

**College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Performance Review and Quality Committee
9 March 2022
8.30 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

Present	Sam Fletcher	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	Scott Leadley	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Roderick Watkins	Governor
Attending	Ruth Harrison	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality
	Trevor Hewlett	Interim Head of English & Maths (part)
	Steve Lowery	Head of Faculty – Technology (part)
	Vicky Mann	Head of Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning (part)
	Ria Steventon	Head of Learning Improvement (part)
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Lee Smith. It was noted that Roderick Watkins would need to leave the meeting at 9.55 am.

2 Declarations of Interests

A declaration of interest was noted for Roderick Watkins should any discussions or issues arise relating to Anglia Ruskin University in any of the reports during the meeting.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 1 December 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 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.

The item from 28/4/21 regarding the sharing of contact information for ESOL tuition remained outstanding. It was agreed that the Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality would review this matter and decide if it remained live, or, due to its timescale, could be closed.

ACTION-VPCQ

Trevor Hewlett joined the meeting at 8.33 am

5 Mathematics & English

The Head of Department advised that mock exams for students had commenced the previous day (8 March 2022) in advance of the summer exam period which would commence in May and end in June; this was a much longer exam period than in previous years. Teaching teams were focusing on specific topics for revision. 'Gradebook,' used for the tracking of student progress, and currently used for English was now also being used for Maths.

The online tutoring programme 'MyTutor' was being used to help students with their work with more than 100 students now signed up; this had recently gone live with good interest from around the College being noticed. Governors asked about the mix of on-line and face to face tuition; the Head of Department reported that students were now very used to using on-line resources and would benefit from the blend of tuition offered; further, on-line resources greatly assisted those students who had missed lessons to catch-up or repeat a topic if needed.

For the Adult Provision, there had been 70 new enrolments, with this expected to increase further over the coming weeks.

Governors were concerned about the attendance issues detailed in the report. The Head of Department explained that weekly monitoring was taking place to address this with the help and support from the various vocational teams.

Governors asked about the recent 'Deep-Dive' exercise that had taken place within the department. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality reported that it had been considered that those outside of the department had limited ownership of English and Maths but those involved in the 'deep-dive' now had a much broader understanding of the department. The Vice Principal highlighted from the report the staffing issues now being faced by the department. Governors discussed the recent staffing changes within the department.

The Chair asked for an update on Functional Skills. The Head of Department advised that there was a focus on increasing first-time pass rates, and although there were lower numbers taking the exams the achievement rate was expected to be higher than previously. The Head of Department would be meeting with the Exams team the following week to review the exam window and review the recent mock examinations. The next assessment point for students was also due the following week.

The Chair suggested that focus should initially be on engagement with learners, to gain their interest and commitment to their studies, which in time would lead to improved attendance.

The Chair reflected that within a number of reports to be reviewed at today's meeting, attendance and behaviour concerns had been reported on several occasions.

The report was noted.

Trevor Hewlett left the meeting at 8.58 am

6 ESOL

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality reported that Ria Steventon, Head of Learning Improvement would be covering as Head of ESOL during the time that Laura Holland was on maternity leave. The department was noticing a particular issue with the retention of its learners, with 14 adult learners leaving their respective part-time courses the previous week; the Vice Principal noted the difficulties adults faced in committing to their courses. The Vice Principal would be reviewing the curriculum plan with the Assistant Principal Funding & Performance to identify how best, and when, to offer ESOL courses for adults. The Vice

Principal advised that staff resources would be reviewed as there was some under-utilisation within the department and that some performance management was also required.

Governors were disappointed that employers seemed not to support their own staff engaging in ESOL and did not realise the benefits that their employees would gain. Governors asked about the funding of ESOL and the flexibility of how it could be delivered. The Vice Principal explained that funding, depending on the particular contract, would normally come from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority or the ESFA. The delivery of ESOL was very flexible, both in where it was delivered (on campus, online, or at an employers' premises) and the timing, to fit in with learners and employers. The Vice Principal said there was a need for teaching staff to be fully motivated and to present a lively lesson to learners to boost interest and engagement. The Vice Principal was confident that the Head of Learning Improvement, now covering this area, was capable of making the changes required and moving the team forward.

The Principal reported positively on a recent staff meeting for the ESOL department he had attended and agreed that the small team would benefit from some changes.

The report was noted.

Ria Steventon joined the meeting at 9.05 am

7 Complaints 2021/22

The Head of Learning Improvement reported that in a number of cases a formal complaint had not been raised as many concerns were dealt with informally as soon as the issue had been raised; this worked well for the learner and the College and ensured faster action leading to the issue being resolved.

It was noted that one complaint relating to HE–classroom temperatures, was now near to being resolved and closed.

Governors were pleased that the number of complaints seemed not to be increasing above previous years; however, it was noted that the recent complaints regarding the vet nursing accreditation issue had been received and recorded directly by Anglia Ruskin University. The Chair asked if the 49 complaints received so far compared favourably with previous years. The Head of Learning Improvement considered that the number of complaints received in 2019-20 and 2020-21 were perhaps higher than normal due to issues relating to Coronavirus and that for the current year, so far, the number of complaints received were considered to be average. The Principal added that perhaps what was most important to review was the nature of the issues raised, rather than the quantity of overall complaints received, and the need for the College to take the appropriate action to resolve issues.

Governors asked for further information on the 13 complaints classified as “Staff/Student Interaction,” where 5 of these complaints were within the Technology faculty. The Head of Learning Improvement assured governors that these were not in relation to inappropriate behaviour by staff or safeguarding concerns, and that the Head of Technology had been made aware of the complaints within his faculty as they had been received. The Head of Learning Improvement would analyse the complaints further to provide more information for governors.

ACTION-HoLI

The Principal reported that there had been some recent breaches of the staff code of conduct by support staff, leading to some of the complaints raised. This was being addressed with the launch of a new training programme for staff. The Principal also reported that one complaint had been escalated to the Chair of Governors, relating to A levels, with a final response from the College due to be issued later this week.

Governors asked about the lessons learned from the complaints received and how this linked into the quality system. The Head of Learning Improvement advised that trends were monitored from the complaints received, with feedback given back to the respective faculty areas along with actions to follow-up. Governors asked how the complaints process could be improved; the Head of Learning Improvement considered that a speedier response, once received, would improve the process and help to resolve issues faster – use of the telephone and/or direct conversation with the complainant rather than use of email was suggested.

The report was noted.

Ria Steventon left the meeting at 9.19 am

Vicky Mann joined the meeting at 9.20 am

8 Apprenticeships

The Head of Apprenticeships noted her concern regarding the number of overdue apprentices, showing as 178 in the report but which had now increased to 181.

Governors asked if apprenticeships were inspected separately by Ofsted and if Ofsted would consider the current number of overdue apprentices to be a concern. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that there was not a separate inspection for apprentices and that it was covered within the overall inspection visit by Ofsted. However, Ofsted would be concerned with high numbers of overdue apprentices, and with this data being visible, it would be a trigger for a possible inspection visit.

The Head of Apprenticeships advised that new funding monitoring conditions had recently been introduced by the ESFA which focused on withdrawals and achievement rates.

It was noted that the Technology faculty had the highest number of overdue apprentices; governors were aware of the staffing issues currently within the faculty, as detailed in the report at Item 9 on the agenda.

Governors asked about the increased number of new starters which was much higher than the previous year, and, if it continued, the issues that could arise. The Principal advised that, depending on the teaching resources available within specific faculty areas, it may be that the College had to limit the number of new starters in some areas, allowing time to focus on existing apprentices. The Vice Principal added that the College would not wish to limit additional apprenticeships, noting the financial and reputational impact, but had to be realistic about the limited resources caused by staff moving back to the commercial sector and/or workplace.

The Principal noted his concerns for the possible reputational risk if the College was not able to effectively support employers in the development of their apprentices. The Principal referred to a recent report issued by the AoC, 'College Staffing Challenges in 2022' and the difficulties of staff recruitment and retention being a major issue for many colleges in the sector.

Governors asked for an update on the changes taking place within the apprenticeships department. The Head of Apprenticeships reported that a project manager had been appointed and was now working alongside the Assistant Principal Funding & Performance mapping out the processes for apprenticeships; it was very much 'early-days', but staff were excited for the progression. Further, a new CRM system had been purchased which, once in operation, would greatly help in the timely and accurate completion of enrolments, and which would also provide a fully integrated tracking system for apprentices.

The Chair asked if there were any areas of concern that would remain outstanding once the project had been completed. The Head of Apprenticeships considered that further attention

would need to be directed in the use of Smart Assessor (software tool) by staff, where the feedback recorded needed to be accurate and clear, but this was not the case in some areas and therefore hindered the monitoring and review of an individual's progress.

The Vice Principal reported that some staff members were working exceptionally well under the current circumstances. Further, staff within the commercial training area had been moved into the Technology faculty to provide additional resources. End Point Assessments were progressing, with good achievement rates, however, the process for moving an apprentice through to the gateway was cumbersome and time consuming.

The Chair noted the retirement of Vicky Mann, Head of Apprenticeships, at the end of March 2022. The Chair thanked Vicky for her support for the College, for attending the meetings of this Committee, and wished her well in her retirement.

The report was noted.

Steve Lowery joined the meeting at 9.43 am

9 Technology Faculty Update

The Head of Faculty reported positively on the recent visit by the EQA assessor to the plumbing department. Staffing recruitment was again a major issue for the faculty, and this had been discussed recently by the College Leadership Team. The Head of Faculty would be pleased if the College was successful in a bid for Levelling-Up funds to be used to transform the facilities at the Wisbech Campus. Student behaviour was an issue, both within the faculty and across the campuses generally – this would be discussed by staff at the training day on 1 April 2022.

The Chair referred to the previous report and asked the Head of Faculty to respond to the concerns about overdue apprentices within the Technology faculty. With regard to gas, the Head of Faculty explained that a new member of staff was now in place and that plans had been devised to allow for catch-up, however, approval for the new member of staff would be required by the awarding body and this was not expected until 1 June 2022. The backlogs in electrical installation would hopefully be cleared by the end of the academic year. For engineering, staff from the commercial training area had been re-deployed to provide additional resources; a meeting had been arranged for the following week to discuss and plan actions to address the backlogs in this area.

The Principal asked the Head of Faculty to consider which areas of the faculty could present a risk if Ofsted were to request an inspection at short notice. The Head of Faculty considered that plans were in place for most areas, with the exception of engineering which would be addressed the following week. However, for brickwork, where agency staffing had been engaged, this had not provided a good experience for students and where, for next year, it may become necessary to put a hold on further enrolments until the staffing situation had been resolved.

The Principal asked the Head of Faculty about the 5 complaints received regarding "Staff/Student Interaction," as discussed by the Committee earlier under Item 7. The Head of Faculty explained that these related to complaints about staff not being in place (due to the vacancies) and classes having to be cancelled. Governors suggested that the classification of complaints perhaps needed some refinement to avoid any misinterpretation as to what the complaint was about.

Roderick Watkins left the meeting at 9.55 am

The Chair noted her concerns regarding the risk regarding an Ofsted visit at the current time; the reputational risk for the College in not being able to effectively support apprentices and employers and the behaviour of students.

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality explained to the Committee that as the Head of Faculty was based mainly at the Wisbech Campus, along with the Assistant Principal Funding & Performance, many of the behavioural issues which these 2 managers would deal with were related to incidents in the general/communal areas of the campus, rather than within the classrooms (which teachers would usually deal with). Behaviour was considered to be improving, although the number of exclusions were much higher this year than normal.

The report was noted.

Vicky Mann & Steve Lowery left the meeting at 9.58 am

10 Learning & Curriculum Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality reported that the College was looking to launch its T Level course in Business Services from September 2022, as an alternative to the BTEC course. The anticipated Construction T Level would not be launched due to the failure to recruit teaching staff. The College was still committed to launching further T Level courses in the future. The recent T Level review by Ofsted at the College was very positive, with inspectors noting that learners were 'curious.'

The recent 'deep-dive' as reported under Item 5 was again mentioned, with the Vice Principal noting that no new issues or areas of concern within Maths & English had been identified as a result of the review. It was accepted that the process was disruptive, exhausting and time-consuming but was very worthwhile. The Vice Principal considered that there was a learning benefit to be gained in understanding the student experience for those teachers involved in the 'deep-dive.'

Vet Nursing Terminal Accreditation – *this item was deemed 'Confidential.'*

Governors asked if any impact had been noticed as a result of the TLA strategy. The Vice Principal reported that it was still early days, although teaching staff were questioning and considering their own activities which was good. Staff were supporting the MyTutor online teaching software and were taking the time to chat with students to gain insight and understand more of the student experience.

Scott Leadley, staff governor, commented on his involvement with the deep-dive in Hair & Beauty. The opportunity to meet with staff and students and to gain insight into a different curriculum area was beneficial and appreciated.

The Chair referred to the lesson observations as detailed in the report and asked why only staff from the Learning Practice had carried out observations within the Technology faculty. The Vice Principal advised that due to staff shortages the teaching staff and the Head of Faculty were unable to carry out the additional duties of lesson observations at the current time.

The Principal referred to the pending retirement of the Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality, noting her influence in shaping the culture of the College and her design of activities such as the deep-dives which had helped the development of those involved in the process. The Vice Principal noted the importance of encouraging those involved in teaching to consider the experience through the eyes of the students.

The report was noted.

11 Performance Data and KPIs

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality highlighted retention levels which were a concern and the importance of trying to minimise the loss of students before day 43 had been reached in the academic year (this being the census cut-off period). Management would review data and look for any early trends emerging to spot areas of concern and take action. The offer of a strong and appropriate NEET package (aimed at those not in education, employment or training) via Fresh Start was important.

The continuing monitoring of student progress via the portal was highlighted, with the need to regularly review those students considered to be at risk. Staff were making more use of RAG rating. Scott Leadley, staff governor, noted that improved comments regarding a student's grading would be necessary in order to provide additional useful information to the reviewer, particular when the status had changed for a student.

Governors commented on the actions being taken to encourage good attendance and good behaviour. The Vice Principal added that extra activities were also being undertaken and, further, course director reports were providing additional information for management.

The report was noted.

12 Quality Improvement Plan 2021/22 – Progress Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality explained that the Quality Improvement Plan provided a focus for the continued development across the College and would be handed over to the Head of Learning Improvement to manage, monitor and develop further. The Principal added that the plan would evolve over time as situations across the sector and within the College changed. The Chair considered that the report was clear and provided clarity.

The report was noted.

13 Strategic Targets 2021/22 Progress Review

The Chair commented on Target 1.5a relating to attendance and how the effects of Covid were still having an adverse impact.

14 Any Other Business

Race for Life – Scott Leadley, Staff Governor, advised that the Race for Life, in support of Cancer Research UK, would be taking place at the Sports Campus on Wednesday 23 March 2022 with staff, students and governors encouraged to support, take part or donate in this fundraising event.

15 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation

- The Committee focused on recurring themes within the various reports received, such as student behaviour, attendance, and the recruitment & retention of staffing in curriculum areas.

16 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 15 June 2022 at 8.30 am.

The Chair noted that this was the final meeting for Ruth Harrison as Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality before her retirement, although she may be attending the summer term's meeting in an interim capacity. The Chair thanked Ruth for her influence and enthusiasm in moving the teaching and learning forward at the College, and for the positive impact she had made in the development of both learners and staff.

The meeting closed at 10.34 am