

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

<b>Present</b>	Sam Fletcher	Governor (Chair)	
	Chris Ashman	Governor	
	Scott Leadley	Governor	
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)	
	Lee Smith	Governor	
	Roderick Watkins	Governor	
<b>Attending</b>	Ruth Harrison	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality (Interim)	
	Kerry Heathcote	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality	
	Trevor Hewlett	Interim Head of English & Maths (part)	
	Vicky Mann	Interim Head of Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning (part)	
	Clare Pelling	Learning Experience Manager (part)	
	Ria Steventon	Head of Learning Improvement (part)	
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation	

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The Chair welcomed Kerry Heathcote, the new Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality to her first meeting of this committee.

#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Lowery, Head of Technology, who was on annual leave. The Chair noted that Steve was retiring from the college this summer and asked that the committee's thanks to Steve be recorded in the minutes for his work and support of the college, particularly over the last couple of years over which time the Technology faculty had faced continued challenges.

#### **2 Declarations of Interests**

Declarations of interest were noted for Roderick Watkins and Lee Smith for Item 15, Higher Education Strategic Plan Update.

#### **3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 9 March 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022 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 Chair noted that Item 7, Complaints, from the meeting held on 9

March 2022 remained outstanding and would ask for an update when the latest report was presented at Item 7 on the agenda.

*Trevor Hewlett joined the meeting at 8.35 am*

*Chris Ashman joined the meeting at 8.36 am*

*David Pomfret joined the meeting at 8.38 am*

## **5 Mathematics & English**

Governors were pleased to note that student attendance had appeared to have stabilised. Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal, confirmed that the gap between English & maths attendance against students' main course of study had reduced. The Chair commented on those students who joined the college in September 2021 whose abilities were found to be lower than the teacher assessed grades they had been awarded that summer and asked what the department would be doing this coming autumn to support students who may also find themselves struggling with a higher level of work. The Head of Department advised that the learning support team would be available to support students and that 2 additional academic support practitioners had recently been recruited to provide further support. Cross-college support would also be provided by Admissions, Quality, MIS etc where necessary with everyone having a keen focus on attendance and engagement, making particular use of systems reporting to identify early those students in need.

The Chair reflected that teaching generally was returning to normal practices following the Covid pandemic, particularly with regard to the taking of exams. The Chair asked if the department and its staff were fully prepared for the autumn term. The Head of Department advised that the department had benefited from a recent 'deep-dive' exercise which had proved useful in confirming the resources available and that the teaching strategies were found to be strong. The department would benefit from the new academic support practitioners and the use of new assessment software.

The Principal spoke of his appreciation for the department and the hard work and effort put in by staff to support the students. Staff recruitment remained a concern, particularly due to the salary differentials between those working in schools and those in colleges.

**The report was noted.**

*Trevor Hewlett left the meeting at 8.54 am*

*Ria Steventon joined the meeting at 8.56 am*

## **6 ESOL**

The Head of Learning Improvement highlighted from the report the 52 students who had withdrawn from the course and the recent resignation of one member of staff. A recruitment process had been planned and there was an expectation that a new staff member to the team would provide a boost for the department. Staff were being supported and guided during team meetings and golden hours, and further support was available from the Learning Practice. It was considered that student retention issues centred around the current cost of living crisis, with workers having to take on additional shifts and overtime rather than study their course. The department had taken some measures to review timetabling for students.

A new provision had been created specifically to support Ukrainian refugees with 25 students now enrolled. A project to deliver ESOL to staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital had recently been confirmed. Governors asked for further details on these recent developments. The Head of Learning Improvement advised that the Ukrainian support was a course designed and certificated by the college, helping refugees to improve their language skills and so gain

employment. For the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, this course was aimed at those experiencing language difficulties and working in areas such as portering, catering, and cleaning.

Governors expressed their concern that poor staff performance may have adversely affected the retention and achievement for students. The Head of Learning Improvement agreed and added that a system of support and intervention was in place to monitor progress.

Governors were concerned for the 52 students who had withdrawn from the course. The Principal reported that the college was continuing to investigate other potential employers where onsite delivery of ESOL could take place. The Head of Learning Improvement highlighted from the report the recent onsite delivery of the course to a food supplier in Diss, where the first cohort of students had successfully completed the course.

**The report was noted.**

## **7 Complaints 2021/22**

The Head of Learning Improvement reported that since the publication of the report the number of complaints received had increased by 4, bringing the total for the year to 72.

The Chair referred to the outstanding matters arising regarding staff/student interaction which was currently showing as having reached 18 complaints in the latest update. Governors agreed that the category was vague and did not give sufficient detail for analysis or understanding. The Head of Learning Improvement advised that she would supply members of the committee with a breakdown of this category in due course and would look to review classification and categorisation of this type of complaint. **ACTION-HoLI**

The Principal explained that if a complaint related to staff conduct (eg. bullying, improper behaviour) then support from the HR department would be requested for the investigation of the complaint and also to provide guidance and support for the staff member concerned.

The Committee noted that there were currently no complaints relating to Higher Education. Roderick Watkins, committee member and Vice Chancellor of ARU reminded the committee that the complaints relating to the terminal accreditation of the vet nursing degree programme were being managed and recorded by ARU.

**The report was noted.**

*Ria Steventon left the meeting at 9.15 am*  
*Vicky Mann joined the meeting at 9.15 am*

## **8 Apprenticeships**

The Chair welcomed Vicky Mann and thanked her for covering as Interim Head of Apprenticeships on a temporary basis since her retirement in March 2022. It was noted that Sarah Anstiss had been appointed to the role and would commence on 4 July 2022.

The Head of Apprenticeships highlighted the 1% improvement in achievement rates since the previous report and advised that a number of End Point Assessments had recently been booked which would help to improve the rate further, once completed. The Head of Apprenticeships reported that a number of new rules regarding apprenticeships would be introduced from August 2022.

Governors noted the number of overdue apprenticeships and the slow improvement in the achievement rate and asked if the college was at risk of any intervention or closer monitoring by the regulator. The Head of Apprenticeships confirmed that she was expecting the current

performance levels to improve by the end of the year and that regulators would also consider quality of provision and the number of withdrawals in their overall assessment of performance before taking any action.

Governors expressed their concerns with the number of overdue apprenticeships. The Head of Apprenticeships said that once the new digitised software system was in place and fully working then close monitoring of activity and performance would be possible, with the benefit of using complete and accurate data. Areas of concern, such as overdue apprenticeships, would be easily spotted so that prompt action could be taken. The Head of Apprenticeships considered it to be very important that individuals had a clear delivery plan, with timescales to follow in order to avoid an overdue situation.

The Principal added that the project currently underway was not only digitising manual systems but was also reviewing and re-mapping processes across the college. The Principal noted the recent Apprenticeship Funding Audit that had been completed and was now being followed up.

Governors asked for a report on the project work being undertaken by Mandy Lakey to be brought to the next meeting. **ACTION-VPCQ/ML**

The Chair asked the Head of Apprenticeships what priorities the department should focus on over the coming months. The Head of Apprenticeships considered that all staff should be fully conversant with the latest guidance coming into force, both those within the department and other staff who support apprentices. Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal, added that staff should also have a good understanding of the IQA process.

The Chair gave her thanks to Vicky Mann.

**The report was noted.**

*Vicky Mann left the meeting at 9.36 am*

## **9 Technology Faculty Update**

In the absence of the Head of Faculty, Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal, spoke to this report. The Vice Principal highlighted the addendum to the report in which the Head of Faculty noted his final comments before his retirement, focusing on the recent challenges faced by the faculty and the opportunities ahead.

The Vice Principal advised that the college had been unable to recruit a permanent Head of Faculty to date, and so, as an interim measure, Jackie Watt had been appointed on a part-time basis to lead the faculty with another recruitment campaign planned for the autumn term. The Vice Principal outlined other staff changes within the faculty and ended by noting her own appreciation for the work and support of Steve Lowery.

Governors raised their concerns regarding the inability of the college to recruit to key roles and considered that the situation may worsen as inflation and the cost of living increased, especially if the college was not able to offer competitive salaries. The Principal reported that this issue had been escalated on the Risk Register and that pay award proposals would be brought to the Board at its next meeting on 6 July 2022. The Principal added that a recent Jobs Recruitment Fair had taken place with 24 potential new teachers showing an interest in working at the college. The Chair noted that governors were also discussing this issue in other areas, such as the Chairs' meeting group.

**The report was noted.**

*Clare Pelling joined the meeting at 9.44 am*

## **10 Single Equality Action Plan – 6 Monthly Review & Policy Review**

Governors commented positively on the report, finding it inspiring and showing good, strong support for students.

Governors asked for clarification on the work to support those with ADHD (section 2.2) which seemed minimal. The Learning Experience Manager explained that the document only detailed new initiatives or actions for the current year, being carried out as part of the annual plan, although there was much other support and assistance available.

Governors considered that perhaps the Board was not fully aware of this important area of work across the college and that the values should be shared more widely and celebrated. The Principal mentioned the success of the recent 'Pride' day that took place on 8 June 2022 and the comments from students who felt supported and accepted by the college.

The Learning Experience Manager noted the current vacancy of Link Governor for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. Lee Smith noted his interest in being considered for this role.

**ACTION-CLERK**

Lee Smith noted the WE Project, a European research project addressing the experiences of young LGBTI+ people in the workplace at the beginning of their careers and offered to share information with the Learning Experience Manager.

**ACTION-LS/LEM**

**The report was noted.**

With regard to the EDI Policy, the Learning Experience Manager advised that the list of protected characteristics given in the opening paragraph was missing those who were pregnant or on maternity leave. This would be adjusted in the final version to be approved by the Board at its meeting on 6 July 2022.

**The Committee agreed to recommend the EDI Policy to the Board for approval, subject to the amendment noted above.**

*Clare Pelling left the meeting at 9.52 am*

## **11 Learning & Curriculum Report**

Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal, commented on her aim for Heads of Faculties and Programme Managers to lead fully on the learning in their respective classrooms and the development of their curriculum areas.

The Vice Principal recognised that observations and reporting were sometimes viewed with suspicion but was assured that these would aid in the personal development plans for individuals. It was expected that the use of observations would develop further in the next academic year.

The use of 'Deep-Dives' was proving to be successful and very useful. Animal Care had recently been the subject area for review. The Vice Principal considered that there was much to learn from the exercise, and although by its nature it was critical it was also supportive at the same time. 5 deep-dives had been carried out during 2021/22 and these would continue into the next academic year. Governors noted that the inclusion of support staff from areas such as MIS, TEL, CIS etc could be beneficial to provide additional insight and awareness of the challenges and opportunities within teaching areas, and also to understand the users' needs for their services. The Chair asked if the Vice Principal had noted any areas in need of particular scrutiny or review by the committee; the Vice Principal

noted particularly the growth in student numbers for Animal Care which could become a strain on teaching resources, and therefore in need of review; the plan for deep dives in 2022/23 would be set in due course.

Feedback from the Student Voice had been poor during the year. Focus groups had been introduced which provided good feedback, although the number of such sessions had been low. The number of sessions were expected to increase in the coming year with increased staffing resources to the Quality Department.

Governors asked for an update on T Levels. The Vice Principal noted that progress was being made, albeit in small steps. The offer of courses had been carefully considered and it was disappointing that Lab Sciences failed to recruit any students. Students were progressing well with their respective studies, although class sizes were lower than would have been liked. The Business T Level course would be launched in the next academic year and with good staffing in place a strong cohort of students was expected. T Levels for Animal Care would be considered for the future. Nationally, the acceptance and support for T Levels had been poor.

Governors thanked the Vice Principal for her detailed report.

**The report was noted.**

## **12 Performance Data and KPIs**

Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal, highlighted the example dashboards available to managers for the monitoring of attendance, retention and those at risk. Although there were obvious concerns with these 3 particular areas, the Vice Principal was most concerned with the level of withdrawals. Work had taken place to review the processes from application to withdrawal to understand the issues faced by students. Students were offered help from student mentors to help and encourage them to remain in education. It appeared that the main reasons for leaving the college early were due to mental health issues and the offer of widely available employment, albeit low paid.

The Principal reported that the issues identified from the various dashboards were supported by the data obtained from the 'deep-dives' and that previous issues caused by the Covid pandemic were now reducing.

Governors asked about the behaviour of students on campus. The Vice Principal explained that students had been quite lively at the start of the academic year and very keen to be back on campus following the lockdown periods. The initial excitement had since calmed and students were, on the whole, behaving in a more appropriate fashion. The Vice Principal referred to the book by Paul Dix, "When the Adults Change, Everything Changes," which focused on behaviours in schools. The Principal added that staff training was being arranged on the theme of interaction with others.

**The report was noted.**

## **13 Quality Improvement Plan 2021/22 – Progress Report**

Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal, advised that monitoring of the current quality improvement plan continued, with Ria Steventon, Head of Learning Improvement, overseeing the process and chasing progress. The RAG rating within the report focused attention on the areas of concern and interest. The Vice Principal emphasised that this document was very much a management tool for internal use only and was not published externally.

There were no questions or concerns raised.

**The report was noted.**

#### **14 Quality Framework 2022/23**

Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal, introduced the new proposed framework, referring to the covering report and highlighting the need for complaints to be a focus of attention in the coming year. The use of course intervention measures would continue, when necessary, as would the review of Course Director reports which were considered to be very useful and insightful. Support to Improve continued to work well and offered benefits for those involved in this intervention measure. The Vice Principal thanked governors for their involvement in learning walks and area performance reviews.

Governors considered that the focus of the framework was correct for 2022/23. Governors suggested that for the following year, (2023/24), there should be a stronger emphasis for the student voice.

**ACTION-VPCQ**

**The Committee agreed to recommend the Quality Framework to the Board for approval.**

#### **15 Higher Education Strategic Plan Update**

The Vice Principal, Ruth Harrison, reminded the committee that in the previous year the Board had approved a 1-year plan for HE at the college. In the current review, it was noted that the external environment was changing, particularly with regard to the courses and qualifications that needed to be provided and who was best placed to deliver them. The anticipated Institute of Technology had not been awarded in the region and so this had resulted in some changes to the strategy being necessary. Regular meetings between the college and ARU to discuss course development were continuing.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal for her report which provided a clear view of the HE strategy.

**The Committee agreed to recommend the HE Strategy to the Board for approval.**

#### **16 Strategic Targets 2021/22 Progress Review**

The Clerk advised that the full listing of strategic targets would be reviewed by the Board at its next meeting on 6 July 2022. There were no comments or concerns raised on this report.

**The report was noted.**

#### **17 Committee Performance, Terms of Reference & Future Business Agenda Plan**

The committee reviewed the 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.

On the proforma it was noted that for some of the items, although evidence had been detailed, the 'YES' column had not been ticked to confirm that the item had been completed during the year. The Clerk apologised for this oversight and would correct the document before it was finalised.

**ACTION-CLERK**

The committee reviewed the current terms of reference, with no changes requested.

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

**The report was noted.**

## **18 Any Other Business**

Roderick Watkins – The Chair noted that Roderick was stepping down from the Board at the end of the academic year after 6 years of service and thanked him for his support of the committee, for his focus on the reports and attention to detail. The Chair added that Roderick would be missed by colleagues. Roderick, in response, noted that he had enjoyed his period of service on the Board and had learnt much with regards to further education and the college sector.

The Principal offered his thanks to Ruth Harrison, Vice Principal, who was leaving the college that day. Ruth had continued in service in an interim capacity since her retirement in March 2022 and had provided a good handover to Kerry Heathcote, newly commenced. The Chair offered thanks also to Ruth on behalf of the committee.

## **19 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation**

- The Committee focused on its usual priority areas and reviewed a number of reports for recommendation to the Board in due course.

## **20 Date and time of next meeting**

Wednesday, 21 September 2022 at 8.30 am.

**The meeting closed at 10.29 am**