

CORPORATION BOARD CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STUDENTS COMMITTEE



Minutes of a meeting held online on Tuesday 26th November at 6pm

Present

Astrid Schloerscheidt (Chair)
Carole Kitching
Sam Wolfe
Jacqui Canton (Principal)
Helen Brown
Abigail Kyei

In attendance

Joanne Milsom, Deputy Principal
Scott Gray, Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality
Jack Price, Vice Principal, Curriculum & Innovation
Howard Stamp, Clerk & Governance Advisor

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

1. Opening comments

1.1 Apologies and Matters to be raised under AOB

No apologies were received. All committee members were present. There were no additional items raised under AOB.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2024

2.1 Public Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2024 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points

No matters arising or written resolutions were reported since the last meeting. The committee noted the action points from the previous meeting.

4. Policies for approval

4.1 Student Disciplinary Policy

The Deputy Principal presented the refreshed Student Disciplinary Policy, highlighting amendments to clarify examples of gross misconduct.

- **Should possession of an offensive weapon be explicitly included in the policy?**
 - o *Yes, we will include this in the policy.*
- **Is the policy clearer for students to understand following revisions?**
 - o *Feedback indicated improvements, though further simplifications may be explored.*

The committee agreed to recommend the policy for approval by the Board.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
JM to update Policy prior to approval.	JM	December 2024

5. Curriculum

5.1 Curriculum Presentation - Construction Faculty

The Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality presented an overview of the **Construction faculty**, detailing its growth, curriculum offerings, and development plans. Key points included:

- The faculty, based at Abingdon and Witney campuses, has experienced consistent enrolment growth since 2022, now catering to approximately 495 students.
- Main curriculum areas include Plumbing, Electrical, and Carpentry.
- A SWOT analysis highlighted strengths in facilities and staff qualifications, weaknesses in teaching, learning, and assessment (TLA), opportunities for employer partnerships, and threats posed by recruitment challenges and competitor institutions.

The next steps within the faculty were outlined across three main areas: Quality of provision, Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA), and Management, recognising the appointment of a new Head of Faculty in a sector particularly affected by recruitment challenges.

- **You explained the buy-in from staff for development of Quality and TLA. Are you getting the buy-in from staff you need?**
 - *Staff have been very involved in discussions and are keen to improve. For example, after learning walks, staff are eager to receive feedback to support faculty improvement.*
- **The issues mentioned with quality—are they specific to particular groups of students, such as high-needs, or more general?**
 - *There isn't a specific theme. In some areas of the curriculum, practical skills are strong, but challenges exist in theory elements, such as health and safety.*
- **How difficult is it for students from Abingdon or Witney to travel to the Bicester Construction Centre to access the apprenticeship progression route?**
 - *Minibuses are available for students who have travel challenges in these geographical areas.*
- **Would you grow further if there were additional student demand?**
 - *Yes, but growth would need to be carefully managed with the right offer in place. Space and materials would also need to be considered, and quality assurance would be essential before expanding into different trades.*
- **If certain trips are successful, are there plans to integrate more into the curriculum?**
 - *Yes, but we need to ensure trips have the right intent and purpose before incorporating them.*

The committee thanked the Vice Principal and the wider Construction team and extended a warm welcome to the new Head of Faculty.

The committee noted the presentation and reflected that it was helpful to gain detailed insight into the Construction faculty.

5.2 Curriculum report

The Vice Principal for Curriculum and Innovation presented an update on curriculum developments, including progress in curriculum area plans and course development for 2025. Challenges in recruiting for new T Levels and HTQs, mirroring national trends, were highlighted. An update was also provided on the previously reported qualification reforms,

which have since been paused by the new government. Further announcements are awaited to understand how these reforms will progress.

The committee discussed the impact of government decisions on qualification structures, particularly the pause on defunding BTECs that overlap with T Levels. The need for clarity on funding and structural changes, especially for Level 2 qualifications, was emphasised to ensure strategic planning aligns with government expectations. Early successes with existing T Levels, such as Engineering and Early Years, were noted, in contrast with slower growth in new areas like Media.

- **The existing T Levels that have recruited in previous years—have they continued to maintain their numbers?**
 - *Yes, areas like Engineering and Early Years have continued to perform well. However, newer T Levels are slower to gain traction.*
- **What challenges are faced in promoting HTQs to employers?**
 - *Employers are still adapting to HTQs, with limited understanding of their benefits compared to traditional HNCs/HNDs. Broader awareness and employer education are needed.*

The committee noted the report.

7. Quality

6.1 Quality Report

The Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality presented the **Quality Report**, outlining early progress in quality initiatives, including the completion of initial quality health checks, the introduction of new TLA metrics, and progress monitoring systems.

Discussions emphasised the role of learning walks and progress points in identifying areas for improvement and tracking performance. Committee members recommended a more focused approach to addressing persistently low-performing areas, particularly in faculties with consistent challenges. The Vice Principal noted that additional training and support were being provided to staff to proactively address these issues.

- **How is the Every Lesson Framework's effectiveness measured?**
 - *Through learning walks and adherence to the top ten TLA priorities.*
- **Can future reports highlight persistently low-quality areas?**
 - *Agreed, with future reports to include more targeted insights.*
- **Are learning walks effective in providing actionable insights?**
 - *Yes, they provide a snapshot of classroom dynamics and are followed by detailed discussions with staff for continuous improvement.*

Action	By Whom	Deadline
SG to update future reports to include more targeted insights for low quality areas.	SG	March 2025

The committee noted the report.

6.2 Further Education Self-assessment report & Quality Improvement Plan

The Chair recognised the contribution of the Senior Management Team (SMT) in preparing the FE Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which had previously been reviewed in detail during the SAR workshop in October. It was noted that all members of the CQS committee were present at the workshop and had the opportunity to thoroughly review the SAR.

The SMT confirmed that all updates requested during the October workshop had been incorporated into the updated documents included in the meeting papers.

The committee recommended the SAR and QIP for Board approval.

6.3. Higher Education Self-assessment report

6.4. Higher Education Quality improvement plan

The Vice Principal for Curriculum and Innovation presented the Higher Education (HE) Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), noting strong overall quality despite challenges in timetabling and communication caused by staff sickness. Areas for improvement included the communication of programme changes and better alignment of course delivery with student expectations.

The report also highlighted improvements in student retention and outcomes, though targeted interventions were required to address challenges faced by specific demographics. Data analysis revealed gaps in satisfaction among part-time and mature students, necessitating tailored support measures.

- **Can proportionality in survey responses be clarified?**
 - *Internal surveys provide richer data than the NSS, with a 70% response rate compared to 7% for the NSS. However, targeted efforts to improve participation in national surveys are planned.*
- **What specific feedback led to identifying communication as an area for improvement?**
 - *Student comments highlighted delays in notifying timetable changes and a lack of clarity around module adjustments, prompting a review of internal communication protocols.*
- **How are gaps in satisfaction among part-time students being addressed?**
 - *Tailored academic and pastoral support is being developed, alongside a review of scheduling flexibility to better accommodate these learners.*

The committee recommended the **HE QIP** for Board approval.

6.5. Annual report on quality-related student and employer complaints (FE and HE)

The Deputy Principal presented the report on student complaints related to quality of provision, noting that it was a brief report with only 14 formal complaints received during the year, primarily within the Technology faculty. As previously reported to the committee, many of these complaints were not unexpected, given the challenges faced in this curriculum area, including a high volume of students and staff recruitment difficulties.

Informal complaints were also tracked and regularly reviewed by the Senior Management Team (SMT) to identify underlying trends. It was noted that proactive engagement by middle management often prevented issues from escalating to formal complaints. The committee emphasised the importance of understanding the broader student experience beyond formal quality complaints.

- **What are the processes for integrating informal complaints into improvement plans?**
 - *Informal complaints and compliments are systematically reviewed for trends that may indicate systemic issues.*
- **Are there patterns in complaints that align with specific faculties or themes?**

- *Most complaints were concentrated in the Technology faculty, correlating with healthy enrolment figures and staff recruitment difficulties.*
- **How is the college addressing the root causes of these complaints?**
 - *Recruitment strategies are being reviewed, and new staff onboarding processes are being strengthened. Faculty leadership is also undergoing training to better manage scaling challenges.*

The committee acknowledged the importance of continuing to monitor informal complaints and using this data to inform strategic decisions.

The committee noted the report.

7. Students

7.1 Students Report

The Deputy Principal updated the committee on **student-focused initiatives**, including growth in free college meal (FCM) claims and bursary applications. Participation in enrichment activities is being tracked, with updates planned for March.

The committee explored the correlation between financial assistance and student engagement. The uptake of FCM and bursaries reflected proactive promotion efforts, though additional work is needed to address barriers for eligible students. Plans to expand enrichment activities were outlined to ensure inclusivity across timetables and campuses. A notable example was supporting student-led initiatives, with a successful club at Witney highlighting the potential for peer-driven activities.

- **There were 134 free college meals; this seems quite low. How is it promoted across the college?**
 - *This has increased to 155 as of today, broadly in line with previous years. However, student numbers have grown. It is possible some students are still applying as the term progresses. Promotion is ongoing, but students are required to provide evidence mandated by the government. Notably, bursary claims have also increased, which often include FCM claims.*
- **Do we know the percentage for FSM in schools and if that follows through to college?**
 - *This data is not currently available, but some disadvantage data is on record.*
- **Under student experience, how are we assessing accessibility in enrichment to ensure all students can participate fairly given timetable commitments?**
 - *We are not yet analysing this information as extensively as we could. Engaging students in this process would be beneficial.*
- **Do you have any information about 16–19-year-olds who have part-time jobs alongside their college studies?**
 - *No current data is available, but this is an area of interest. Enrichment activities are scheduled during the college day to minimise conflicts with outside commitments.*
- **Do we record the number of students participating in enrichment outside of their course?**
 - *Tracking has started this term, but data is currently limited. An update will be provided at the next committee meeting in March.*
- **Do you use students to run enrichment activities?**
 - *Not currently, but there is one student at Witney who has successfully been supported to set up and run a club. The college aims to replicate this model for other students. A three-year plan for expanding enrichment activities is in development.*

Action	By Whom	Deadline
JM to bring updated participation numbers as part of the report in March.	JM	March 2025

The committee noted the report.

8 Committee Self Assessment

8.1 Committee Self Assessment

The committee agreed that they now have a much better understanding of topics across their remit.

The committee discussed the need to improve trend analysis in reporting and to ensure alignment with the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The Senior Management Team (SMT) will consider how to integrate emerging data trends more effectively into future reports.

The committee noted the report.

9. Any Other Business & Future Business

There were no items raised under AOB.

Meeting closed at 19:30

A Schloerscheidt

Signature
A Schloerscheidt

22/05/2025



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