



QUALITY OVERSIGHT GROUP: 10th DECEMBER 2020

TELEPHONE CONFERENCE MINUTES

- PRESENT** Shane Chowen, Amelia Sussman, Sanna Jordansson, Mark Isherwood, Anthony Impey, Roy O’Shaughnessy, Gemma Simmons Blanch, Precious Agyei-Boateng, Desmond Corlis, Ashton Milton, Sarah Ebanja
- IN ATTENDANCE** Kurt Hintz, Gary Hunter, David Dangana, Jackie Chapman, Graham Drummond, Nathan Nagaiah, Victoria Howarth, Peter Phillips, Jasbir Sondhi
- APOLOGIES** Luke Willmoth

The Chair welcomed attendees and the newly appointed students, Precious Agyei-Boateng and Ashton Milton. Desmond Corlis, the newly elected staff board member, was also welcomed to his first meeting.

1. **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8th OCTOBER 2020** **Action**
The minutes of the meeting held on 8th October 2020 were accepted as an accurate record.
2. **MATTERS ARISING**
All matters arising had been actioned or were included within the agenda.
3. **RAPID IMPROVEMENT PLANS**
A group wide overview paper was presented by the Director of Quality and Compliance. The following was noted:
 - The 2018/19 self-assessment report had identified A levels, the Holloway campus and Apprenticeships as areas of weakness, and as a result they became subject to rapid improvement action plans. Following the Ofsted inspection in January 2020 the Creative and Service Industry (CSI) directorate at Kings Cross also became subject to a rapid improvement action plan (RIAP);
 - Since the imposition of lockdown restrictions in March, management focus has concentrated on the switch to online and blended learning. As a result, only one RIAP meeting has taken place since March, which was on CSI;
 - The Centre Assessed Grade (CAG) process, which was used to award national qualifications during 2019/20, resulted in improvements in overall outcomes for A level students and those on courses at Holloway and Kings Cross as compared to previous years. It is therefore difficult to assess the impact of RIAPs. With this in mind, it was the view of senior management that limited progress had been made with respect to apprenticeships, Holloway and Kings Cross campuses, with reasonable progress being made with respect to A levels.

Lastly, it was explained that the purpose of the meeting was to ask members to provide their views on whether the actions being put in place were appropriate and sufficiently robust.

The Managing Director of CCCT was asked to present the RIAP for apprenticeships. The following was noted:

- The ability to assess impact has been problematic, however retention is at 81.3% for a cohort size of 1,136 (of which 263 are on frameworks and 873 are on standards);
- A number of apprentices have been withdrawn because they have lost their job;
- The number of apprentices who have not succeeded in completing their end point assessment (EPA) in line with the deadline and therefore no funding is received for them, has fallen from 27% to 20%, but is still too high. The aim is to get this rate below 5%;
- Minimising non-attendance is a priority, particularly with respect to functional skills, which is currently at 21%;

- A key challenge for the Group is to improve the co-ordination and quality of service provided to employers.

A challenge was provided by a member asking how the actions within this plan differ to those that had been identified within the rapid improvement plan for 19/20. A further question was asked about the long term changes required in order to deliver sustainable improvement. It was noted that:

- A primary focus for 19/20 had been to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence provided by independent feedback from employers and apprentices demonstrates that the quality of learning, including the workplace experience, has improved. Many of the actions associated with the need to improve compliance have been carried over to the 20/21 rapid improvement plan.

It was noted that a survey of 1000 employers carried out as part of the Open University's Business Barometer report indicates that employers have been unwilling to take on apprentices during the pandemic but that half of the respondents recognise the need to develop skills 'in-house', either through apprenticeships or through the 'Kick Start' programme. The group recognised that the economic environment is challenging and employment opportunities are limited, particularly for the young. At the start of the academic year CCCT's budget had included no apprenticeship starts, however recently the number of apprenticeships has picked up and the budget includes 50% of the number of starts compared to the previous year. It was further noted that:

- The construction sector presents an opportunity for employment particularly with respect to sustainability, as the green economy develops. It was noted that the Group's Head of Construction is well connected within the construction sector and is well placed to take advantage of opportunities as they arise, for example with respect to the regeneration project at Meridian Water;
- The Group has tended not to provide apprenticeships within the retail sector. The number of staff currently being laid off within retail is significant, and opportunities to deliver re-training are arising;
- The health sector continues to present opportunities for CCCG and currently there is a European Social Fund (ESF) project whose aim is to assist those Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) to access career opportunities within the NHS;
- Senior staff have been in discussions with Islington Council about how to respond to the needs of residents and employment trends identified within Labour Market Information (LMI) data. It was further noted that Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding is more flexible than has previously been the case, particularly with respect to level 3 courses. The intention is that more short courses will be provided aimed at upskilling students to assist with their career trajectory. It was further noted that CCCG currently offers 1300 short courses in this vein.

It was agreed that a quality assurance review by an external consultant should be carried out and that February would be a good time for this to take place.

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The quality of feedback from apprentices is a key metric used by Ofsted and it was noted that the majority of apprentices are positive about the changes that have been made, particularly with respect to the quality of support provided by coaches. It was further noted that a minority of apprentices have indicated that they want more face to face teaching.

It was noted that the aim of the quality improvement plan was to ensure that the Group self-assessed apprenticeship provision as a grade 2. In the view of CCCT's managing director this was achievable in terms of the quality of provision, however timely achievement rates needed to improve which in many cases was not completely within the control of CCCG staff.

The Assistant Principal for City and Islington's Angel campus and Westminster Kingsway's A level Director were asked to present the RIAP for A levels. The following was noted:

- Despite a large number of improvement strategies, it is difficult to assess impact yet;
- At an overall level at CIC there continue to be issues with respect to 'stretch and challenge' and at WKC there are issues surrounding the level of personalisation and the pace of learning. It was further noted that around 2/3rd of subject areas are underperforming both at WKC and CIC;
- Feedback from a learner survey and focus group will be available soon. This will be used to inform the nature of further improvements. Initial indications are that students are receiving an inconsistent online teaching and learning experience;

- Opportunities for standardisation and the sharing of good practice are not being exploited to the extent that they could be. This will be a central part of a forthcoming professional development day;
- The ability of students to study independently needs to be developed more. Alongside this, the availability and quality of independent study space on sites is an issue for students;
- Students have come back from the lockdown determined to study hard; this needs to be capitalised on;
- At WKC, compliance with 'markbook' is a risk and needs to improve. This will improve the College's ability to plan targeted interventions with the aim of enhancing individual students' progress;
- At 84.3% attendance at WKC continues to be a concern. Attendance at CIC is 90.7%, however online lessons (particularly tutorials) tend to be less well attended;
- The maintenance of 2 year A level retention is part of the improvement plan. At WKC, the rate of 84.8% is above the rate at the same point last year (81.7%), but is below target. At CIC the rate is 88.6%. At both centres, this is being monitored closely and any withdrawals require sign off by the Assistant Principal;
- Improvement in value added for both WKC and CIC continues to be an area for improvement.

Members discussed the improvement plan and recognised that there were 'green shoots' of improvement but noted that there was a lack of consistency in performance across all A level provision. It was further noted that the quality of information, as compared to previous years has improved significantly, however at a cultural level there is a need to re-set the expectations required of teaching staff. Personalised professional development support is being provided to staff who do not currently meet these expectations; in a small minority of cases teaching staff's performance may need to be managed. The following challenges were provided by members:

- In answer to the question as to how personal targets are communicated to students by staff it was noted that the majority of students, if asked, would know what their personal targets are, however this continues to be an area for improvement, particularly at WKC. With respect to staff performance targets it was further noted that at CIC staff will be issued a hard copy of what their value added targets are. The importance of target setting for staff as part of the performance review process was emphasized by members and it was agreed that this should be included within the rapid improvement plan;
- The importance of promoting the understanding of the role played by the institution in providing A level provision was emphasized and the reasons that students might choose to study at the two A level centres within the Group. It was further noted that at CIC entry standards have been raised to ensure that students are on the right course of study, for example all students are expected to have at least a grade 4 at both English and Maths GCSE in order to study A levels. Advice and guidance is provided as part of the induction programme and if staff believe that an alternative course of study such as a BTEC would be more suited, then the student is referred to another part of the Group. The quality of curriculum intent planning has improved and A levels are aligned into 10 career paths alongside which enrichment is provided. In order to improve the stretch and challenge provided to high performing students, a scholars' programme is being provided to 37 students in partnership with UCL. At a broad level however it was noted that A level students have a lower average G score than students at other sixth form providers. Despite this, progression to University is high, at 95%;

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Lastly, it was noted that the achievement of a grade 2 would take a further two years. Members of the group emphasized the importance of refining the action plan to ensure that its contents concentrated all efforts on returning the quality of teaching and learning to this end.

The Assistant Principal for City and Islington's Holloway campus was asked to present the RIAP for this centre. The following was noted:

- A significant proportion of teaching is of a 'requires improvement' or worse standard and therefore the central part of the RIAP is to improve the quality of teaching practice. As part of this the approach to lesson observations has been strengthened. By way of comparison, in February 2020 only 50% of teaching staff had been observed and in a significant number of cases no feedback had been provided to indicate how teaching practice could be improved. It was further noted that, currently 84% of teaching staff have been observed, with 20% of these carried out as joint observations. Of these, only 52% of lessons were judged to be good or better. All teaching staff will have been observed at least once by end of term 1. Currently there are a significant proportion of teaching staff who have been graded as requiring improvement

or worse, for whom a development action plan is in place. The actions within these plans, which identify how the quality of teaching is to improve, must be complete within four weeks and the teacher is to be re-observed within six weeks. Professional support and further lesson observation for those teachers who are underperforming are prioritised by the teaching and learning hub;

- Thematic visit reviews are also taking place, the aim of which is to identify professional development opportunities;
- Expectations with respect to student attendance has been too low. Students who do not attend are now routinely chased about why they have not attended and the levels of recording attendance on registers has improved, for example the non-completion of registers rate has dropped from 8% to 1.5%. As a result, the centre has seen attendance improve over a four week period from 73% to 82%.

Members welcomed the approach being adopted to address the weaknesses at this centre and recognised the importance of coaching staff to carry out robust lesson observations which focus on the quality of learning, for example ensuring that teaching staff regularly check and reinforce the learning of their students. It was further noted that a larger proportion of the centre's provision is delivered at levels 1 and 2 and therefore the use of value added measures such as Alps are not used. For level 3 courses, the centre does not currently use value added analysis. In line with the rest of the Group students do have personal target grades. Students are also rag rated to assist with intervention strategies to support 'at risk' students.

The issue of how a culture of self-improvement can be established within the centre was raised, rather than one that simply focusses on compliance. Members recognised that the quality and accuracy of information was vital in raising standards. It was further noted that the teaching and learning hub for the City and Islington College has been located in the Holloway campus in order to maximise its impact in a centre that has been consistently underperforming for a significant number of years. Whilst the impact of improving compliance in the centre will have some immediate improvement impact, the turnaround of the centre to a high performance culture will take a number of years.

Westminster Kingsway College's Vice Principal presented the RIAP Creative Services Industries (CSI) which is based at the Kings Cross site. The following was noted:

- The quality of provision of Performing Arts (particularly music) and Business Studies are the key areas of concern within this directorate;
- 78% of teaching staff have received at least one lesson observation, with the aim that all staff will have been observed by the end of this term;
- In the past, continuing professional development (CPD) plans have been too broad, and these are now being personalised, with the focus on teaching practice improvement;
- There have also been significant compliance issues; for example too many students have not received progress reviews and the identification of 'at risk' students has been slow. Personal targets are not recorded on the central recording system for 80% of students with the intention that this will be 100% by the end of term;
- The strict implementation of the College's attendance policy has resulted in attendance improving. The most recent attendance rate for CSI is 87% but this is still below benchmark. Attendance for maths and English is particularly poor;

The group noted that weaknesses in learner recording systems in the past resulted in low staff morale and had a detrimental impact on the student experience. Systems have now improved and a culture of high expectations needs to be re-established.

Members challenged whether the contents of the lessons, particularly in maths and English were sufficiently engaging and therefore encouraged attendance. In response, it was noted that the learner representative system is a central part of the College's approach to ensuring that the student experience is good. For example, the student governor attends senior management team meetings and feedback about the quality of teaching is received from learner rep meetings. This feedback is acted upon promptly.

Members expressed considerable concern about low attendance rates for English and maths (which has been as low as 40%) and it was agreed that a target of 77% attendance is to be aimed for.

4. CURRICULUM AND LEARNER EXPERIENCE SCORECARD

The curriculum and learner experience scorecard (the contents of which was based on the most recent learner number return to the funding agency (R04)) was considered and received. The following was noted:

- Overall attendance is 84.8% which is below the Group's target of 88%. GCSE attendance is 72.9% which is below the Group's target of 82% and is a focus for management to improve;
- Whilst current retention rates compare favourably to previous years, a key concern will be the ability of the Group to retain students (particularly adults) after the Christmas period. This will potentially be exacerbated if London moves into Tier 3 status as part of moves to lessen the impact of the pandemic;
- Enrolments for Access to HE and HE courses have suffered a drop as compared to previous years, which accounts for a £600k fall in income for the Group.

It was agreed that the next meeting would consider issues surrounding the development of the Group's culture.

KH/GD

5. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates of future meeting were noted:

Monday 18th January 2021 at 5pm
 Thursday 25th February 2021 at 4:30pm
 Tuesday 23rd March 2021 at 5pm
 Thursday 13th May 2021 at 5:30pm
 Monday 28th June 2021 at 5:30pm

Signed as a correct record: _____

Shane Chowen