

**WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 JUNE 2021 AT 1630 HRS
VENUE: VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT: Alan Woods Chair
Paul Averis (until 1800 hrs)
Jo Hughes

TOGETHER WITH: Dave Wheeler Governor Observer
David Turner Assistant Principal Quality and HE
Richard Brennan Assistant Principal Curriculum
James Norris (Item 36.21) Assistant Principal Commercial
Development
Victoria Lynn-Robinson Curriculum Manager, HE
Alison Buick Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES: Jaswinder Dhillon, Mary Mahoney

29.21 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. It was noted that Dave Wheeler was attending as an observer for this meeting.

The Chair had spoken to the Assistant Principal Quality and HE earlier in the day to thank him for the excellent quality of the meeting papers.

30.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Jaswinder Dhillon, Mary Mahoney.

31.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alan Woods made his usual declaration as Chief Executive of an awarding body and that there was a small contract in place between his organisation and the college. Full details had been included in his declaration made in July 2020. He was also Co-Chair of the Federation of Awarding Bodies.

32.21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2021, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

33.21 MATTERS ARISING

Governors reviewed the Action Points Record for Learning and Quality Committee and noted the following:

Item 21.21

Catch up plans had been discussed at Corporation as agreed.

Item 26.21

Details of how to access recorded learning walks had been provided to Governors as agreed.

Item 27.21.1

Work experience presentation slides had been circulated to Governors.

Item 27.21.2

There had been limited progress in reviewing the possibility of A Level provision. The Assistant Principal Curriculum commented that the outcome of the Government post 16 qualifications review was awaited as this was likely to affect the decision-making process.

The Chair suggested a date for action rather than it being open ended.

There was a discussion about the post 16 qualifications review and the likelihood of applied general qualifications being ceased. If this was part of the review outcome, the college would need to seriously consider an A Level offer. However, nothing would be in place for at least two years due to the time and investment needed in curriculum planning and staffing to deliver this model.

A Governor asked if there was an option to look at a partnership arrangement with local secondary schools. The Assistant Principals thought that this may be an opportunity, but that the expansion of a local academy trust could also be a threat. Further work was required to understand this.

Governors felt that exploring A Level options was a significant conversation that the college needed to engage in. Offering an A Level alongside a T Level or vocational option could increase the pool of prospective students and keep the college competitive in the local market. Many secondary schools already did this.

Governors formally requested that the Exec team give some thought to a potential A Level offer and that this be brought back to either this committee or to Corporation in the autumn term of 2021.

Post Meeting note.

There were two matters arising from the Corporation meeting on 25 May which were not covered elsewhere during the meeting. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE provided the following updates after the meeting for inclusion with the minutes:

Item 64.21, relating to college engagement with adult learners.

Rachel Davies would take up post as Faculty Director for Adults on 1 August 2021, and would be reviewing how Adult learners engage and consider their student journey experience. At this stage a detailed plan around student voice was yet to be established however like most college processes it had been expected that Adult learners follow the same format and approach as Young People, which suggests a more bespoke approach would be required as the college moved forward from September 2021

Adults were more likely to engage when they needed to raise a concern or complain but the new Faculty Director would like to see how the college could get Adults more involved in shaping the curriculum and wider services. The challenge is that many are on part time courses and would rather not be involved in wider curriculum activities or surveys etc. Adult focus groups and more targeted surveys (that take into account for example, that they don't all need to do E&M and WEX), would be

Assistant
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Curriculum
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Principal
Quality and
HE

introduced, making sure Adults were being asked the right questions for them and their intended outcomes.

Community Learning funding would be used to offer enrichment type opportunities to Adult students, but more akin to supporting them on their particular journey.

The new directorate management team would meet shortly to agree specific projects and work streams in the whole 'website to graduation' piece and Adult student voice would be a part of this.

Satisfaction results for Adults based upon the question "I would recommend Walsall College" were high: Induction – 97% however based on low participants (35, in proportion to the wider overall result of 2935 this equates to 1.20%).

Teaching & Learning – 90%, based on only 20 responding (in proportion to the wider overall result of 1931 responses this equates to 1.14%).

Item 65.21, relating to Access to HE

Size and achievement data:

- 2018-19 – 168 students; 87.5% retention / 84.5% achievement (National average 76.1%) +11.4%
- 2019-20 – 166 students; 88.6% retention / 84.9% achievement. (National average 87%) -2.1% NA increased significantly as linked to CAGs that year (predicted grades for several courses).
- 2020-21 – 156 students; 91.7% retention / pending achievement.

The newly appointed CDM for Access to HE and Professional Services was Claudette St Prix as from 1 August. She would report direct to Rachel Davies so that Access to HE is seen amongst the wider context of Adult provision and the Faculty Directorate for Adults. Access to HE would therefore be reviewed along the same lines as described for Adults generally, so that a cohesive picture would emerge with more bespoke management and visibility as a result of the restructure.

Satisfaction results based upon the question "I would recommend Walsall College" for the learners identified on the **Access to HE** courses were: Induction – 100% based upon 62 participants (in proportion to the wider overall result this equates to 2.31%)

Teaching & Learning – 96% based upon 23 participants (in proportion to the wider overall result of 1931 responses this equates to 1.38%).

It was proposed that the Faculty Director for Adults be invited to the next Learning and Quality Committee meeting to provide an update.

Clerk

34.21 DATA REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on his report, which showed data for the academic year.

Of particular note were:

- Retention across provision types;
- Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) had been completed and submitted by the deadline of 18 June. Awarding bodies had started to request samples for checking so achievement data was still to be confirmed;

- There were some challenges within the apprenticeships data, but this would be covered at a later agenda item;
- There had been 1,175 community learning interventions to date and it was felt that the college was on target to reach the target of 1,700 by year end;
- HE student feedback was good, with 81% satisfaction. This was high compared to national as there were many concerns about the quality of online HE provision. There had been no complaints about the learning experience from HE students at Walsall this year;
- There were currently 360 students RAG rated as 3 (ie at the highest risk of failing or leaving). This was higher than staff would like but lower than last term.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors asked if there were any KPIs that were not where management wished to see them, and also if there were any implications of under-performance.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE responded that the KPI data was reasonable given the operating context for the academic year and the impact of Covid. It was hoped that a more 'normal' operating model would resume from September.

A Governor asked about the data on achievement but it was confirmed that this would not be complete until summer results were known from August. The achievement data showed only high grades from November GCSE re-sits.

The TAG process was discussed. The Exec team were happy that a robust process had been followed. Staff were now preparing evidence packs to send to AQA. Curriculum Managers were confident that their submissions were accurate and fair. There had already been some requests to submit evidence to awarding bodies for English, but not yet for Maths.

Governors asked about destinations data at section 3 of the written report. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE had expected that the numbers would reduce, given the Covid impact with redundancy and furlough. Some provision areas, such as apprenticeships, had held up well. Community numbers seemed low but were comparable to the national picture. Regional data would be available later in the year.

The Chair noted that retention rates were high. He also asked whether there were any disproportionate effects of students with protected characteristics. It was confirmed that 65% of the students RAG rated as 3 were BAME and had been more affected by difficulties in accessing remote learning. However, 70% of learning had now returned to face to face and only 45% of the students now RAG rated as 3 were BAME.

It was requested and **agreed** that for the next Data report, the Assistant Principal Quality and HE would provide any significant variations relating to students with protected characteristics.

The Chair asked if there were any issues relating to High Needs students.

Assistant
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The Assistant Principal Quality and HE responded that High Needs continued to be a very strong curriculum area and that there were no significant concerns.

Governors asked about Maths and English, which was included in a later agenda item and would be discussed at that point. Attendance at Maths and English continued to be lower than in vocational subjects, despite staff making clear that poor attendance was very likely to affect TAGs. The Assistant Principal Curriculum added that teaching of Maths and English had not been a major issue at Ofsted, but attendance had been. Changes to staffing were being made to address these issues.

A Governor asked about RAG rated students and what was being done to ensure that they would achieve by year end. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE cited several steps being taken, and noted that they were still in learning. Not all students RAG rated as 3 failed their course. It was difficult to predict achievement outcomes as there were many factors affecting this.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Data Report.

35.21 CURRICULUM REPORT

The Assistant Principal Curriculum presented his report, which gave updates in the following areas:

- Provision for young people;
- Provision for adults;
- T Levels; and
- Maths and English.

Provision for Young People

The college's strategic aims included having an employer in every classroom. Walsall continued to be 'proudly vocational' and therefore had a clear focus on getting students into jobs. However, research showed that around 65% of children joining Reception classes this year would work in jobs that currently did not exist. This meant that the college needed to be innovative in evolving its provision to support the jobs that would emerge for the future.

Staff were looking at frameworks to measure the degree to which students were being prepared for the future. The 21st Century Learning Design framework (developed by Microsoft) was currently being rolled out across staff teams as part of the Walsall College Digital Educator Gold programme. This provided a way of formally categorising or coding learning activities in terms of what opportunities they provide to develop the skills required for the future. Governors views on this were sought.

The Chair thought it was a useful framework but it was agreed that it was a significant area for a debate, as consideration needed to be given to matching curriculum to local needs and the college ethos. A full Corporation discussion was agreed as required and it was suggested that it be covered at a future Governors' Training Day.

The Staff Governor commented on her experiences of curriculum change, which was often influenced by external factors that the college was unable to fully control. This meant that meaningful change took time. Looking at barriers to change and consistency of approach would be very helpful.

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The Chair commented on future Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and the extent to which they were expected to influence provision. Taking account of these would be important to scenario planning for the college. There was a need to be proactive in this.

Provision for Adults

The college continued to perform well on adult provision and expected to exceed the 90% threshold for AEB despite the Covid disruption. Provision had been more closely aligned with the strategic ambitions and priority areas of the WMCA with a higher proportion of the funding that received being spent on Level 3 and higher and on programmes in their priority sectors such as Digital, Business, Construction, and Health Sciences).

Community learning programmes had continued to recruit well and were above sector averages.

T Levels

The College would offer four further T Level subjects in addition to the three started in September 2020. Decisions had been taken not to offer T Levels in certain areas, due to a variety of factors, including student preference, the need for higher GCSE attainment to access the courses, restricted progression routes and lack of demand. It was often the case that there were apprenticeship routes into T Level subjects, which gave prospective students different options.

The Government agenda for T Levels was discussed.

Maths and English

The staffing re-structure meant that the Maths and English team would be distributed across the two main new 16-18 Faculty areas from August. It was hoped that this would improve attendance as there would be closer links with the vocational areas.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair suggested an update on the outcome of the Government review of Level 3 courses, and the implications of this for the college. This was agreed and would be added to the agenda.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Curriculum Report.

36.21 APPRENTICESHIPS AND COMMERCIAL REPORT

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development presented his report.

The report covered:

- Expected outturn to year end;
- Retention into next year;
- Subcontracted and Employment Gateway activity to date;
- Publication outlining the responsibilities of Governing bodies for subcontracting.

The data showed that apprenticeship retention was holding up well and that the targets were expected to be met by year-end. EAFA guidance on calculating achievements had now been received. The impact of this

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Curriculum

would be articulated through the self-assessment process. A significant number of End Point Assessments (EPA) had been booked in so the final outturn would change.

The overall apprenticeships budget was tracking well. Retention into next year looked high.

The results of the recent survey were presented and noted. 98.5% of apprentices would recommend the college.

There were no concerns to report on subcontracted activity. There were three partners in 2020/21 but only two would have contracts for new starts next year.

The key points in the publication setting out Governors' responsibilities for subcontracting had been summarised in the written report, and Governors were asked to note these. Governors were reminded of the role of Finance and Resources Committee in approving subcontractor arrangements and monitoring the financial aspects.

High outturns were expected for Employment Gateway activity.

There were no approvals needed from the committee, as information was submitted for monitoring only.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair referenced the earlier discussions on designing a curriculum for the future. Input from the Assistant Principal Commercial Development to this was crucial. The Assistant Principal confirmed that curriculum planning for his directorate followed the same process as other areas. Potential new apprenticeship standards were being considered. The LSIP trailblazer bid included ensuring the views of employers on jobs for the future would be taken into account. It was essential that the LSIPs were considered to inform future curriculum changes.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Apprenticeships and Commercial Report.

37.21 QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented his report. The following aspects were drawn to Governors' attention:

- RSM had recently completed an internal audit on Quality Assurance. The resulting report was very positive and had only one minor recommendation. It would be considered at Audit Committee on 28 June;
- The Executive QIP and Post Ofsted Action Plan were noted. The agreed staffing re-structure would assist in moving this on. Also, as the impact of Covid declined and there was a return to more normal ways of working, the focus would be on re-gaining Outstanding from Ofsted. There had been some specific investments in posts to support this, such as the Head of Personal Development;

- Andrea Packer had recently been appointed as permanent Head of Student Services, reporting to the Assistant Principal Quality and HE.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors discussed High Needs students and the delivery of Maths and English. Deep dives into Maths and English would resume next term. The role of Curriculum Development Managers (CDMs) in overseeing Maths and English was considered. It was agreed as important that there was a consistent approach across the college, and that oversight by senior staff to ensure this was maintained was critical. Staff welcomed the integration of Maths and English into vocational areas as this had been requested for some time. It would allow more contextualised teaching for these subjects.

It was noted that three external EIF consultants would be brought in next term to complete deep dives with the Assistant Principal Quality and HE.

There was a discussion about ongoing Covid measures such as mask wearing. Overall behaviour had improved. The Ready, Respectful Safe messages were being reiterated.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Quality Assurance Report.

38.21 HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY

The report was presented by the Curriculum Manager for HE, and gave an update on the HE Strategy for 2021-24. This would require approval by Governors. The following were drawn to Governors' attention:

- The strategy aligned to the new Corporate Strategy pledges and to the requirements of the OfS;
- The aim was to grow HE student numbers. There were currently 236 on programme, rising to 413 when ER programmes were included;
- The college had recently received approval from Staffordshire University for a top up degree in Computer Science to start in September. The centre approval had many commendations for the college and the application had scored highly. College staff were extremely pleased to have secured this partnership opportunity.

The routes into HE and higher technical qualifications were discussed in some detail. Currently the college focus was on higher technical qualifications from Btecs, but it was acknowledged that there were other routes offered by other exam boards. This was not an intentional action to limit the college ambition and the college was not averse to change. As there was a curriculum conference being planned, other options could be considered as part of this. Now that the partnership with LCCA had ceased there was more management capacity to look at further development of HE at Walsall.

- A lifetime loan entitlement would be available as part of new Government plans. How this would work was explained;
- The college was holding Aspire events in June to encourage adults to visit and look at HE options. The current options were included within the strategy document. There was ongoing review of the

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HE

popularity of courses and what would be needed after the pandemic;

- An HE Teaching and Learning Strategy was being written by the Curriculum Manager;
- HE student rep meetings were held termly. Student voice had been relatively quiet this year and needed to be re-invigorated for next year.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair suggested a re-positioning of the strategy to make it clear that it covered higher technical qualifications and not just traditional HE. He felt that this would give it a wider appeal. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE would consider this.

Assistant
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Quality and
HE

A Governor asked about the current media scrutiny of HEIs in respect of sexual harassment and racism, and whether some reference to this needed to be included within the strategy. The Curriculum Manager for HE responded that the college was already monitoring and reporting on these areas as part of OfS requirements.

Governors **resolved** to **recommend** the Higher Education Strategy for Corporation approval.

39.21 SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

The paper was introduced by the Clerk and comments were invited. It was noted that the report format this year was unchanged and included specific comments on the ways in which the Committee had fulfilled each of its terms of reference in the year to date. The RAG rating of each element, introduced last year, had again been included.

It was noted that the terms of reference were due for review as part of the usual three-year cycle for this. It was also the case that committee membership was likely to change from September as part of the wider succession planning.

The Chair felt that student attendance at the committee had been disappointingly low. Governors discussed student engagement and student voice, which needed a clear refresh for next year. This would fall within the remit of the Assistant Principal Quality and HE from August and he had several ideas to launch. These included a review of the Student Union, which was not as representative of the student body as it could be. The Assistant Principal was aware of another college that had excellent student engagement through its commitment to personal development, and would look at best practice there.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Self-Assessment Report.

28.21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 29 September 2021 at 0930 hrs. Governors were asked to note the changed start time for this occasion.

The meeting ended at 1850 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
34.21	What the implications of under performance in the KPIs were.	38.21	Recommended HE Strategy for Corporation approval.
34.21	Whether any students with protected characteristics were disproportionately affected by Covid.		
38.21	Discussed the title of the HE Strategy and whether it should be changed to be more inclusive of higher technical qualifications.		