

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Performance Review and Quality Committee
22 September 2021
8.30 am
Meeting Room, Principal's Suite, King's Lynn Campus**

Present	Scott Leadley	Governor (Meeting Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Lee Smith	Governor
Attending	Ruth Harrison	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality
	Laura Holland	Head of English & Maths, ESOL (part)
	Vicky Mann	Head of Apprenticeships & Work Based Learning (part)
	Steve Lowery	Head of Faculty – Technology (part)
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

In the absence of Sam Fletcher, Committee Chair, Scott Leadley, Committee Vice Chair, chaired the meeting.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Sam Fletcher and Roderick Watkins.

2 Declaration of Interests

A declaration of interest was noted for Scott Leadley under Item 5 – Election of Vice Chair.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 9 June 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2021 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. With regard to the action point on 28/4/21, Item 6-ESOL, this remained outstanding; Lee Smith noted that he would send the requested contact information later that day (22/9/21) **ACTION-HoF(LH)/Lee Smith**

5 Election of Vice Chair

The Clerk asked for this item to be moved to the end of the meeting.

Laura Holland joined the meeting at 8.31 am

6 Mathematics & English

The Head of Faculty reported that “good” performance had been recorded in the recent area performance reviews for Maths and that this department had now moved out of Support to Improve intervention. Performance in English was also considered to be “good.” GCSE exam results had increased steadily on previous years, but there had been no grade inflation caused by the teacher assessed grading process. The College had made 14 appeals for Maths and 4 for English. For the latter, 3 progressed to Stage 2 and to date, 1 of these had recently been approved. The Principal was pleased that to see the appeal upheld, highlighting the accurate and confident approach adopted by teaching staff in carrying out the assessments. Governors asked about the success of appeals across the sector; the Vice Principal advised that to date, successful outcomes had been low. The Head of Faculty reported on the limited number of November re-sits that would be undertaken, taking into account the imminent entry date; learners would be carefully advised about taking the re-sit.

For Functional Skills, 1,300 exams had been conducted. Although the final results were still being collated, it was expected that performance would be 20% down on the previous year. Colleges would not be publishing functional skills results for the 2020/21 academic year.

Teaching on campus had commenced the previous week. Students were lively. Teachers were noticing that for some students, the teacher assessed grade did not accurately reflect the student’s actual ability; these students would be advised to move to another class which would provide the correct level of teaching and support. Attendance levels were around 75% (this was at 60% two years’ previously). There were some timetabling and class size issues still to resolve. The Principal asked about early assessment of students; the Head of Faculty advised that rigorous assessment had been undertaken, particularly for Maths. The Principal asked how staff would manage dealing with the disparity of the teacher assessed grading, already awarded, and the assessed ability by the College. The Head of Faculty explained that supportive conversations would be had with both the learner and, where necessary, their parents, to explain the situation and to advise the best action to take for the learner. The Principal acknowledged that there was a lot for the team to do at the present time. Governors noted their concern regarding the amount of support needed for learners due to inaccurate grades. The Vice Principal commented that Catch-up Funding would be used to cover for the additional resources required.

Student Voice surveys had been carried out to gain feedback from students on their previous learning experiences, with over 900 responses received so far. Students from other institutions regarded their experience of maths and English to be low; the responses from students returning to CWA for this year were more positive. Governors asked how students could be encouraged to read to develop themselves. The Head of Faculty explained that generally learners on entry to the College had a lower reading age than their peers. The Vice Principal explained that teachers, in all areas, should encourage their learners to read suitable texts that would engage learners’ interest and be appropriate to their courses. The Head of Faculty noted new “Optical Eye” software currently under development, used to capture the reading age of students. The Principal asked the Head of Faculty to liaise with Clare Pelling, Learning Experience Manager with regard to exploring reading clubs across the campuses.

ACTION-HoF(LH)

Numbers were expected to be good for the Adult Provision. Five out of six planned enrolment sessions had already taken place, with 174 learners now enrolled (last year’s total learners was 186). There would be a mix of courses offered either remotely or on-campus. The Chair asked if the demand for adult courses had increased during the lockdown periods due to more adults being at home. The Head of Faculty reported that a number of enquiries had been received from adults regarding GCSE Science – this would be considered in due course.

The report was noted.

7 ESOL

The Head of Faculty reported that at the recent area performance review the ESOL department had been graded “4-Inadequate” and remained under the scrutiny of the Support to Improve scheme. The performance in results had worsened over 3 years, being 3% less than the national average in 2018 to 17% less than the national average in 2021. The number of learners in the Adult 19+ provision had reduced by 29%. The number of learners (across all ages) had reduced by 24% over 3 years. Achievement Rates for 16-18 year olds were up by 8% on last year but this was a very small cohort.

Governors asked about the average age of ESOL learners; the Head of Faculty explained that these tended to be younger adults (in their 20s, 30s), usually working and possibly with young children. There was a need to encourage more youngsters, particularly in the Wisbech area, to undertake the course.

Governors discussed the need to establish links with employers and other agencies to promote the benefits of ESOL. Contact details were given with the Borough Council. The Principal added that Paul Smith, CWA’s Head of Employer Liaison could also be involved in promoting ESOL. **ACTION-HoF(LH)**

Support to Improve intervention continued, with the Learning Practice attending the most recent meeting (21/9/21). A plan was in place for the autumn term to develop the department and its staff. The Principal asked for this plan to be included in the next report to Governors so that all were aware of the actions being taken. **ACTION-HoF(LH)**

The Head of Faculty reported that new methods of funding ESOL provision could help to improve the retention levels of learners. The Chair asked if the “Hummingbird” approach had been considered, attaching the teaching of ESOL to the learner’s curriculum area. The Head of Faculty noted that a Hair & Beauty student was currently doing ESOL at the same time as their vocational course.

The report was noted.

Laura Holland left the meeting at 9.08 am

Vicky Mann and Steve Lowery joined the meeting at 9.09 am

8 Apprenticeships

Vicky Mann, Head of Department, reported that achievement rates had improved slightly to those detailed in the report: Overall achievement had increased from 48% to 52% and timely achievement had increased from 38% to 44%. There remained 20 achievements still to process and so performance figures were being updated on a daily basis. Governors asked about the likely final overall achievement rate. The Head of Department explained that this was difficult to assess, although the College was hoping this would reach circa 58%-60%. The Principal asked for an idea of the current performance across the sector. The Head of Department considered that the sector would probably achieve around a 40% achievement rate, noting the very difficult year due to the Covid pandemic. The Head of Department, Principal and Vice Principal all commented that performance figures were not being discussed and shared across the sector at the present time.

The Head of Department explained the difficulties with certificates pending and the problems this had caused at the year-end, and was relieved that some progress was now being made in moving forward. The Vice Principal commented on the difficulties with end-point

assessments in that awarding bodies had not been responsive in helping apprentices to reach their gateway and the end-point assessment. The Head of Department noted that awarding bodies had been issuing e-certificates over the previous 2 weeks with assessors being monitored and challenged, with some re-visits being requested.

Steve Lowery, Head of Faculty, Technology, explained that some colleges had remained with Frameworks until the last minute; the Head of Department advised that CWA had moved to Standards early and so were ahead of other providers. The Vice Principal added that the College received a higher level of income by using the Standards rather than the Frameworks.

The Principal asked about the relationships with employers and any discontent noticed due to the overdue apprentices. The Head of Faculty reported that progress was being made with plumbing, and that an EQA visit had been planned for 15 October 2021 at which time 6 apprentices would be signed off, leaving 3 outstanding from 2-years' ago. Governors asked if any individuals had left their courses early. The Head of Department advised that this had not been the case, and that particularly with the trades, apprentices had to remain in order to gain their certificates, noting that both employers and their apprentices had been very patient during the difficult times.

Governors asked about the possibility of lobbying the Secretary of State for Education regarding the difficulties being faced within the sector. The Vice Principal advised that the AoC was already communicating on this issue and challenging the government on behalf of the sector.

Governors asked about the difficulties of managing a paper-based system within the department, as noted in the report. The Head of Department commented that the current system was causing difficulties for staff and that the process for enrolling a new cohort of apprentices took the team around 4 weeks to complete. The Principal said that this had been identified as a priority following the recent self-assessment reviews, that SMT was fully aware and that the College would be reviewing its processes and reporting.

The report was noted.

9 Technology Faculty Update

The Head of Faculty highlighted from his report the number of overdue apprentices and was confident that all would be completed by the end of the autumn term. Difficulties were being experienced with staff recruitment, with 5 positions currently out to advert but to date, only 1 of those vacancies had received applications. There was currently a reliance on agency staffing at the present time. Vicky Mann commented that the regular change in staffing caused a concern for employers. Governors asked about the recruitment package available to new teachers. The Head of Faculty explained the package, with the Principal adding that the College was looking at all approaches to recruitment.

The construction workspace at the Wisbech Campus was insufficient for the number of learners now attending (30% up on the previous year). The Vice Principal added that there was a current concern for the college to identify sufficient space to carry out 200 synoptic tests over an 8-week period; minimal equipment would be required for the tests. The Principal noted the various project bids that the College had applied for over recent times for the development of the Wisbech Campus.

Governors asked about the current position of the Technology faculty. The Head of Faculty considered that the faculty was in a good position and optimistic about future developments. The Wisbech Campus was now vibrant and much busier. This had been caused by the increased emphasis on teaching & learning and the support given to staff. The Vice Principal added that positive comments and feedback had been received from the teachers.

Vicky Mann commented that workplace issues were a current concern for her team. The Head of Faculty also noted that communication was poor with employers and needed to be improved; Vicky Mann added that the larger employers were now requesting more meetings to discuss and monitor the performance of their apprentices. Governors asked about the difficulties of programme managers leaving the faculty. The Head of Faculty explained that a replacement programme manager had been identified for the Wisbech Campus.

Governors asked for a summary grid to be provided in the next report detailing the good and bad points of the faculty. **ACTION-HoF(SL)**

The Principal asked for the Technology faculty's recent area performance reports to be circulated to committee members. **ACTION-CLERK**

The report was noted.

Vicky Mann and Steve Lowery left the meeting at 9.46 am

10 Learning & Curriculum Report

The Vice Principal highlighted from her report the Teachers' Conference held in July 2021; the continuation of lesson observations (drop-ins) and the strengths of teaching being noted, and developmental areas now being actioned.

Key curriculum changes were reported with the increase in the demand for animal care at the Wisbech Campus and the vet science course being developed at the Cambridge Campus.

The Principal commented on T Levels, noting that this was a concern for the College and the sector generally at the present time. Learner numbers were low and both employers and learners seemed to prefer the BTEC qualifications than the new T Levels. The Vice Principal reported that 2 T Level courses had been launched this year and that sadly the expected third course, Lab Technician, had failed to recruit learners.

The report was noted.

11 Learning Strategy Annual Review

The Vice Principal introduced a new version of the Learning Strategy, comprising 7 key principles with clear actions for teachers to follow. Lesson observation was key to the strategy and this would continue, with follow-up reports to teachers noting possible areas to focus on and improve.

The Vice Principal explained that the strategy had been developed in consultation with Heads of Faculties and Programme Managers and would be launched on the next training day (22 October 2021). The Chair added that this would be cascaded down to all staff through golden hours and staff meetings and would be used to promote discussion and debate on improved teaching and learning.

The Principal highlighted the fifth principal of the strategy: "5. Understand the limitations of assessment and do not use it in a way that causes unnecessary burdens for learners or staff." The Principal considered that sometimes "less was more" and to focus more on the important issues of supporting and developing the learner.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Board the approval of the Learning Strategy at its next meeting on 13 October 2021.

12 Curriculum Planning Strategy Report

The Vice Principal advised that there had been no major changes to the curriculum following the review. Focus would continue on T Levels, with the planned development of a business management course and Animal Care & Management. The development of this strategy would link into the future planning work for finances and other resources (staffing, property).

Governors asked about the current resources to monitor the success of the strategy, particularly within apprenticeships. The Vice Principal advised that Ria Steventon, the new Quality & Improvement lead was now in post and would support this area of work in developing roadmaps to give a clear direction of the actions to be taken.

The Committee approved the Curriculum Planning Strategy for 2022-23.

13 Performance Data and KPIs 2020/21 – Emerging Outcomes

The Vice Principal explained that the current figures were still evolving and unfinalised, with the final results to be reported in the College overall SAR report. An overall reduction in performance results was expected. The SAR report would explain the mitigation and actions being taken to support students. Staff were currently engaged in encouraging students back to college. The numbers for A levels and apprenticeships were good. Attendance would be a focus for teaching staff this year. The Chair commented that learners were keen to be on-campus and mixing with other learners.

The report was noted.

14 Quality Improvement Plan 2020/21 – Year End Review

The Vice Principal advised that the report presented a final review of the outcomes of the actions in the previous year. Where actions had been unsuccessful or were incomplete, these would be rolled forward to 2021/22. The Vice Principal highlighted the good forms of assessment achieved in Maths (under Support to Improve); adult retention had dropped and would require a focus moving forward; the collection of destination data needed to be improved. Apprenticeships, again, was considered to be a risk and would be highlighted in the final self-assessment report.

With regard to apprenticeships, Governors asked how the performance affected the finances of the college. The Vice Principal explained that income received was based on the number of starts; the Principal continued that further funding was received based on completion and achievement. The number of new starts, and those expected in the future would be a challenge for the college and a fundamental review of all processes and the structure would be required.

The report was noted.

15 Applewood Nursery Update

The Vice Principal reported that the Ofsted inspection report of 24 August 2021 had been published the previous day (21/9/21), noting the “Good” grading received. The report would be included in the papers at the next Board meeting (13/10/21) for all governors to review. The Vice Principal was pleased that this issue had been successfully resolved and that the nursery could be removed from the Risk Register.

The Principal advised that a press release had been issued advising of the success of the nursery inspection and that with increased marketing there was an aim to increase children numbers and to recover lost income over the past couple of years.

There were no questions or concerns raised on the report.

The report was noted.

16 Complaints Summary 2020/21

Governors commented on the low number of complaints that related to teaching, with most being related to support areas and administration. The Vice Principal advised that where possible, teaching staff were able to resolve issues before they became official complaints, particularly as teachers were meeting face to face with learners on a regular basis. The Vice Principal advised that support areas were developing the use of service level agreements in a bid to improve performance overall.

The report was noted.

17 Hearing the Student Voice

The Vice Principal noted the poor response to surveys over the past year, accepting that the coronavirus pandemic had been the main reason for this. The report outlined the many other ways students were able to give feedback to the college. Focus groups were highlighted, where the Quality Co-ordinator would meet with a group of learners from a particular course to gain insight and then provide feedback to management.

Governors asked about the “You said, We did” posters that had been previously used by the college. The Vice Principal explained that these would continue to be used, using the feedback from the focus groups, but would be more specific to curriculum areas.

The report was noted.

For the next item the Clerk took the Chair.

18 Election of Vice Chair

The Clerk moved back to agenda Item 5 – Election of Vice Chair.

It was agreed that Scott Leadley would serve as Vice Chair of the Performance Review and Quality Committee for the 2021/22 academic year.

Scott Leadley, Vice Chair, re-took the Chair.

19 Any Other Business

Governors commented on their pleasure to be back on campus for face-to-face meetings.

20 Chair’s items for briefing to the Corporation

- Performance Data and KPIs – results for 2020/21 were still emerging, however, it was expected that performance levels would be down.
- Apprenticeships and ESOL both remained particular concerns and the committee would continue to receive regular reports from these 2 areas.
- The Committee was delighted with the “Good” inspection result from Ofsted following its visit on 24 August 2021.

21 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 1 December 2021 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 10.29 am