

EXETER COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 28 September 2020 held remotely via Zoom

Present	Bindu Arjoon John Laramy Sue Clarke Tim Rutherford Sonja Longmore Tim Quine Dave Underwood Vicki Roberts Will Valastro	Chair
Apologies	Jo Matthews	
Observing	Richard Church	Chief Financial Officer
In Attendance	Jade Otty Kristyn Woodward Lisa Smith Jenny Leach	Vice Principal Performance Director of Student Experience Assistant Principal Assistant Principal
	Alison Layton-Hill	Clerk to the Corporation

1. **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest.** Action

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting, especially Will Valastro, the student governor and Vicki Roberts, the business support staff governor who were attending their first Quality and Standards Committee meeting. Richard Church, Chief Financial Officer was also welcomed as an observer.

Apologies were received from Jo Matthews and there were no declarations of interest received.

The Committee noted that this would be Dave Underwood’s final Committee meeting. The Chair acknowledged Dave’s dedicated service to the College and thanked him for his valuable contribution to the Committee, particularly during the time that he was Chair.

2. **Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2020 as circulated, were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting.

3. **Matters arising**

- 3.1 Committee Self-evaluation update
The Committee reviewed the narrative prepared by the Clerk following the self-assessment discussion at the previous meeting.

The Committee agreed the narrative and the proposed QIP

Clerk

Kristyn Woodward, Director of Student Experience joined the meeting

4. **Department of Student Experience Annual Report**

The Committee received the presentation and noted that a more sustainable staffing model had been implemented in the Student Experience Department to enable the team to extend its support to all students. The wellbeing function had been strengthened, triage had been improved and the counselling service had been replaced by Level 4 qualified, trainee counsellors.

The Committee questioned the implication of the changes to CPOMS, the safeguarding system. It was explained that the only difference is that staff will have wider visibility of the system. The intention is to allow staff to have a greater understanding of the needs of their students and the confidence to have transparent safeguarding conversations with them.

Bursary thresholds have been updated in line with the National Minimum Wage/National Living Wage, however governors were reassured that each application is considered on its individual need. The College continues to ensure students have what they need to support remote learning.

Governors challenged how the College is supporting its vulnerable learners, who may have been disengaged through lockdown, return to College. The Committee was reassured that the College carefully monitors every child in care (currently 99) and care leavers. The College receives early notification of who the vulnerable students are, from when they are in year 11 at school, to triangulate the information and feed into a PEP from their first day at College.

The Committee requested clarification in terms of the change in wellbeing staff resources. It was confirmed that the College is imminently undertaking interviews for wellbeing advisers to replace a 0.6fte to 1.0 fte.

The Committee noted the presentation

Kristyn Woodward left the meeting

5. **Quality Assurance**

5.1 Emerging Exeter College results 2020

The Committee received the report and acknowledged the difficulty the College had faced in terms of the process around results without exams. It was noted that over a three-year trend, the vast majority of data lines showed an improvement on the previous year with two exceptions; Level 1 learners and Functional Skills learners. The awarding bodies had set a very high achievement threshold and full attendance and engagement would have been required to succeed. Some learners opted not to complete their final assessments and it was challenging to engage Level 1 and Functional Skills learners with online learning.

The Committee questioned what measures the College would like to put in place that had not been possible. It was advised that the previous year was the first year for Functional Skills delivery, which made it more challenging as it is very different from GCSEs. It is essential to consider the functional skills scheme of work and get the students used to the style of questioning.

Governors were advised that 16-18 students attained the highest ever achievement rate. The impact of lockdown on businesses and work placements had impacted apprenticeships, however apprentices remain learning at College and returning from furlough, although not able to take final assessments. Access to HE results improved significantly in 2019/2020.

The Committee was advised that the College is facing the challenge of sourcing sufficient space and resource to facilitate the large number of maths and English GCSE resits in November 2020. There will be a need to close some provision for on-site learning during the week of exams to ensure sufficient space to meet new regulations that exam desks must be two metres apart. The Committee challenged whether facilitating the GCSE resits in November is achievable and was reassured that the College will ensure there is space and there was a suggestion that local secondary schools may be able to assist.

Governors sought the views of the leadership team in terms of the likely situation for exams in 2021. The national view is that exams will take place if at all possible as it is very challenging to replace exams with a system that feels fair and equitable. The higher risk to the College, in the national context of grade inflation, is ensuring students on new courses feel confident and prepared for being examined in a traditional way. The College is not grading students during the first half term as it is felt more appropriate to undertake skills assessments to support them at this early stage.

The Committee noted the report

5.2 Intensive care update

The Committee received the report and noted that of the four programmes in intensive care, two will now leave the programme and two will have a further period of intensive care to ensure improvements become embedded. No new programmes were added to the intensive care process.

The Committee reflected that the intensive care programme and the support it provides is an excellent process and has undoubtedly driven up quality, contributing to Exeter College's outstanding status.

The Committee noted the report

5.3 Student Recruitment update

The Principal/CEO gave an oral update and the Committee noted the positive recruitment for the 2020/2021 academic year. In all areas recruitment had been on or above target. Apprenticeships had been a concern and although the College had budgeted for a 50% reduction in starts, recruitment was currently running at 70% of what was budgeted for.

The Committee questioned the contextual element of recruitment of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Governors were advised that there are contextualised places on the Reach Academy for those disadvantaged students who may not have achieved grade 8 and 9 in their GCSEs but who showed potential. In addition, for the most vulnerable learners there is flexibility in terms of entry requirements and support with setting out a learning pathway.

The Committee noted the report

Jenny Leach, Assistant Principal joined the meeting

6. **Teaching, Learning and Curriculum**

6.1 Plan for Catch-up funding

The Committee received the report which explained how the Covid-19 catch-up funding allocation of £390k is being spent. There are eight layers of support, which will commence after half-term and will ensure that support is provided to those most in need. The stringent recording and audit requirements were noted.

The Committee asked if the extra hours provided to the students are being covered by existing staff. It was confirmed that some elements will be covered by the capacity of tutors and other existing staff, however there may be a need for some fixed term contracts to cover traineeships and learning support. The resources will be monitored half termly and if the delivery of the programme becomes at risk there will be the potential to approach an external agency.

Governors also challenged the level of catch-up support that can be undertaken online if students are not able to attend college. The programme will be flexible and some elements are designed to be online, however face to face support appears to be more effective for the most vulnerable learners and therefore the College hoped to retain some face to face support.

The Committee endorsed the College's approach for the use of catch up funding and requested an update as to the progress of the programme at a future meeting

Clerk

Jenny Leach left the meeting. Lisa Smith, Assistant Principal joined the meeting

6.2 Internal Inspection Strategy and Year Plan

The Committee considered the report as circulated and noted the strategy to maintain outstanding teaching and learning:

- **Readiness** to deliver on-line learning (equipment and skills)
- **Engagement** through delivery LIFT: Live, Interactive, Feedback-rich, Teaching
- **Intervention** – acting on non-engagement, particularly vulnerable students

The Digital Strategy Group will shift focus from 'strategy' to 'implementation' to ensure all students have the access to all IT equipment necessary and the confidence and skills to use it.

The Committee noted that it is informed regularly how quality assurance operates in terms of face to face learning and asked what will be preserved in that process for virtual learning. To prioritise and create additional capacity, it has been agreed not to undertake formal observations this academic year of teachers where there are no concerns. It has also been decided not to undertake Ofsted style internal inspections. Capacity will be focused on more frequent learning walks including online lessons. It is also intended to amend the student survey questions to enable a clear idea of what the learner experience has been of online learning.

Governors expressed concern that learners will be left behind if the College needs to close again. Governors were reassured that the College is committed to remaining open, even if partially for vulnerable students. The College is also planning to provide devices if required and to ensure that students remain in contact with their tutors to promote increased engagement and motivation.

The Committee noted the report

6.3 Admissions Policy

The Committee received the Admissions Policy and noted the minor amendments.

The Committee approved the Admissions Policy

7. **Responsiveness**

7.1 Students and Stakeholder Feedback report

The Committee Received the report and noted that the completion rate was significantly reduced (56%) compared to the previous year (92%), which reflected the timing of the launch, two days before lockdown.

In terms of student feedback, the knowledge of what to do in an emergency and how to engage with Learner Voice had significantly improved due to being promoted through new personal development plans. There were also some decreases in satisfaction, which were expected, around social spaces not meeting expectation and enrichment activities not being sufficiently wide ranging.

The Committee was advised that although the number of complaints received had been on a three-year downward trend, due to the impact of Covid-19 and the diverse views of stakeholders, this year complaints are already much higher than previous years.

Governors questioned what aspects of College students are enjoying. It was noted that even through lockdown, responses about their teaching and learning was very encouraging. The Committee was advised that students are unequivocally happy to have returned to College, a view echoed by the student and staff governors.

The Committee noted the report

7.2 EDBV Action Plan

The Committee received the updated EDBV Action Plan and noted the three actions: to monitoring and close the achievement gaps for vulnerable students, teaching and learning to promote the EDBV agenda and to ensure all staff are appropriately trained to prevent discrimination.

The Committee particularly noted that there remain vulnerable students that are not performing as well as expected. These tend to be Level 1 learners and the College is trying to address the issue by exploring other qualifications that may be more appropriate. There are also a minority of individual A level programmes where social and cultural aspects are having an impact on the success of vulnerable learners.

The Committee noted the report

8. **Risk Management**

8.1 Risk Register/Emerging Risks

The Committee considered the risk register that had been scrutinised at Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 14 September 2020 and noted those risks specific to this Committee.

- R47 - GCSE exams. Due to the recent government guidelines in terms of exam desks being a greater distance causing a strain on space, this risk is likely to increase.
- R9 – Attracting good quality staff and managers. This risk has reduced due to a higher number of applications being received for jobs advertised.

The Committee:

a) noted the risks

b) did not propose any additional emerging risks

9. **Future Meetings**

9.1 Items to take to Board were agreed as:

- Department of Student Experience Annual Report
- Emerging Results
- Plan for catch-up funding
- Feedback report
- EDBV Action plan

9.2 Items for the next meeting

The Committee reviewed the cycle of business for the meeting on 30 November 2020.

9.3 Dates of future meetings

- Monday 30 November 2020
- Monday 22 February 2021
- Monday 14 June 2021

10. **Minutes/reports for information**

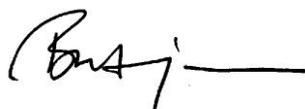
10.1 External and Internal Verification update

11. **Another other business**

11.1 Remote meetings

The Chair commented that remote meetings are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. She thanked the committee for their contribution and asked that any suggestions to make the meetings more effective would be welcome.

Signed by the Chair



Date: 30 November 2020