

**WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 0930 HRS
VENUE: VIA TEAMS**

PRESENT:	Alan Woods Jo Hughes (from 0940 hrs) Mary Mahoney Heather Lodge	Chair
TOGETHER WITH:	David Turner Richard Brennan James Norris (Item 08.22) Rachel Davies (until 1105 hrs) Victoria Lynn-Robinson (Item 10.22) Alison Buick	Assistant Principal Quality and HE Assistant Principal Curriculum Assistant Principal Commercial Development Director of Faculty – Adult, Foundation and Community Curriculum Manager, HE Clerk to the Corporation
APOLOGIES:	Paul Averis.	

01.22 CHAIR’S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the 2021-22 academic year and thanked them for their attendance. The efforts of the staff in producing a comprehensive set of papers were noted .

A particular welcome was extended to Heather Lodge, attending the committee for the first time.

02.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Paul Averis.

03.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alan Woods declared his employment 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 and updated for 2021.

04.22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

05.22 MATTERS ARISING

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

Item 27.21

A Levels would be covered later in the agenda and also at the curriculum conference planned for January 2022.

Item 33.21

The Faculty Director for Adult, Foundation and Community would give a presentation later in the meeting.

Item 34.21

EDI information had been included in the data report to be covered on the agenda.

Item 35.21.1

21st Century Learning Design Framework would be covered at the next committee meeting in February 2022.

Item 35.21.2

Level 3 qualifications review would be covered later in the agenda.

Item 38.21.1

The curriculum conference was planned for January 2022.

Item 38.21.2

The HE strategy had been updated and would be presented for Corporation approval in October 2021.

06.22 DATA REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on his report. It was important for Governors to have a view of current performance, although much of the data had yet to settle at this early stage of the academic year. The purpose of the report was to give some context to support other agenda papers.

The following were noted:

- The results to date for 2020/21 looked healthy. Many were based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs);
- Vocational achievement in 2019/20 had been 87.6% and the college was on target to meet this again. Vocational retention in 2020/21 had been 94.6%. Results were still being processed but would be complete by the date of the final ILR submission in October;
- Retention rates across different types of provision were included. High needs was particularly good, at 94%;
- A new interactive data dashboard was being implemented, but not until September 2022;

The Chair commented that his preference was for data to be shown in graphical format rather than tables where possible. This made it easier to establish any trends.

- English and Maths results, including high grades. GCSE Maths were at 29.9% (up from 16.1% in 2018/19). GCSE English were at 31.2% (up from 20.4% in 2018/19). 2018/19 was the last available year of actual data, so would be a focus for Ofsted;
- The written report included general comments about the start of term;
- There had been a disappointing drop in work experience due to the pandemic. Actual figures were well short of the year-end target;
- Tutorial activity had been good, with much having been accessed online;
- The written report included a table on personal development. This showed a low percentage of the expected termly review of careers and personal development had been completed;

The Chair commented that including actual numbers as well as percentages in future would be helpful.

Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE

There was a discussion about careers advice and guidance to students. Staff generally felt that there was more actual activity than was being recorded. Students were expected to have at least one meeting every term, to discuss careers and personal development. However, it was possible that time pressures had led other activities such as TAGs to be prioritised instead. This would be monitored more carefully in this year.

Governors noted that the written report did not really reflect the impact of the pandemic on the college. There were many elements of college and student experience affected, and it was important to acknowledge these. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE confirmed that this would be included in the whole college SAR when complete.

The Chair questioned whether Governors had sufficient focus on careers advice. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE felt that it had been infrequent with no clear focus recently. It was agreed that a presentation on this to the committee would be beneficial. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE would consider the timing of this.

Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE

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

07.22 CURRICULUM REPORT

The Assistant Principal Curriculum shared his report on screen. It was wide ranging and covered a number of areas.

T Levels

The background to the three T Levels offered last year was noted. There were four that were new for this year, covering building services engineer, electrical installation, data technician and health. Recruitment to the different qualifications had been variable, with the more established programmes recruiting better overall. There was a concern that some T Levels were not clearly understood or related to job outcomes that people were less aware of.

Staff were now considering the offer for next year, taking into account this year's recruitment and the availability of work placements to support the qualifications. In some areas, such as electrical installation, it was harder to secure enough placements. The job roles that Walsall residents aspired to would be taken into account in the planning.

A Governor suggested that a digital media campaign to raise awareness of future job opportunities should be considered. It was important to build a jobs market, as many of the jobs of the future did not currently exist. The Assistant Principal Curriculum confirmed that some work on this had already started. However, it was clear that due to the many uncertainties resulting from the pandemic, students were often making cautious choices. Parents and students were also unclear how universities and the jobs market may view T Levels.

The Chair noted that the outcomes and destinations of T Level students would be critical to future recruitment. Wave 4, from 2023, would include

all areas of the college's current mainstream provision, so it was vital to be well prepared for changes.

A Levels

The Chair noted that the intention to introduce an A Level offer had been included in the new prospectus. He had discussed this with the Principal but was aware that it had yet to be fully debated by Corporation.

There was a discussion about the merits of T Levels and A Levels. It was felt that offering A Levels broadened the provision at college and gave prospective students more options if their GCSE grades were lower than were generally accepted for A Levels in school sixth forms. Walsall was ranked at 125 out of 129 local authorities for the number of students gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C.

A Governor noted the likely staff training needs to deliver A Levels when the majority of staff were used to vocational delivery. The Assistant Principal Curriculum responded that in some subjects there were similarities in teaching Btec and A Levels, and that many staff were skilled in preparing students for written exams.

The Chair noted the suggested A Level pathways, and felt that there may be other course options to be considered. Progression routes were also important, as was Level 2 provision, which accounted for a large proportion of the delivery at Walsall. There were complexities in the changes to the funding regime that would drive delivery, and the Chair was not sure that Governors fully understood this. It was an area that needed to be high on the college's risk register. He would welcome a separate discussion with the Principal and Assistant Principals on this. This would be arranged.

Clerk

Other Governors agreed that a paper and further discussion on this was needed. The Assistant Principal Curriculum confirmed this was a topic for the forthcoming Governors Training Day.

Provision for Young People

Study Programmes enrolments were 4080 against a contract allocation of 3892 and a target 4242, so this was very positive. There were weekly meetings of curriculum staff to look at students at risk.

Some elements of synchronous learning had been retained for every course, to ensure that all students were familiar with this and able to switch if necessary if there were further Covid disruptions. Most delivery was face to face.

All students had been asked to continue with lateral flow testing.

Adults

Governors received a presentation from Rachel Davies, Director of Faculty – Adult, Foundation and Community, which covered:

- A provision overview, as set out in the written report;
- The challenges and opportunities for the college;
- The new delivery structure following the recent re-structure, including that some was via the STEAM Faculty;
- Development and design of the curriculum offer, with innovation as a priority;

- Balancing the requirements of Ofsted, WMCA and other stakeholders with those of students;
- The wide-ranging and flexible community offer;
- The increased uptake of courses in September to date, which meant that performance against the plan was strong. The plan was for 4,900 adults and 3,500 community learning interventions;
- Profiling of activity across the year and the performance monitoring in place;
- ESOL, which had recruited well. Learners in this area had particularly welcomed the return to face to face provision. Unfortunately WMCA was looking to commission less ESOL, despite continuing high demand;
- Quality, which had been judged as good by Ofsted in March 2020. The re-structure aimed to reduce inconsistencies
- The curriculum plan, which had been discussed and agreed with WMCA. It was ambitious and focused on wellbeing, family learning, improving confidence, digital and communication skills.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor commented on her attendance at the recent launch of the new community venue at Pleck library. It had been an excellent event and it had been extremely busy. High demand for ESOL was apparent.

Governors congratulated the Faculty Director on the work to date to shape the curriculum to meet the many demands and the WMCA requirements.

There was a discussion about the lifelong learning entitlement and the need to prepare for this. It was an important part of the future of HE.

English and Maths

There was a new delivery structure, with English and Maths now embedded within vocational areas.

The process for awarding GCSE grades was noted.

Level 3 Qualifications Review

The outcomes of the Government review were noted, as set out in the written report. More details would be brought back to a future meeting.

Plans for exams and assessment in summer 2022

The College had been represented in reference group meetings with the Schools Minister and senior personnel within Ofqual to discuss the approach to examinations and assessment in the coming assessment series and feedback to Government. Ofqual's consultation into the assessment for this academic year had concluded and it was expected that college programmes would be fully examined in 2022. However, contingency plans in the event of exams being cancelled were expected to be announced.

Curriculum Changes and Developments

A curriculum conference was planned for January 2022. This would allow wide debate on the future provision of the college at different levels.

The Chair welcomed this and was keen to have input to the structure of the conference. Governors noted that the appetite for learning and styles of learning appeared to be changed following Covid, so this was an important factor to be considered.

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

08.22 APPRENTICESHIPS AND COMMERCIAL REPORT

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development presented his report

The report covered:

- final achievement position for the 2020/21 academic year;
- an update on retention and activity for the current academic year;
- the current position on sub-contracted activity; and
- a brief update on Employment Gateway activity.

The final apprenticeships outturn for 2020/21 was challenging. The target was 74% but the current estimate was 70%. This was largely due to the number of end point assessments that could not be booked in. There were also some apprentices that would only partially achieve as they had already obtained a licence to trade without needing to complete their qualification.

For those apprentices that had completed, distinction rates were high.

Apprenticeship learner satisfaction remained high.

There were no concerns to report with subcontractors or Employment Gateway.

Staff were continuing to focus on five key themes to get to Outstanding:

- Compliance and paperwork
- English, maths and digital skills
- Individualised learning including recognition of prior learning
- Personal development for apprentices
- Additional Learning Support.

The new Faculty Director for Apprenticeships was now in post.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair asked whether apprenticeships with embedded qualifications that were not being completed would affect college funding. The Assistant Principal confirmed that this was not a significant concern. The apprenticeships budget for 2020/21 had been exceeded and the current year was on track to date. In a meeting with Ofsted the previous week, this issue had been raised. Ofsted were aware of the challenges this presented. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE added that an explanation of the impact of this would be included in the college SAR when complete.

The Chair requested that the impact of Covid be included in the SAR, and this was confirmed as being a key factor that would be covered.

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

There was a five-minute break at 1105 hrs

09.22 QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented his report and the following were noted:

- There continued to be a range of quality interventions across all provision types;
- At this early stage of term students were still settling in. The majority of provision was face to face, which students had expressed a strong preference for. Around 97% of classes had been on site so far;
- Attendance was at 87%, which was good, but not at the aspirational target of 90%;
- Lesson walk throughs had started and feedback was generally positive. It had been particularly pleasing to see students being taught reflective practice. Thanks were expressed to the three Governors that had accompanied the Assistant Principal on walk throughs to date.

A Governor commented on her recent visit to college and the discussions she had had with students. All had been very positive about their experiences in college to date, and had commented on how much they had benefitted from being in college rather than online. Online learning was less enjoyable for them overall.

- Staff training had recently been launched;
- More learning walks were planned for November;
- Actions from learning walks last year had all been closed down except seven (4%). These were being reviewed.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum commented on the high proportion of face to face learning. It was expected that more online elements would be introduced as term progressed.

A Governor asked whether there may need to be a transition plan between face to face and online learning, with leadership managing expectations around behaviour, quality and other aspects for staff. Staff balancing different delivery types and multiple expectations could be difficult. It was agreed that the Assistant Principal Quality and HE would review the percentage of online delivery after the induction period concluded.

It was suggested that a period of reflection of best practice in delivery may be needed. Technology had moved on quickly during the pandemic so making best use of it going forwards was very important. There would be different needs for different curriculum areas.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on destinations. Data was being collated by an external organisation and would be made available at curriculum level. Students were contacted around six months after they had left so that actual rather than intended destinations were recorded. Data showed an overall drop of 5% in positive destinations, but some variations between gender, BME, high needs and widening

Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE

participation students. Curriculum managers were being asked to review their data and comment on it in their SARs.

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

10.22 HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT

The report was presented by the Curriculum Manager for HE, and gave an update on key aspects of the provision:

- The five-year Access and Participation Plan had been submitted in July. OfS had subsequently approved the first two years. An update would be submitted at the end of October, taking out LCCA as that was no longer included
- There were 220 HE students currently enrolled;
- Graphs from OfS were shared on screen. They showed some interesting data for Governors to note, including the distribution of median earnings three years after graduating (with FE courses being at the lower end), the distribution of students from low participation neighbourhoods (with FE colleges being at the higher end) and the variation in well paid jobs and earnings potential;
- The work of the college with Aspire to HE and Uni Connect. The pandemic had disrupted learning for the most disadvantaged students. However, the college had submitted bids to Aspire to HE and Uni Connect for some specific projects as outlined in the written report. £10k had been awarded;
- There was a new Level 6 Computer Science course available via Staffordshire University.

There was a discussion about the funding bid for access programmes during the summer. This had not gone ahead but it was hoped to run it in 2022 instead.

The Chair suggested a further look at other higher technical qualifications to complement the existing offer. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE agreed that this would form part of the planned curriculum conference in January 2022. It was important to innovate and develop the HE offer. Having a more diverse offer would mitigate some of the risks.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Higher Education Report.

11.22 ANNUAL SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS

Governors were asked to note the number and nature of complaints in 2020/21, as well as the trends identified. There had been 22 formal and 26 informal complaints in year. The majority related to curriculum matters and had been managed through the approved process by the Quality team. There was clear evidence of other matters that had been raised being successfully addressed at a lower level and not being escalated to formal stages.

There had been an exchange of emails on this topic with some Governors recently. The Assistant Principal hoped his responses had provided some reassurances on the robustness of the process. It was explained that there were separate processes for dealing with any matters relating to safeguarding, bullying and harassment, and that these were also reported through different channels. Disciplinary action was taken if necessary.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum added that where any pattern of complaints was seen to emerge for a particular curriculum area, this would be investigated and bring the area into scope for a monitoring process. Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Annual Summary of Complaints Report.

12.22 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2021/22 AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Clerk noted the draft workplan that had been provided. It would be used as the basis for agenda setting in year but was flexible if changes were needed. As usual, Governors were reminded that they could request agenda items.

The terms of reference had been reviewed in line with the agreed three-year cycle. Minor amendments had been made. The Chair suggested that a specific point about careers advice and guidance be added, and this was agreed.

Governors **resolved** to **note** the Committee workplan and to **recommend** the terms of reference for Corporation approval.

13.22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 16 February 2022 at 1630 hrs. It was agreed that this meeting would be held online on Teams.

The Corporation would also hold a SAR Validation meeting on Thursday 25 November 2021.

Governors would be invited to the curriculum conference, which was planned for Wednesday 26 January 2022 in the Hub.

The meeting ended at 1200 hrs.

Clerk

Assistant
Principal
Curriculum

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
06.22	To provide data in graphs and using numbers as well as percentages in future where possible.	12.22	Recommended updated terms of reference for Corporation approval.
06.22	Whether Governors had sufficient focus on careers advice and guidance.		
09.22	Whether staff needed support with a transition plan between online and face to face learning.		
10.22	To innovate the HE offer and to review higher technical qualifications alongside more traditional routes.		