

**MINUTES OF LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 13TH OCTOBER 2025
A339, WISEMORE CAMPUS**

Members:

Mary Mahoney
Adam Comery
Paul Averis
Barbara Van Der Eecken (Chair)
Jat Sharma
David Wheeler

In Attendance:

Kirsti Lord, Deputy Principal Curriculum,
Innovation & Student Success
Lesley Venables, Head of Governance
Rachel Jones, Assistant Principal MIS,
Information & Student Services
James Norris, Assistant Principal Adults & WBL
David Turner, Assistant Principal Quality

	Apologies for Absence	
1	Apologies for absence were received from Heather Lodge.	
	Declarations of Interest	
2	There were no declarations of interest in any agenda item.	
	APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR	
3	Resolved – That Barbara Van Der Eecken and Mary Mahoney be appointed as Chair and Vice-Chair for the 2025/2026 academic year	
	MINUTES	
4	Resolved - That the minutes of the meetings held on 3 rd June and 1 st July 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair	
	MATTERS ARISING	
5	Governors received a report on progress against previous recommendations and noted the following items: (173) Predicted Achievement – the DP reported that staff were currently building an overall picture of actual achievement. (126 & 130) A Levels – the DP advised that remedial decisions had been taken in respect of A Levels over the summer. Any future provision needed to be tailored to student needs and based on the Government’s Curriculum Reforms. An options appraisal had been undertaken but further work was required on the accompanying metrics. Once this had been completed the draft report would be circulated to Committee members, with a recommendation made to the Corporation at the next meeting.	DP
6	All remaining items had either been completed, superseded or were featured on the agenda. It was agreed that all actions that had arisen prior to July 2025 would now be archived.	LV
	PROPOSED KPIS & DASHBOARD	
7	Governors were reminded of the KPIS that had been agreed at a previous Committee meeting and approved by the Corporation. These were aligned to the Corporate Strategy and Strategic Priorities.	
8	A series of Quality Reviews would be taking place shortly at which managers would present information on performance levels in 2024/2025, together with any	

	improvements required and how excellence could be achieved. This process had been designed so that any decision-making was evidence-based.	
9	It was agreed that the KPI milestones for 2025/2026 would be submitted to the November 2025 Committee meeting and that an updated dashboard would be presented at each future meeting to enable governors to monitor performance.	KL
10	Current target performance levels were: Attendance 83% (82% in 2023/2024) Retention 92% for 16-18 (91% in 2023/2024) and 96% for adults (94% in 2023/2024) Achievement 84% (81% in 2023/2024), but apprenticeship achievement may be increased Progression 60% Destinations 91% (91% in 2023/2024)	
11	The Committee was advised that the national expected achievement rate for apprenticeships was now 67%, which would require the College's target to be increased slightly for 2025/2026.	
12	Different methods of collecting data on student satisfaction had been utilised in 2024/2025, with 91% of respondents willing to recommend the College to others. The AP Adults & WBL was asked to bring back to the next meeting information on employers and key partner satisfaction rates, with proposals for improvement where appropriate.	JN
13	The target for relevant staff upskilling had increased from 45% to 60% and there would be a higher degree of flexibility as to the activities that could be included in this CPD. A governor questioned whether there was a time constraint on upskilling taking place and was informed that the aim was for colleges to be ambitious. The latest figure was 40%, with further activities encouraged. The quality of engagement and ensuring that all events were properly recorded were key. For some staff it was a question of consolidating current performance, whilst others needed to be set stretching targets.	
14	Governors noted that CPD for career progression was 10% (an increase of 5% on the previous year) and that a middle management training programme was in place, supplemented by external courses from the Education Training Foundation and Colleges West Midlands.	
15	Under the new Ofsted inspection framework the College would be aiming to be graded as 'exceptional', which would require a high degree of consistency and was challenging due to the size of the organisation. The SAR/QIP process would be assessed in line with the 'old' inspection framework. Course reviews would be data-driven and provided an opportunity to evaluate the information prior to the Quality Review process.	
16	A report on the outcomes would be submitted to a future meeting (RAG-rated for each curriculum area). Initially, the dashboard would focus on attendance, retention and achievement.	KL/DT
QUALITY ASSURANCE & PERFORMANCE DATA		
17	The AP Quality presented a detailed report on Quality Assurance and performance data for 2024/2025 and emerging data for 2025/2026.	

18	<p>Attendance had improved, particularly from March to July 2025 and had outturned at a higher than anticipated level. However, on apprenticeship programmes the final figure was 1.5 PP below the target, whilst retention and achievement both exceeded the targets set.</p>	
19	<p>Although it was recognised that there was still further development required on attendance, progress had been strong with greater visibility and a robust action plan. This should provide a strong foundation for 2025/2026. In response to questions about the reasons for non-attendance, the Committee was advised that there had been some delays in processing bursary applications which had impacted on attendance, but these individuals could not yet be disaggregated easily from other groups.</p>	
20	<p>Overall Retention was 93.6% against the target of 94%. Apprenticeship retention was 3.1 PP (pp) above the target, Adult Skills Fund (AEB) learners at 0.3pp below target and 16-18-year-olds at 1.6pp below target.</p>	
21	<p>The Achievement rate for 16-18 year-olds was also 1.9PP lower than the identified target and the Committee noted the correlation between retention by level and achievement rates. However, this was not consistent across all areas and would be reviewed during the SAR/QIP process. There were still further achievements to be uploaded to the College's MIS. The DP commented that it was possible that the College had held onto some learners for too long, which had resulted in lower achievement rates.</p>	
22	<p>Achievement levels for A Level programmes were currently a concern, given the trajectory of this cohort. A number of actions had already been taken such as not enrolling any further students on the A Level Science programme due to small classes and flagging 'at risk' learners early in the year and transferring some Year 1 learners to vocational courses. A Level Science had been placed in the Course Review process.</p>	
23	<p>For English courses the level of achievement had been 22% compared to 12% in 2023/2024. The DP advised that the grade boundary had been increased and that some staff had warding body to be challenging. All staff had now been appropriately trained and a large proportion were also external examiners. There had been a high turnover of English & Maths staff over the summer.</p>	
24	<p>Maths programmes had performed better, with 17% achieving a grade 4 or above compared to the target of 15%. This was partly due to improved leadership in this area. A thorough review of examination reports was underway and the outcomes would inform future practice.</p>	
25	<p>Governors were informed of the significant increase in the number of re-sits required amongst the current student cohort. There had been widespread re-tabling for 2025/2026 due to the rise in numbers and the fact than the proportion of L1 and L2 learners had increased with a fall in L3 entrants. The staff governor commented that this was critical as students were unlikely to attend College for their vocational lessons if English & Maths sessions were not operational.</p>	
26	<p>Historic attendance data from students transitioning from schools was incomplete, but it was noted that there tended to be a high incidence of safeguarding concerns and complex needs amongst these individuals. Greater co-operation between</p>	

	schools and the College was required to ensure that safeguarding data was received prior to enrolment to enable appropriate planning to take place.	
27	A plan had been prepared to enable students to make up the learning that they had missed prior to the timetable changes, including booster sessions. The Committee commented that students' lack of English skills also impacted on their performance in their vocational courses.	
28	A governor added that 'sticky' learning was critical to enable students to pass English & Maths exams and that the latest educational research indicated that high quality teaching was more successful than the quantity of delivery. Governors agreed that staff should be exposed to and experience up-to-date teaching theories as part of their CPD.	
29	The DP reported that staff recruitment in areas where vacancies were difficult to fill was being evaluated by HR. Staff turnover in many curriculum areas was low, but English & Maths was a significant risk for the organisation.	
30	A governor questioned whether there was a link with Level 1 achievement and if adaptive teaching would be of benefit. The DP responded that in 'trades' curriculum areas some Level 1 achievement rates were due to students undertaking Functional Skills, which had pulled down the average level.	
31	Information on Value Added would be presented to a future meeting. Reports on performance against KPIs would be filtered into 16-18s and Adults.	DT/KL
32	In response to questions from governors as to whether resourcing was sufficient the DP reported that any under-utilised staff had been identified and had been supportive of the overall English & Maths Strategy, offering to teach on these programmes.	
33	The Chair commented that the issues highlighted above would be revisited throughout the academic year. The significant increase in the number of bursaries and complex needs of learners were noted.	
CURRICULUM & ENROLMENT UPDATE		
34	Governors received an update on current enrolments and were advised that 16-18 recruitment was on target (4480 against the target of 4420 and an DfE allocation of 4205). It would need to retain 4306 students at the October census date to qualify for in-year growth funding and an attrition rate of 10% had been estimated.	
35	Adult recruitment was slightly above the Combined Authority target and at the target for DfE-funded programmes.	
36	The Committee noted that there had been a significant marketing campaign over the summer to maximise student numbers. The proportion of Level 3 students in the 16-18 cohort had decreased this year (40% compared to 43.7%) and there had been a corresponding increase in Level 1 and Level 2 enrolments. This was mainly due to achievement levels on English & Maths courses which students were required to pass to progress to Level 3 and had impacted on both T Levels and vocational courses.	
37	For 19+ courses entry level starts had improved, however, the College had lost a portion of its market share at Entry and Level 1. It was possible that future recruitment would lessen this impact.	

38	Governors requested that comparative data on enrolments at the start of 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 be brought to the next meeting. Management commented that this position was due to the type of learners and their associated level of vulnerability.	KL
39	The Committee discussed the link between staff CPD and Level 1 delivery, particularly for English & Maths. There was a concern that unless this was addressed through effective teaching and learning the College would suffer from 'mission drift'. Although recruitment was positive, the profile and support needs of the cohort meant that the College would need to devote even more resources to wrap-around services as well as teaching and learning.	
40	Many staff had only taught on Level 3 programmes previously and would require coaching and support to be able to delivery lower-level courses. The DP commented that the work being produced by Level 2 students was of a much higher standard as they would, previously, have been studying at Level 3.	
41	The Principal reported that some local schools were participating in a pilot Auto-Enrolment project through the Combined Authority as part of the Government's Youth Guarantee Scheme. One of the key themes under the new Ofsted Framework was inclusivity. The proportion of students without a grade 4 in English and/or Maths would impact on vocational and academic achievement rates and it was noted that two-thirds of 16 year olds had not successfully completed GCSE English and/or Maths.	
42	Progression levels for 16-18s were strong for Level 1 to Level 2 in Construction & Plumbing, but weaker from Level 1 to Level 2 and Level 2 to Level 3 in areas such as Early Years, Creative Industries and Protected Services. A total of 18% of adult students progressed post Level 3, with 53% of students not returning to College after achieving their initial qualification and 27% of ESOL and Community learners.	
43	The DP reported that management was currently developing a progression 'roadmap' to illustrate potential routes into employment. It was important that the Combined Authority was aware of the barriers to learning for students and the efforts that colleges were making to enable them to succeed.	
HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY		
44	The AP Quality presented an updated draft of the College's Higher Education Strategy, which had been informed by national and local priorities and was aligned to the strategic objectives and key priorities. The Strategy included an analysis of the opportunities and threats facing the College and the impact of the external landscape.	
45	Following a meeting with the link governor for HE, further work on the content would be undertaken prior to the final version being submitted to the Corporation for approval. These included ensuring that the principles of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement were built into the Strategy, such as the ability for learners to step on/off their qualification pathways and a high content of innovation and enterprise. It would be important for the College to ensure that its ethos and values pervaded the Strategy.	
46	It was agreed that the HE Strategy would be submitted to the December Corporation meeting, so that the outcomes of the Government's Qualification Reforms could be included.	DT/KL

TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT		
47	The Assistant Principal Quality presented a report on Teaching, Learning and Assessment performance and activities since the July 2025 Committee meeting, including information on the new Quality Assurance Frameworks in operation.	
48	There was now a greater emphasis on quality improvement, with Quality Development Coaches in classrooms to improve teaching practice and provide coaching for staff. Governors were invited to attend Quality Review meetings in November/December to experience this activity first-hand.	
49	Governors were advised that student satisfaction levels, as evidenced through the National Student Survey, were high, but noted that the participation rate was low. A number of issues had been identified, namely IT access, resources and support services, all of which had been allocated to the relevant managers for responses and actions.	
50	Complaint levels rose by 5% in 2024/2025, which was broadly in line with the increase in the size of the student cohort. The average length of time to resolve a complaint was 123 days and further investigation of this figure had revealed systemic delays and the need for stronger compliance with the College's Complaints Policy. Mandatory staff training had been introduced as one method of addressing this issue.	
COMMITTEE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2024/2025		
51	Governors received the final draft of the completed Committee Self-Assessment for 2024/2025.	
52	The level of attendance for 2024/2025 had been 63% against a target of 75%, which was disappointing but due to a number of individual issues. It was agreed that start time of meetings would be amended to 5.00 p.m. and that the February 2026 meeting would be held on Teams.	LV
53	Further discussion on the scheduling of future meetings would take place between the Committee Chair, Head of Governance and Deputy Principal, reviewing options such as a single-item agenda on the attendance dashboard.	LV/BVDE/ KL
54	The proforma would be amended to capture the impact of the activities undertaken by the Committee.	LV
55	Resolved – That the Committee's Self-Assessment for 2024/2025 be approved	
DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS		
	27 th November 2025 26 th February 2026 30 th June 2026	