

CORPORATION BOARD CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STUDENTS COMMITTEE



Minutes of a meeting held online on Tuesday 18th March 2025 at 6pm

Present

Astrid Schloerscheidt (Chair);
Carole Kitching;
Sam Wolfe ;
Jacqui Canton (Principal) ;
Helen Brown;
Abigail Kyei

In attendance

Joanne Milsom, Deputy Principal;
Scott Gray, Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality;
Richard Peirson, Head of Public and Professional Industries

Governor questions are represented with bullet points and bold italics, and management responses follow.

1. Opening comments

1.1 Apologies and Matters to be raised under AOB

Jack Price and Jude Brown had given their apologies. All committee members were present, and the Committee was quorate. The meeting was recorded to enable the production of the minutes. There were no additional items raised under AOB.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2024

2.1 Public Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2024 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points

There were two matters arising, and they have both been or will be taken care of. There was a new action on the Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality to provide updates in the future reports including more targeted insights for low quality areas.

No written resolutions were reported since the last meeting. The committee noted the action points from the previous meeting.

4. Policies for approval

4.1 Admissions Policy

The Principal presented the refreshed Admissions Policy on behalf of the Vice Principal Funding, Planning and Systems Improvement who owns this internally. There has been no material change to the policy itself but the language has been tidied up slightly.

- ***Regarding withdrawal of an offer, for example in the case that a course does not run, the College can do that up to one week before the course starts. That seems like quite a tight timescale. Is this good or bad practice for the sector and does it give people enough chance to find another course?*** In most cases the decision happens much earlier but, particularly for lower-level courses, enrolment predominantly occurs within a two-week window from late August (after GCSE

results) into early September. This tight timeframe can lead to unexpected situations. If a course at one location (e.g., Abingdon or Witney) isn't viable, then perhaps the course will only run at one site and efforts are made to accommodate students, such as providing transport to the alternate site, to minimise disruption. The College does everything to make sure it is not only a week's notice but retain the option.

- ***It would be helpful to have a cover sheet to outline the level of changes to the policies for example whether changes are minor, it's been completely re-written or is a new policy.*** It was agreed to ensure that this is provided in future as well as a version with tracked changes. Clerk to ensure there is a cover paper ensuring it shows the key changes.
- ***In section 2.2 regarding statement of principles it refers to safeguarding. Can you elaborate on how the commitment to preventing extremism specifically relates to admissions policies, and how is this connection distinguished from broader considerations like equality or EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) which one can see would want to be embedded in every aspect of admissions?***
The reason for including this in the principles is that the greatest number of challenges on admissions are where the College may be aware of an applicant's criminal background. It was agreed to expand the paragraph slightly to make it not overly prescriptive but broader, in line with the previous paragraph on the quality of opportunity. This may assist if the College was challenged externally on a safeguarding issue.

The Committee agreed to approve the policy subject to the amendment to section 2.2 on safeguarding.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
JM to update Admissions Policy regarding safeguarding in line with the discussion	JM	March 2025

4.2 Student Voice

The Deputy Principal gave an overview of the limited changes to the policy. The only significant change to the content is where the new governor meetings that have been arranged with students have been referenced. These meetings were the only material change in terms of what the College is doing to gather student voice. Everything else was in the policy previously apart from some terminology updates or post name changes. The student governor confirmed that she agreed with what was in the policy.

The Committee agreed to recommend the policy to the Board.

4.3 Admissions and RPL Policy

The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality gave an overview of this policy. There are not many changes to the overall policy. The main driver for change has been from external awarding bodies in relation to the use of AI within assessments. A section has been added to cover this requirement. The other main change is in terms of the inclusion of storage of work and the length of the time you have to store those assessment decisions for, this has now been recognised in the policy as well as it wasn't recognised before.

- ***In relation to the use of AI and the ability to check work for AI structures and wording, how do you make students aware and train them not to do this?*** This is an interesting question because in T levels, students are permitted to use AI for

research, so a lot of work has been done with the teaching team to ensure that the students know how to use this properly. The awarding bodies provide a lot of information prior to the assessments about how students can use AI within their assessments, Digital being a prime example. The team therefore make sure that the work prior to those assessments covers all these areas. There has been a lot of work carried out with the HE faculty to look at this, as well as staff training to spot the use of AI. There has also been an emphasis on trying to teach entry level students how to use AI productively and appropriately. The staff governor observed that the topic had been included in student induction and on learning walks, she had seen students using AI and was able to engage with them on how they were using it. Students had been able to explain their understanding of plagiarism and the boundaries of how they can use it to support their studies. Assessment methods have shifted too to reflect the changes, from written work to discussion based and skills demonstration so they can be seen to be applying their knowledge in practice. The student governor suggested that teachers could emphasise the effects of plagiarising ahead of assessments so that it is fresh in students' minds.

- ***Is it worth for the next review having something under the general principles around AI and also the use of AI in assessment as AI is not just there in assessment but is also there to help students learn?*** It was agreed that this was an area to work on to continue to embed this in the policy.

The Committee discussed that it would be appropriate for a Board level discussion to be had regarding the use of AI and, if this is an area where the College wishes to be leading, then there may be financial considerations in terms of investment in people and in digital infrastructure. The Deputy Principal noted that there was work being undertaken with regard to digital and the intention was to share this at the Board Strategy Day.

The Committee agreed to approve the policy.

5. Curriculum

5.1 Curriculum Presentation – Public and Professional Industries

The Head of Faculty gave an overview of the **Public and Professional Industries** faculty, detailing its growth, curriculum offerings, and development plans:

- The faculty operates in four main curriculum areas: business and accountancy, sport and public services, hair and beauty, and health and education, across two campuses.
- It is the largest faculty in the college with high enrolment numbers and staffing challenges, particularly in business and accountancy.

Courses:

- New T Level programmes are offered in business, management, administration, and accountancy.
- Traditional further education courses are also available (e.g., sport, public services, hair and beauty).
- Provision is across both sites, except for sport and public services, which are exclusive to Abingdon.

Challenges:

- Staffing issues have impacted recruitment and delivery, especially in business/accountancy.

- Requires improvement ratings for health and education, and business sections in the SAR (Self-Assessment Report).
- Curriculum reforms pose challenges, including uncertainties in sport and public services curriculum outcomes.
- In sport Level 2, footballers often prioritise participation over education, leading to retention concerns.

Enrolment and Growth:

- Majority of growth comes from first-year programmes progressing to second year and the addition of new provision, such as marketing and football programmes.
- Witney campus has a shortfall in business and public services enrolments.
- Predicted growth aligns with students' intended destinations and recruitment trends.

Improvements and Strengths:

- Advanced Football Programme partnered with Oxford United in the Community, offering better coaching and engagement.
- Creative course delivery methods in hairdressing (e.g., blending smaller barbering cohorts).
- Positive progress in retention rates for health and education T Levels.

Future Focus:

- The department is identifying key wins for improvement in the next academic year.
- Addressing complex challenges in curriculum clarity and staffing.
- ***Why are T-levels so different do you think? We see this across the board not just in your faculty.*** The Head of Faculty really likes the concept of T-levels but feels that there could be a mismatch between the skills set required for the T-level students and the target market, for example those students may not want to go into Early Years education. It may be that the level is set a bit too high for the typical level 3 learners who come into FE provision, noting the example of the very demanding anatomy and physiology subject matter in the T-level Health programme. It was also noted that the teaching teams are excited about the T-levels as it's allowed them to revisit what they are delivering from a teaching and development point of view. There has been a lot of feedback about the assessment methods used for T-levels and several of the first generation of T-levels are now going for re-validation. Some awarding bodies are being seen to deliver good outcomes.
- ***You mentioned the challenge of getting external clients into the salons and you mentioned maybe relocating the salons. What has the college done to try to bring in external clients? Noting the current locations, where would you relocate them to and how would that help?*** The salons near Reception in Abingdon would stay where they are, it's the salons at the back of campus behind the sports site that might be moved. The challenge is to balance the teaching and learning and the customer experience going to the salon, and with the new laser equipment there is now the opportunity to make the salon front of house area better and a more appropriate salon area. Part of the issue has been recruitment challenges so now the Head of Faculty is putting together a rationale to make a current vacancy into more of a salon manager to focus more on the business and allow the curriculum manager to focus on the curriculum. However, it is accepted that the salon should have people in all day every day in hair and beauty to generate student experiences and opportunities, and the revenue that comes with it. It is a focus for the faculty to move forward.
- ***You referenced staffing challenges. Is this about expansion and getting new staff with different skills, or is it an issue across the sector of taking a long time to recruit to post? What have those challenges been and how have they***

impacted on teaching and learning in your faculty? The Head of Faculty feels that it's a bit of both. For the new health and business T-Levels it's been a challenge to identify suitably qualified, experienced teachers to deliver T-Level content. In both cases either the potential teachers do not have a sufficiently good background in the topic or the experienced professionals do not have the teaching ability, and recruiting business lecturers and accountants seems to be a big issue nationally.

- ***Do you have a model where people can work half in their profession and half in the college?*** Yes, the team have recruited recently for a different range of hourly paid lecturers looking to find people who may be part-time and who are interested in getting into teaching. If they have an established teaching team around it, then they can certainly help entry level specialists come in and learn to teach because they can add a lot of value with students. So far, this approach seems to be attracting more interest but there are risks in terms of having the established team to support this. It's an ongoing push to find the right people with the right background to work with our young people and build that team.

The Committee noted the presentation and thanked the Head of Faculty for the presentation.

6.1 Curriculum Report

The Principal gave a summary of the key points from the detailed report. The team have revisited labour market information (LMI) to rethink the curriculum for the next two years, focussing on building upon core strengths rather than drastic changes. This review process has been completed and will inform future strategies (e.g., people and digital strategies). Underpinning strategies are being revamped to support the revised curriculum delivery with an emphasis on digital innovation.

In terms of study programme reforms, Level 2 qualifications are no longer being defunded but the College is awaiting the spring outcome of a sector-wide curriculum review. Regarding the Higher Education (HE) and professional course offer, there are plans to broaden the HE and professional programs. Staffing challenges have delayed progress, but the faculty is now fully staffed to accelerate implementation.

There have been several Government policy announcements on apprenticeships and changes include:

- Minimum apprenticeship length reduced to 8 months in some cases.
- Removal of English and maths requirements for some apprentices.
- Adjustments to endpoint assessments.

The College continues to encourage all its apprentices to develop literacy and numeracy skills alongside employer-driven program needs.

- ***Do you have a sort of rough time scale in mind from a leadership point of view in terms of working on reshaping the Higher Education (HE) offer?*** The Principal feels that there is now a direction of travel which is moving away from traditional degrees to prioritise a broader, higher-level offer emphasising professional skills and shorter qualifications. Existing degrees will still be maintained but won't dominate the offering. The HE and Professional Curriculum Area Plan identified new professional programs in procurement, pensions, and payroll, complementing a new apprenticeship offer. Seven Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) have been developed alongside matching apprenticeship programs. Initial uptake in January was low, possibly due to timing, but there is a strong focus on achieving robust enrolments by September. There is now confidence in progress while acknowledging that the offer will continue to develop and evolve.

Governors noted that they were pleased to see the range of access programmes being offered as they are so important especially when there are so many adult learners engaged with the College in various ways.

The Committee noted the report.

7. Quality

7.1 Mid-Year Update on Quality Improvement Plan

The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality gave an overview of the detailed report and the following key highlights:

- **Quality Improvement Progress:** Targets identified in the SAR (Self-Assessment Report) and QIP (Quality Improvement Plan) are being actively worked on, including enrichment provision at Witney and Common Leys, with benchmarking assessments underway.
- **Attendance Improvements:** Attendance has slightly increased between December and February by 5 percentage points, supported by targeted interventions involving progress coaches, curriculum managers, and study programme leads.
- **Teaching and Learning Enhancements:**
 - Focused improvements in curriculum areas needing development (e.g., engineering, construction, computing).
 - Targeted CPD (Continuous Professional Development) sessions for staff, aiming for outstanding teaching quality.
- **Planning Ahead:** Efforts are being made to plan for next year, focusing on expanding current courses and introducing new ones.
- **Leadership and Management Development:** Initiatives such as bespoke training and participation in the ETF program have supported middle managers. Presentations by leaders have showcased progress in leadership projects.
- **Ongoing Work:** While reasonable progress has been achieved, further efforts are necessary for the remainder of the academic year to meet key goals.

The Committee discussed sub-contracting and whether Governors understood enough about how, when, why and to what extent sub-contracting happens. While the F&GP committee receives a financial report about this topic, and SMT feel that the provision is good, it was agreed that an overview of the area could be given at the Strategy Day or at a full board meeting to ensure all governors were aware of this.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Clerk to schedule an appropriate overview at an upcoming meeting	Clerk	July 2025

The Committee also discussed whether there was a process for the Committee itself whereby it can better review patterns of performance over longer timeframes to see if there are areas of under-performance that are not being addressed. Consideration was given as to whether the QIP itself had become too generic and needed more detail about specific interventions and progress measures for areas where the curriculum needed improvement. It

was also suggested that the QIP might benefit from more data points to allow patterns to be recognised or acted upon, albeit some data points are gathered once a year. Detail could be added to the areas of concern to allow them to be examined in addition to the higher-level narrative.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality to review how the QIP can be improved to address patterns of performance over time	SG	June 2025

The Committee noted the report.

7.2 Quality Report

The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality gave an overview of the Quality Report. 422 learning walks have been conducted, yielding rich data for curriculum improvement. The Teaching Skills Academy (TSA) and the quality team are addressing areas for development. In terms of teaching staff challenges, 123 new delivery staff are employed, representing about half of all teaching staff. The TSA supports new staff, including progress coaches and technician instructors, to develop high-level teaching. Quality Health Checks have been completed in four curriculum areas (e.g., family learning, computing, media, and games) and are ongoing in construction and engineering. Findings from these health checks inform quality improvement plans. Regarding Ofsted inspection updates, a new inspection model is under consultation; the college will respond to the findings once finalised.

- ***[In relation the large increase in staff numbers] is there a danger of expanding so fast that you can't get staff in place and trained up to satisfactory at least satisfactory levels?*** The importance of providing comprehensive support to newly recruited staff was noted, particularly in hard-to-fill sectors like engineering, construction, and business. There is a need for immediate and effective wraparound support from the start, facilitated by teams like the TSA and the quality team. There is a focus on ensuring industry recruits feel equipped and supported, especially during learning walks and initial classroom engagements. There is a concern about recruiting the right staff to sustain growth while maintaining robust support systems.
- ***The percentage of staff not meeting College standards is 16%. What was that last year so I can understand how the current figure?*** The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality explained that the metrics used in learning walks had changed substantially over the last year, so figures were not directly comparable. It was clarified that until this time last year, a judgement was not made on the sessions observed on the learning walks. The way that this is fed back to staff to ensure it is taken as a learning opportunity was also highlighted by the Principal. Now, however, the College is getting clearer data on whether sessions meet expectations, and this will help to drive improvement.
- ***Have you got enough staff working in the Teaching Skills Academy? Is more investment required?*** The Principal emphasised the need to assess the impact of interventions carefully, especially given the sudden increase in newer staff for the Valued Practitioner Programme (VPP) which was designed when numbers were lower. Resource constraints and the necessity of making decisions about reallocating resources or restructuring the program were highlighted. The focus is on maximising the impact of available resources quickly and ensuring all sessions meet minimum expectations. The College is not complacent about the 16% of sessions not meeting

expectations and meeting expectations continues to be a focus. The Committee discussed the balance of learning walks and observations and the relative frequency. Some nuance behind the 16% figure was also discussed in terms of some staff receiving multiple learning walks to support their improvement. The team are also working on a TLA reporting dashboard so that it's easier to access live data and so that heads of faculty can be more independent in accessing their data.

The Committee noted the report.

8 Students

8.1 Student Report

The Deputy Principal gave an overview of the Student Report which was based on Term one data and reflected on the progress made in student enrichment efforts. Despite challenges, such as limited resources and the difficulty of scheduling activities that engage the right students, there have been visible improvements. Enrichment efforts are gradually fostering student interaction across faculties, addressing a long-standing issue in further education. The Deputy Principal emphasised the importance of sustainability through active student participation and recognizes it will take a couple of years to achieve desired outcomes. There are positive trends, including a range of engaging activities, growing participation, and promising feedback. While acknowledging more work is needed, the overall direction appears positive, with enrichment efforts being a top priority and continually improving. The College has highlighted some examples of positive engagement opportunities on its social media channels.

The Committee members who had attended a recent Student Engagement meeting at Common Leys noted that the students all seemed very happy, but enrichment had come up as a concern, a feeling of being siloed and not having the same opportunities as students on other campuses, particularly Abingdon. They also raised the issue of sport or exercise as an area that was lacking, albeit a recent [plastic] axe throwing competition had proved particularly popular. The Deputy Principal was aware of this and is working through some options. It is a challenge as the students are siloed in part due to the nature and location of their course, but one option being looked at for the future is transporting students to Witney campus on a Wednesday afternoon to allow them to take part in sporting activities there, and the possibility of outdoor gym equipment for Witney and possibly the farm is also being looked at. The Committee further discussed the possibility of sport and exercise helping to combat some of the lower-level behavioural issues.

The Committee noted the report.

8.2 Annual Safeguarding and Prevent Report

The Deputy Principal highlighted that the safeguarding data for the last academic year feels delayed, due to the timing of submission to the local authority in December, which prevents it from being reviewed at the December Board meeting. It was highlighted that Committee member Carole Kitching was involved in reviewing safeguarding data ensuring board visibility. Some of the data, such as increases in numbers and patterns, had previously been shared in the training session for Governors held in December.

It was highlighted that the report needs a note that the Board has got a lead governor for safeguarding and a note that governors have also received safeguarding training and that governors have had to confirm they've read Part A of Keeping Children Safe in Education, because these are requirements.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Deputy Principal to add notes regarding Board compliance matters to the Safeguarding report.	JM	June 2025

The Committee noted the report.

9. Any Other Business & Future Business

There were no items raised under AOB.

10. Future Business

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 17th June 2025.

Meeting closed at 19:36.

A Schloerscheidt

Signature *A Schloerscheidt*

18/06/2025



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