

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Performance Review and Quality Committee
29 April 2020
8.30 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

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

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence received. The Clerk noted that Lee Smith would need to leave before the end of the meeting due to a work commitment.

2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 12 February 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2020 were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record.

4 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for item 4. Governors noted that the number of outstanding items was increasing. The Clerk advised that the report included items going back to 2018 which were still to be resolved.

5 Initial Impact of the Coronavirus on our Learners

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning reported that early technical issues caused by the massive increase in students and staff using the on-line virtual learning environment (VLE) had been resolved by increasing server capacity. Monitoring of pastoral and safeguarding matters had identified an increase in the number of concerns. Guidance had recently been received regarding the awarding of qualifications for GCSEs and A Levels. HE on-line courses were working well. There was particular concern with Apprenticeships and vocational courses, noting that some apprentices had been “furloughed.” The sector was anticipating several independent learning providers to close in the current climate with colleges expected to take on any affected learners. Careful monitoring of adult learning and sub-contractor activity was taking place, along with reviewing withdrawals and student retention.

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students reported that staff and learners generally were engaged with the remote learning being provided and that good practices of remote teaching methods were being noted.

Governors asked about the learners engaged with remote learning. The Vice Principal advised that teaching staff were aware of those students who were engaged with learning and those who were not, and where, for the latter, staff would be making direct contact to encourage them to use the materials being provided on Learn (on-line teaching portal). The Vice Principal was not aware at this very early stage of the general progress being made by learners due to the interruption of learning due to the Easter break.

Governors asked if the tracking of student engagement via remote learning was automated. The Vice Principal advised that this was not currently the case and that departments were developing their own recording methods for monitoring engagement.

Governors enquired about the monitoring of mental health issues within the student population. The Vice Principal reported that the College had identified 270 learners classed as “vulnerable” and who were being managed by Student Support staff and their own teaching teams. The Assistant Principal added that the College counsellors were actively involved and that an increase in the number of referrals had been noted.

Governors were concerned about apprentices whose study had been interrupted, particularly those who were near to finishing courses. The Vice Principal advised that although funding guidelines were strict, the College would continue to support those apprentices who were out of time to complete their respective courses, or who had been furloughed by their employer. For those still to complete practical assessments, it was envisaged at this stage that these would be arranged for June, or, if not possible, for the beginning of the autumn 2020 term. The Principal reported that 285 apprentices had been furloughed to date with a further 25 apprentices being made redundant. The Apprenticeship Team had so far assisted 2 apprentices to find alternative re-employment. The Team was making regular contact with employers and apprentices. The College would be applying for financial support from the Post 16 Provider Relief Scheme to support non-levy apprenticeship delivery.

Governors were pleased to note the action currently taking place and asked about the plans to review longer term issues, particularly with regard to adult on-line learning. The Vice Principal said that there was a capacity issue with staffing. Where possible, commercial trainers were being utilised to assist with requests for learning and Heads of Faculties were looking to develop on-line facilities further. The English and Maths department was actively looking at long term delivery but for most departments the current priority was to focus on the immediate concerns and issues.

Governors referred to the number of previous issues regarding management information reporting which remained outstanding and asked if more should be done to resolve these or for management to consider cancelling these. The Assistant Principal reported that a bid to the Department for Education had been recently submitted for the development of remote working. Governors noted that the current situation provided a huge opportunity to engage with learners and that adequate tracking systems would be required.

Regarding the College's ability to assess and grade the performance of students, the Chair was concerned about the support being offered to staff to ensure that they were fully trained to manage this process. The Assistant Principal advised that an internal grading board had been put in place and that guidance and support was being given to staff.

The report was noted.

Laura Holland joined the meeting at 9.02 am

6 Mathematics & English

The Head of Department reported that the latest statistics indicated that there was currently 18% of English students and 35% of Maths students who were engaged with on-line learning which was higher than other local colleges who were reporting a decrease in engagement. Governors asked for an understanding of these statistics. The Head of Department clarified that the figures represented those students who had returned work for marking. Governors considered that these figures would need to be improved upon as remote learning continued.

The Principal asked if staff considered themselves to be supported during this period of uncertainty. The Head of Department said that her staff had been well supported and were now engaged in new activities, such as grading work for students' final awards. The Chair said that it was important for managers to raise concerns and to ask for help when needed.

Governors asked if it was likely that the current level of engagement would decline over time. The Head of Department replied that deadlines were being set for the return of work and teaching staff were being supportive to their students, although were not insisting that work was completed on time at this stage, not wanting to add further pressure. Adult learners were receiving personal calls from teaching staff to check progress. The resources being added to Learn were increasing.

The Chair thanked the Head of Department for her report which provided a clear overview of the current activities within the English and Maths department.

The report was noted.

Laura Holland left the meeting at 9.12 am
Vicky Mann joined the meeting at 9.12 am

7 Apprenticeships

The Head of Department provided latest figures to those showing in the report: 285 apprentices had now been furloughed; 16 had been suspended due to COVID concerns, maternity etc; 9 had been made redundant, of which, 2 had since found alternative employment; 25 had been delayed. There had been no guidance issued until 24 April 2020. A consultation document had also just been released regarding the extension of legacy functional skills until December 2020.

Governors were pleased to note the support being offered to apprentices and asked about future recruitment and new starts. The Head of Department advised that there were currently 255 new applications being processed with the challenge being to find suitable employers who would be able to take on an apprentice; some employers were not able to commit to taking on an apprentice at the present time under the current circumstances.

Where apprentices had been laid off, the Head of Department advised that this was due to the employer not being able to pay wage costs upfront and who would not consider the furloughing option. If circumstances improved most had indicated that they would re-employ their apprentices. The Apprenticeship Team would maintain communications with apprentices and employers.

Governors noted that some areas of the construction industry were already looking to recommence operations following the strict lockdown period. The Head of Department agreed, adding that this would be beneficial to the smaller companies that sub-contracted with the larger building firms.

The Chair noted the difficult work being undertaken by the department and thanked staff for their efforts in supporting both employers and apprentices. The Chair asked if any additional support was required. The Head of Department advised that the Head of Funding & Exams was providing additional help to monitor and track apprentices and their funding. The Senior Management Team was keeping in close contact and this was appreciated. Morale within the department was considered to be fair but the circumstances were somewhat negative and draining for staff.

The Principal reported that the income target for the year had been on course to have been exceeded but was now more likely to come in on budget at £3.5m. There was a concern regarding next year's budget, with an expectation currently that income could drop to £3.0m. The Apprenticeship Team was working hard to mitigate this reduction where possible.

The report was noted.

Vicky Mann left the meeting at 9.25 am

Steve Lowery joined the meeting at 9.25 am

8 Technology Faculty Update

The Head of Faculty reported that the recent interview process for a new plumbing lecturer had been unsuccessful. A new applicant was being invited for interview on Friday of that week.

Within Motor Vehicles, 3 students had failed their test out of a group of 25. The pass rate within Carpentry currently stood at 50%.

The Chair asked about the operation of the faculty under the current circumstances. The Head of Faculty advised that the initial momentum of remote learning was reducing among staff and students. Staff training for using the remote technology was still taking place. Engagement with students, particularly those at Level 1 was difficult, although staff were trying to maintain regular contact where possible.

Governors asked that in the current climate of job losses, if now was the opportune time to recruit staff with vocational skills. The Head of Faculty responded that adverts were now out for engineering and electrical installations and that the current circumstances could result in an

increase in the number of applicants. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning added that the HR department had been involved with recruitment and had run a recent event encouraging people to get into teaching. Difficulties with interviewing and assessing candidates remotely were noted.

The Chair asked what actions could be taken to improve the momentum within the faculty. The Head of Faculty reported that a meeting of programme managers was taking place that afternoon to discuss improvements in the use of video conferencing. There were difficulties in that some students did not have adequate IT facilities at home to fully engage. The faculty considered that face-to-face contact with students was necessary. The Chair asked if staff were confident in using remote technology. The Head of Faculty advised that staff had developed their skills and were using the new systems available.

The report was noted.

Steve Lowery left the meeting at 9.32 am
Lee Smith left the meeting at 9.33 am

9 Learning & Curriculum Report

The Vice Principal outlined the introduction of T Levels, how they had been developed and how the College had selected particular courses to run from September 2021. Some staff training had taken place, but further training would be necessary. The development of T Levels would be included within the curriculum strategy for the coming year. It was noted that historically the success of a new qualification in education tended to be poor.

Governors commented that the decision for the College to offer a small number of selected courses was good for its first year. Governors asked if there was any guidance on the flexibility with work placements should social distancing measures continue. The Vice Principal reported that for the courses selected, the number of work placement opportunities was good, noting that for the College, this would commence from September 2021. Colleges who were planning to launch T Levels in September 2020 were more likely to face greater challenges with regard to social distancing measures.

Governors asked about the opportunities to provide work placements for Adult Nursing students. The Vice Principal did not envisage any problems with finding suitable placements as the course would be a small cohort of 12 students.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal for her report. A briefing with questions and answers would be provided at a future Corporation meeting.

The report was noted.

10 Applewood Nursery Update

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning reported that the Nursery was open for 3 days per week at the present time with on average 3-4 children attending. Staff were working on a rota basis. Where necessary, assistance was being provided by Property Services staff, the Head of Faculty and the Vice Principal. OfSTED had advised that they would not be carrying out any inspections during the current situation. Prior to the lockdown, staff were becoming used to being questioned regarding children's' progression, baby care had improved and performance within classes had improved also, notably in the Grasshopper class. Income remained a concern.

The Chair commented that it was impressive for the Nursery to have remained open under the challenges being faced.

The report was noted.

11 Quality Improvement Plan 2019/20

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students reported that prior to lockdown, momentum had taken place with the activities in the quality improvement plan. Since March 2020 however, activities had been somewhat derailed. Governors asked if any of the key performance indicators had been suspended for the duration. The Assistant Principal responded that there may be a need to review some KPIs, but many would still be monitored, and any actions required will be expected to be taken, such as areas within Support to Improve. Governors suggested that it may be necessary to introduce new KPIs particularly relevant to lockdown. The Assistant Principal advised that KPIs would be reviewed in detail by SMT at its next meeting, (4 May 2020).

ACTION-APQS

The following discussion was deemed “confidential.”

The report was noted.

12 Quality Strategy

There were no comments or questions raised regarding the quality framework.

The Committee agreed to recommend the CWA Quality Framework 2020/21 to the Board for approval.

13 Value Added Report (College Performance Measures)

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students apologised to the Committee for the lengthy report, particularly the number of appendices and statistics contained therein. This information was required to satisfy the requirements of the Education Inspection Framework whereby final outcomes were no longer the emphasis but remained an important component when evaluating the local context.

Regarding the DfE Headline Performance table at appendix 1, Governors enquired what was meant by a reduction in A level performance that reflected this being a stronger cohort which had performed marginally less well. The Assistant Principal clarified that prior attainment of this cohort had been strong, therefore future expectations of grade performance had been higher.

Governors asked if there were any particular concerns to note. The Assistant Principal noted outcomes from Maths and English where the starting position was at grade 3 although progress headline data was showing that progress had been made. This was more from English than maths and contributed extensively from Functional Skills performance. A further concern was the positive impact of 19+ partnership performance which, if withdrawn, would show an improving underperformance in 19+ overall College activity.

Governors asked if this data was reviewed only by senior managers or shared with faculty management. The Assistant Principal responded that it was shared with all managers, adding that there was a need for the College to continue to progress each year and sharing such information was critical to give a relative perspective against national data.

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning emphasised the need to focus on intent and impact within the Education Inspection Framework, rather than outcomes. The need for education providers to be “exam factories” was no longer the case. The College had been making good progress with the monitoring of performance within its internal area performance review process.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Principal for the thorough report.

The report was noted.

14 Strategic Targets 2019/20 Progress Review

The Clerk reported that Governors had already reviewed the full set of strategic targets for the spring term during the Corporation meeting held on 18 March 20. No comments or questions were raised by the Committee.

The report was noted.

15 Complaints (Current)

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students reported that the new procedures continued to work well. No comments or questions were raised by the Committee.

The report was noted.

16 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.

The Terms of Reference were considered. The minor changes suggested by the Clerk were agreed with no further changes proposed.

No changes to the proposed future business agenda plan were required.

The report was noted.

17 Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

18 Chair’s items for briefing to the Corporation

The key briefing items to note from this meeting were that the Committee had a good overview of the current remote working practices within the teaching areas, a number of challenges had been discussed and priorities were known.

19 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 10 June 2020 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 10.15 am