

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
held on Wednesday 11th March 2020 at 15.30**

Present: Mrs Sally Bromley (Principal), Ms Liza Karandeja (Student Governor), Ms Emily Leddy (Student Governor), Dr Grant Powell (Governor), Dr David Skipp (Chair of Governors), Mrs Helen Smith (Governor), Mr Dominic Wakefield (Parent Governor)

Apologies received: Mrs Clare Ruaux (Staff Governor),

In attendance: Ms Andrea John (Vice Principal -Student Support), Mr Dan Lodge (Vice Principal – Quality and Curriculum), Mr Steve Martell (Deputy Principal), Ms Naomi Lask (item 6), Mr Ian McAlister (item 7), Ms N Whitehead (Clerk)

Chair: Dr David Skipp

NB Agenda items 7 and 6 were brought forward to benefit from lead staff availability

1. **Declarations of interest:** There were no declarations of interest.
2. **Student Progression Report** (*Agenda item 7*)
Paper: 2019 Progressions Overview, UCAS Destinations and UNIFROG on and Destination Report Mar 20

The Director of Higher Education and Progression's (DoHEP) explained that his **review of progression sought to identify any trends or possible areas to address** informed by S7 and national benchmarks. There was evidence of:

- An increase in the number of applications to university
- An increase in early applicants and successful applications to Russell Group reflecting **more aspirational choices**
- **An increase in students achieving first choice university places**
- Universities in the South East continuing to be popular with Collyer's students
- Courses in the field of medicine and dentistry and design remaining popular as was Business but less so European languages and literature
- **University as still the most popular destination route but a shift in popularity towards options with a clearer career pathway** such as sponsored degrees and apprenticeships as a further alternative
- Gap years still being popular.

The new UCAS system had had some teething problems in terms of connectivity, overcome however through a new protocol. The remaining upgrade was due in 2020/21 but, overall, the system should, in time, be more user-friendly. Student choice continued to be informed by UNIFROG, at least as a starting point for further research and for those less sure of their course choice as illustrated by the experience of the student governors present.

[15.40 Mrs Smith joined the meeting]

Asked whether the College should be concerned at the emphasis on southern universities possibly ruling out valuable choices further afield, it was thought this reflected both a common S7 trend and a number of justifiable reasons such as specialised and job-focussed courses in the

south, earnings potential, travel costs (both in visiting to research and attending universities) and a balance between independence and proximity to home. UNIFROG did however help students to consider a wider range of institutions as did the HE fairs attended by Collyer's students. The former Unistats data, now incorporated into UCAS, further facilitated access to a body of evidence (reflecting a narrowing in the range of scores between universities). The HESA data on progression was also useful.

Members asked about:

- the role of alumni in supporting choice, noting that these were widely used by subject areas. The College was also conscious of the need to ensure the best possible information was available given demographic trends would increase demand for places in two years' time;
- the potential for confusion with the range of information available, with the College expectation that student use and experience would influence the market 'winners'.

The student governors also commented favourably on the role of 'fast tomato' in guiding career choices.

Members thanked the Director for his report.

[16.05 Mr McAlister left, and Ms Lask joined, the meeting].

3. **E&D Update** (*Agenda item 7*)
Papers: Equality and Diversity Policy and Review 2018/19

The E&D Officer explained that, following the radical overhaul of the **Policy** in 2016, the proposed **changes on this occasion were minor** reflecting changes in role titles and other organizational changes. The SMT and E&D Committee had been involved in its review.

Recommendation: That the Governing Body approve the Equality and Diversity Policy (as a consent item given minor changes).

The E&D Officer explained that once again the **E&D review** sought to fulfil the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011) through both quantitative information and a qualitative narrative on the positive action in College. Points to note included the **newly introduced Wellbeing Week** and **pronoun badges** designed by students to help raise awareness of and respect for gender identity. **Student societies** including the Feminist and ID societies, had maintained their **visible** presence around the campus through, for example, the repeat of the successful International Women's Day poster campaign as well as the inaugural Pride showcase in February. They had also contributed to the design of **tutorial materials**. The E&D Committee had been well attended by students and the E&D Officers had been instrumental in setting up the Red Box project, providing free sanitary supplies.

Training had continued with new and existing staff and updates made to the E&D handbook, informed by focus groups. A new suggestion from the E&D Committee was the introduction of less formal training for smaller groups as had been undertaken with the Library staff.

Turning to the **monitoring data**, the E&D Officer explained that there were **no emerging trends of concern**. With the exception of gender, the groups were generally small making small changes in number produce greater fluctuations in percentages. There had been a closing of the gap on achievement by gender (e.g. 96.5% male; 96.7% female overall). There was some disparity (13.3%) in high grades with females doing better but male students were slightly more likely to reach their target grades than females.

Asked about the **greater number of course entries by females** (52:48 split), the E&D Officer explained this was a common trend potentially as a result of greater female achievement at GCSE, making them eligible to study four rather than three A levels. (*Action: E&D officer to check whether similar picture across S7 colleges*).

The VP (Q&C) explained this was **an area which SMT were looking at more closely** with the evidence suggesting that more females choose A levels whilst males are more inclined towards practical courses. Areas being explored were the impact of the intake from the local partner schools as well as those opting to choose a greater distance to travel and the curriculum changes. The College sought to offer a wealth of advice and guidance on appropriate choices, for example through the Not Going to Uni (NG2U) events being offered to years 10 and 11 as well as internally. Subject SARs and QIPs were a good source of evidence of the awareness of such issues and how these were addressed.

Members asked too about students with learning difficulties and disabilities where however there were limited differences in retention rates with all groups over 78% and those with hearing and visual impairments with higher retention rates than those with no learning difficulties or disability.

Looking at **E&D in terms of staff**, the E&D officer explained that the E&D Committee had discussed issues such as the **higher rate of increase in ethnic minority students than in staff**. (Whilst ONS statistics on the local population suggested 92% were White British, 85.4% of Collyer's students were White British.) Low staff turnover was possibly a factor in this. Advertising was generally national, but recruitment was very local. That said, whilst there had been little or no change in the numbers of applications, the trend was more positive in appointments made. The College was due to undertake unconscious bias training in the summer to provide additional assurance. The F&GP Committee would be looking further at staff issues at their May HR-focussed meeting

Finally members thanked the E&D Officer for the extensive work in producing the comprehensive report.

[16.30 Ms Lask left the meeting]

4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2019** were approved.

5. **Matters Arising**

Item 5 - T Level Focus Group/ Feedback idea: The VP (Q&C) explained that both the parent governor and Science link governor had met with the capacity development fund lead to discuss their experiences with industry placements in the hope that this could help inform future placements. He commented on the established infrastructure with regard to Early Years placements and the progress made in fully understanding the new Digital spec. A new government website aimed at employers considering placements was shown to members.

Item 6 – Exam marking review: The VP Q&C sought, through an analysis of the remarks, to dispel any misunderstanding from the previous meeting that the emphasis had been on questioning the higher-grade results. Whilst the C/B borderline had been addressed, the approach had been comprehensive with the largest percentage of possible reviews in respect of the pass/fail borderline. In response to questions, he reassured the governors on the robustness of the exam marking system both within the boards and as overseen by JCQ.

6. External Quality Reviews (EQRs)

Paper: EQR Employability

The DP explained that the recent **EQR on Employability** had been **positive in recognising the strengths of the provision** in terms of the high priority given to it, the strong business links, high visibility across the College with effective careers events and the development of level 2 work experience. **Areas for development** were framed in terms of the latest EIF (Ofsted framework) and the theme of entitlement relating to how universally the taught employability course should be, 'Digital Footprint' course content and stretch, closer ties still with the tutorial framework and replicating the STEM approach to industry events across the curriculum. **In response**, the NG2U event was being rebranded to flag potential interest to those also considering HE, a full-time work experience coordinator was being advertised with a remit to facilitate the mapping of independent college-wide work experience, to organize T Level, Transition and BTEC Triple work experience, as well as to support the work experience required for BTEC Doubles and future HE applications (e.g. vets, medics and teaching). Additional interview time was also planned for the Careers Advisor.

In discussion the parent governor who was involved in the Employability programme as a local retailer spoke of his strong belief in the course and the Collyer's students of whom he had experience. If feasible, he thought its wider application would be of value. He recognised the potential risk of losing the Deputy Principal who was a key driver of the project and, therefore, the potential for some succession planning. The DP commented that the College could call on a pool of talented staff with ready access to the extensive materials including lesson plans and schemes of work. The governor also suggested there could be greater visibility of the programme on the College website or at least VLE.

In response to questions, the DP confirmed that attendance had been as high as in the College overall for the first two years and that with the current cohort there was parity with attendance in the students' other subjects. The plan was to increase **access to the course** by some 5% but that there was a risk in offering the course too widely, not least in terms of its perceived value. The current programme already tried to maximise the impact of employer contributions through sharing business involvement more widely across the college curriculum such as in the recent MP's talk. The intention was to identify more clearly what was being done at the specialist and broader ends of the provision and ensure there was no gap in the middle. The College was fortunate in receiving some Mercers' support to address the Gatsby benchmarks whereas the Government had offered no funding to support its aspirations.

In terms of **alumni**, the College was actively promoting a continued relationship at Leavers' events with a current leadership project focusing on their potential ongoing involvement. It was hoped they might also benefit from networking events and closer links with the (Old) Collyerians' Association. This could be usefully followed up with the RCU Officers (**Action: DP**).

7. DfE Performance Tables

Paper: Excerpts from tables concerning local schools and colleges

The VP (Q&C) explained that further to the College's excellent results shared with governors early in the academic year, the recent DfE performance tables demonstrated how well Collyer's had performed nationally based on value added. These placed **Collyer's first** amongst schools and colleges **locally for A levels** and **third for A levels** amongst Sixth Form College state providers **nationally**. **For BTECs, the College was first amongst the S7 colleges** (i.e. in Surrey and Sussex) **and seventh nationally**. Increased parental awareness of value-added was welcome given the College's success across both vocational and A level courses.

8. **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020 Update**

Paper: Quality Improvement Plan 2020

The VP (Q&C) reported on SMT's thorough **review of the key actions** underpinning the College's five strategic aims which had concluded that **all actions were progressing well**. Some of these spanned multiple QIP targets concerning raising aspiration, the introduction of T levels, enrichment and curriculum changes. Other key initiatives included a student support strategy, the expansion of international markets and a further increase in lettings.

Looking through the annotated QIP and the **curriculum**, members welcomed the **improved accuracy in progress tracking**, and the more detailed report on underperforming subjects. They noted the imminent report to the DfE on **T level preparations** and the huge popularity of the new Criminology course, seeking further information on its application in terms of careers. The parent governor was reassured on the level of **feedback regularly available to students** on their work on MyProgress whereas parents saw information only at the key progress review points.

In terms of **pastoral support**, the VP (Student Support) reported that a recent survey of students, in conjunction with the findings of collaborative research with external organisations such as the Anna Freud Centre, was helping the **development of a new Wellbeing Strategy**. Furthermore, increased remission for Heads of House (HoHs) had been useful in **trailing more supervised intervention strategies**. Development of a **strategy for curriculum-linked enrichment** was underway with the intention of including wellbeing, course-related and employability elements and encouraging greater participation. Members noted that the Enrichment Co-ordinator provided guidelines on financial support to student-led enrichment activity to ensure the effective use of resources given this was not funded nationally.

Members understood that the **success in diversifying international markets and activity would be at risk from** uncertainty over EU students post-Brexit and, more particularly, the **Covid-19** developments. The Principal reported on her efforts to keep in touch with staff and parents with updates, for example, on the cancellation of trips and visits. Members explored the extent to which further safeguards could be enforced in terms of non-essential travel with the Principal receiving support for pursuing an approach in line with Public Health England (PHE) advice. They noted the forthcoming meeting of the Disaster Recovery Group which would look in more detail at business continuity.

[17.30 The DP left the meeting]

Key issues to note in respect of **Strategic Aim 4: Staffing and Quality** were the completion of **subject EIF position statements** as part of the review of Ofsted readiness reported to governors at the February Learning Walk as well as the finalisation of a system and the paperwork for a more **professional development approach to lesson observations**. This was proposed as the subject of an internal audit review in 2020/21.

Finally, in terms of **finance and resources**, members were advised of the continuing increase in **demand for computer rooms**, to be addressed through the new DigiHub - due to start in April - and the reconfiguration of a room in the Baird Building. The F&GP Committee had discussed a report on the implementation of the Digital Strategy more widely. The draft **Green Travel Plan** had been informed by staff and student surveys with a cycle scheme already in place and car-sharing incentives and an electric charging point being explored. The Budget had pledged more money for green issues and there was strong staff and student interest with RCU about to launch a Green Week. The Plan would be fed into the development of the next Strategic Plan and the more specific Property Strategy which could be expected to include further window replacement and LED lighting. Factors to consider might include the scope for solar energy, rainwater

harvesting and air source heat pumps. To-date the approach had focussed on new building projects with awareness that a more proactive plan would require significant capital investment upfront.

Members were greatly encouraged by the excellent progress and thanked the VP for his extensive work in presenting the information clearly.

9. **Student Progress - KPI Health Check**

Paper: KPI Health Check January 2020

Members noted the latest key performance indicators with **encouraging numbers of student applications**, albeit that some drop was expected in certain areas with new competing provision. Student retention was up and would continue to be carefully monitored and the new attendance system working well. The progress report on developments in the eight small underperforming subject areas was particularly welcome with members noting the potential causes and solutions.

10. **Policies**

Papers: Curriculum and Admissions policies and Code of Conduct (Student)

The VP (Q&C) explained the nature and rationale for the proposed policy changes. The **Curriculum Policy** and **Code of Conduct (Student)** had been **changed minimally**, most notably with the former now including the College's approach to students without GCSE English or Maths including the option to take Functional Maths where appropriate. The **Admissions Policy** contained **slightly more changes** to include the need for early disclosure of special educational needs, the criteria for progression to Level 3 under the new transition programme and no resit courses from other colleges.

Resolved: The Q&C Committee approved the minor change to the Code of Conduct (Student) under the College's Scheme of Delegation.

Recommendation: That the Governing Body approve the changes to the Curriculum and Admissions Policies (with the former as a consent item)

11. **Survey update**

The VP (Q&C) reported that a revised student survey was underway with an improved response rate to-date on the previous year. The changes were chiefly in relation to student support better to identify and evaluate what had been accessed. The parents' survey in the summer was due to be an interim one taking account of the poor response the previous year.

12. **Sector update**

Paper: SFCA PowerPoint presentation

The Principal updated members on recent developments including funding uplifts, for example, for Science and Maths, and the extent to which their continuation was guaranteed. The average value to colleges at the current time was c. £774k per annum. Members asked whether the increase in funding suggested scope for additional spend, noting that curriculum areas had an opportunity to bid for funding, the College's pay budget as a % of income did not suggest undue austerity and the College did need to be careful to maintain its 'outstanding' financial status. The Budget promise of greater investment in education was welcome but it had yet to be seen whether and how this might be fulfilled. The Principal explained that other topical issues included systems leadership, the future of Applied General Qualifications alongside T levels, and signs of some progress in pay negotiations.

13. **Any other business** None

14. **Governance Quality Framework: Meeting Assessment**

Paper: Committee Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Members confirmed that they were content with the timely and clear documentation and attendance.

The student governors were thanked for their contributions over the past year and the enthusiasm they had brought to the Committee's business.

15. **Date of the next meeting:** Tuesday 23rd June 2020 at **10.30**

Meeting ended at 18.15

Chairman

Date

NCW 25-3-20