

CORPORATION BOARD CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STUDENTS COMMITTEE



Minutes of a virtual meeting held on Tuesday, 10 November 2020 at 5pm

Present

Jacqui Canton
Vicky Field, Chair
Fay Croft
Kathryn Schutterlin
Stephen Vickers
Eduardo Pereira
Jessica Birkhead

In attendance

Jenny Craig, Deputy Principal
Jo Milsom, Vice Principal
Matt Phelps, Vice Principal
Ruth Reavley, Clerk

Governor questions are represented with bullet points, and management responses are italicized.

1. Opening comments, apologies for absence and new declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, notably Kathryn Schutterlin, recently elected Staff Governor, and Jessica Birkhead, recently elected Student Governor. There were no apologies for absence, and no new declarations of interest. The meeting was quorate.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June, 2020

The minutes were approved for signature.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda, and Action tracker

The report was noted.

4. College Self Assessment Report

The Deputy Principal gave a short presentation of key elements of the FE SAR.

- What lay behind disappointing English & Maths Functional Skills results? *Typically these students make greatest progress in their final term. The Centre Assessed grades were based on work completed earlier in the year. The College now tracks and captures more evidence earlier in the year.*
- What has been done to improve coherence in lesson planning where it was a problem? *Moving to online learning presented temporary challenges for some teachers in pivoting their lesson plans to ensure clear coherent flows of learning and work; there has been much support available from the Teaching Skills Academy and the Digital Learning Team.*
- What is the scale of Looked After Children (LAC) and Young Adult Carers (YAC)? *56 enrolments, involving 20 or so students. The gap shown in the College data is typical of the sector as a whole. The College provides targeted support, in a collaboration between Student Services and Curriculum staff. The College has contact with the Social Workers responsible for Looked After Children; Young Adult Carers self-identify. College support has been increased as staff felt LAC and YAC students had been disproportionately affected by Covid-19.*
- What was the background to the drop in Apprenticeship judgement? *There were some Apprenticeship Standards where achievement was not as we would like. Is that connected the sector issues with late guidance for Assessors, and inconsistency of End Point assessments? There has been variance in End Point Assessments. As the College has run the programme, staff have developed a better*

understanding of how students can succeed. Some End Point Assessors did not fully understand their own establishment's rules.

Will the self-assessed drop from 1 to 2 for Apprenticeships have an impact when Ofsted inspects? Ofsted tests what the College claims for its self-assessment but will inspect the provision at the time of the inspection and make a judgement based on evidence they see during the inspection visit.

- *What is the nature of out-of-class support for Special Educational Needs (SEN) students? Typically study skills support, to enable them to develop independent learning skills necessary in the transition from discrete to mainstream learning.*
- *Is it the case that if the College has self-assessed as 2 on all the student-related measures, Leadership and Management cannot be self-assessed as 1? Governors felt the College had very strong management, teaching and business support teams in place. If the Quality of Education judgement is not a 1, it is very difficult to argue that Leadership & Management should be a 1.*
- *In providing support for students who are carers and parents, is the College leveraging study coaches? Are students made aware of the support proactively? They are a brilliant resource and one which is not typical in HE and FE. Study coaches are one element of the range of services provided to YAC students.*
- *The report is complex and detailed, and the visual presentation aids communication. Who is it for? It is principally for the College and Corporation Board. Upload to the Ofsted portal following Board approval is required, and, if inspected, it is a core document for Inspectors. The College chooses therefore to write it in an Ofsted Inspection framework structure.*
How does this SAR compare with other Colleges? A real mixture of styles of report can be found.

Governors agreed with the scoring of the FE SAR and welcomed the consistency of report format over a number of years. Governors agreed that the quality of reporting had been high over a number of years.

The Deputy Principal gave a short presentation on key elements of the HE SAR.

- *It was encouraging to see the College attracting HE students from non-traditional HE backgrounds. The College attracted a greater number of mature students and students from a more diverse background than was typical*
- *In the 2019/20 HE SAR, an area to improve had been use of the library. Now, with students working from home, the challenge was different. How is HE student use of the library going? Students whose courses are accredited by Oxford Brookes University can access the OBU library online. The College Librarian works closely with OBU. Online Journals are readily accessible. Covid-secure protocols are in place for returning books to OBY and AW libraries.*
HE students typically need text and reference books for the whole of a module, several weeks, yet the College Library requires them to be renewed weekly. Can that be changed? That will be followed up.
- *For students whose courses require use of technical equipment on College sites, what steps have been taken to ensure they can achieve? On some of the courses accredited by Pearson, for instance HNCs, this is an issue. The sequence of units studied has been altered in order that theory was covered during lockdown, with practicals optimised when restrictions were lifted and students could be on site.*

Governors agreed with the judgements presented.

The Quality Improvements Plans were considered.

- How was the QIP to be monitored? *Operational monitoring is built into the College management approach. The Committee had a key role in monitoring. Individual Curriculum areas had, in the past, been invited to give presentations to the Committee.*

Governors supported the areas of improvement identified in the QIP, and the measures to be put in place.

- How would the SAR and QIP be presented to the Board? *The plan was to re-use the key messages presentation used in this Committee, as a means for governors not on CQS to engage with the material. The full report would be included in the pack.*

The Committee recommended the SAR and QIP to the Board.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Add SAR and QIP to the Board agenda	Clerk	For December meeting

5. Curriculum Headline Report

There was little to update beyond what had been presented to the Board in October. The College, responding to staff and student feedback, planned to bring GCSE English and Maths for 16-18 year-olds back on-site as a more effective learning environment running up to exams. The exam timetable in England had been pushed back by 3 weeks, in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. Governors noted that in Wales the 2021 GCSE and A Level exams had been cancelled.

- Was there an additional impact on students from the second national lockdown? *The College had implemented very strongly upheld 2 metre distancing, and a practice of 25% of a cohort being on site at any one time. This gave the College capacity to increase numbers on site in due course. This robust approach has meant that there has been little additional impact upon students in the second lockdown.*
- Were there any issues at the start of 2020-21 in getting College devices to less advantaged students? *50 new laptops had been purchased and returned laptops from 2019-20 had been rebuilt. There had been an issue nationally with the supply and availability of laptops to purchase. Distribution prioritised students on bursaries; thereafter needs-based assessments were made by staff. In addition, on both Abingdon and Witney Campuses, supervised classrooms had been set up with Webcams and headphones for students to book PCs.*
- Much also depended on internet connections where students lived and worked. Accessing College teaching on a mobile phone was not adequate.
- How did the College prevent students “falling through the gap” of mobile/College device access? *Curriculum and Student Services staff collaborate closely to identify and resolve such problems. There is strong pastoral support offered through the Student Performance Managers, and the College was responsive to changes in need.*
- As the English and maths being brought on-site was for re-sit students, what was being planned for students who had achieved at least a grade 4, and who were required to continue to study the subjects? *Stretch and Challenge English and maths material which was relevant to the curriculum area continued to be part of the learning programme.*

The report was noted.

6. Quality Headline Report

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The Deputy Principal emphasised how blended learning had called for adaptations and flexibility from all teachers, regardless of previous experience. The Teaching Skills Academy and Digital Learning teams had provided highly valued support across the teaching staff body. An additional digital learning team member was being recruited. Student survey findings had been pleasing, reflecting back the flexibility of the College's response.

Since the paper had been written an HE income issue had been identified. At the October Board meeting, a level of recruitment of HE students beyond projected numbers had been reported which had subsequently been found to be inflated by the inclusion of a small number of students who had withdrawn in the previous year. At present HE income was expected to be £100k less than previously reported, though still above budget. Much of the problem centred on Equine course data. It appeared that data capture by Oxford Brookes University and AW on student admissions and student retention from 2019-20 into 2020-21 were not harmonised. There remains a retention issue with the Equine HE courses which is being followed up with the relevant teams in KPI meetings. The College was investigating in detail and would report findings to the Board.

The report was noted.

7. Students Headline Report

Further to the paper, the Nominated Safeguarding Governor reported on a meeting with the Vice Principal Student Engagement and Safeguarding Lead. Much Student Services team resource was being deployed in supporting students whose individual and family circumstances had been adversely impacted by Covid-19, and whose mental health was of concern.

- At an Association of Colleges webinar for teachers, there had been vigorous discussion about the difficulty of identifying safeguarding issues when teaching online, particularly when students have cameras switched off, which is routine for younger students. What is the College putting in place in this area? *The College is seeing students on site for 1 or 2 days a week, which allows for identification of issues more readily. The plan to bring more students onto campus had been developed in part in response to identified typical needs of different cohorts of students; those with learning/engagement difficulties and on lower level courses were a priority.*
- Online and in-person attendance was high compared with the sector average, which contributed to the College's capacity to identify safeguarding problems.

The report was noted.

Governors agreed to take item 8 with item 11.

9. Policies

The refreshed Assessment Policy and Student Voice Policy were approved. The Compliments and Complaints Policy was recommended to the Board.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Add Compliments & Complaints to the Board agenda	Clerk	For December meeting
Publish Assessment and Student Voice policies on O365	Clerk	immediate

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

8 and 11. Future Business and Presentations to the Committee

The Committee requested that two presentations be planned for each meetings of 10 minutes presentation and 20 minutes discussion, with both courses/faculties of concern and of good practice to be reported. It was agreed that HE and Technology be invited to present in March. There was interest in hearing from Oxfordshire Adult Learning faculty in summer.

Governors noted that a revised planned one-day "Immersion" programme for governors on Student Services, deferred during the first national lockdown, would be proposed to the Board in December.

It was agreed that, within the headline reports on Curriculum, Quality and Students, matters arising from FE, HE and Adult education would all be "in scope".

The necessity for a separate Apprenticeships report was discussed. The report had been established when the College was a "Trailblazer", and when the Board needed to be aware of the overarching issues such as the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and of Standards. It was agreed that there was no longer a need for a separate Apprenticeships report.

It was important that Committee reporting enabled CQS members to scrutinise and challenge, within a positive working relationship between Senior Managers and governors. Reporting should be practical and logical for Senior Managers to compile. SMT were invited to make further suggestions on reporting in due course.

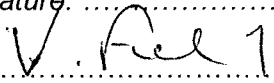
Reflecting on the meeting, governors fund Teams was an appropriate virtual platform. Support from the Digital Team to resolve connection problems had been appreciated.

Business has been appropriately managed in a virtual setting. The meeting had been shorter than a typical face to face meeting, but this was a finding common to many institutions across many business sectors. Discussion of the SAR had been pertinent.

The next CQS meeting was on Thursday 4 March, 2021 at 6pm.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.

Approved for signature:

Signature 

Date

Action points arising from the CQS.Committee, 10 November 2020

Item & Title	Action	By whom	deadline
4. College SAR	Add SAR and QIP to the Board agenda	Clerk	For December meeting
9. Policies	Add Compliments & Complaints to the Board agenda	Clerk	For December meeting
	Publish Assessment and Student Voice policies on O365	Clerk	immediate