



QUALITY OVERSIGHT GROUP: 18th JANUARY 2021

TELEPHONE CONFERENCE MINUTES

PRESENT	Shane Chowen (Chair), Amelia Sussman, Sanna Jordansson, Mark Isherwood, Anthony Impey, Roy O'Shaughnessy, Gemma Simmons Blanch, Precious Agyei-Boateng, Desmond Corlis, Ashton Milton, Sarah Ebanja, Simon Horne
IN ATTENDANCE	Kurt Hintz, Gary Hunter, David Dangana, Jackie Chapman, Graham Drummond (Clerk)
APOLOGIES	Luke Willmoth

The Chair started the meeting by explaining that the focus of the meeting would be to consider how the Group has responded to the pandemic. Simon Horne was welcomed to his first meeting.

QUALITY UPDATE

Action

A quality update report had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The following was noted:

- Due to the restrictions associated with the country's third lockdown, teaching has moved to 100% online, as opposed to the blended approach adopted prior to the Christmas break;
- Schemes of work have been adjusted accordingly; for vocational courses, practical learning activities which require the use of equipment have been moved to the summer term and theoretical content is currently being taught via online means;
- The Deputy Executive Principal is liaising with Heads of Teaching and Learning to monitor the quality of teaching and the progress of students; a summary report is considered by the Group Leadership Team on a weekly basis;
- Student attendance has been comparable to previous years, for example during the previous week the rate was 86% which is marginally below the pre-pandemic target of 88%. The attendance rate at the Alexandra Centre was asked about and the Executive Principal agreed to report this rate after the meeting;
- Learner retention is 2% points lower than the same time last year and is currently at 94.2%;
- College sites are required to stay open for vulnerable students. At City and Islington College the needs of vulnerable students have been catered for without the need for any student to attend college sites. At CONEL there are 30 students attending the Tottenham site and 10 attending the Enfield site. At Westminster Kingsway College staff and students are attending the Alexandra and Kennet West centres as normal (where students with special needs are taught) and 14 students (who are aged 14-16) are attending the Kings Cross site. It was further noted that Vice Principals have been closely monitoring the way in which the needs of vulnerable students are being met, whether they are learning remotely or attending college sites;
- At the start of term, the Government made an announcement that GCSEs and A level examinations were cancelled over the summer, however no initial guidance was made with respect to VTQ examinations scheduled to take place during January. Examinations on the 5th and 6th January went ahead for which attendance was mixed, after which most examinations were cancelled. Re-take opportunities will be provided to students. There are a small number of examinations e.g. AAT which will still go ahead;
- Ofqual are currently consulting on the assessment arrangements which will replace examinations. Once these arrangements have been confirmed, the required protocols will be put in place;
- Every student has been written to ask whether they have a suitable device for learning and internet access. Where students have indicated that they have a need this is being resolved as quickly as possible; around 3000 devices have been allocated since the start of term with a further 1000 currently available;
- Staff development days on the last day of the 1st term and the first day of the 2nd term went ahead as planned, and in the main were well received by staff.

KH

With respect to quality improvement, the intention is that the Group improvement plans will continue to be adhered to as normal, regardless of the restrictions associated with the pandemic.

It was further reported that a recent student survey has indicated that 20% of students are dissatisfied with the quality of online teaching and that 5% are highly dissatisfied. Considerable concern was expressed by members about this.

The Chair invited members to ask questions about the report. The following issues were raised and discussed:

- With respect to schemes of work it was noted that their contents are being adjusted and the intention is that all aspects of courses will be delivered. Practical elements of vocational courses are being re-scheduled for teaching in term 3 and awarding bodies have adapted assessment requirements as needed. It was further noted that heads of schools are responsible for signing off schemes of work for courses within their areas of responsibility;
- The Group continues to meet its safeguarding obligations. Protocols have been adapted for online delivery, for example guidance for staff to identify whether students may be in need of emotional or wellbeing support have been adapted. Staff are also carrying out 1 to 1 check ins with students and follow up support is being provided where needed;
- With respect to apprenticeships, very little activity is currently taking place and in the main assessments have been delayed.

With respect to online learning and the recent student survey it was commented that for some students it works well but for others it does not. It was further noted that the DfE have recently published self-assessment guidance for online learning; members were reassured that the Group has fulfilled all aspects of this guidance and has done so since the first lockdown in March of last year.

The extent to which the use of external expertise and collaboration is being used to inform online pedagogy was asked about. It was noted that external experts have led continuing profession development (CPD) sessions e.g. at the development days in July, and Heads of Teaching and Learning have been organising collaboration activities across the Group to encourage the sharing of best practice. It was further noted that a significant proportion of online lessons are not being delivered to a good enough standard, and that this is a concern and is a focus for improvement. It was further noted that:

- The ability to check and plan the progress of students' learning is problematic via online teaching. Ways in which this can be achieved more effectively are currently being explored including the use of research to inform the development of a group wide protocol.

Members emphasized the importance of communicating to students about how the Group is adapting its approach to teaching and learning to ensure that the student experience is as good as possible. The need to seek feedback from students on how to improve lessons was emphasized; for example students could be asked about the ways in which teachers could improve their lesson delivery and ways in which teachers could enable students to learn more effectively. The possibility of using parents to help check student progress was also raised.

Whilst it was recognised that the quality of online teaching and learning needed to improve in some cases, ways in which to develop a high quality online course offer after the pandemic should be explored and that the current situation provided opportunities to learn how this might be done. For example, there are some courses which have a large amount of students such as ESOL where the course content is the same; the income received from these courses could justify an investment into a high quality online course offer, which could develop independent learning.

The student members informed the group that in their view the majority of their lessons were of a poor standard. The poor quality of maths lessons was highlighted as an example. The Executive Principal agreed to discuss this with the students outside of the meeting and finds ways in which this could be improved.

KH

It was agreed that ways in which the Group has responded to student feedback about the quality of online teaching and learning should be reported to the next meeting, which is scheduled to take place on 25th February.

GD/
DD

Signed as a correct record: _____

Shane Chowen