

College of West Anglia
Minutes of Performance Review and Quality Committee Meeting
Wednesday, 4 March 2026
8:30am – 11.00am
Meeting Room – Remote meeting (via TEAMS)

Present	Jan Feeney Fliss Miller Donna Woodruff Jemma Curtis David Pomfret	Governor (Chair) Governor (Vice Chair) Governor (Staff) Governor Governor (Principal/CEO)
Attending	Kerry Heathcote Sarah Anstiss Paul Gibson Rachel Boast Jules Bridges	Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality Head of Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Head of Quality Head of Public Sector Services Head of Governance

No.	Action
<p>1 Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received from Gemma Standen. The Assistant Principal Funding Performance and Projects, Rob Petto, Head of Faculty, Technology, Sue Moore and Head of Learner Experience, Clare Pelling, also passed on their apologies.</p>	
<p>2 Declarations of Interests There were no items of interest declared.</p>	
<p>3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 November 2025 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2025 were reviewed and agreed as being an accurate record.</p>	
<p>4 Matters Arising The progress arising from the previous meeting were summarised in the progress report and all actions reported had either been resolved or, where appropriate, an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p>All other completed items are to be removed from the report.</p>	HoG
D Woodruff and S Anstiss joined the meeting at 8.35am	
<p>5 Priority Item 1 – Apprenticeships/Technology A slight increase in achievements (R07 return) was reported at 59.3% and a past planned end date of 7.2% which is a significant drop. There are several plumbers due to go through in the coming weeks and minor holdups with some of the certificates for the engineering standards but another tranche of engineers also going through shortly which will positively impact achievement.</p> <p>The report provided an update on the sector and funding changes impacting the delivery of apprenticeship provision. In summary the highlights discussed by the committee included,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key changes in policy and assessment practices being introduced at pace • The apprenticeship accountability framework changes in January 2026 and how this impacts the risk rating of apprenticeship providers. • Key growth and skills levy changes – ‘apprenticeship units’, use of the levy for short, flexible training courses 	

- Fully funded apprenticeships for non-levy payers (mainly small and medium sized businesses) will be available for eligible under 25-year-olds
- Assessment model changes – streamlined to enable more design and delivery flexibility so that assessments are more proportionate to the competency being tested and removes duplication.
- Student portal – pilot with Early Years. Enrolment pilot will then follow.
- More starts to come in for Work Based Learning which are now starting to move.

In terms of promotion and apprenticeship week

- CWA had over 1800 interactions with pupils at schools.
- 'Back to the Floor' visits with apprenticeships in their workplace. The Chair of the Committee visited Buttercup Nursery.
- A Showcase event was held involving the Chamber of Commerce, the CEO of Anglian Water and a panel of apprentices. This will be followed up with ITV with panel members talking to reporters about the event.

Governors were informed that the transfer of S4PL apprentices has concluded with all apprentices successfully transferring through. The final piece is to reconcile the financials which will be completed shortly.

The Principal/CEO asked if there was early indication of likely achievement forecast outturn. The target is 68% and there is some confidence that this is achievable. Governors wished to pass on their thanks to the team for dedication and hard work to see the improvements now coming to fruition.

HoApp&WBL

In terms of the skills levy changes the Chair asked if there would be appetite from employers for shorter, sharper interventions. CWA is hopeful that these will be an attractive offer to the larger levy paying employers.

S Anstiss left the meeting and R Boast joined the meeting at 8.45am

6 Priority Item 2 – A-Level Provision

The report confirmed

- Indicators of positive engagement with the A level provision remain strong
- The whole college attendance rate (at 13 February 2026) was 85.4%.
- A level provision attendance is 88%.
- Retention in Year 1 is 98.5%.
- Overall retention is impacted by poor retention of the current year 2s where there are only 88 students on roll from 114 starts in 2024

Since preparing the report it was confirmed that the interview process has been rolled out for next year with over 400 applications in the pipeline. Students have been offered a provisional place together with a questionnaire, flowchart detailing the pathways available to them to ascertain if A Level is the right route for them. Admission tasks (RAG rated) will be given to applicants to provide assurance that they are on the right course for them.

Mock exams will be held for every paper for every subject. The motivation for this is to glean more accuracy of predicted grades and finally CWA has been linked with Sheffield FE college who will mentor CWA leaders to share best practice and collaboration.

In summary there is confidence that measures introduced will continue to ensure robust retention and secure a future for A level provision.

Governors recognised the risk factors detailed in the report around lecturer recruitment (Accounting and Economics) and asked for an update. Candidates have been shortlisted and interviews are to be held next week with a strong field of candidates. If recruitment is not successful governors were made aware of the risk that these subject choices could be withdrawn from the course offer for new first year learners. There are other providers locally if CWA cannot accommodate.

The Principal/CEO asked for more detail concerning the progress and prospects for year 2 learners who may not necessarily benefit from the positive improvement/changes made in this academic year. The good news about year 2 students is that 88 progressed into year 2 and there are still 88 students. Mock exams will take place in the last two weeks before the easter break and students are preparing for these now. The 'minimum expected grade' and the 'working at grade' tasks are still in development with CIS to use them as value added predicted grade although staff have a better understanding of the mocks and appreciate their importance.

The staff governor asked if there was more confidence now around timetabling and the student journey as this had been a reported area of concern in previous meetings. The college will publish four-day timetables across the provision. There will be some timetables (dependent on subject choices) with longer gaps, but study skills will be used to fill periods for those learners to help alleviate the bigger gaps between learning.

Finally, governors recognised the wider engagement programme offered with 95% of the first-year cohort enrolled on the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and the potential correlation (if there is one) between the cohort and those from the most deprived areas, this will give young people a good opportunity to aspire and move on.

R Boast left the meeting at 9.00am

7 Operational Oversight Report (inc. Learner Groups)

The committee received a summary of KPI statistics including enrolment, attendance, and retention in the report.

The committee was reminded that faculty F03 has disappeared with F04 absorbing the creative arts aspect of the provision and F02 has science and A Levels.

The pre-census retention target for 16 to 18 Learning provision is 97%. This is the fourth consecutive year this challenging target has been met, in line with the continued maturation of the induction period. An analysis to understand how this has been achieved suggests that the piece of work being undertaken with the admissions and business support teams around 'keeping applicants warm', and touching base during the induction period has positively impacted. This was also suggested in the recent matrix accreditation where it had also been identified that this support was the key to improving the pre-census retention figure even further.

There was concern about the low retention rate of young carers at 84.7% so the Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality had analysed the data to find that this related to safeguarding issues with 6 individual learners who have left the college.

The committee acknowledged that enrolments were exceeding targets and the pre-census retention target achieved for the fourth consecutive year, but the Chair asked how this would be maintained bearing in mind that retention has in the past dropped at the end of the year. There is confidence that the year-end retention target is achievable and will be better than last year. Processes put in place are maturing and a weekly analysis (purple perilous) is embedded and where those are at risk, opportunities are taken to signpost them onto other pathways.

Recognising that retention is currently positive governors noted that attendance was not as strong and as there is a correlation between attendance and retention governors asked if there was confidence that this issues with attendance are known and can be addressed. For 16-18s there is confidence that there are no issues with the quality of classroom or workshop experience. For many learners' life gets in the way of their learning but initiatives such as adjusting timetables and looking at the pressure points in the round it is anticipated that attendance will improve.

A governor questioned the data in appendix 1, adult learning, looking at the faculty F05 the target is 12, past census is 173, but then purple RAG rated. Why is this so different from target but perilous rated. It was confirmed that this will be investigated and the disparity reported back by email.

DCEO/PC&Q

The Principal/CEO asked for the report to include more sector data comparators. For example, CWA overall achievement for 2024/25 compared with the sector. It is known (at management level) that CWA achievement is in the bottom decile comparatively which to some extent is due to levels of deprivation but narrative to explain this and/or where data is not necessarily comparing like for like (i.e., absence of T Levels) should be provided.

DCEO/PC&Q

D Pomfret left the meeting at 9.30am to deal with a duty manager incident at the Tower Block

Finally, regarding ALS (Additional Learning Support) governors asked how much analysis is being done on the proportion of ALS grant allocated versus teaching. The Assistant Principal Student Services will be asked to report on this to the committee.

APSS

8 **Learner Voice**

It was reported that there are now 173 (39 three years ago) student representatives across all campuses. There have now been 2 more rounds of student council meetings in December and February with students attending across all campuses, including Downham Market.

Noting that students had reported anxiety in some courses about the volume of hours required for placements governors commented that this will be an increasing issue to find placements for young people. The difficulty for learners who have part-time work in a related setting to their study programme unfortunately cannot count those hours as work experience. CWA however has a well-resourced careers and destinations team and has just won a contract for a Health and Social Care work experience co-ordinator for the region.

9 **Student Satisfaction**

A total of 2,535 students responded to the spring survey with 96.38% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that teaching on their course is good, indicating high levels of teaching satisfaction across the college. There were however issues raised around IT with 321 students mentioning dissatisfaction with Wi-Fi connection and aging hardware. The college has invested in higher broadband connectivity and firewalls to improve the IT experience for all users.

Noting that the areas of most dissatisfaction for students is in the quality of resources and estates (IT, social spaces, catering facilities etc) and as this committee doesn't look at resources and estates governors asked how they can be assured that the college is directing its resources for the best interests of students and their learning experience. The Head of Governance will consider how best to bring this to the attention of the Finance and General Purposes committee.

HoG

For future reports the Head of Learner Experience will be asked to filter the report by campus as themes/issues may be campus specific and not necessarily felt across the college.

HoLE

The Chair commented that the response rate for the survey was high although at least 1000 students had not participated so it was questioned how the voices of those learners are heard. Also, notably there were 130 learners who said that they didn't feel safe at college and 140 who said that they didn't know how to access support. These may very well be the same learners, but can the data be drilled down further to try to understand where some of these safeguarding concerns are shared. The Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality confirmed that every learner who said that they didn't feel safe at college has been contacted to find out why they have given that response. For many it was because there are people at college who they didn't get on with at

school, lifts were broken, or they didn't like crowds of people for example. There were only 4 individuals who felt particularly unsafe and these are being supported by the student welfare team.

10 ARU Annual Monitoring Report 2024/25

The Head of Quality reported that HE enrolment is not as strong as it should be, but the rate of withdrawals is low (5.8%) and attendance is good. There is an increase in the number of students (50%) under the age of 21 so these may have progressed into HE from FE which is positive.

The proportion of good degrees and firsts has dropped (in the main due to unique circumstances of a large psychosocial cohort) reflecting the need for better assessment support from formative prior to summative. Student voice is positive and priorities continue to support learners as they transition into HE learning, support for study skills and academic writing. The report has been submitted to the ARU who typically acknowledge receipt but do not tend to provide feedback or comment.

Whilst concern was raised about low enrolment, governors observed that a good percentage of learners achieve and come from an area of deprivation. UcWA should use this to promote higher learning 'on your doorstep'.

11 Headline Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26

The Headline QIP went through its first progress check resulting in two focus areas being removed due to confidence in the destination/progression data and achieving Adult Skills Fund targets. The focus on A Level provision has been added and two previous focus areas revised (rows 4 and 6).

In summary the review demonstrates stable progress. Of the 11 areas, one is blue (completed), seven are green, three amber and one remains on strategic pause. Eight areas have maintained their previous BRAGP rating, with three of these holding satisfactory progress. It was noted that there are no focus areas in red (high risk) or purple (perilous) status.

Noting that many of the areas for improvement are a focus for the committee the Business Engagement Strategy for example doesn't feature in the committee's business cycle. In response it was agreed that an additional column would be added to the QIP to confirm where governors have oversight. Additionally, governors also wanted transparency around how long actions had been on the QIP and where target dates had been moved. The Head of Governance will work with the Head of Quality to look at adding these enhancements to the format of the QIP.

HoG/HoQ

12 Single Equality Action Plan

The committee received an update on the action progress detailed in the Single Equality Action Plan (SEAP) for 2025/2026.

It was noted that where cells are grey in the update column this is because work has not started yet, i.e., the Pride and Armed Forces events are planned for June 2026 so progress will not show until the next report to the committee.

13 Strategic Targets 2025/26 – Progress Review

In summary, of the 10 strategic targets monitored by the committee, 9 show good progress since the last review in the autumn term, and 1 is behind target. This relates to strategic number 2.6, as the HE strategy and growth plan has been paused. Noting that this has been paused for this academic year governors asked when the strategy would resume which will happen once negotiations with other HEIs have taken place with the expectation that this may resume at Easter, although this is subject to review.

Recognising the sector challenge of FE delivering HE it was questioned if external consultancy should be used to strengthen the HE strategy to help the college navigate such complex provision in a difficult landscape.

14 Any Other Business

The Head of Governance confirmed that Gemma Standen is due to return from compassionate leave after easter and an approach has been made to an education specialist who may be interested in a coopted or full governor role.

15 Chair's Items for Briefing to Corporation

- Apprenticeship achievement rates improving, with confidence that the 68% year-end target is achievable; several upcoming completions expected to boost results.
- Significant apprenticeship sector and funding changes, including new accountability frameworks, flexible levy-funded training, and full funded apprenticeships for eligible under 25s.
- A Level provision showing positive engagement, with strong attendance and excellent year 1 retention (98.5%); over 400 applications received for the next intake.
- Concerns remain regarding year 2 A-Level retention though stability has improved, mock exams and enhanced academic processes are being implemented.
- Operational data indicates strong pre-census retention for 16-18 learners (97%), achieved for the fourth consecutive year through strengthened admissions and induction support.
- Attendance flagged as a concern, with ongoing actions to address barriers impacting learner's ability to attend.
- Student voice has expanded with 173 student reps across all campuses.
- Student satisfaction remains high (96% teaching satisfaction), although IT and estates issues were frequently cited.
- HE enrolment is low, but engagement is strong. The number of withdrawals is also low (5.8%) but there is an increase in the number of under 21s enrolled which suggests that these have progressed from FE into HE.

Suggested additional agenda items for the meeting to be held in June 2026

- Students to be invited
- HE Strategy and Growth Plan
- Ofsted Update
- Summary of response/recommendations arising from the two new LSIPs

16 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 3 June 2026 at 8:30am (Remote Meeting, via TEAMS)

Chair

HoLE
DCEO/VPC&Q
DCEO/VPC&Q
HoAPP&WBL

Meeting ended at 10.30am