

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on Zoom on Thursday 2 December 2021, 1.30pm

Membership: *Lily Lin (Chair)
 *Sotirios Adamopoulos
 Jon Bouffler
 *Rod Bristow
 *Liz Laycock
 *Maksymilian Peikert
 *Karen Spencer

*denotes present

In attendance Becky Jones, Vice-Principal
 Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal
 Wendy Martin, Assistant Principal
 Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal
 Kirstie Craig, Assistant Principal
 Kelly Edwards, Executive Director – Quality
 Maria Staines, Head of Higher Education
 Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Jon Bouffler due to work commitments and Will Allanson.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 29 June 2021 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes (not mentioned elsewhere on the agenda)

4.1 Key Performance Indicators – Ofsted (minute 6 refers)

Liz Laycock asked about the current situation with Ofsted inspections. Karen Spencer reported that an announcement was made at the Association of Colleges' (AoC) annual conference that a new framework will be launched next year and that all colleges, regardless of current Ofsted grades, will be subject to a full inspection. Currently Ofsted are prioritising merged and grade 3 colleges which are due for inspection of which there are several in the East of England. Based on a five-year cycle, the College is expecting a full Ofsted inspection next year.

Becky Jones reported that the College is working towards and planning for a full inspection next year. Actions needed to be undertaken as a result of the College's last full inspection were set out and progress was being made however COVID has caused some actions to be paused due to differing priorities during this time. The College is clear of the direction it needs to take before the next inspection however it could be that the College does not fully meet the required directions before Ofsted come due to the impact COVID has had.

Karen Spencer reported that colleges who have been inspected recently have reported that the focus is on deep dives, speaking to students, staff and managers in separate groups to ensure they are all aligned. There has been less of a focus on governance papers, according to other Principals..

Liz Laycock highlighted that inspectors are not likely to accept COVID as a reason for lack of progress. Karen Spencer reported that they expect to see evidence that all students have an individualised learning plan (ILP) so they know where they are currently at, what they need to do to catch up and how this will be achieved.

4.2 Key Performance Indicators – Progression Rate (minute 6 refers)

Liz Laycock asked about progression rates which had been RAG rated red and whether there has been any confirmation on catch-up funding.

Paul Whitehead reported that the College had received funding in 2020/2021 and following on from an audit of how the funding was used, the auditors felt that some activities were not eligible therefore funding has been carried forward into 2021/2022 and the College has also received an allocation for 2021/2022. The College is ensuring that activities are in place to fully utilise the funding.

Liz Laycock asked if the funding was adequate for the increased number of learners requiring catch-up support. It was felt that the funding would never be sufficient.

Kirstie Craig informed Governors of the maths and English booster sessions which are running – two for maths and one for English per day. There has been a reasonable uptake and attendance at these sessions is increasing. Liz Laycock asked if there were reasonable resources for these sessions. Kirstie Craig confirmed that there are, with two members of staff delivering each session.

5 Harlow College Self-Assessment 2020/2021

5.1 Self-Assessment Team Reviews

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the update on Self-Assessment Team Reviews, presented by member of the College's Executive.

Safeguarding:

A group of students met with two Governors and members of the Executive for an open discussion, primarily focused on peer on peer sexual abuse following on from Ofsted's report and to get a feel on how the subject should be tackled in College. The College needs to ensure it gets the outcomes and impacts it wants and students are on board to tackle the issues.

Liz Laycock reported that the students were very articulate and are a great resource for raising awareness of the issue. The students were very open and challenging issues were raised. An issue with the consistency of tutorials was raised and the Committee noted that this has been documented in the Self-Assessment Report (SAR).

Karen Spencer asked what is needed to be done by the College, is there an issue at College and what needs to be done?

Sotirios Adamopoulos reported that students highlighted that certain tutorials with sensitive content cannot be delivered effectively through powerpoint presentations. Sensitive issues need to be addressed differently and there is a need for some staff training around this.

Liz Laycock highlighted that the reported issues were mainly around low key sexual abuse and what people think of as banter. When inappropriate language is heard, it is being addressed.

Karen Spencer highlighted the "Don't Be That Guy" campaign and research undertaken by the AoC which has reported that students have reported en masse that tutorials are always an issue and not the best way to deliver such content. The question is, is there something different to tutorials that colleges should be doing? The College needs to identify what a programme should look like that covers such issues and how it can be modernised and made more relevant.

Apprenticeships:

This is a key area for development for the College, with the final achievement rate for last year being 33.6%. There is an issue with legacy apprentices who are still to complete which has impacted on this figure. There is also a retention issue and functional skills has been an issue. The College is still working with 74 legacy apprentices to ensure they achieve their qualification.

Management identified the trajectory the College was on for apprenticeships and processes were reviewed and refined. Previously the College had a roll-on, roll-off enrolment programme for apprentices however this has now changed to three cohorts per year. This ensures they have the same induction and is more easy to manage. Each apprentice has a targeted five and eleven week check which will help to ensure they are on track and identify any early interventions which are required.

Management is confident that apprenticeships will get back on track, issues have been identified and are being addressed, however it will take a few years to turn the data around.

IT and Digital:

This team has been separated and now delivers a broader curriculum, including Level 2 Transition Year, T-Levels, BTECs and Level 4 and 5 apprenticeships and is looking to deliver higher nationals in the next few years.

Jon Bouffler asked in the session how the team know what industry wants and the manager presented a mapping document showing this.

There is an issue with target setting which needs to be addressed.

Aviation Operations:

The manager gave a detailed, well-rounded presentation which focused on achievements and identified key issues. Overall the team has exceptional achievement and outcomes. There has been an issue with the Year 2 diploma however this was due to an enrolment process.

There has been an increase in student satisfaction and positive EQA visits have taken place.

There is more work to do on attendance however the team is working well together.

Curriculum development is moving forward and thirteen students are enrolled on the HNC in International Travel and Tourism Management which is being delivered for the first time this academic year.

A-Levels:

This team also includes GCSE biology and vocational science. GCSE biology has high achievement rates and the newly introduced economics A-Level results will not be known until next year due to it being a two-year programme.

The team is looking to introduce a Level 1 science offer, a Level 4 biology offer and A-Levels in law and / or paralegal studies.

The team achieved a 99% pass rate however the retention rate has dropped to 69%. This is due to students being enrolled on a two-year programme for A-Levels.

There is excellent tutorial provision in the team and applications to UCAS are very high.

The team is focusing on improving targets and embedding target setting.

English and Maths:

This session covered the GCSE English, GCSE maths, adult English and maths and the Centre for Excellence in Maths teams.

There has been good success with GCSEs with results above national benchmarks, especially in maths. This is a good indication that the College's strategy is working. There was success in the November GCSE resits which were full exams and not reliant on teacher-assessed grades.

Functional skills maths remains an issue. A new, untested specification has been introduced which is harder to pass. Functional skills has been brought into the core English and maths team.

Karen Spencer reported that the AoC English and maths group has identified an issue with functional skills nationally. National pass rates are approximately 40% for English and 20% for maths.

There are significant issues with Level 2 functional skills and colleges have chosen to move students en masse from functional skills to GCSE. Functional skills consist of examined assessments. The DfE committed to level out the results and review the qualification however this has not yet been done. The issue is a mix of quality issues and the poor design of the qualification. Functional skills is an issue for the College as more students are on this pathway.

Liz Laycock highlighted that functional skills is reported in detail in the SAR and asked if the College believes the key reason behind the poor achievement is the pandemic, the course design or attendance and if the SAR has identified all the reasons?

Karen Spencer reported that there has definitely been some poor planning with functional skills for apprentices being end loaded. There has also been an impact when COVID hit, as many apprentices had not achieved their functional skills however secured a job or promotion and the qualification was not valued (eg in healthcare). There is however a fundamental flaw in the design of the qualification and national attainment has dropped significantly. Students particularly at level 2 Mathematics are unable to bridge the gap and are finding GCSE easier to demonstrate progress.

Kirstie Craig reported that the College will continue delivering functional skills English and is confident that results can be improved. There is however a big concern with the Level 2 functional skills maths programme. Students with a grade 2 or 3 GCSE in maths will now study GCSE maths. For those with a grade 1 or below, a new qualification has been introduced which is non-exam based. The aim is for students to achieve this qualification, identify any gaps in learning or skills and prepare them to move onto GCSE maths.

Rod Bristow asked about the switch onto GCSE maths as functional skills is harder to pass. The qualification is harder to achieve therefore it is not a problem with what they have learnt previously.

Karen Spencer reported that the awarding bodies have been told to make the functional skills content as hard as GCSE and the pass mark as hard as getting a GCSE grade 4. Functional skills is a straight pass / fail qualification and the assessment is in one single exam and the model is fundamentally flawed.

Rod Bristow asked whether it mattered to a learner and if GCSE maths is just as good as functional skills maths.

Karen Spencer reported that there is recognition that applying simple maths in a context is harder than just doing maths. The GCSE is broken down into smaller steps however functional skills gets caught with context as well as mathematical concepts which is unfair to the students. The functional skills English qualification is better designed.

Rod Bristow highlighted that Ofqual needs to maintain public confidence and maintain standards and if this is not being done, it needs to be flagged up. Karen Spencer reported that Ofqual attended a meeting with the AoC which raised this specifically. It has also been raised with the DfE who have promised an evaluation of the qualifications.

Rod Bristow highlighted that the drop in performance is being attributed to the standard of the qualification.

Liz Laycock asked if the issue of functional skills is highlighted sufficiently in the SAR under areas to improve and key actions. Karen Spencer reported that it is covered in detail in the key themes however it needs to be replicated further down in the SAR. Becky Jones agreed to revise this before the SAR is presented to the Corporation for approval at its meeting on 21 December 2021.

Becky Jones thanked everyone who took part in the self-assessment team reviews and thanked Gayle Peachey for chairing each review and ensuring a standardised format to all review meetings.

5.2 Self-Assessment Report 2020/2021, including Key Performance Indicators 2020/2021

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2020/2021, including Key Performance Indicators 2020/2021, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The majority of the SAR had been covered in discussions under the previous agenda item and Becky Jones confirmed that the key actions in the SAR will be taken into the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

Rod Bristow reported that the SAR is a very good and clear report. Rod Bristow asked about destinations which is at 92% and asked if the quality of destinations is looked at in terms of meaningful employment or other positive destinations and the quality of the destination. Becky Jones reported that the College measures relevant destinations and other destinations however the data could be broken down further. Karen Spencer suggested that this could be part of a further discussion at a future Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting. A judgement would need to be made on a destination and this could be difficult to do. It does not necessarily mean that a good destination would mean a good, well-paid job. The outcomes would be better measured over time, with perhaps a three month and six month update on the data, rather than the quality of the initial outcome.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee approved the draft SAR, including the key themes, subject to the additions outlined in agenda item 5.1 above, and noted the final position of the KPIs for 2020/2021.

6 Quality Improvement Plan 2020/2021 and 2021/2022

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The QIP 2020/2021 had been covered in agenda items 5.1 and 5.2. Governors' attention was brought to the areas in red which had not been achieved due to the pandemic and Governors were informed that they would be carried forward into the QIP for 2021/2022. Areas in amber indicate that the College has taken some steps to achieving the action.

Liz Laycock asked if a matching exercise between the SAR and QIP had been completed, with QIP actions completed being in the strengths section of the SAR and the red and amber QIP actions being in the key actions section of the SAR. Becky Jones confirmed that this will be looked at.

Becky Jones informed Governors that the areas to improve and key actions sections from the SAR will be used to develop the QIP for 2021/2022.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the QIP for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

7 Key Performance Indicators 2021/2022

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2021/2022, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Becky Jones informed the Committee that the KPIs are in the new format agreed by the Corporation and are fit-for-purpose and relevant.

Becky Jones reported that the KPIs on English and maths and apprenticeships have been strengthened.

Governors noted that the data included in the KPIs is based on data available in November and Karen Spencer reported that when further data becomes available, the gaps will be filled.

Liz Laycock asked if the GCSE English target of 45% and GCSE maths target of 55% are challenging enough. Karen Spencer reported that this year there will be fully examined assessments and no teacher or centre assessed grades therefore the targets are not comparable to last year and need to be compared to results two years previously.

Liz Laycock asked about the 55% functional skills achievement target and whether it should be separated out into English and maths. Becky Jones confirmed that she will update these KPIs.

Rod Bristow highlighted that not all KPIs are RAG rated and whether all KPIs should be populated. Becky Jones reported that they will be RAG rated once the data is available and that some systems are being updated. Rod Bristow suggested they could be rated based on how confident the College is feeling about achieving the target. Karen Spencer reported that the KPIs show current progress towards the targets linked to the final end of year position. It would only be a feeling as to whether the College believes it is on track for some of the KPIs during the year. Paul Whitehead reported that attendance is monitored all year so would be easier to predict compared to exam results. Becky Jones reported that the end column could be removed however it was believed that it would be useful for the Committee to see current progress. Becky Jones confirmed that all the cells will be populated and rated by the next Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee agreed the KPIs for 2021/2022 and noted progress made to date.

8 T-Levels

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on T-Levels, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Becky Jones reported that the College's first year of delivering T-Levels is going well and the Transition Year is exceeding expectations.

Governors were informed that the College did not recruit to all T-Level pathways. The electro-technical T-Level did not map over to the apprenticeship and it would take learners six years to qualify if they followed the T-Level route. The College believed students should not be put on a pathway which would take twice as long as an apprenticeship. There is an issue with the industry placements for the science T-Level and the College will struggle with this for future intakes. Health and social care recruited a small number of students however the T-Level did not run due to the double vaccination requirement for the industry placements.

There are 18 students studying early years, 18 studying construction and 7 studying digital. These are going well and the College is pleased with progress to date. Gayle Peachey has worked hard in preparing the teams for T-Levels.

The T-Level is structured like A-Levels however if any element of the T-Level is not passed, the learner will leave without any form of qualification.

The exit requirement to achieve a Level 2 in English and maths in order to pass the T-Level has been relaxed however it is the College's intention to make it an entry requirement. This will give the College flexibility and the ability to feel confident that it can put some learners on this pathway who may not achieve the Level 2 by the end of the T-Level.

Liz Laycock asked if the College is still asking for learners to have a Level 2 in English and maths. Becky Jones reported that it is for this year however this will be reviewed with each team individually to ascertain whether the entry requirements are right for each T-Level. The College is asking for high grades on entry and will reflect to see if there is a need to strengthen entry requirements through a bespoke review of each T-Level.

Liz Laycock asked if a learner can achieve the T-Level without English and maths. Karen Spencer confirmed that they could but it would be unlikely however this would change once the College offers T-Levels in creative disciplines.

Liz Laycock are asked if learners are told about the English and maths requirements. Karen Spencer reported that it is a condition of funding and the approach is the same for all learners at College. Where required, they will be entered for and expected to attend English and maths.

Liz Laycock asked about the Level 3 science transition programme and asked if the BTEC Level 3 science would still run. Becky Jones reported that the Government has slowed down with the removal of vocational and technical qualifications, therefore a BTEC and a T-Level group will run next year.

Lily Lin reported that there are mixed feeling about T-Levels nationally however the College is doing a good job and providing great support to the learners.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on T-Levels.

9 Higher Education

9.1 Higher Education Update and Quality Assurance Report

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Higher Education and Quality Assurance Update, presented by Maria Staines, Head of Higher Education.

Maria Staines highlighted the overall achievement rates and the student satisfaction rates and confirmed that the previous issues with engineering have been addressed.

There is work to do on recruitment to the College's higher education offer. Maria Staines reported that she has been attending Level 3 classes, giving presentations, offering 1-2-1 meetings and speaking to learner mentors in addition to the College's usual advertising campaigns.

Governors noted that early years and business were not running this year and health and social care is being looked at. The majority studying health and social care want to become a social worker therefore a discussion is being held with Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) around a higher national qualification for this.

Key areas for improvement are recruitment and achievement gaps for 24+ aged learners and ethnic minority groups.

Turnitin training has been delivered in August and November and is all up-to-date. It should be used 100% by staff and students and teams are being spoken to to ensure that it is being used.

Rod Bristow asked about the recruitment challenge and progression to higher education, whether ARU's foundation degrees rather than higher nationals were

exacerbating the problem and if the College is looking at all marketing opportunities.

Maria Staines reported that she had moved over the Access team which has 19+ aged students. Feedback is being gathered on what these students are interested in and the College is looking to change its offer where appropriate based on this feedback. Students like to stay with the College, it is convenient and close to home for them.

Karen Spencer reported that some pathways which students want to follow require a degree and there are some challenges with this.

Becky Jones reported that there is a particular issue with early years. The settings and placements requirements as part of the foundation degree with ARU has become a barrier and it is difficult for those who are working part time as well as studying to fit in the placement requirements. Karen Spencer reported that feedback has been given to Pearson however there is no flexibility with the placement requirements.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the higher education and quality assurance update.

9.2 OfS Reportable Events

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted that there has been no OfS reportable events since the Committee last met on 29 June 2021.

10 Student Voice

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on student voice, presented by Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that the College has started the process of student voice this academic year, gathering students' views via the internal student survey. Governors noted that there is no external student survey at present. The internal survey deadline has been extended. Currently there is a 67% completion rate however the College is aiming for an 85% completion rate.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that there has been a slight decline in some of the student satisfaction figures at present and overall satisfaction is sitting at 90%. Satisfaction with tutorials has remained the same and despite what is being heard elsewhere, students are saying tutorials are good.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew highlighted the Children's Commissioner's visit and the discussion which was held around peer-on-peer sexual abuse arising from Ofsted's report.

Governors' attention was brought to the Student Voice Action Plan and Laura Wedgbury-Glew outlined the actions which have been taken.

There are 42 Student Ambassadors in place across the College. If something is seen to be emerging in teams, the mechanisms are in place to address issues and feedback to the Ambassadors.

General feedback from the Student Ambassadors are:

- Lacking enrichment offer – the College has put together a package of enrichment opportunities, some of which have been more successful than others. These will be reviewed at the end of this term.
- Students wanting their own tables – this and keeping windows open are being kept under review.
- Tutorials – this has already been reported on.
- GCSE exams – more positive experience this time than previously.
- Toilets – this is always an issue.

Lily Lin asked about whether other issues that the Committee has discussed, such as attendance and teaching and learning, should be included within student voice. Karen Spencer reported that this is covered by Ofsted through their walkthroughs and deep dives and it is a key focus of the College's Quality Team.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on student voice.

11 Complaints and Compliments 2020/21

The Standards and Curriculum received and considered the report on complaints and compliment 2020/21, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Governors were informed that there has been a slight increase in the number of complaints received compared to the previous year. Paul Whitehead reported that all complaints are taken very seriously, reported upwards and scrutinised by the Principalship.

Liz Laycock asked about the categories of complaints and it would be useful to see where the complaints are coming from. Paul Whitehead reported that more complaints are around delivery teams than support teams and due to a particular circumstance. Karen Spencer reported that it is not appropriate due to the low number of complaints which could identify staff and students. Paul Whitehead reported that they could be broadly categorised into service functions and teaching and learning. It was agreed that Karen Spencer and Paul Whitehead would look at this.

Lily Lin highlighted that there is no bad feedback and it is key to look at in a positive way to ensure improvements in the way of working. Paul Whitehead reported that any issues arising from complaints are worked through in a lot of detail and staff are supported to ensure improvements can be made.

Governors were informed that there has been a slight decrease in the number of compliments compared to the previous year however Karen Spencer reported that not

all compliments are forwarded to be recorded. Rod Bristow highlighted the fantastic work the College is doing and Ruth Lucas agreed that Governor compliments would be added to the compliments log. Laura Wedgbury-Glew asked if the Friday shout-outs were recorded on the log however the log is for external compliments and praise. Ruth Lucas reported that Governors receive Karen's weekly updates and therefore see the staff shout-outs.

The Standards and Curriculum noted the report on complaints and compliment 2020/21.

12 Any Other Business

The Standards and Curriculum Committee thanked Becky Jones for all her work on the self-assessment and thanked Maria Staines for her presentation.

13 Dates of Future Meetings

Spring Term	Wednesday 16 March 2022	8.30am / 9.30am
Summer Term	Thursday 16 June 2022	8.30am / 9.30am

Key Points From The Meeting For Corporation:

1. Self-Assessment 2020-2021, including Key Performance Indicators 2020-2021

To receive and approve the College's Self-Assessment for 2020-2021.

2. Key Performance Indicators 2021-2022

To receive and approve the Key Performance Indicators for 2021-2022.