

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
held on Tuesday 9th March 2021 at 14.15 on Zoom**

Present: Revd. Lisa Barnett (Governor), Mr Aidan Cross (Student Governor), Mr Dan Lodge (Principal), Dr Grant Powell (Governor), Ms Lorna Macrae (Student Governor), Mrs Clare Ruaux (Staff Governor), Dr David Skipp (Chair of Governors), Mrs Helen Smith (Governor), Mr Dominic Wakefield (Parent Governor)

Apologies received: N/A

In attendance: Mrs Rebecca Adams (Item 7/Min 5), Ms Emily Hawkins (Item 12/Min 8), Mr Rob Hussey (Vice Principal – Curriculum); Ms Andrea John (Vice Principal - Pastoral), Mr Ian McAlister (Item 7/Min 5), Ms N Whitehead (Clerk)

Chair: Dr David Skipp

1. **Declarations of interest:** There were no declarations of interest.
2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2020** were approved.
3. **Matters Arising** Covered by agenda items.
4. **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2021 Update**
Paper: Quality Improvement Plan 2021

The VP (Curriculum) reported on SMT's **review of the College QIP actions** which had concluded that **all actions - but one - were progressing well at the mid-year point**. Looking at the RAG ratings, the 'amber' reports showed that most actions were on target with some 'green' items already completed. The one 'red' item, the 'one grade higher' initiative, had been postponed until September in recognition of the current challenging environment for teaching and learning during the Covid pandemic. Members welcomed this prioritisation of pastoral welfare.

Members noted and asked questions on the full contents of the update including:

a) **Curriculum**

- The current preparation of detailed **guidance for students** on how they would be assessed i.e. with teacher assessed grades (**TAGs**), the proposed end date for teaching and coordination of approach with other S7 colleges;
- HMG's **national process of moderation** to avoid grade inflation - with Collyer's confident in the accuracy of its assessments;
- The promising outlook for **consistency of progress data with expected final outcomes** for L3VA;
- **Curriculum alignment with feeder schools** for both transitional L2 and L3 courses. The promotion of the Digital T level and new staff appointments to support studentship and the transition programme as well as co-ordinate work experience opportunities. Popularity of new courses such as Criminology and BTEC L3 Engineering;

- **Smooth transition to distance learning post-Christmas** supported by training in the autumn term. Efforts to engage students boosted through 100% registration for lessons and minimum thresholds for proportion of live teaching;

[Ms Macrae, Mrs Adams and Mr McAlister joined, and the Revd. Lisa Barnett left, the meeting]

b) Pastoral - as reported by the VP (Pastoral):

- **Considerable ongoing support to ensure students** (and vulnerable students in particular) were **not disadvantaged by distance learning** e.g. through provision of IT, study space, access for those self-isolating. Transitional additional mental health and wellbeing support being offered given sustained challenging circumstances. Surveys and focus groups to ensure provision meeting need;
- Short- and medium-term planning requirements impacting to some extent on longer-term strategic thinking but **new Pastoral Strategy to be ready in the Summer Term**. In the meantime, **restructuring of House support system working well** with improved tracking and support from the new Director of Student Engagement;
- Restrictions on **enrichment activities during lockdown** unavoidable but promotion, nevertheless, of online work experience and Navigate pilot as means to track enrichment activities;
- **Progression development** with new Director of Progression (Careers and Employability) alongside the existing Director for Higher Education (HE) In addition to the two appointments already mentioned (see 'Curriculum' above), a careers adviser would also be joining the team.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principals for their comprehensive and encouraging progress reports.

5. Student Progression Report (Agenda item 7)

Paper: Progression Report 2020

Members welcomed the two Directors of Progression (DoPs) as introduced by the VP(Pastoral). The DoP (HE) explained that he had sought to avoid too Covid a focus in his report for ease of comparison with previous years. **The PR data indicated that 2019/20 had been a strong cohort and the 5% rise in applications and 8% rise in acceptances to university reflected this.** As such there was some assurance that the efforts of the College and UCAS had helped to mitigate any impact from Covid and the results process. UNIFROG was also thought to have contributed to students' aspirations.

Members noted the further key messages from the report as follows:

- 6% rise in offers
- 1.6% rise in the early UCAS applications (with higher number for medical courses and fewer for Oxbridge)
- 3.1% drop in students accepting offers from lower tariff universities
- 0.9% rise in students accepting offers from medium tariff universities
- 2.2% rise in students accepting offers from higher tariff universities
- 34% of all 2889 individual student applications were for Russell Group
- 32% of all student final acceptances were Russell Group
- No anomalies in terms of the profile of course choices and success of ethnic minority students
- No impact on success depending on choice of course i.e. BTECs or A levels

Members asked about:

- **Course choices**, confirming that Collyer's students in sync with national picture, and broadly so with S7 comparison group in the top 5 subject acceptances;
- Ways of measuring **whether the university course choices led to careers in those subjects**. They noted that the HESA report covered the very positive grade outcomes of our students in HE whilst the universities issued the career information, albeit based on data within 6m of leaving university whereas it could take longer to secure a suitable job. Collyer's subject areas sought to convey information on career prospects to students. Furthermore, non-course specific careers could also be of value with, for example, many graduate schemes focused more on transferrable skills and individual potential than course specifics;
- What happened to the **group of 50+ students who were not placed**, noting that many of these would be included in the c.40-50 students a year who applied to university after leaving but through the College. The College continued to guide students to make well-advised applications to choose suitable courses and institutions.

Members thanked the Director for his very accessible report, giving a **clear impression that College support in this area, as in others, had not been adversely affected by Covid**. They noted that the report to the forthcoming Governing Body would include more information on employability and careers. Future reports to Q&C would also include more information on progression to non-HE destinations (e.g. degree-apprenticeships and employment) utilising data from the Navigate platform as well as more detailed analysis of Gatsby compliance.

[Mrs Adams and Mr McAlister left the meeting].

6. **KPIs- Education**

Paper: KPI Health Check January 2020

The VP(Curriculum) explained that the **latest report** had been **informed by PR2** (progress review) data from January focussed on second years given their imminent study outcomes. All **L3 data was looking promising**, both for A level and vocational courses. The picture was less encouraging for the **L2 BTEC** component particularly when looking at distinctions, with at least a 'merit' required for progression L3. Given the evidence that these students had struggled more with distance learning, they were **now being invited to attend college 100%** of the time. The **prospects for positive GCSE results were good** in line with the College's previous success with these students.

Value-added measures (for all but the new T levels where not yet available) provided **positive assurance on the quality of the College's distance learning** given that these were consistent with the previous year which had been pre-Covid.

The VP(Pastoral) explained the positive picture on **attendance** whilst highlighting that it was a less indicative measure of **engagement** during remote learning than usual. As such teachers had, for example, been encouraging more consistent use of cameras and increasing their use of break-out rooms for smaller group discussion. **Retention** was markedly higher, particularly for transition students owing potentially to enhanced advice and guidance. SMT were mindful of the need to monitor the emergence of any issues requiring intervention as the College returned to fully onsite learning.

In discussion, the parent governor commented on some of the advantages of distance learning which he hoped might be retained such as recorded lessons to help with revision or catching up if a student were unwell. The VP agreed that **careful consideration (as indicated in the latest Strategic Plan) would need to be given to what practices might continue** to bear fruit whilst returning to effective delivery onsite in keeping with the character of the College. Members expressed concern about the **catch-up plans** being floated by the Government in terms of pressure on staff and students, especially given the College's evidence of student progress.

7. **Curriculum Strategy and Policy**
Papers: Curriculum Strategy 2020-23 and Policy 2021

The VP(Curriculum) explained that the **Curriculum Policy 2021** was an intent document for both internal and external audiences detailing our approach to providing an inclusive education. It was not **little altered** from the 2020 policy document that had previously gained approval. The same was true of the **Curriculum Strategy** on which governors had previously been consulted but which had now been brought into line with the new College Strategic Plan both in timing and approach. Key points included a reflection of the College's Covid experiences and a similar balance in the academic/vocational offer. Clarification was provided in terms of seeking to avoid overlap in the T level offer with neighbouring colleges.

Recommendation: That the Governing Body approve the minor revisions to the Curriculum Strategy and Policy.

8. **E&D Update (Agenda item 7)**
Papers: Equality and Diversity Review 2019/20

Members welcomed the **new EDI Officer** and noted her **comprehensive annual report**. Once more, this showed **no clear trends of concern** whilst, given Covid and Centre-Assessed Grades (CAGs), not providing a clear like for like comparison with previous years in terms of student data, nor staff recruitment. The EDI Officer highlighted in terms of **student data**:

- a closing of the gender gap of high grades at A level, with a considerable jump in male high grades of over 12% compared to 2018-19, though potentially an anomalous year and potentially quite different across faculties and subjects. This was also at odds with the perception that males do better in final exams;
- an increase in the dyslexic student pass rate from 93% in 2018-19 to 99% in 2019-20 though with some more nuanced retention issues to consider;
- white course starters had considerably higher pass rates than all other ethnic groups, although in terms of course retention and high grades at A level this was much more balanced.

Members noted that the fee-paying international students were not included in the report and discussed the possible pros and cons in doing so or whether a separate report was a better place to cover this e.g. the internationals report considered annually by F&GP.

In terms of **staff recruitment data**, only 17 new staff had been recruited in the past year (by comparison with 50 the year before), but the report did suggest:

- a three-year trend of decline in appointing people from the age groups 25-34 and 35-44;
- a five-year trend of increase in appointments of 45-54 and 55-64 age groups, despite the number of applications from these age groups staying fairly consistent over the same period.

This trend was interesting given a strategic move towards welcoming trainee teachers but might be balanced by other recruitments of both teaching and support staff. Overall, the College was clear in its policy of recruiting on merit but would continue to monitor the position.

Members recognised that in some cases, such as in the case of ethnic minority students, the numbers were very small and the percentages therefore potentially misleading. It was suggested therefore that the Director of Information Services be asked to provide a **statistical significance measure** for the next report. *(Action: EDI Officer)*

Finally members thanked the EDI Officer for the extensive work in producing the comprehensive report.

[16.24 Ms Hawkins left the meeting]

9. **Other policies:**

Papers: Examinations and Assessment Policy, Student Disciplinary Policy and Code of Conduct (Student) and Admissions Policies and Code of Conduct (Student)

The VP (Curriculum) explained the comprehensive nature of the **Exams Policy** in detailing the College's responsibilities, from operating within the legal framework, to fees and dealing with malpractice. The March 2021 update **largely included minor title changes**. A separate statement covering a COVID secure approach to examinations and appeals was planned. A proposal was made for additional clarity on costs (Section 9) if an appeal were successful. **(Action: VP (C) to complete the fine-tuning of the policy).**

The VP(Pastoral) reported that, following the previous substantial changes to the **Student Disciplinary Policy**, the **key amendment** now was to **integrate the new role of Director of Student Engagement within the disciplinary procedure**.

The **Student Code of Conduct** now included specific reference to compliance with the Use of Computers Agreement and to prohibition of carrying drug paraphernalia on site. In addition to the previous Covid-19 Annex, an **Online Classroom Etiquette document** sought to clarify behavioural expectations for remote learning in response to teacher feedback.

In response to questions on the Covid annex, the VP:

- Explained that testing was voluntary and therefore would be inappropriate to the code of conduct;
- Agreed to consider some future proofing of the document in relation to specific examples of government guidelines such as the rule of six as these were subject to frequent change . **(Action: VP (Pastoral) Postscript: completed).**

Resolved: The Q&C Committee approved the changes to Exams and Student Disciplinary Policies and Student Code of Conduct.

Turning to the **Admissions Policy**, the Principal explained that the policy had been amended to be consistent with the Fees and Charges Policy approved by F&GP in December 2020. Of more note to Q&C was the additional clarity re: late applications and the waiting list process as well as calculation of the average GCSE score in determining course entry. Members endorsed the changes.

Recommendation: That the Governing Body approve the minor revisions to the Admissions Policy.

10. **External Quality Reviews (EQRs)**

Paper: EQR Employability

The VP (Curriculum) explained that the **EQR on Adult Ed** had been completed just prior to Covid lockdown. The review had three areas of focus: Functional Skills (Maths and English), the science Access course (for Nursing and healthcare), and High Needs (the 19+ learners). Overall, the review had found that these **students felt supported and were well engaged in lessons**. A proposed improvement was to resolve the **disconnect between daytime and evening learners** although the scope for this, given the two largely different cohorts, seemed limited.

Key Functional Skills strengths included improved diagnostic assessment and robust enrolment procedure. Further improvement could have been better preparation when moving to on-line testing. Key Access strengths included the increased number of learners and strong progression. Improvements included clearer structures and better access to advice and guidance including UCAS support. Key High Needs strengths included embedding of high needs teaching approaches such as inclusivity and positive reinforcement as well as, for the QEII students,

student choice of activities and successful collaborations with other parts of the college (including the A-level Dance project). Improvements were proposed to screening and interview processes, diagnostic testing and monitoring processes. Since the report, it was felt that **the Adult Ed Manager had been successful in addressing the issues raised.**

11. **Any other business** None

12. **Governance Quality Framework: Meeting Assessment**
Paper: Committee Self-Assessment Questionnaire

The Chair commented on the comprehensive information received and hoped that, whilst a lengthy meeting, it had provided a good opportunity for discussion.

The student governors were thanked for their insightful contributions over the past year and the enthusiasm they had brought to the Committee's business in spite of the challenges of online meetings.

13. **Date of the next meeting:** Tuesday 22nd June at 2021 at 14.00

Meeting ended at 16.40

Chairman

Date

NCW 25-3-20