policy to the Board for approval subject to the above amendments being made and reviewed by the committee chair and safeguarding link governor.

ACTION: Prevent Policy to be recommended to the Board for approval.

11. Any Other Urgent Business

None.

12. Meeting Dates

To note the forthcoming meeting dates:

Thursday 26 June 2025 – It was noted that this is a change in date.

All meetings to take place at the Colchester Campus at 4:30pm