

QUALITY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: 25th FEBRUARY 2021

MINUTES

PRESENT

Shane Chowen (Chair), Amelia Sussman, Mark Isherwood, Anthony Impey, Gemma Simmons-Blench, Sanna Jordansson, Simon Horne, Des Corlis (Staff Member), Precious Agyei-Boateng (Student Member), Ashton Milton (Student Member)

IN ATTENDANCE

Roy O'Shaughnessy (CEO), Kurt Hintz (Executive Principal), Gary Hunter (Deputy Executive Principal), David Dangana (Director of Quality and Compliance), Jackie Chapman (CCCT Managing Director), Rosie Francis (Head of Teaching and Learning, CIC), Torcato Coutinho (Head of Teaching and Learning, CONEL), Graham Drummond (Director of Governance), Graham Cooper (Deputy Clerk)

APOLOGIES

Sarah Ebanja, Luke Willmoth (Student Member), Dawn Duval-Macsporrán (Head of Teaching and Learning, WKC)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

1. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10th DECEMBER 2020 AND 18th JANUARY 2021** **Action**
The minutes were agreed as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair. **GD**

2. **MATTERS ARISING**

The committee noted that:

a) Minutes of 10th December 2020

All actions and matters arising are covered in the papers for this meeting.

b) Minutes of 18th January 2021

With respect to attendance, Jackie Chapman advised that she had not been present at the meeting. **GD**

With respect to the attendance at the Alexandra Centre, this had been 96.3% at the time, as reported to members of the committee after the meeting.

With respect to student feedback on poor lesson quality, specifically in maths, the Executive Principal advised that a meeting has been held with students and that teacher support is being provided in order to address student concerns. Additional support is also being provided to small groups of students, as explained further in the report to this meeting.

With respect to student feedback on the quality of online teaching and learning, this is covered in the report to this meeting.

3. **OFSTED MONITORING VISIT**

The committee reflected on the Ofsted Monitoring visit which had taken place over two days, concluding shortly before the start of this meeting. This visit had been due as the Group had received an overall Grade 3 judgement at its last full inspection twelve months ago. The committee noted that the visit had focused on a small number of areas of provision, to determine progress in the quality of both face to face and online delivery. This 'deep-dive' approach had included A-level provision at the Kings Cross Centre, ESOL, BTEC, Level 3 Hospitality and high needs learners.

The Chair advised that the minutes of previous meetings of the committee had been included in the documentation provided to the inspectors ahead of the visit, along with the Group's last self-assessment report. During the visit, inspectors had asked about the effectiveness of the committee in raising the quality of teaching and learning.

The outcome of the visit, to be kept confidential until confirmed in writing, is that the Group has made **'reasonable progress'**.

The committee received and noted a verbal summary of the judgements, provided by the Director of Quality and Compliance, who explained that a shortened version of these is likely to appear in the final report:

- Leaders, managers and members of the Quality Oversight Committee have a realistic oversight of strengths and areas of development. Processes and plans are already having a positive impact to improve the inconsistencies in the quality of education the learners receive.
- Leaders and managers recognise that there is further work to do to ensure a consistency of approach in the Quality of Education, such as in A-levels, and in improving the attendance in English and maths.
- Leaders and managers have strengthened communications with employers and as a result are better aware of the apprentices' progress and can provide more targeted support in the workplace. Tutors now hold regular meetings with apprentices to review their progress.
- Leaders and managers have provided suitable training for staff to improve their teaching skills online and this training has helped staff to use the technology to teach.
- Teachers of all provision types have a good rationale based on their curriculum intent and consider how different components of the curriculum fit together and what foundation knowledge students need to be successful.
- Where necessary, teachers have adapted the curriculum creatively to make up for the lack of practical lessons during the national restrictions. However, in small areas, learners need to catch up with skills which they have not been able to acquire e.g multitasking in kitchens.
- Teachers have become adept in using online learning platforms. Teachers mostly create good resources to use during online lessons such as well-crafted presentations and appropriately selected video clips and general articles to support learners.
- Teachers' ability through online lessons and to hold learners' attention and to use strategies to deepen and check what learners and apprentices know is mixed.
- Most learners gain new knowledge and skills and their work is of a good standard. The extent to which learners receive useful feedback about their work varies across the different parts of programmes. On apprenticeships, assessors carefully consider their approach to assessing learners and involve employers in this process. This gives apprentices sufficient practice so they feel confident and prepare for their End Point Assessments. On A level programmes, teachers do not use assessment well enough to provide learners with enough understanding of gaps in their knowledge and how to bridge these gaps.
- Students receive helpful information for their next steps and as a result, learners understand the opportunities available to them and become ambitious about their progression. However, apprentices are not always aware of the opportunities available to them at the end of their programme and as a result, they do not understand the next steps they can take after completing their apprenticeship programmes.
- Managers have carefully planned the support on offer for each site since the pandemic started and learners appreciate the support they receive from staff and the support they get to be able to learn online.
- Learners have access to online enrichment sessions which consequently supports learners' well-being.
- Learners benefit from external guest speakers to enrich their curriculum from industry professionals such as professional chefs, and plumbers. Learners who have high needs have participated in yoga sessions run by yoga instructors.
- Learners benefit from a variety of support which range from counselling sessions, classroom learning support, mental health and well-being support. Learners who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) benefit from therapeutic assistance such as speech and language support and occupational therapy.
- The majority of learners feel safe and know who to contact if they need to. Teachers ensure that learners know how to keep themselves safe online.

The Executive Principal advised that the Group has been given the option whether or not to have a further monitoring visit prior to the next full inspection, and has elected to do so. This will take place during Term 1 of the next academic year.

The committee extended its congratulations to the management team and to all staff who had contributed to the Group's progress and the outcome of the visit, which the committee considered

to be commendable given context of the additional challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic throughout the period.

3. GROUP QUALITY UPDATE

A Group Quality Update report was received and considered. It was noted that:

- Attendance and retention data shows an improvement over the previous year, and there is a clear focus on supporting learner engagement by ensuring that learners have the support to access online learning during the lockdown and as preparations are made for transitioning out of lockdown. There is nothing to suggest that this improvement will not be sustained post-lockdown
- Data indicates that as a result of the impact of lockdown, the overall progress made by learners is around 12% behind plan and compared with progress pre Covid-19.
- Progress made by learners on A level programmes indicates that Yr 13 students are on target to achieve an overall value added grade of 5 (measured by ALPS) while the Yr 12 students are on targets to achieve grade 6 based on the first term assessment point. This indicates the impact on Yr 12 learners from the Term 1 interruption along with lost learning in Yr 11. Scores for Yr 12 learners would need to be reviewed at the next assessment point in order to determine the need for additional support and interventions. The committee expressed concerns for this cohort of students in particular, and also students due to enrol in September, given that they will not have the experience of exams this year.
- Following on from the cancellation of the general qualification summer examinations, Ofqual has embarked on a consultation, to which the Group has submitted a response. The outcome of the consultation is expected during the week commencing 22nd February.
- A recent student satisfaction straw poll shows that 78.4% of learners are either very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of remote learning. However, it is of note that 1 in 5 learners are not satisfied. This has been explored further in student focus groups and it is clear that many learners are unhappy with online learning as a concept and consider that it will never deliver to the same quality as face-to-face teaching, which is being used as the comparator. This reinforces the need for students to return to classrooms as soon as a lower level of national restrictions permits.
- In reviewing progress against the Quality Improvement Plan, the committee asked about strategies to improve attendance, particularly in English and maths. The Executive Principal explained the process for following up students in relation to every missed lesson, although he explained that progress had been difficult to achieve as a consequence of the lockdown.
- Gemma Simmons-Blench advised the committee of her experience at Luminate Group of using a system (S24) that tracks usage of online platforms by students during lessons, compared to just attendance, which was helpful in ensuring student engagement. She offered to share information on this with the Executive Principal.

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4. TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATE

A report was received and considered. The Committee particularly noted:

- With respect to lesson observations, 77% of teaching staff have been observed through the formal lesson observation process. A breakdown of completed observations by college was provided, including grade profiles where available (WKC does not currently have a graded lesson observation policy in place). The lockdown in November 2020 and January 2021 had hindered the formal lesson observations being completed as planned and it was hoped to catch up once the lockdown is over.
- During lockdown, supportive visits to online lessons have been taking place, although these have not been formally graded. These have identified areas of good practice, with teachers confident in using Teams and delivering synchronously, positive learning environments including effective use of breakout spaces and good learner participation and engagement in the majority of lessons. Areas for development, including aspects of behaviour management during online lessons, will be used to inform teacher continuing professional development (CPD).
- Notwithstanding that it has been stressed that feedback will be used primarily to drive teachers' CPD, the practice of online lesson visits has faced resistance from trade unions, who have instructed their members not to admit observers to online lessons. This is part of wider issues with the unions at present, including moving to ungraded observations, as discussed later in the meeting.
- With respect to teacher CPD, programmes have been devised and implemented across all colleges. Many online CPD sessions are recorded and are delivered using Microsoft Teams, so that they are available at times that fit with individual personal schedules.

- A profile of the numbers of teachers currently receiving support through performance management, and an explanation of the approach to interventions was provided. A minimum standard for teaching is being rolled out across the Group.
- A summary of progress and impact of recent improvements by each college was also provided. At CONEL, improvements in questioning to check and extend learning, collaborative learning using breakout rooms and an increase in the variety of interactive elements being used, as well as improvements in attendance in some functional skills groups, were particularly notable. At WKC, the main strengths coming through included learners' attitudes and behaviour, lesson planning and execution (Academic Studies), teaching and learning materials, classroom standards (Hospitality, Functional Skills and Commercial) and questioning (STEAM). Also, at CIC, questioning, well-structured explanations, use of breakout spaces, embracing new technology and positive online environments.

The committee asked for further explanation regarding the number of teaching staff at CIC under performance management, noting the support needs that had been identified during a drive to complete formal lesson observations during Term 1 ahead of potential further lockdowns. These observations had revealed issues particularly at the Holloway campus in Business and IT and Health and Social Care. An academic consultant had been employed to provide mentoring support to academic staff at the campus. The committee was concerned nevertheless that students do not suffer as a consequence of experiencing a prolonged period of poor teaching, and the Executive Principal provided assurance and further detail of the process and timescales relating to the performance management and capability processes.

The Committee expressed support for the policy to move away from graded lesson observations and questioned the rationale for the resistance from the trade unions. It was explained that the unions particularly objected to the timing of the transition, during the current pandemic. The CEO also provided a wider perspective on the situation with the unions, explaining the longstanding strength of their influence, particularly at CIC. He also explained, the progress that had been achieved, and he assured the committee of the Group's commitment to continuing to respond in a manner that does not shy away from issues that need to be dealt with, whilst recognising that any industrial action would not be in the best interest of students. Such industrial action had thus far been avoided through various successful negotiations. The CEO also highlighted the significance of the discussions needed with the unions over the next four months, not limited to the subject of the observations policy, but also including the major issue of the pay award. Whilst respectful of the unions, the Group's priority would be to continuing to deliver in the best interests of its students.

5. APPRENTICESHIPS

The committee received and considered a report and noted:

- Overall the retention of apprentices remains strong.
- There has been an ongoing focus on improving teaching and learning, and there is evidence that improvements have been achieved. Details of the highlights at each individual college were noted.
- There is also evidence of improvements in communication with employers.
- A key challenge is timely completion, due to the impact of the pandemic on exams, practical assessments and on the employment status of apprentices and their line managers.
- In relation to the Ofsted monitoring visit, four apprentices had been selected and interviewed. The interaction with the inspectors had been positive, with good feedback provided. The inspectors had also chosen a random selection of employers to speak to, and feedback received from inspectors today was that all employer feedback had been positive – which had not been the case during the last full inspection.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for this committee were received and reviewed. It had been agreed that the these would be kept under review for a period following the group being established. Hitherto referred to as a 'group', it was agreed that as a permanent committee appointed by the Board, the word 'committee' is more appropriate, and that the terms of reference should be revised accordingly. It was also agreed that the terms of reference should again be brought forward for review by the committee at its final meeting of the academic year, but thereafter only periodically, with time also to be taken by the committee to reflect on its own effectiveness.

GD

A number of other minor changes to the terms of reference were noted, including the co-opting of student members, as agreed by the Board and already implemented, and removal of reference to the College Education Boards, which had been discontinued. The committee **APPROVED** these changes.

The Director of Governance advised the Committee that Kurt Hintz has been confirmed as Executive Principal and Gary Hunter has been appointed as Deputy Executive Principal. The committee extended its congratulations to both.

7 **FUTURE MEETINGS**

Tuesday 23rd March 2021 5pm

Thursday 13th May 2021 5:30pm

Monday 28th June 2021 5:30pm

The Chair also encouraged the exchange of ideas between members of the committee and members of the executive between formal meetings.

Signed as a correct record: _____

Shane Chowen