

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

<b>Present</b>	Samantha Fletcher	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	Scott Leadley	Governor (Vice Chair)
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Lee Smith	Governor
	Roderick Watkins	Governor
<b>Attending</b>	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

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**1 Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2 Declaration of Interests**

Roderick Watkins noted a declaration of interest in Item 12, HE Strategy.

**3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 10 February 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2021 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.

*Laura Holland joined the meeting at 8.33 am*

## 5 Mathematics & English

The Head of Faculty outlined the problems and concerns regarding Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG). These were evidence based, with sampling by the awarding bodies and subject to a full review should there be any concerns noted. It was important that the evidence was robust, trustworthy and controlled. To date, 3 assessments had been carried out with a fourth assessment due that week. This was a huge undertaking as 1000+ students were being graded. As at the Easter break, a number of students were still to complete work although this was being chased by Programme Managers and Heads of Faculty with assessments being completed either on-line or in hard-copy format, depending on the needs/capabilities of each individual student. For Maths, students had so far achieved 12 marks representing 15% of their grades. English papers required further work due to moderation, thus causing delays.

For Functional Skills, these exams would go ahead, although late notification of this had only recently been received and now caused a backlog in exam entry. Each student would be assessed before being entered. For English, which comprised the 3 elements of reading, writing and speaking/listening, this was proving difficult particularly with the speaking/listening element where students had only recently returned to campus, attendance had been lower than expected and students were not fully prepared. Teachers were now arranging revision courses to assist students.

The Adult Provision had had a good spring term, offering a remote programme with a target of 90 students anticipated for January, but achieving 160. For September 2021, 30 students had already enrolled. Currently, a 10-week intensive course was underway for adults with the aim of students then moving to other programmes of study.

Planning for 2021/22 was underway with a mixed programme for adults, noting that on-line learning tended to work well for this age group. For 16–18-year-olds, the majority of learning would be delivered face-to-face with some on-line teaching. The Head of Faculty was keen for staff to continue teaching some elements remotely in order to retain and improve the on-line/digital skills they had developed over the last 12 months.

Governors commented on the importance of only placing students into exams once they were ready, but noted that success rates still appeared to be low. The Head of Faculty reported that this level of performance compared well nationally, and that CWA was higher than other regional colleges. It was accepted that performance levels for the current year would dip, hence league tables would not be published. The Head of Faculty assured governors that staff would do everything they could to ensure their students were successful. Governors referred to the Apprenticeships report at Item 7 on the agenda, noting that performance levels were higher. The Head of Faculty advised that this particular group of learners tended to comprise more adults, and therefore a higher performance level was to be expected.

Governors asked if students were made aware in advance that their assessments would form part of their final grade. The Head of Faculty explained that the announcement of Teacher Assessed Grades was only made in January, by which time 2 assessments had already been carried out. However, students had been previously advised that there was the possibility that all areas could be used to assess performance.

The Principal acknowledged the challenge faced by the teaching team, particularly with Functional Skills. Management was aware that performance levels would be reduced for 2020/21 in this area and others across the College. The Head of Faculty reminded governors of the difficulties faced by the team in September when students arrived having received their summer centre assessed grades (CAG) which in many cases had been inflated and did not

reflect the true ability or knowledge of the students. Governors asked if this was being tracked, so that the College could monitor the overall improvement of students since their arrival. The Head of Faculty confirmed that this data was being recorded.

The Principal asked the Head of Faculty to explain how the government's grant of 'Catch-up Funding' had been used. The Head of Faculty explained that the funding had been used to offer additional classes for smaller groups of students enabling the teacher to focus on key topics. The smaller class sizes helped students to discuss difficult areas in depth, achieving faster progress and improvement.

Governors were assured by the report that students were being supported and asked how we compared with other colleges. The Head of Faculty explained that benchmarking and data analysis was difficult to obtain, although from the informal data sharing and communications between regional colleges, CWA appeared to be better than most. The Head of Faculty emphasised that the College would continue to assess and moderate students' performance accurately and would avoid grading inflation, which was considered to be detrimental to students' progress. The Principal reported that whereas CWA's provision of English and maths moved to fully on-line from September, other colleges did not offer this; the Head of Faculty added that other colleges reduced their number of timetabled sessions, whereas CWA had delivered a full timetable since September. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning confirmed this and advised that she believed the approach taken by CWA during 2020/21 was the best approach for our students.

The Chair thanked the Head of Faculty for the report which provided a clear and accurate picture of the situation, and asked for the Committee's thanks to be passed onto the teaching team.

**ACTION-HoF, ENGLISH & MATHS**

**The report was noted.**

## **6 ESOL**

The Head of Faculty reported that the exam situation for ESOL students was not as difficult as that discussed in the previous item for English & Maths with normal exams taking place for the majority of students. Those who were unable to attend exams would receive teacher assessed grades. Face-to-face teaching had resumed following the Easter break and two members of staff who had been physically shielding had returned to the campus. The department remained in the Support to Improve process. The external consultant had now completed 3 out of 5 planned sessions with some resistance being noticed coming from the small teaching team. Regular golden hours, training sessions and team meetings were now in place, although there was still much to do. The mobile training vehicle project for the delivery of teaching at employers' premises, funded by the CPCA, was on hold. The Essential Digital Skills course had commenced with only 13 students engaged so far, although with further marketing (leaflet drop) this was hoped to improve.

Governors asked about the mobile training vehicle. The Head of Faculty advised that the vehicle had been leased and once covid restrictions had relaxed then visits to the various workplaces would commence. The College was currently in the process of engaging with possible employers. Visits of the training vehicle would be timed to coincide with shift patterns to enable learners to attend all sessions. The provision of specific, short courses would provide flexibility.

Governors asked if the mobile training vehicle project had been given sufficient publicity, noting that this development was not really known about. Future developments of how the provision

would then lead to possible further study, such as HE courses with ARU and the engagement of minority groups such as asylum seekers and the travelling community was discussed.

Lee Smith, Governor, explained how his recent work at ARU with the Norfolk & Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group and the King's Lynn Purfleet Trust could link to the work being developed by the ESOL department. It was agreed that contact information would be shared.

**ACTION-HoF ESOL/LS**

The Chair asked for the next report to include a detailed listing of the key areas of focus/actions to be included.

**ACTION-HoF ESOL**

**The report was noted.**

*Laura Holland left the meeting at 9.21 am*

*Vicky Mann joined the meeting at 9.21 am*

## **7 Apprenticeships**

Governors were concerned about the £230k that was currently tied up in outstanding completion payments and asked how this was being addressed. The Head of Department explained that tracking systems were in place to monitor which apprentices were likely to achieve in time, so that action could be taken in areas where progress was slow. It was considered that much of the funding related to technology-based apprenticeships where payments per individual apprentice were high.

There was progress with plumbing and an external quality assurance visit was due, noting that some end point assessments had been held up, with many due in the autumn term. Site visits were now taking place. Difficulties continued in that many organisations were still to return to normal working arrangements.

Governors asked if there had been any developments with the department's IT software system. The Head of Department advised that use of the PICs system and manual (spreadsheet) systems continued. Meetings continued where the use of PICs, EBS etc were being discussed. The matter was being considered by the CIS department and the Assistant Principal Funding & Performance.

Governors asked about the number of starts with partners where this figure was some 95% down on the previous year. The Head of Department advised that this related mainly to the covid situation, where apprentices had been furloughed, placed on training breaks or redeployed to other areas within their respective organisations. The Principal added that the College was rationalising the use of the partners it engaged with.

The Chair asked about the performance on timely achievement rates and how this compared to other providers. The Head of Department reported that although national figures were not available, through discussions with other colleges it appeared that CWA was performing similarly to others, with achievement rates currently down. The Head of Department emphasised that the department was working hard to mitigate the reduced performance where possible. The Head of Department was confident that staff were working hard and that progress would continue to be made.

**The report was noted.**

*Vicky Mann left the meeting at 9.33 am*

*Steve Lowery joined the meeting at 9.33 am*

## 8 Technology Faculty Update

The Head of Faculty reported that out of the L1 students, 78% were looking to remain at CWA for further studies, whereas usually the proportion was around 45%.

On-line teaching practices within the faculty had developed with good teaching being noticed in a number of areas. Members of the faculty had engaged positively with the college's training week and had led various sessions.

Plumbing was now fully staffed and it was hoped that a visit by the external verifier to this area would take place very shortly. Activity within bricklaying was lagging behind but this area was now also fully staffed and so progress was expected. It was anticipated that the backlogs within carpentry would be completed before the end of the academic year. Staff were understanding and appreciating the importance of IQA. The recent area performance reviews were deemed positive and much improved on the previous year.

Governors asked about the 22% L1 students who were not looking to stay at CWA and what qualification they would achieve. The Head of Faculty reported that some would be moving to employment, some would move to other providers and that some remained uncertain of their plans. Staff would be checking with all students and advise accordingly. Those leaving at this stage would have achieved a L1 City & Guilds certificate. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning added that staff were following the 'next steps' approach in the support of their students, particularly those who had suffered with mental health issues in recent months (with support from Student Services staff). The Vice Principal confirmed that she had also been impressed with the improvement noticed during the recent area performance reviews, where programme managers had been very aware, alert and engaging/challenging with senior managers.

Governors asked about the current block in the electrical qualification. The Head of Faculty reported that this was affecting 3 students whose qualification was being phased out. The external verifier had incorrectly applied the old standard. A response from City & Guilds was awaited.

The Chair referred to the RAG rating across the various headings and considered that although some areas were 'Green,' action was still being taken to improve matters and that perhaps the rating should be at 'Amber.'

The Chair was pleased to note that the faculty was now fully staffed and asked about plans to retain and train those now in post. The Head of Faculty advised that support was being received from the Learning Practice staff; a robust induction had been provided for the new staff; a reduced timetable had been provided to allow staff time to find their way and faculty mentors had been appointed. One of the new members of staff who had a L2 qualification would be encouraged and supported to gain a L3 qualification.

It was agreed that for the next meeting, the Head of Work Based Learning would be invited to remain in the meeting for the Technology Faculty update report, as input from both managers in the discussions on this report would be beneficial. **ACTION-CLERK**

Governors asked the Head of Faculty to include in his next report a table for apprentices within the faculty, showing starts, end-dates, timely achievement etc. **ACTION-HoF TECHNOLOGY**

**The report was noted.**

*Steve Lowery left the meeting at 9.48 am*

## **9 Learning & Curriculum Report**

The Vice Principal provided a summary of the current focus of teaching, learning and assessment within the college. The recent training week had been successful with many staff attending the remote sessions; most noticeable was the number of staff willing to lead sessions and share their skills and knowledge, particularly from the Technology faculty. The remote sessions had been recorded and were available on 'Learn' for staff to access.

The Vice Principal noted that 'Catch-Up' funding was being used appropriately to support those students in need.

Work was progressing in preparing for the summer assessments. Some adaptations within the vocational areas had been permitted from the awarding bodies. There would, however, be some delays in progressing licences to practice. Details of the assessment process in respect of each awarding body would be published on the College's website the following week, as per the requirements.

Governors noted that the Learning Practice was carrying out drop-ins/observations and asked why others were not carrying out these virtual 'learning walks.' The Vice Principal advised that programme managers, heads of faculties and indeed other managers were also dropping into on-line lessons to observe, although this had not been detailed in the report.

Governors noted the strengths of the teaching, learning & assessment taking place, along with the areas in need of development and asked about the measures being engaged to address this. The Vice Principal advised that the use of digital skills was being supported where needed. Help was being given to staff to assist in assessment strategies. The Chair commented on the possible need of different assessment strategies for on-line delivery to that in the classroom.

**The report was noted.**

## **10 Current Performance Data and KPIs 2020/21** **11 Quality Improvement Plan 2020/21**

Items 10 & 11 were taken together.

Governors commented that the earlier reports in the meeting had provided good information to quickly assess the area of concern and to inform discussion, whereas the data provided within the reports for Items 10 and 11 made it difficult to focus on the most urgent issues or indeed to appreciate where there were concerns which required attention. Governors appreciated that data would always be required in reports, although in such wide ranging and comprehensive reports could the presentation perhaps be more simplistic.

The Vice Principal commented that the area performance reviews provided good insight into the current performance across the college, explaining the review of dog grooming as an example and how its progress had been monitored.

With regard to the Quality Improvement Plan, governors appreciated that the document aided the reporting on the progress made, but considered that from a management point of view it perhaps did not provide any operational help to managers.

Governors suggested the use of a risk-based approach to reporting, considering how best to collect and report data and then highlighting the issues to governors. The Chair considered that often, even with all of the data available, the Committee relied on the commentary and focus within reports to identify areas of concern for discussion. The Principal accepted the comments made and advised that with the future appointment to the new post of Head of Learning Improvement that the reporting of data and performance would be reviewed and improved in future months.

**ACTION-VPCL/HoLI**

**The reports were noted.**

## **12 HE Strategy**

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning asked for governors' feedback on this document. Areas of concern for the College with regard to HE included the static recruitment of HE students; the need for course development; the limited resources available; the need to grow degree apprenticeship courses and the need to upskill the local population. The Principal added that the development of the document would involve the joint venture committee with ARU to approve and work with the College on its HE strategy.

Governors welcomed the future developments of HE, including the School of Nursing Studies, laboratory technician, data technicians, vet nursing programmes and work in supporting Institutes of Technology but considered there was little in the way of new courses or directions of travel to be considered over the next 5 years.

It was accepted that full cost courses were currently price-prohibitive to many students and so limited what could currently be offered. Governors asked what could be done to change the fee charging policy for HE studies. The Principal advised that many organisations, such as the AoC, were currently engaged with lobbying actions prior to a change in the funding of HE in 2025.

Roderick Watkins noted his interest in this report, as Vice Chancellor of ARU (and as already noted in Item 2). Mr. Watkins considered that further work was required to the document, and should include the results of more in-depth discussions with ARU and other interested stakeholders looking at both offer and provider. Mr. Watkins said that ARU was keen to work with the College in its development of the HE strategy, subject to the CWA Board approving input from the ARU. It was suggested that the College should prepare a one-year HE strategy now, covering 2021/22, and then use the next 12 months to develop a strategy covering a much longer period with input and discussion from all stakeholders.

Governors were interested to know the process for developing and deciding on the future courses to be provided. The Vice Principal explained that feedback had been received by the College's employer-based learning teams. Further, the Chartered Management Course, recently introduced but currently with low numbers was becoming popular and numbers were expected to rise. The laboratory technician course and the data technicians had been requested by specific employers.

Governors commented on the capacity and resources available to the College to undertake this work and were concerned that this important area of planning should not fall solely to the Vice Principal.

**It was agreed to postpone the report for now, with a revised report to come back to the Committee at its next meeting, (9 June 2021).**

**ACTION-VPCL**

### **13 Applewood Nursery Update**

The Vice Principal reported that she would be undertaking a learning walk in the nursery later that day. The Quality Improvement Plan had proved to be a very useful document and had been followed by all involved in the development of the nursery. Staffing was considered to be stable. Nursery staff were very positive, engaging in their duties and willing to discuss ideas and suggestions. Staff were noticing and recording the progress of the children. Numbers were increasing, much through word-of-mouth recommendations. The Vice Principal would be expecting a 'Good' grade at the next Ofsted inspection.

There were no questions or comments from governors on this report.

**The report was noted.**

### **14 Complaints (current)**

There were no questions or comments from governors on this report.

**The report was noted.**

### **15 Any Other Business**

There were no items of other business.

### **16 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation**

- The Committee continued to focus on Technology, Apprenticeships, Maths & English and ESOL.
- The Technology faculty currently had no vacancies and staff were positively engaged in their work.
- Teacher Assessed Grades were causing additional work and pressure for teaching staff.
- Overall performance grades were expected to dip this year.
- Apprenticeships continued to be affected by the Covid situation.
- The presentation of KPIs & QIP to governors would be reviewed.
- The HE Strategy document had been reviewed but further work had been requested by the Committee, for review again at the next committee meeting.
- The Ofsted re-inspection of the Applewood Nursery was eagerly anticipated – all areas of concern had been addressed.
- The Committee was confident in the approach of the Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning to the various matters covered during the meeting.

### **17 Date and time of next meeting**

Wednesday, 9 June 2021 at 8.30 am.

**The meeting closed at 10.32 am**