

College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Performance Review and Quality Committee
1 December 2021
8.30 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams

Present	Sam Fletcher	Governor (Chair)
	Scott Leadley	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Lee Smith	Governor
	Roderick Watkins	Governor
Also present	Sharon Cambridge	Governor (part)
	Alan Measures	Governor (part)
Attending	Ruth Harrison	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality
	Paul O'Shea	Assistant Principal Student Services (part)
	Steve Lowery	Head of Faculty – Technology (part)
	Clare Pelling	Learning Experience Manager (part)
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

The Chair welcomed Sharon Cambridge and Alan Measures, who were joining the meeting for the review of the Overall College Self-Assessment, at Item 3 on the agenda.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Chris Ashman. It was noted that Lee Smith would need to leave the meeting at 9.15 am.

2 Declarations of Interests

A declaration of interest was noted for Roderick Watkins under Item 8 – Learning & Curriculum Report (RCVS update).

3 Overall College Self-Assessment Review 2020/21

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning advised that the report had been written in a style suitable for several readers including staff, governors, and Ofsted. The report, previously reviewed by the Heads of Faculties and Senior Management Team, provided a fair and honest overview of the college organisation. The report, once approved, would be submitted to Ofsted. The report noted the difficult year due to the challenges of the Covid pandemic and the resulting reductions in outcomes. Comparisons with other colleges were not possible as national benchmarking data had been suspended for the time being. Sharon Cambridge noted that the AoC was trying to obtain benchmarking data for colleges to use. The Principal reported that he was working with a small group of colleges on a benchmarking exercise to provide some level of comparative data.

Governors asked if the style and content of the report was governed by Ofsted requirements. The Vice Principal advised that this was not the case and that colleges were free to create

their own format of reporting, however, for CWA, the style chosen mirrored the themes and style of Ofsted's own Education Inspection Framework. Governors agreed that the report provided a strong picture of the college's current position, suitable for all audiences and was an effective document.

The Vice Principal advised that Ofsted had announced its intention to visit all colleges by 2025, in priority risk order. In order to indicate to Ofsted that CWA was not a priority, the SAR report mentioned recent visits by the FE Commissioner and Ofsted where positive comments had been received.

The Vice Principal continued that the report then led to the development of the Quality Improvement Plan for 2021/22 (QIP), using also the detailed self-assessment reviews from individual faculties and departments which had been reviewed themselves by management and governors over the summer period. Within the QIP, attendance was a particular concern of focus in many areas. All areas of focus had named staff responsible to aid the management and monitoring of progress.

The Chair asked if the report and the actions in the QIP matched the feedback received from the student body. The Vice Principal confirmed that areas of focus and concern were similar. Governors considered the QIP to be a useful management document. Governors asked the Vice Principal to consider including staffing issues within the QIP, such as recruitment and well-being, as well as the growth and development of HE. The Vice Principal advised that this document would be regularly reviewed and updated and agreed there was further work to do within Leadership & Management.

The Principal noted that the report provided a good management tool, and that reference in the report to each faculty and department having its own specific action plan should be highlighted. **ACTION-VPCQ**

The Vice Principal reported on the planned 'deep-dive' taking place the following week, to help monitor and improve quality, involving a small group of staff and an external professional reviewing in detail a curriculum area.

The Committee agreed to recommend the Overall College Self-Assessment Review to the Board for approval, and its subsequent submission to Ofsted.

Sharon Cambridge and Alan Measures left the meeting at 9.00 am

4 Minutes of the previous meeting – 22 September 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2021 were reviewed and agreed as being an accurate record.

5 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for Item 5. There were 3 actions still to be completed at a later date. Regarding the Technology Report where positive aspects of the provision ought to be reported, the Principal advised that he had recently attended a faculty meeting which had been very encouraging, although current staffing resourcing issues had resulted in a waiting list of students for electrical and the temporary standing down of a cohort of students for gas. It was agreed to close this item from the Matters Arising listing. **ACTION-CLERK**

Paul O'Shea joined the meeting at 9.05 am

6 Annual Safeguarding Monitoring Report 2020/21

The Chair asked about the increased number of attempted suicides during the year compared to the previous year and if the college was sufficiently resourced to support students. The Assistant Principal considered that resourcing within the college was currently adequate with a good team of staff on hand and indeed SMT had recently discussed adding further resources to this area. Support from external agencies could be improved, particularly from within the Cambridgeshire area. The Principal noted his concern for the wellbeing of the support team, particularly as the number of students requiring help was increasing. Roderick Watkins advised that he would be willing to share resources and information from ARU.

ACTION-APSS/RW

Governors noted the 25% increase in suicide attempts and asked for the actual numbers so that they were fully aware of the scale of the concern.

ACTION-APSS

Governors proposed the use of the term “suspected suicide” for future reporting. The Assistant Principal would consider this for future reports.

ACTION-APSS

Roderick Watkins reported that ARU was currently promoting the need to encourage all individuals to talk about this difficult subject, across all levels of the organisation, considering various strategies and increased discussion. The concern of suicide ideation was discussed. The Assistant Principal reported that where there were concerns, plans would be formulated for individuals, sometimes involving family members where appropriate.

Lee Smith noted his involvement in the recently formed charity 8:56 Foundation and was keen for this organisation to work with the College. The Clerk would confirm Lee Smith’s interest in this organisation in the register of interests.

ACTION-CLERK

Scott Leadley, staff governor, reported that teaching staff were experiencing an increase in the number of safeguarding concerns, with daily conversations taking place. The Assistant Principal added that this matter had been discussed the previous day at the College Leadership Team meeting.

The Chair asked about the frequency of meetings for the Safeguarding Oversight Committee. The Assistant Principal advised that meetings were held in October, January, and June, with this annual report being reviewed by this Committee and then issued to the Board for information. In addition, verbal updates were provided by the Safeguarding Link Governor to the Board when required.

Lee Smith left the meeting at 9.20 am

The Chair asked the Assistant Principal if there were any other actions or areas of support that could be provided to support students further. The Assistant Principal advised that the Oversight Committee would continue to monitor the situation and discuss new areas of support as required.

The report was noted.

Paul O’Shea left the meeting at 9.27 am

Clare Pelling joined the meeting at 9.27 am

7 Single Equality Scheme & Equality Objectives 2021/22

The Learning Experience Manager highlighted the action plan for 2021/22 which clearly detailed the responsibilities for specific managers. The plan had been re-focused to make it more measurable and centred around both students and staff.

The Principal reminded the Committee that the Learning Experience Manager had taken on the responsibility of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion earlier in the year, following the departure of the Assistant Principal Students & Quality in January 2021.

Governors asked about how equality was measured across the College, such as in terms of performance (for students) and pay (for staff). The Learning Experience Manager and the Principal outlined the current areas where data was recorded and monitored and noted that this would be improved further over time. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality highlighted achievement rates which had been reported in previous reports to the Committee.

The report asked for the Committee to recommend the action plan to the Board for approval. The Chair advised that she would discuss the plan further with the Link Governor for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (Rebecca Hamilton) before finalising a recommendation to the Board. The Chair would action this over the next few days and report verbally to the Board at its meeting on 8 December 2021. **ACTION-CHAIR**

Clare Pelling left the meeting at 9.38 am

8 Learning & Curriculum Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality highlighted attendance which remained a cause for concern, particularly in English and Maths which was 11% lower than the main qualification areas, (noting that usually a 3% differentiation was accepted). There was currently a greater emphasis on the need to carry out more frequent monitoring of student progress to around 20 days. A dashboard had been produced allowing monitoring by managers. Students would be graded as Red, Amber or Green depending on their latest review.

The recruitment of staffing remained a current issue with those areas experiencing difficulties highlighted in the report.

The termination of accreditation for the OSCE (objective structured clinical examination) in vet nursing by the RCVS was discussed. Further recruitment of new students to the course would not be possible until re-accreditation had been completed. All students had been advised of the current issues. Daily meetings were currently being held with ARU and College staff. There would be reputational damage for both ARU and the College although the complaints received so far had focused on the RCVS and the action it had taken. Both ARU and the College were working hard to support the students. An update would be provided at the Board meeting on 8 December 2021.

The national uptake for T Levels had so far been poor. At the College, the Laboratory Technician course received no enrolments. The Government's intention to withdraw funding for several BTEC courses had been suspended for one further year. From September 2022 the College is planning to launch Business Management and then Animal Care in September 2023. The Principal added that Ofsted would be carrying out a 'thematic survey' on T Levels with the College having been selected to take part; this would involve 2 visits by Ofsted to view progress with the final report expected in September 2023.

The report was noted.

9 Mathematics & English

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality presented this report in the absence of the Head of Faculty.

The Vice Principal reported that staff absences due to short-term sickness and Covid-related matters had forced the cancellation of some classes or amalgamated lessons being provided

on-line, which was not ideal. Attendance was lower than expected, as reported in Item 8, previously. For Adult courses, a good recruitment campaign was expected in advance of the launch of the January 2022 offer, although there were now some minor concerns with Covid matters affecting the launch and possibly the delivery of the new courses.

The Chair commented on the continuing pressures on existing staff due to recruitment, retention, and Covid-related matters. Scott Leadley, Staff Governor, noted that students were anxious and lacked confidence about undertaking written exams, with this possibly escalating as exam dates moved closer. The Vice Principal emphasised the need for the College to support students and to ensure that mock-exams were provided to give students the experience they needed to boost their confidence.

The report was noted.

10 ESOL

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality presented this report in the absence of the Head of Faculty. The teaching team had continued to develop through their training plan, some of which included one-to-one support. The department remained in the Support to Improve Process. An action plan for the department, listed in the report, provided focus for the team.

The Essential Digital Skills course, funded by the CPCA had so far been successful, however, the Community Project Vehicle had not received any engagements from employers yet, although interest had been very positive.

The report was noted.

11 Apprenticeships

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality presented this report in the absence of the Head of Department. Apprenticeships had been affected during the Covid pandemic. Overall achievement for 2020/21 had ended at 57% with 51% for timely achievement. Apprenticeship numbers and income targets for the last year had been achieved. Benchmarking data across the sector was not available although comments from other colleges suggested that everyone had suffered similar performance results. Staff were continuing to support those students who were out-of-time, even though funding had now ceased for those individuals.

Governors referred to the Self-Assessment Review and asked if the College was confident in its assessment of "Good" for this provision. The Vice Principal considered that for most learners the experience had been good; for apprentices who had encountered difficulties during the year, these had mostly been supported with the issues resolved. The Principal added that the Covid pandemic had caused difficulties and that the move from Frameworks to Standards in many areas had resulted in further challenges. The College considered its position in switching to standards to be ahead of many other providers at the current time in respect of apprenticeships and that the necessary actions to further improve the provision were being addressed.

The report was noted.

Steve Lowery joined the meeting at 10.09 am

12 Technology Faculty Update

The Head of Faculty reported that good progress had been made within the faculty in the completion of overdue apprenticeships. There had been some recent resignations resulting in 8 vacancies currently being advertised. It was anticipated that Levelling-Up Funding would

have a positive impact for the faculty. The Principal reported that he had recently attended a 'golden-hour' session for staff which he found to be focused, positive and encouraging.

Governors asked about the current workshop facilities and if these affected the future development of the faculty. The Head of Faculty advised that with the current increase in student numbers, and further increases expected in the near future then additional facilities would be required. The current facilities at the Wisbech Campus were also in need of some refurbishment. Curriculum planning for 2022/23 would take account of the facilities available. The Principal advised that archive storage space at the Wisbech Campus was being considered for conversion into usable workshop space which would assist the faculty in the short-term. It was hoped that external grant funding, if awarded, would then be used to further develop facilities on the campus.

Governors asked about the morale of faculty staff during this pressurised time. The Head of Faculty advised that staff were enthusiastic and were willing to work flexibly where necessary. Further, recently appointed staff were performing well, and additional new staff would be recruited in January.

The Chair commented on the generally-positive picture within the faculty, despite the current staffing resource issues.

The report was noted.

Steve Lowery left the meeting at 10.20 am

13 Complaints - Current 2021/22

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality noted that in many cases informal chats between students and teaching staff helped to resolve issues before they became official complaints.

The Principal reminded the Committee that the very recent complaints received relating to the RCVS accreditation issue, as discussed in Item 8, had not yet been included in the figures reviewed within this Complaints Report.

There were no comments or questions raised on the report.

The report was noted.

14 Any Other Business

The Principal noted the very recent decision of Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality, to retire in the spring term. The Principal highlighted the support that Ruth had given to this Committee since her appointment in 2018. The Principal added that other managers would be retiring from the College at the end of the summer 2022 term, with the potential that this may cause some risk for the College in the short term, but also offering good opportunities in the recruitment and development of new managers.

15 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation

- The Committee reviewed the overall College SAR report and considered that its report style made it useful to many different groups of readers. The report was clear on the areas of focus for the College. The Quality Improvement Plan, based on the SAR was also reviewed. 2 other members of the Board attended the meeting for this item. The Committee recommended the SAR to the Board for approval.
- The Safeguarding Report for the last year was reviewed in detail. Mental health, particularly the concern of student suicide was greatly discussed.

- The Single Equality Scheme and new objectives were reviewed.
- The Committee reviewed the usual regular reports from specific areas of focus: maths & English, ESOL, apprenticeships and technology. Staff resourcing was a theme running through several of the discussions.
- The Committee was disappointed to note the retirement of Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal, in the spring term. The Committee had benefited from Ruth's focused reporting and discussion during meetings and she would be missed.

16 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 9 March 2022 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 10.28 am