

# **CORPORATION BOARD CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STUDENTS COMMITTEE**



Minutes of a meeting held online on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 6pm

## **Present**

Astrid Schloerscheidt (Chair);  
Sam Wolfe ;  
Helen Brown

## **In attendance**

Joanne Milsom, Deputy Principal;  
Scott Gray, Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality;  
Clare Forder;  
Jude Brown, Clerk & Governance Advisor

Governor questions are represented with bullet points and bold italics, and management responses follow.

## **1. Opening comments**

### **1.1 Apologies and Matters to be raised under AOB**

Carole Kitching, Abigail Kyei, and Jacqui Canton had given their apologies. Jack Price had left the College in the preceding week. Governor Clare Forder attended as a guest. The Committee was quorate. There were no matters to be raised under AOB.

### **1.2 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

### **2.1 Public Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record.

## **3. Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points**

There had been no written resolutions reported since the last meeting. The Committee noted the action points from the previous meeting had been completed.

The Committee noted the report.

## **4. Presentation – Sub-Contracting**

The Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality gave a presentation about Sub-Contracting. This had been identified as a topic which the Committee would like to review based on feedback in the College's 2024 Ofsted report. It was considered important that the Committee understood more about why the College sub-contracted, which companies were used for sub-contracting, the performance of these companies and the governance, management, and quality processes around them.

There is a policy on Subcontracting which the College follows, and sub-contracting is used to reach learners in the community and give access to people who might otherwise not be able to access learning. It is also used for niche delivery which might be unsustainable without the College's support. There are some limits set by DfE, for example, not more than 25% of ASF. The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality, gave an overview of the sub-contractors

and the kinds of organisations they are and the provision they supply. The sub-contractors are reviewed year on year.

Performance is monitored and many of the sub-contractors perform very well and are monitored by Heads of Faculty in line with college expectations. Performance is in line with the College.

An overview of the management and governance of the processes around sub-contracting and quality was provided to provide assurance about risk, performance and compliance. The Sub-Contracting Policy itself is reviewed at F&GP Committee as well as the budget lines and compliance is reviewed at Audit Committee. Health and safety relating to sub-contractors is also reviewed at F&GP and quality at CQS through the SAR and the QIP. The College must also do an annual return to DfE. The Committee were satisfied that there was sufficiently robust oversight and that this had been a helpful overview.

- ***How does safeguarding work with sub-contractors operationally?*** A lot of the provision is adult so there are fewer safeguarding requirements, however due diligence is conducted to ensure that sub-contractors have trained staff. Operationally the organisations will have a DSL who has a link to the College safeguarding team. If a concern is raised to the College, then the College Safeguarding lead will liaise with the sub-contractor. When providers are new then a lot of review and support is provided tailored to the size and experience of the organisation. The College only sub-contracts where it really needs to and the provision can be better delivered by the provider; all the local provision is quite well understood. Unannounced visits are also conducted. Processes appear to work well as they are rigorous.
- ***Is it just English and Maths?*** There is a lot of this for 16-18 but also employability skills and entry level qualifications. For adults the provision is more mixed. There are several elements and some of the provision could not be delivered without the support of the College. All the sub-contractors are specialists so they can sometimes change year to year to meet the needs of the community and ensure equal access.
- ***Would you ever sub-contract 14-16?*** The College would be unlikely to do this as DfE would probably not allow it to or fund it to do this, and the College can only take school-link or home educated students. Students this age should be otherwise be in school and the College is primarily aimed at post-16 education.
- ***In terms of quality assurance, where does the Committee see the numbers? Should they be separated out?*** SMT have considered this, and the Deputy Principal and Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality, are looking at this. The numbers are currently reported within the faculty in which the provision sits which it is felt gives the Heads of Faculty ownership in terms of quality etc. A breakdown of type of provision within faculty could possibly be provided to make it clear. This will be reviewed.

The Committee noted the presentation and thanked the Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality for the overview.

## 5. Curriculum

## 5.1 Curriculum Report

The Deputy Principal gave a short overview of the Curriculum report acknowledging it was relatively high level this time due to the lack of detail around recently announced reforms.

- ***Regarding the renewed policy focus on green skills and construction, what is the impact on the College? Will you try to do things differently?*** While there have been several public announcements and pots of funding created, there has been little detail so far given to enable a proper assessment of what it might mean for the College. For example, with the TECs for construction, from what SMT understand it may be difficult for any college in the region to qualify based on the published criteria. The College has until 4<sup>th</sup> July to decide whether to apply.
- ***What does the Skills England work mean for the College?*** It is positive to see Further Education have a focus and for the sector to be recognised. It's too early to have a view on the impact as again the detail behind the announcements has not been given.
- ***How will the College market the HTQs?*** SMT accept that numbers were not as good as hoped for last year. The challenge is partly that the term HTQ is not well understood compared to the old HND qualifications for example so there is an education job for marketing to warm the market up as well as encouraging students to apply.

The Committee noted the report.

## 6.1 Quality

### 6.1 Quality Headline Report

The Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality, gave an overview of the Quality Report highlighting the 15% increase in learning walks carried out so far this year and the 85% of teaching and learning that is effective or better. There is no concentration of the 'not yet effective' teaching and learning in one teacher or curriculum area, and the team continue to support teachers to improve through targeted interventions.

During Quality Health Checks conducted in curriculum areas requiring improvement from last year, it was highlighted as positive to see high levels of effectiveness on the learning walks. In Construction there was good attendance and all the learning walks carried out had been effective, including one highly effective. The Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality felt that this showed the value of the support given to new teachers such as the Valued Practitioner Programme (VPP) as there have been a lot of new teachers in this area who had entered from industry. It was pleasing to see the progress and important to keep up the momentum.

- ***Regarding the Quality Health Checks in Construction, the narrative is focussed on Construction at Witney but at SAR Validation last year it was explained that the issues with construction were at Abingdon due largely to staffing challenges and that the Witney provision was good. Was Abingdon part of the health check too?*** The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality, explained that Construction had been looked at as a whole so it had been at both campuses. Abingdon had previously not performed as well but a lot of the teachers have now passed the VPP.

The approach to underperforming courses or curriculum areas was outlined and how this would form part of the SAR and QIP process. The targeted approach supported by data will also enable support to be put in place. The new Ofsted framework publication date had been

put back to the autumn so the format for the SAR for this year would continue to be the original key judgement areas as noted in the report.

***The target of 85% attendance is effectively a day off per week. Is this in line with other colleges?*** There is no published college benchmark so 85% is the bare minimum required while Student Support work with the student to try to improve their attendance. SMT are clear that 85% is not regarded as ok and this is not the expected attendance level, in fact 85% of students should have 85% attendance or better. Many colleges have 80% or less depending on the subject. The College has used 85% based on its own data and analysis showing that, below this point, lack of attendance starts to seriously hamper performance and achievement.

***It would be useful to see what attendance is like for different courses.*** There are very different patterns for different provision, for example HE/Adult Learning is very different to 16-18. The latter group is not the same as school. The College has whole jobs dedicated to supporting students into college and spent a lot of time on this topic with Ofsted. Some students experience a range of challenges to attendance, including having to work as their parents can't afford to support them properly. It was agreed that this was an evidence-based benchmark which was fine.

The Committee noted the report.

## 6.2 Predicted Achievement Rates

The paper was taken as read and noted as predicted not final. Performance in exams or controlled assessments will determine the actual achievement rates. However, the predictions are positive and show the work that has been done at a granular level to help students to achieve their qualifications. It was highlighted that the landscape has changed with the increased number of exams and diversity of assessments which can make predictions hard. However, the College staff understand the expectations and work hard to support the students to achieve their qualifications, and the team are optimistic. The actual achievement rate will be reported to CQS in November. The Committee were pleased to see the positive progress.

- ***In relation to English and Maths, if you have someone who is predicted a three, can they be pushed to lift this up?*** The grade boundaries can be difficult as they can shift the grade boundaries depending on the performance of the cohort that year, and this is a hard group of learners to work with who may have previously had bad experiences with exams at school. Targeted support does take place to try to help them achieve a grade 4 and the College is looking at whether those at grade 3 can take a November resit.

The Committee noted the report.

## 6.3 End of Year Update on Quality Improvement Plan

The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality gave an overview of the QIP noting that there had been progress in all areas. While there had been progress, some areas may remain in the QIP for next academic year as SMT want to continue to see attendance improve for example. Work will continue with managers to set targets and aspirations to ensure all courses meet or exceed national benchmarks.

The Committee noted the report.

## **7 Students**

### **7.1 Student Report**

The Deputy Principal gave a brief overview. One key highlight was enrichment where there had been good progress. There had also been progress at Witney where the team will have a dedicated space for enrichment activities for the next academic year. It is hoped that this dedicated space will help establish the brand a bit more, so students feel able to participate.

Regarding the termly survey, are any of the strengths/development areas the same as last year? If development areas the same, has there been progress? Students' understanding of their progress is still an area for improvement. Students use a system called Promonitor, but it is different to all the other systems they mainly use. This information will move to EBS, and target setting will happen there so will be all in once place moving forward which should help students in their understanding. Low areas can vary term by term due to stress for example at this time of year due to exams. The dip in relation to targets is not great and plans are in place to support students.

The Committee noted the report.

### **7.2 Student Voice Report**

There were no questions on the Student Voice Report.

The Committee noted the report.

### **7.3 Student of the Year**

The Committee members had reviewed the nominations for the Student of the Year. The Committee members ranked their top 5 students and students were given five points if they were the top, four if they were second etc. The Deputy Principal compiled the results. This year there was broad agreement and first to third places were awarded. The names of the students are not included in this record for data protection purposes and will be announced by the College in July 2025.

The Committee approved the choice of student for Student of the Year with second and third place also agreed.

## **8 Review of Underpinning Strategies in Support of the College Strategic Plan**

The background to the paper was discussed with the revised approach to the underpinning strategies.

The Committee noted the report.

## **9 Policies for Approval**

### **9.0 Policies Cover Paper**

The Clerk gave a brief overview of the policies that had come to the Committee. In general, the policies were only lightly refreshed with updated dates and referencing as set out in the cover paper, apart from the Trips policy which was new.

### **9.1 Safeguarding Policy**

It was noted that the Safeguarding Policy should be amended to include reference to the Trips policy.

## 9.2 SEND Policy

There were no additional comments on the SEND policy.

## 9.3 Student Financial Support

DfE had only this week issued some additional guidance regarding childcare payments under Section 5.5 so the policy will be amended to reflect this updated guidance.

## 9.4 Trips Policy

The Trips policy is a new policy where the College previously only had a procedure. The Deputy Principal felt that it was now time to have a policy given the complexity of some of the trips and the students.

- The policy states that it is 'inclusive'. How is affordability dealt with, particularly with overseas trips? Are there numbers of students who are unable to take part due to cost?*** The Deputy Principal agreed, and this had happened sometimes in the past. It is tackled through culture shift at the College to consider how to take students on the trip in an inclusive way and to give more notice of trips to try to make it more manageable financially. Students had been encouraged to do fundraising to help support their costs and to look for bursaries or external funding where possible. The College does not have a big enough bursary fund itself to support many students in this way. It is also made clear to College staff that students should not be disadvantaged if they cannot or do not go and the trip cannot be the only way to cover that curriculum criteria. It has also been made clear that not as many need to go abroad which also helps to keep the costs more affordable.
- Regarding inclusivity, is it worth considering whether to stop doing foreign trips at all?*** There is a lot of scrutiny of trips that do happen, and sustainability has also been a driver. This is something that will be kept under review.

It was noted that the clarity on responsibilities was excellent and helped alleviate concerns about the trips themselves.

## 9.5 Exams Policy

It was clarified that this policy did apply to all exams including HE and End Point Assessments.

The Committee recommended all the policies to the Board subject to the amendments being included.

## 10 Any Other Business

There were no items raised under AOB.

## 11 Future Business and Reflection

The Committee reviewed the draft business plan for 2025/26 and approved the plan.

The Committee discussed what the next appropriate presentation would be, having received presentations on Construction, Public and Professional Industries and Sub-Contracting during 2024-25. It was agreed that a presentation on the College's HE provision would be requested for the December meeting of the committee.

The date of the next meeting is the SAR workshop on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 4-5.30pm before the Board meeting.

Curriculum, Quality & Students Committee 2024-25

Meeting closed at 19:30.

A Schloerscheidt

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Signature .....

11/12/2025



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