

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Performance Review and Quality Committee
23 September 2020
9.00 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

Present	Samantha Fletcher	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	Scott Leadley	Governor (Vice Chair)
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	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 thanked the Committee for agreeing to the amended start time of 9.00 am for this particular meeting, (normally 8.30 am).

1 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence received. Lee Smith was absent from the meeting.

2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 10 June 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 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.

The Clerk noted that a number of outstanding items related to IT systems and management information. It was accepted that with the additional work pressures caused by coronavirus since March 2020 it had not been possible yet for staff to make progress on the outstanding items.

5 Election of Vice Chair

It was agreed that Scott Leadley would serve as Vice Chair of the Performance Review and Quality Committee for the 2020/21 academic year.

Laura Holland joined the meeting at 9.03 am

6 Mathematics & English

The Head of Department reported that the centre assessed grade results were higher than in previous years, even though a cautious approach had been taken with an emphasis on quality assurance at each step of the process. An issue currently remained with Maths Functional Skills; a plan had been put in place to support this. New resources had been put in place across the department for the new academic year; additionally, the maths co-ordinator would be undertaking regular teaching sessions. Two appeals were currently in progress based on Centre error. Details of two complaints received were reported. Exam entries for November were currently at 50-60, this being much lower than in most colleges. Revision classes would be made available to those learners undertaking these exams.

On-line learning for English and Maths commenced the previous week. Despite the preparations for this a number of difficulties had been experienced: students struggling to use the “Learn” VLE platform; digital poverty among certain students where they either did not have suitable equipment or did not understand how to correctly use their devices; differences across the various vocational areas; teachers trying to do too much and perhaps over-complicating their lessons. These matters were currently being rectified.

Adult Learning began the previous evening (22/9/20) with this being held on site; in due course delivery would move to remote learning.

Staff recruitment was taking place within the department for the current vacancies of a maths lecturer and an English lecturer.

Governors referred to the Complaints report (Item 14) and asked how the relationships between staff and students were being improved. The Head of Department advised that the issues had been with Maths staffing and were unable to be resolved during the period of lockdown; in addition, staff vacancies added to the concerns being raised. Attention was being focused on matching students to the most appropriate teacher.

Governors asked that with the continued use of on-line teaching if the Head of Department had considered recruiting teachers from across the country who would teach their classes on-line. The Head of Department responded that this was something that could be explored, although she considered that some on-site presence would be required, particularly for team training events and the regular Friday staff meeting.

The Chair thanked the Head of Department for her thorough report which focused on the priority areas of the department.

The report was noted.

Laura Holland left the meeting at 9.21 am

Vicky Mann joined the meeting at 9.21 am

7 Apprenticeships

The Head of Department advised that the number of confirmed starts had increased from 172 in the report and currently stood at 190.

Governors were concerned with the complaints being received regarding Apprentices. The Head of Department explained that staff were working to resolve all issues and outlined one complaint from a gas apprentice whose training had been delayed due to the limited use of the workshops; this matter had been addressed and the apprentice was now on target to complete the training by the end of October.

The Head of Department explained that there had been frustration and upset from apprentices, parents and employers due to the rules to force a break in learning if the apprentice ceased to access training, noting that the College could not claim funding if the apprentice was not undertaking their learning. Many concerns had been dealt with informally via the telephone and email rather than becoming formal complaints.

Governors asked if those apprentices who found themselves without an employer were being offered any other training or learning pathway at the College. The Head of Department advised that an option was the Apprenticeship Training Route. The Principal added that a range of suitable courses were available at the College where student numbers for 16-18s were up on the previous year, noting the expected reduction in apprentice numbers. Catch-Up Funding was being used to provide opportunities for small groups of learners.

The number of new starts was behind plan, particularly in trade areas such as construction. These were now starting to progress, albeit slowly.

Governors asked what had caused the 70 apprentices to be past their end-dates as noted in the report. This had been caused by issues with quality assurance, mainly within the Technology faculty; plumbing was a concern with one outstanding apprentice dating back to 2017.

Governors asked about the recent changes to end-point assessment. This was a relaxation of the rules and allowed learners who had achieved at Level 1 to go through the gateway without having to sit Level 2 functional skills. This relaxation would continue until December 2020.

The Chair recognised the continuing issues within the Technology areas and asked if the situation was improving. The Head of Department commented that improvements were taking place, although not at pace. Good dialogue was taking place between colleagues.

The Chair asked about the wellbeing of staff over recent months. The Head of Department explained that the necessary changes to ways of working caused by coronavirus had had a big impact on the team. This had caused an additional pressure for staff members who were already suffering with pre-existing health conditions. Weekly meetings, catch-up sessions and other activities had taken place to support, encourage and motivate staff.

The Chair recognised the impact that the coronavirus pandemic was having on staff and thanked the Head of Department and her team for the work that was being done with regard to the apprentices.

The report was noted.

Vicky Mann left the meeting at 9.40 am

Steve Lowery joined the meeting at 9.40 am

8 Technology Faculty Update

The Head of Faculty reported that the adapted assessment grades for motor vehicles and carpentry were currently outstanding.

The Vice Principal advised that the self-assessment reviews for construction and engineering which had been presented during the review process had been re-evaluated with the updated reports attached at appendices 2 & 3. Construction had received a grading of 3, and Engineering a grading of 2.

Governors asked about the progress being made with apprentices who were currently behind, and the actions being taken. The Head of Faculty commented that with new staffing now in place this would allow for a period of catching up to take place. The Vice Principal added that she would like the faculty to fully accept the joint responsibilities along with the Work Based Learning department with everyone working together on behalf of each individual apprentice; with the new staffing and a good induction with clear guidance this could be achieved.

Governors commented on the grade 3 awarded to Leadership and Management within Construction self-assessment review and asked for assurance that this low score would be addressed. The Head of Faculty advised that no specific changes had been proposed to address this; training would remain ongoing but perhaps this item should have been explained in more detail within the report. The Chair noted that the work being done for this and its impact was not clear and that the Committee would require a clear listing of the steps being taken to address this in the next report from the faculty. **ACTION-HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY FACULTY**

The report was noted.

Steve Lowery left the meeting at 9.50 am

9 Learning & Curriculum Report

The Vice Principal reported that she had met with the Chair over the summer period to discuss how best to report on the quality of education to the Committee in the months ahead as the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic continued. The self-assessment reviews over the summer period had identified particular areas of weakness which had been categorised as red, amber and green.

To aid teaching staff in their planning a guide had been issued (Appendix 1). The College would deliver a blended approach in the autumn term with priority learners receiving more on-campus teaching than others. It was noted that there was an urgent need also to have more vocational students on site for practical lessons and assignments although this was proving difficult to maximise due to spacing issues.

Governors welcomed the RAG rating style of report to focus attention especially on those areas which would greatly suffer during a period of local lockdown, such as Hair & Beauty. Scott Leadley, Staff Governor, added that certain indoor activities within the Sports department could be impacted soon such as basketball, netball, public protected services and physical training classes – clarification was now expected.

Governors asked what was being done to support students with English and Maths. The Vice Principal advised that early assessments were identifying those students in need of help; catch-up classes were being offered.

Governors asked about plans to cover teaching and the management of courses during periods of staff absence. The Vice Principal advised that for on-line lessons some classes could easily be grouped together with one teacher remotely teaching a much larger class size. Part-time hourly paid teachers would be utilised to cover additional teaching sessions or to cover absences for on-site teaching. Course directors would be required to manage this appropriately with an emphasis on good performance management.

Noting Maths & English, Apprenticeships and Technology as discussed earlier, the Chair asked if there were any other areas considered to be a concern within the College. The Vice Principal advised that ESOL was a concern, although with this under the management of Laura Holland she was confident of seeing improvement in due course. Additionally, Hair & Beauty was currently without a programme manager and so was a current concern. The Principal was concerned about the possibility of teaching staff suddenly having to be absent for a period of 2 weeks should they need to isolate for coronavirus reasons which would upset the continuity of teaching for students.

Governors commented favourably on Appendix 2 of the report – Expectations for Teaching, and asked about any reactions received from staff members. The Vice Principal explained the need to set clear expectations for staff at the beginning of the autumn term. Training was in place and Heads of Faculties and Programme Managers had been positive and had been sharing the guidance with their staff.

The report was noted.

10 Curriculum Planning Strategy Report

The Vice Principal explained that the purpose of the curriculum planning strategy report was to share the direction of progress with staff and governors. The strategy referred to the themes identified within the Education Inspection Framework – Intent, Implementation and Impact. T Levels and the further development of A Level provision were also included within the strategy.

Governors asked how higher education was reflected within the document. The Vice Principal advised that higher education would be addressed in a separate report, to be presented to the Committee at a future meeting. The College would work with ARU in the development of this report.

ACTION-VPCL

The Principal was anticipating the government's publication of its White Paper for Further Education, due this autumn. Radical changes were expected regarding the Level 4 & 5 offer. This could present new opportunities for the College.

The Chair was pleased to note that the strategy considered it appropriate for the College to continue its A Level provision.

The Committee approved the Curriculum Planning Strategy document.

11 Performance Data and KPIs 2019/20 (Emerging Outcomes)

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students highlighted the exam issues experienced over the summer period. The overall performance picture was positive although governors were asked to be mindful of the underpinning issues as to why the data was so positive for this academic year and that comparisons with previous (and future) years should be undertaken with caution.

The Principal welcomed this positive report and was cautious not to overly-celebrate the performance data, noting that there may have been some institutions which had taken advantage of the exams grading process this summer. Staff would be thanked for their efforts.

The Chair noted the difficulties when analysing the data and trying to make comparisons with previous performance. Governors asked if the positive performance would be referred to in marketing campaigns. The Assistant Principal advised that it would be difficult to use the results for the 2019/20 academic year, especially when considering the very strange circumstances in which final grades had been calculated and awarded. Due to the challenges in carrying out a full student survey at the end of the year, it would also be difficult for this data to be used in marketing materials. The Chair commented that destination data for students should be the main emphasis from which to report success for 2019/20.

The report was noted.

12 Quality Improvement Plan 2019/20

The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that it had been difficult for managers to focus on the Quality Improvement Plan since March 2020. Efforts were currently being focused on finalising the self-assessment reviews and preparing the Quality Improvement Plan for the new academic year (2020/21) based on the findings from the SARs process.

Governors emphasised the need for management to ensure that any continuing areas of weakness would not be forgotten as the new plan was compiled and would continue to be recorded and addressed in this new academic year.

The report was noted.

13 Applewood Nursery Update

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning reported that the Nursery was now fully open with those staff who had been furloughed during the summer period having now returned. Funding for 2-year olds remained an issue whilst the nursery remained with its grade 3 inspection result. Ofsted inspections were due to commence from January 2021 and it was expected that Applewood would be inspected early in the spring term. Norfolk County Council advisers were continuing to support the nursery with further walk-throughs having been requested. Staff were very positive about the nursery and were happy to share any remaining issues or concerns.

Governors asked how confident the Vice Principal was to securing a good grade at the next inspection. The Vice Principal reported that improvements in intent, implementation and impact (themes of the inspection framework) could be clearly seen; rooms were well presented; staff were confident; room lead managers were strong and the nursery manager had past experience of successfully managing inspections.

The Chair asked about the relationship with the Norfolk County Council advisers and the help being received. The Vice Principal commented again that throughout the whole process improvements in the nursery were being noticed with the children being well looked after. Governors asked about other possible sources of guidance and assistance. The Vice Principal advised that 2 nursery practitioners were available to visit Applewood to offer further support.

The Chair advised that she would pass on the contact details of an Early Years Ofsted inspector who would be able to provide further advice and support.

ACTION-CHAIR

The report was noted.

14 Complaints (current)

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students noted that the number of complaints received during the year had been drastically distorted by the high number received relating to result outcomes. A total of 193 complaints had now been received (5 of which were received after the advised closing date and so would be managed in the normal way). 3 complaints had been referred due to centre error, 2 of which had already been accepted and updated.

There were no questions or concerns raised on this report.

The report was noted.

15 Complaints Summary 2019/20

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students referred to the conclusion of his report which noted the themes of the types of complaints received throughout the year. The complaints system, newly introduced during the year was working well, offering the protection and transparency needed particularly for HE students under the requirements of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

There were no questions or concerns raised on this report.

The report was noted.

16 Hearing the Student Voice

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students noted that whereas the feedback received for the first 2 terms of the academic year had been positive, the disruption during the summer term by the coronavirus pandemic had prevented the usual collection of survey data and feedback from students for the final term. The final Learn poll at year end received only 65 responses and was therefore considered to be unrepresentative.

Governors commented on the outstanding NSS results and acknowledged the hard work put in by students and staff which had resulted in this very positive survey.

The report was noted.

17 Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

18 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation

- i. The Committee continued to focus on the same 3 areas:
 - a. Maths & English
 - b. Apprenticeships
 - c. Technology

- ii. A new performance reporting method had been outlined by the Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning and this would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting on 2 December 2020 for its first review.
- iii. The feedback received from students via the various surveys over the summer had been very positive.
- iv. The number of complaints had increased over the summer holiday period due to the exam results situation caused by the use of Ofsted's grading algorithm and the government's late decision to change to using centre assessed grades.

19 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 2 December 2020 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 10.40 am