

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Performance Review and Quality Committee
10 February 2021
8.30 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

Present	Samantha Fletcher	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	Scott Leadley	Governor (Vice Chair)
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Lee Smith	Governor
Attending	Ruth Harrison	Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning
	Laura Holland	Head of English & Maths, ESOL (part)
	Vicky Mann	Head of Apprenticeships & Work Based Learning (part)
	Steve Lowery	Head of Faculty – Technology (part)
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Roderick Watkins. Lee Smith advised that he would need to leave the meeting at 9.45 am.

2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 2 December 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2020 were reviewed and agreed as being an accurate record.

4 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for item 4.

With regard to item 5 on 13/3/19, the Clerk advised that the Head of Maths & English no longer considered a reporting dashboard necessary and had asked the Committee to approve its removal from the outstanding matters. This was agreed by the Committee.

Various items relating to the reporting of data for apprenticeships had been consolidated in one single outstanding item. It was agreed to discuss this item when the Head of Work Based Learning joined the meeting for agenda item 7.

Laura Holland joined the meeting at 8.35 am

5 Mathematics & English

The Head of Faculty advised English and Maths continued to be delivered on-line. Assessments for Maths were taking place on-line and were working well, although for English on-line assessment was proving to be more difficult. Emphasis had been given to boost the interactivity by learners. Attendance had stabilised at 72%-75%, having dipped at the start of the academic year (September) and then again in January 2021. Regular meetings were taking place with Heads of Faculties and Programme Managers to review attendance levels. It was reported that CWA was the only college regionally to be delivering a full timetable on-line. Attendance levels at other regional colleges ranged from 50% to 60%. National attendance data for FE institutions was not available. An analysis of non-attenders found there to be no specific group of individuals identified and that the average 25% of non-attenders varied weekly due to a number of reasons (connectivity, self-isolating, domestic issues). There would be no exams for GCSE for the summer term and guidance on this was awaited. It was likely that exams for functional skills would be cancelled from April 2021 onwards. Enrolment to the adult classes had been successful with 127 learners enrolled against a target of 90 for the spring cohort.

Governors asked how the current methods of delivery and support had impacted on learners. The Head of Faculty reported that a number of learners that had joined in September 2020 at L2 following centre assessed grades over the summer period were struggling with their work and that effort was being expended in getting them to the correct level. Further, the delivery of teaching via Zoom was a longer process than the delivery offered face-to-face in a classroom. 'Topic Checks' had been introduced to track the progress of learners. The Principal commented on the need to assess learners' abilities on entry to avoid issues caused by over-inflated grades. The Head of Faculty explained that in the autumn term the usual BKSb assessments had not been undertaken, accepting that earlier assessment would have been beneficial for both learners and teaching staff. Governors asked if the AoC was aware of the issues of students being unqualified for the grades they had received last summer. The Principal commented that the AoC was aware of this issue, however, for next year, the College would work hard to ensure students were assessed on the commencement of their course and spoken to honestly and with integrity to ensure they are placed at the correct level for their ability. Further, digital poverty which had caused early problems for some learners was being addressed with the issue of new IT equipment initially from the College, and more recently following a grant from the Department for Education.

Governors asked about a previous suggestion raised to consider a minimum level of attendance requirement. The Head of Faculty considered that it was important to chase all learners for any period of non-attendance to understand the reasons for absence and that if a minimum level of absence was set then some absences could be overlooked. In order to help those learners who had encountered difficulties, hard-copy packs were being posted out, the LRC was available for on-campus study and IT devices had been distributed to a number of learners.

Governors were interested to hear about the attendance of adult learners. The Head of Faculty reported that there were currently 2 cohorts running. The first cohort learners were now waiting for their exams and would normally have completed their studies at this point in the year. Actual attendance data was not to hand, but the Head of Faculty expected attendances to now decline in advance of the exams.

Governors commented on particular employers, noting the Royal Navy, who had recently announced their intention to only recruit new starters with a minimum grade 6 in English and maths. The Head of Faculty advised that she was not aware of the increase in the required grades, noting the Government's guidance on minimum grades should be maintained.

The Chair asked about the engagement from students with on-line delivery. The Head of Faculty reported that engagement had improved since September, albeit slowly. Learners were asked to attend with their cameras on and good use was being made of the break-out rooms for group work and discussion. However, it was considered more difficult for teachers to monitor and assess learners' engagement online than in a classroom setting.

The Chair asked about the measures to ensure each learner is making maximum progress. The Head of Faculty explained that each learner progresses at a different rate and that currently there were some data difficulties. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that the actual assessments undertaken work. Where progress was behind, the additional tuition fund was being utilised in providing small group interventions; further, revision groups were being planned with additional resources.

Governors asked if class sizes had been reduced for online sessions, noting that smaller groups perhaps work better during a remote session. The Head of Faculty advised that initially, from September, online classes were actually larger than those normally held in the classroom. However, from the October half-term numbers were reduced to typically a normal class size. The Head of Faculty agreed that small groups would work better although resources were not available to provide the number of additional classes that would be necessary.

The Chair noted the need for the College to take the best action for each learner, noting however there was a need for data to record and monitor progress.

The report was noted.

6 ESOL

The Head of Faculty outlined the problems being experienced within the ESOL department which was currently the only area of the College graded as 'inadequate.' The teaching team performed well in the classroom setting but had struggled with the move to online delivery due to Covid-19. Additional team meetings had been introduced to support staff, along with golden hours and additional training in a bid to improve online teaching delivery. It was considered that external advice/guidance from a consultant would help to support and encourage staff in their approach. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning added that progress had halted, and a number of learners had withdrawn. The Vice Principal recognised the need for the delivery of ESOL to be improved as quickly as possible as there was the potential for increased learners joining the programme from other courses across the College.

Governors asked if there was any further support that could be provided to the ESOL teachers. The Head of Faculty advised that further training would be provided where appropriate and that the Technology Enhanced Learning team had been supporting the teachers and this would continue. It was emphasised that the teachers within ESOL were good, but that the delivery of the course online needed much improvement.

The Principal explained that it was necessary to bring this issue to the Committee's attention. The use of an external consultant to provide further support to the teachers would add to the

actions already taken. The Vice Principal added that staffing within the department was stable and was encouraged that the teachers had much to offer to their learners.

The Chair noted the immediate need for improvements to be made to the online delivery of ESOL and to ensure retention improved.

The report was noted.

Laura Holland left the meeting at 9.20 am

Vicky Mann joined the meeting at 9.20 am

7 Apprenticeships

The Head of Department advised that National Apprentices Week 2021 was currently underway. Within the recent Norfolk County Council awards, 5 apprentices from the College had been highly commended in their respective categories.

The number of overdue carpentry apprentices continued to be a concern, however the College, following a recent assessment, was able to retain its direct claim statuses – this was viewed as positive. There was further good news in that the electrical department regained its direct claim status.

The government's incentive payments to small employers, due to end in January 2021 had been extended to March 2021, supporting the employers and their apprentices.

Due to staff recruitment issues within bricklaying, a group of learners due to start in January 2021 had been delayed to March 2021. The vacancy was currently out to advert. For current learners a temporary agency teacher had been engaged until Easter.

Achievement rates, where the target was set at 75% was underperforming. The Head of Department expected this to only reach 70% in the current year, based on the current data and its projection. The financial target of £3m was expected to be achieved.

Due to the continued disruption of Covid-19, a tracking report had been created to enable advisors, (and managers) to see the current status of all apprentices and to monitor where engagement had reduced. It was considered that this new report provided managers with sufficient monitoring capability and that, for the time being, no further reports would be required. The outstanding action relating to data reporting for apprentices would be removed from the matters arising sheet.

ACTION-CLERK

The Principal reported that the College's ESFA representative considered CWA to be 3 times higher in its engagement with the employers' digital apprenticeship service than other regional colleges. The Principal recognised the work the College had undertaken with employers in supporting them to use the service.

The Chair asked if there was any comparative data currently available. The Head of Department advised that there was no data available, although general comments and feedback was being received from other regional colleges.

Governors were concerned with the number of overdue apprentices and asked how assurances could be given that this would be achieved. The Head of Department advised that there were regular communications across the College teams to chase progress and to ensure engagement

from all concerned with swift action being requested on internal verification, monitoring and so on ensure progress was made.

Governors asked about the process for making claims within plumbing. The Head of Department explained that this was a direct claim made by the College, although noting that an external verifier had the authority to carry out sample reviews during future visits to the College.

The Chair asked about the current concerns and priorities. The Head of Department noted that the continuing move from Frameworks to Standards across the various courses/qualifications were still causing issues. The Chair recognised the hard work that was continuing within this department and appreciated the effort and commitment from the team.

The report was noted.

Vicky Mann left the meeting at 9.45 am

Steve Lowery joined the meeting at 9.45 am

8 Technology Faculty Update

The Head of Faculty reported that there had been a number of drop-ins to the Level 1 programmes – staff were being asked to be more optimistic and independent in their approaches. Two or three staff were found to be struggling and support/guidance was being provided to them; elsewhere good work was being seen.

City & Guilds were now working with the College in regard to plumbing. It was hoped that the outstanding assessments for apprentices would be completed by Easter.

The target to develop IQA process to improve assessment was showing as ‘amber’ within the report although this was now considered to be ‘green.’ There had been some recent visits from the external verifier and direct claims for Electrical were now possible. Motor Vehicles had received a visit from City & Guilds, with no action points being given. The Chair asked for clarification on the move from amber to green. The Head of Faculty explained that the external comments received had been positive with no action points being suggested.

Within Plumbing, facilities were being developed for synoptic assessments. There was currently a vacancy.

Management within the faculty was improving. Area performance reviews and focus on the curriculum were both considered to be ahead of the previous year; staff were feeling supported in their work.

Governors asked about the delivery of online teaching, noting the comment from the report suggesting there was a small number of staff who had not embraced online delivery. The Head of Faculty reported that of these, a few felt they could not deliver effectively. To aid this, some staff had attended training sessions with the Technology Enhanced Learning team, with further support being received from Joyce Chen of the Learning Practice.

Governors asked what was being done to support students during the continued lockdown period. The Head of Faculty considered that the engagement from L1 learner had been good and were keen to be in the workshops once this was possible. In the meantime, learners were being encouraged to observe their own vehicles at home.

Governors commented positively on the progress made with the IQA processes and asked how this had been achieved. The Head of Faculty explained that this had progressed due to the continued close management and challenge to the individual managers, who were now being encouraged to manage their own areas which had previously proven to be a cultural change. Staff were now made aware of the importance of IQA and it was a focus for the faculty that should be maintained.

Lee Smith left the meeting at 9.55 am

The Chair asked about the priorities for the faculty over the next few weeks. The Head of Faculty said that more work would be done to improve the online delivery of courses; the timely completion of apprentices and IQA would continue to be monitored and would remain a priority. The main area of concern for the Head of Faculty was the recruitment and retention of staff.

The report was noted.

Steve Lowery left the meeting at 10.01 am

9 Learning & Curriculum Report

The Vice Principal noted a formatting error in the report in that the performance graph for the Technology faculty was not showing – this was shared on screen for the Committee to view.

The Vice Principal reported that teaching staff were being encouraged to undertake self-assessment in a bottom-up approach. This approach began in December and had now been shared with all faculties. Course Directors were receiving guidance on how to RAG rate their respective areas to ensure consistency across the College. Good challenge from Heads of Faculties and Programme Managers was being noticed. Both Technology and Creative Arts only had one course each rated as 'red.' The Chair commented that it was good to push responsibility and accountability downwards, to those who were managing the areas on a daily basis, but with continued monitoring and scrutiny from the Vice Principal. The Vice Principal noted that there were other benefits to be gained by Course Directors preparing their own reports and assessment, with support and challenge from above. Scott Leadley, Staff Governor, added that within his own teaching area this approach was working well and that there was a feeling of ownership from the process.

Governors were concerned that there was less focus on the data which would normally be used to assess performance and inform discussions. The Vice Principal said that data, such as attendance and retention would always need to be considered. Work would continue to improve the current processes and indeed a meeting was taking place later that day with unions to discuss further improvements.

The report was noted.

10 Current Performance Data and KPIs 2020/21

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students, Andrew Gedge, had prepared the report for the Committee before he left the College on 31 January 2021. The Principal commented that the data within the report reflected the earlier conversations within the meeting and the areas of concern known to the Committee. There were no questions raised on the report.

The report was noted.

11 Quality Improvement Plan 2020/21

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students, Andrew Gedge, had prepared the report for the Committee before he left the College on 31 January 2021. The Vice Principal noted that the improvement plan focused on the current (and correct) issues for the College. There were no questions raised on the report.

12 Applewood Nursery Update

The Vice Principal reported that within the nursery there was a mix of flexible working and staff being furloughed to help reduce costs during the current period. Training had continued and support was still being received from external consultants. Further engagement would continue when staff returned in order to maintain the higher levels of working.

Staff had notice that pre-school children appeared to be struggling in certain areas and so work plans had been amended to support the children as they prepared for school. Staff felt empowered that they were able to make the changes to support the children more.

The next Ofsted inspection was not expected until the summer term.

The Chair commented on the changes in the approach from staff, their attitude and confidence, both within the nursery and from other areas noticed in other reports during the meeting.

The report was noted.

13 Complaints (current)

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students, Andrew Gedge, had prepared the report for the Committee before he left the College on 31 January 2021. The Chair commented that there appeared to be a higher proportion of issues relating to student experience. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning noted the importance of early messaging and trying to deal with issues before they turned into complaints. The Principal said that Clare Pelling, Learning Experience Manager had been reviewing students' views, most of which were positive. Where action was required this was being passed to teaching staff. Overall, the comments received had been reassuring.

The report was noted.

14 Committee Performance, Terms of Reference and Future Business Agenda Plan

The Committee reviewed the committee review proforma as prepared by the Clerk and concluded that it provided a fair and accurate summary of the committee's performance during the past year. With regard to Item 1a on benchmarking in the sector, the Principal reflected that it was often difficult to obtain data for benchmarking purposes and that where possible colleges should share information to allow for review and comparison. The Principal would speak with other colleges to discuss this possibility. **ACTION-PRINCIPAL**

Governors commented on the remote meetings that had been held throughout the year during the coronavirus pandemic. The general feeling was that governors missed being on campus and seeing the College in action. Governors agreed to the Clerk's proposal to reduce the number of scheduled meetings for 2021/22 from 5 to 4, noting that additional meetings could be

called if there were any urgent items of business. Governors commented that members were invited to join the summer performance reviews of faculties and departments.

The Terms of Reference were considered with no changes to be made.

No changes to the proposed future business agenda plan were required, although the Chair noted that the Committee would regularly consider its agenda and ask for additional reports when required.

The report was noted.

15 Any Other Business

Governors asked if managers were considering the changes that had to be made during the coronavirus pandemic, and of those, which had been beneficial and would therefore be retained by the College moving forward. The Principal advised that this had been discussed within SMT earlier that week and that a management development day was planned for March 2021 to focus on this and other similar issues, such as a flexible/homeworking policy for staff.

17 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation

The Committee continued to focus on the same areas of Technology, Apprenticeships and Maths & English. However, one new area of concern had recently arisen, that being ESOL - the only department graded as "inadequate" within the College. Two funding grants had recently been awarded by the Combined Authority to support ESOL. Action was planned by managers to address the issues.

18 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 28 April 2021 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 10.38 am