

Colchester Institute Corporation

Minutes of a Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee
held on 1st February 2024
at the Colchester campus and on Teams

Present

Caroline Williams, in the Chair
Alison Andreas
Thomas Empson
Marco Iciek

Angela O'Donoghue
Brenda Rich
Dawn Swainson
Kevin Prince

In Attendance

Maeve Borges Vice Principal: Student and Information Services
Hazel Paton Clerk to the Governors

Observer

Fiona Chalker External Board Reviewer

Angela O'Donoghue and Michael Iciek were welcomed to the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Cook, Sally Messenger and Benjamin Smith.

2. **Declaration of any conflicts of interest**

None

3. **Agreement to Starred Agenda Items**

Members were invited to indicate any items which they wished to star for discussion or question. Items that were not starred were noted and/or approved by the Committee without discussion.

4. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2023 (CIC/CQ/24/1/1) were received and approved as an accurate record. The Chair signed the minute book.

5. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

CIC/CQ/24/1/2, Curriculum and Quality Committee action sheet, was received and noted.

6. **Curriculum and Quality Update Summary**

CIC/CQ/24/1/3, Curriculum and Quality Update Report – January 2024, was received and presented by the Principal. Governors' attention was drawn to the retention and attendance targets in the table in the body of the report, which was incorrectly showing the targets from the previous year. It was confirmed that the agreed targets for the current year were 91% for retention and 86% for attendance.

The Principal was pleased to report that:

- The predicted achievement for FE learners was nearly 89%, and for young people was nearly 90%.
- Current retention figures were strong for all categories and the target of 91% should be achieved or possibly exceeded.

- Compared to anecdotal data, overall attendance in FE was good although the Executive would like it to be higher than the current 87%.
- Attendance at GCSE English and maths had increased to 75% compared to 70% in the previous year, but the Executive would like to see much higher attendance rates.

A Member expressed surprise that a target had not been set for achievement of English and maths at Grade 4 and above. The Principal responded that because so many students have Grade 1 or 2, or are ungraded, the progress they make is more important than the number of students that achieve a Grade 4, although this figure is always provided in the data. It was AGREED to include a target for Grade 4 and above when the targets are set for 2024-25. **Action:** Principal

A comment from a Member that it would have been helpful for national benchmarks, if available, to be included in the table, rather than just comparator data for the same point in the previous year, was accepted. The Principal reported that there were no national benchmarks for attendance and that the data at 23 January 2024 was very similar to, or better than, the comparator data for January 2023.

The Link Governor for English and maths was very pleased with the improvements in that area. The Governor commented that, being the first year since Covid that students coming to the College had sat examinations rather than receiving teacher assessed grades, students who were expecting to achieve a Grade 4, but received a high Grade 3, were more motivated to improve their grade. It was suggested that it would be useful to base the targets on this year's results rather than the previous year's assessed grades. It was acknowledged that the English and Maths Department had very little opportunity to have an impact on the November GCSE results, which were good.

Governors asked what was behind the increase in attendance in English and maths. It was reported that some management actions had been taken at the start of year in areas where attendance was particularly poor. Strategies included accompanying students to classes and remaining in the corridor to ensure students engage and stay in the class. Governors were pleased to note the positive impact of the actions taken by Management.

Governors asked if qualitative data was available on why students were not attending. It was reported that a lot of information on attendance was available on ProMonitor. It was reported that about 10% of learners rarely attend, and quite a large number do not have 100% attendance, impacting the overall attendance rate. There had been a lot of sickness this year (both staff and student), and there had been a spike in absences before Christmas, particularly due to Covid. It was noted that English and maths lessons timetabled late in the day are less well attended, but the number of students attending these lessons means it is not possible to timetable them all in the morning.

To help Governors understand which curriculum areas were the higher and lower performing areas in terms of retention and attendance, the Chair had asked the Principal to have this data available at the meeting. It was reported that:

- The best performing areas for 16-18 retention were Fabrication and Welding, Painting and Decorating and Science.
- The poorest performing areas for retention were Hairdressing (88%), Beauty Therapy (92%) and Sport (93%).
- A lot of pastoral support was being put into Hair and Beauty because of complex behaviour and mental health issues.
- Attendance in Painting and Decorating was 82%. It might be that some students have not attended for a while and that retention would fall when these students are withdrawn.
- Other areas with low attendance were Music (82%) and Health and Social Care (84%).
- Course with high attendance were Computing (93%), Performing Arts and Public Services at 92%.

Governors noted that a number of End Point Assessments (EPA) had been taken place and were interested to know which areas these were in. The Principal reported that since the report had been issued, the number of EPAs taken had risen to 128 (22 Distinctions, 6 Merits, 97 Passes and 3 fails). EPAs by areas were reported as:

- Engineering and Welding – 21, the majority of which were Passes.
- Early Years – 4 (3 Distinctions)
- Functional Skills, Digital and Accounting – 5 (2 distinctions and 3 Passes)
- Health and Social Care (mostly Dental Nursing) – 11 (mostly Passes)
- Electrical and Plumbing – 27
- Motor Vehicle – 5
- Professional Studies (large number in Business Administration) – 43
- Applied Technology (Higher and Degree Apprenticeships in Engineering) – 10
- Wood – 1
- Salon - 1

It was reported that some of these learners would have had a planned end date in 2023-24, but the majority would have been for the previous year.

Governors noted that the predicted achievement rate for learners with declared disabilities (about 20% of the student population) was 2.1% below the College average and questioned the reasons behind this. Governors were surprised to learn that the number of learners with declared disabilities is all students that ticked that box on the enrolment form and could include students with conditions such as asthma. It was reported that the College was close to the target of +/-2% and above the national average of 3.6%, and that a large number of these students would be working with learning support in the classroom. It was reported that the Additional Learning Support Manager goes through Scorecard periodically to see if there are any patterns in the achievement gap in particular subject areas and talks to the relevant Manager. SEND Ambassadors had recently been identified for each area, to work with Additional Learning Support to provide support in their area and to provide additional support for colleagues.

Governors welcomed the report, which they found easy to understand.

7. **Positive Management of Student Behaviour – a whole College approach**

The Principal and Vice Principal: Student and Information Services updated the Committee on the work they were doing on the positive management of student behaviour. It was reported that in mid December a group of Curriculum Heads had arranged a special meeting to talk about the changes in behaviour they were experiencing within their student group and the actions and interventions that had had a positive impact. The Executive took this opportunity to look at what could be done as a College and to look at empowering staff. This resulted in training sessions on being delivered to over 550 staff at a College Learning and Development Day on 31st January. The sessions were around College professional expectations of students in response to =student behaviour concerns. For teaching staff, this included enforcing expectations; setting the tone during the first seven minutes of a session; looking at barriers to learning; how to challenge and de-escalation techniques. Sessions for 150 business support staff were around ways to challenge the behaviour of others around the College, such as the wearing of ID, smoking, vaping and low level disruption, in a professional and supportive way.

Governors asked if there was a way to measure a reduction in disruption in the classroom and were advised that this would be done informally, but it would be possible to get data such as the number of exclusions for drugs or verbal abuse to staff.

Governors suggested revisiting this after a period of time to see where further training or points of clarification were required. It was reported that more specific areas to look at had been identified from the feedback at the end of the sessions.

The Vice Principal: Student and Information Services left the meeting.

8. **Supporting Teaching and Learning Improvement**

The Principal gave an oral report on whole College activity and area based activity to support teaching and learning improvement. It was reported that:

- The programme for the Learning and Development Day on 31st January included half a day for development activities in each area. In most cases this was based around what Area Heads had seen in observations and learning walks.
- Learning walks take place on a weekly basis and 90% of observations had been carried out by Christmas.
- Area Heads meet with Jill Wognum every two weeks. Meetings always include a discussion about learning walks, observations and the focus of area based CPD sessions.
- To allow for staff development sessions within areas, which have to take place at least every three weeks, timetables do not start until 10:00am on a Tuesday. When this was first introduced a central programme of activity was put out, but this was not necessarily what the area needed. Activities are now area led and include topics such as raising expectations, teaching techniques to support high grades, AI, questioning techniques, and SEND support.
- The College was about to issue 100 TeacherMatics licences for teaching staff. Pilots have shown this to be a very positive tool for taking time consuming tasks out of the teacher role.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that staff are encouraged to give workshops on what they have done in their area, but some are reluctant to do this. The College was currently involved in a number of projects, including one through LSIF (Learning and Skills Improvement Fund) around advanced practitioners in the College working with new teachers. It was hoped that the advanced practitioners would lead some sessions in the summer staff development programme as well as mentor people on the taking teaching forward programme.

9. **Update on Progress against Quality Improvement Plan**

CIC/CQ/24/1/4, Update on Progress against Quality Improvement Plan, was received and presented by the Principal. It was reported that good progress had been made against most aspects of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and that the mid-year data suggests the targets should be met by the end of the year. It was reported that Area Heads were currently updating their QIPs and these would be used, along with the data, on a risk basis to invite Heads in for their quality reviews. These reviews involve a 30 minutes conversation and action plan for any area that is falling behind where it is expected to be.

10. **HE Institutional Revalidation**

CIC/CQ/24/1/5, HE Institutional Review, was received and presented by the Principal. It was reported that it had been a successful revalidation meeting, which identified two commendations, one recommendation, two requirements and one condition, which had already been met. Given the focus at the last meeting on the disappointing outcome of the Teaching Excellence Framework Governors were reassured by the outcome of the institutional revalidation.

The requirement to develop a UCC approach to student voice was discussed, and members shared their experience of what had worked well in other institutions. Examples included the Dean and Quality staff meeting students on a termly basis to find out what they thought was good and not so good about their experience. This was time consuming, but the impact was positive because students felt that they were being listened to. It was reported that some groups discussions do currently take place in UCC but not with the whole cohort.

It was agreed to bring the outcome of the revalidation and the requirements, which would be closely monitored by this Committee, to the attention of the Board. The Principal was asked to include the recommendations in the Curriculum and Quality update report before it is received by the Board.

Action: Principal

11. **Annual Report to the Board**

CIC/CQ/24/1/6, Curriculum and Quality Committee Annual Report to the Board 2022-23, was received, considered and approved.

12. **Review of Meeting**

The Committee reviewed the effectiveness of the meeting and agreed the items to be referred to the Board. This included bringing to the Board's attention the approach to the management of student behaviour and the outcome of the HE institutional revalidation.

13. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday, 16th April 2024 at 4.30pm. It was agreed to move the meeting from Teams to in person, with the option for members unable to be on campus to join on Teams.

14. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There were no items.