

Solihull College and University Centre
Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 13th December 2021
on MS Teams starting at 5.00 pm

Present	Barbara Hughes (Chair) Christine Abbott Stan Baldwin Tasleem Chaudary Badri Gargeshnari Sarah Horton-Walsh Tony Lucas Donna Poole Geraldine Swanton Zane Richter Lindsey Stewart (Acting Principal) Harrison Thompson Sally Tomlinson Paul Assinder
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In Attendance	Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance) Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services) Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality) Sam Bromwich (Director of Risk, Control & Compliance)
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This meeting was recorded.

Pre-Corporation Presentation: Sustainability and Climate Change Update

The Director of Risk, Control & Compliance explained that Maddie Booth, Sustainability Officer was unwell and unable to join the meeting but would join a future meeting.

The Director of Risk, Control & Compliance gave a presentation to explain progress made in relation to the sustainability agenda. She explained that there was an activity that would take place at the next meeting that provided information about individual carbon footprints that was good for initiating discussion. This tool would be used across the college. [link to WWF World Wildlife Fund website](#)
She described current progression along the college's sustainability journey, which had been excellent. The Sustainability Officer's role had really contributed to moving things forward and she was excellent at networking, which gave the college a good profile. The college's roadmap was highlighted and the Director of Risk, Control & Compliance noted some key activities. A new roadmap would be produced in the new year to demonstrate how sustainability had moved forward and to reflect the embedding and integration of sustainability into the college culture.

There were a lot of projects underway, but 2 key ones were highlighted:

- Pathfinder – a company that produce energy audits to identify energy consumption. This would be very helpful for the college, as the campuses are very complex, but it is very important to minimise consumption.
- Ecosia – this search engine was adopted by the college last year. The company donate 80% of their income to focus on re-forestation. They claim to have planted 138million trees to date.

There was an internal sustainability hub and an area on the college website for sustainability. The college had signed up to the AOC Green Commitment, which included 3 areas: delivering green skills; educating students and communities to build a more sustainable future; and developing net zero campuses and building resilience to environmental change.

The presentation would be shared with Governors on BoardEffects. **Action.**

The Chair noted that the college had adopted the AOC Code of Governance in April 2015. The Code had been updated to incorporate responsibilities in relation to sustainability and equality and diversity. The new Code would be considered at the Governors' development session in February 2022.

Q. Has the survey of students happened and what were the outcomes?

A. The survey had recently been done by the Sustainability Officer and she would feedback on this in the new year.

The Vice Chair noted that the college must be leaders in this field as this would reflect well when Ofsted visited. When considering investment policy, it was possible to identify a sustainable and responsible portfolio.

Q. The AOC identify a need to education communities – what organisation is the college working with in relation to this?

A. The Director of Risk, Control & Compliance noted that the Sustainability Officer worked closely with a range of SMEs providing support in relation to sustainability. The partnerships with Birmingham MET and South and City regarding the ESFA project provided a large range of links with community groups. It was confirmed that the Sustainability Officer would provide detailed information regarding the communities and organisations that the college works with. **Action.**

The Chair noted that Governors should be aware of activities that are reported locally, and they could find news items on the college website to provide this information. It was also important for Governors to be aware of how the college performs and progresses in relation to other colleges, both locally and nationally.

The Chair welcomed the new Governors to the meeting: Donna Poole (Staff Governor), Christina Abbott and Zane Richter (HE Student Governor). Each new Governor gave a short introduction.

The top risks were noted, and the Chair provided an explanation about the process for highlighting these risks for each Corporation. She noted that it had been previously agreed to maintain the finance risk, even though this now amber because it represents a key governance element for on-going consideration.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Lucy Lee, Amaan Ukaye (FE Student Governor), Theresa Lynch (Clerk) and Maddie Booth (Sustainability Officer). Scott Beasley was on a leave of absence for the Autumn term 2021.

2. Declarations of Interest in relation to this agenda

No new declarations of interest were received.

3. Minutes of the Audit/Corporation Meeting held on 30th November 2021

The minutes of the meetings held on 30th November 2021 were **agreed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3.1 Matters Arising

3.1.1 Complaint Update

The outcome for the complaint was noted.

3.1.2 Membership Update

The Chair presented the Membership Update.

Resolved to appoint Student Governors: **Zane Richter** and **Amaan Ukaye** with effect from 1st December 2021 for a term of office of 4 years or when their programme of study ends, if sooner.

3.1.3 Vice Principal Finance – Targets 2021/22

The targets for 2021/22 for the Vice Principal Finance and the Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum were noted for information.

3.2 Actions

The contents of the Actions list were noted.

4. Targets 2021/22

The Acting Principal presented the proposed targets for 2021/22 and she explained that learner number targets had been reported previously in the PMR. She confirmed that numbers were currently on-target as was recruitment for apprenticeships, and HE was better than anticipated. Achievement targets were currently being set, although this was difficult as 2021 had been TAGS (Teacher Assessed Grades) and it was yet to be confirmed how assessments would take place in 2022. However, on-going assessment was taking place. The attendance target had always been 90%, however, with issues around COVID-19, it seemed appropriate to reduce that again for 2021/22 to 88%.

Q. Learner number targets for 2021/22 what is the difference between actual and prediction?

A. Students do withdraw, and therefore 16-19 numbers often do go down. However, other learner number groups do tend to rise with more enrolments.

Q. Can you explain how Achievement is calculated?

A. Achievement is the number of learners that achieve a qualification in relation to the number that started the programme (after first 6 weeks).

Q. If the target for level 2, in 2020/21 was 89% and the actual was 95% why would the college set a less ambitious target?

A. The outcomes are skewed, to some extent, by the TAGs, particularly for maths and English, that achieved mid-40% in 2020/21. When students sit external exams, it is unlikely they will achieve at the same level and therefore target needs to reflect this.

The Acting Principal noted that early withdrawals were a concern for 2021/22 as they were higher than previous years. The number for 2021 was 368 (6%) compared to 247 for 2021 (5%). She confirmed that she would provide a detailed report to the next meeting to give more analysis.

Action. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services explained that processes to provide early alerts where learners may be at risk of leaving were being explored.

Resolved to approve the Targets for 2021/22, as set out.

5. Self-Assessment 2020/21 and Quality Improvement Plan 2021/22

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the SAR for 2020/21 and the QIP for 2021/22

She noted that the executive summary provided a good appraisal of the key quality elements that would be useful to be familiar with when Ofsted visit. The areas for improvement are code to link to the college QIP for 2021/22. It was noted that due to COVID issues in 2020/21 some actions had rolled over into 2021/22. The Plan was a live document that was updated throughout the year to respond to key issues.

It was noted that both attendance and apprenticeships remained areas for improvement.

It was noted that a printed copy would be circulated to all following the minor amendments that would be completed after the meeting. **Action.**

Q. If Ofsted were to inspect what are the two or three top strengths and the top areas for development?

A. Strengths include intent of what is delivered; well thought-through curriculum that is aligned with local and regional priorities; and the fact that the college is meeting the demands and requirements of the Combined Authority, the LEP and local employers. Students are well prepared for employment or progression to HE. All groups of learners achieve well, including those that are looked after, with disabilities or learning difficulties and disadvantaged students. Destination outcomes for students are also very positive, reaching their employment goals or moving on to further higher-level study.

The Chair noted that the college was due to be inspected after 1st February 2022, although the exact date was not known and with COVID having an impact on inspections this week, timeframes for inspection were even more uncertain. The Chair noted that she and the Vice-Chair had had a mock inspection interview with the Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum in preparation. She also noted that page 30 of the SAR provided an explanation for Governors about how they meet their responsibilities effectively and hold leaders to account.

Q. In 2020/21 there seems to be a suggestion that due to furlough very little occurred in relation to apprenticeships, however, is this the case?

A. The QIP summary (36 and 37) rated as red, as this related to apprenticeship achievement, which was not possible in relation to furloughed apprentices. In the QIP for 2021/22 all the actions are listed to address the areas in relation to apprentices, so this sets out the extensive support and scrutiny in these areas.

Q. Are there any challenges in relation to apprenticeships due to the part of the country and the economic sectors in the region that is not necessary experiencing the bounce-back or it is too early to say?

A. There are no specific regional issues, although some sectors have really struggled, for example, hospitality and catering in Stratford were impacted hugely over the last 2 years and so they are presenting a challenge now in terms of apprenticeships. However, due to the backlog and higher demand there can be an increase in the requirement for apprenticeships, but some employers may struggle to provide adequate support in terms of apprentices having time for their college work.

Q. Have any employers been lost due to COVID-19?

A. Don't seem to lose long term relationships, however, some are not prioritising apprenticeships at the moment. Most employers still need training for their employees.

Q. Apprenticeships are a key income generating area – does the College need to do something different to address evolving trends?

A. A number of employers have identified different training needs; however, the college team are very good at working with employers to develop training for apprenticeships in relation to employer needs. The apprenticeship programme is carefully planned to respond to the needs of the employer as well as in terms of the student's previous skills and what they need to develop.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum and the team.

Resolved to approve the Self-Assessment Report for 2020/21 (subject to minor amendments) and Quality Improvement Plan for 2021/22.

6. In-Year Student Progress Report 2021/22

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and she noted that the report was largely based on the students' first assessment and provided only a snapshot. The termly reports provide a building picture throughout the year. She noted that where there were red with referral requirements, it reflected the fact that many students were new to the college following a very disrupted education year, so this would be expected at this early stage in the year. There had been

enhanced catch-up funding that was being used to support student and to identify and address any learning gaps.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality noted that as a benchmark, students at or above their target grade last year was 55%, compared to 53% in 2021. Progression and achievement rates were very good in 2020/21, based on that starting point and therefore this provides a positive indicator. It was noted that there was a strategy to support apprentices to ensure they were able to undertake the required 20% off the job training element, particularly given that some have been furloughed or unemployed. In relation to maths and English was also a building picture based on their first half term progress checks.

Q. Just using the level 2 Public Services graph as an example, what would a Head of Department do in response to this?

A. These are students that even with TAGs didn't get onto Level 3 courses, so they may be struggling with content or structuring of their work. With the catch-up fund, additional specific teaching can be given to small groups of learners to address gaps in learning. Gaps are identified and specifically addressed for each individual student.

Q. How many areas are using the catch-up funding of £600k?

A. All areas are using it as all students have had a difficult 2 years. The college has used about £300k of the funding to date.

7. Deep Dive Report – Autumn 2021

To brief new Governors the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality explained the deep dive process operated by the College.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality explained the deep dive process operated by the college for new governors. She noted that 4 areas had been visited to date and explained the strengths and areas for improvement, which the college was aware of and included in the SAR.

Strengths included:

- Strong curriculum intent - a broad and well justified offer, addressing LEP / Government priorities with clearly identified progression routes.
- Learners display positive attitudes and good behaviour in class. They are respectful and demonstrate work ready behaviours.
- Tutors demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and expertise and are passionate about the subject they teach.
- Learners are well prepared for the world of work with access to up-to-date resources and equipment which meets industry standards.
- Good development of learners' maths and English skills.
- Engaged and motivated learners.
- Learners feel safe at college.

Areas for improvement included:

- Attendance levels were low.
- On a minority of programmes, consistency and timeliness of feedback requires improvement.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality explained that there would be CPD available for staff. She also noted that the quality cycle continued to move along during the academic year.

Q. There seems to be an inconsistency in relation to learners being engaged in their learning, whilst attendance levels are low. How can these be reconciled?

A. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality explained that the strength comes from the learners that are in attendance and in class when the deep dive takes place. She noted that during the Faculty Health Check meeting recently some learners were absent due to COVID-19, and it is necessary to focus on being able to articulate how learners are supported when not in class and how they continue to build on the knowledge and skills and continue to make progress. The catch-up fund is available to support this and has demonstrated that some students who are not attending their main class do attend the small group catch up sessions and are therefore continuing to progress.

Discussion took place about using the catch-up funding in this way, as it allows students not to attend their main classes and as it is only temporary may only provide this safety net for a short period, so attendance at main classes will need to continue to be addressed in the longer term. The Vice Principal confirmed that this was an unusual period when addressing learners' needs post-lockdown needed to be considered and acknowledged to develop resilience and confidence going forward.

Q. What is considered to be included in the term 'engagement'?

A. In the classroom it is about taking part in activities, answering questions and demonstrating positive attitudes to learning. This is evidenced through learners' individual interaction in the classroom, but also through their written work in their folder, which shows the learners' longer term attitude to learning too. The level of engagement can be different in different lessons and dependent on the activities taking place.

The Chair noted that information regarding attendance was available for Governors on the dashboard and that feedback from the 13 learning visits provides information about engagement in classrooms. Discussion took place regarding access to the dashboard.

8. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Update

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and noted that all staff would have had a learning walk during the Autumn term 2021. A second learning walk would take place in the second half term of the Spring term. As well as the individual learning walks, themed walk-throughs also take place to gather evidence about specific elements, including use of technology, embedding of maths etc. These activities, alongside the deep dives provide a big broad evidence base to identify and share good practice, as well as, identifying and triangulating the areas for improvement.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality highlighted the CPD interventions that were informed by the learning walk and other quality evidence gathered to address areas for improvement identified. She also noted that schools were undertaking a range of initiative projects, as part of Project 22, which encouraged staff to try new activities to address their identified priorities and a number of schools were using this to deal with low attendance rates.

9. Student Satisfaction Survey Results

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the survey results and confirmed that compared to the previous year outcomes were largely positive. More students than in 2020 had responded, with 2,800 for 2021 and most questions demonstrated increased satisfaction, particularly with regard to online resources to support learning (8%) and online content (3%). Students also tended to feel that behaviour management and learner voice had improved and the overall question relating to whether a student would recommend the college to a friend had increased by 2%. The only question that had declined to 92% was whether induction had been useful, and the college had set up focus groups to obtain constructive feedback from students about how this could be improved.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality explained that results for the apprenticeship survey were on-going with 100 responses to date. That was a high return rate compared to 2020. 80% of apprentices were satisfied with their programme and where there were issues these would be picked up with individual students and schools to address these. A lot of work was underway to make apprentices feel more part of the college and the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality confirmed that she would share the Apprenticeship Tutorial Newsletter with Governors for information. **Action.**

Clarity was sought regarding the proportion of responses for the FE students, and it was noted that 2,800 represented just over half of the student community. It was noted that the target was to ensure more students year on year responded to the survey and this was the case compared with 2020. It was also noted that for apprentices 100 students represented about 20%, but that the survey was on-going and overall response rate would increase.

Q. Do Governors receive the breakdown by school for survey responses?

A. Governors do not normally receive the school breakdown, but it would be possible to summarise the responses to questions by school to be shared with the Corporation as a for information report.
Action.

10. Complaints Report and Complaints Policy Review

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and policy and confirmed that there were fewer complaints compared with 2020 and this was part of a 3-year decline.

The Policy had been amended to incorporate the Stratford upon Avon campus complaints procedure in future. The Policy tended to work well.

Q. Encouraging that complaints are declining, but is management confident that learners are fully aware of the Complaints Policy/Procedure?

A. Yes, the Policy and Procedure is widely available, but the college has changed its approach aiming to deal with issues at an earlier stage to try to avoid formal complaints arising and this approach seems to be working well to reduce learner dissatisfaction.

Clarity was sought regarding the phrase: 'The higher number of complaints from those of a White British background is also reflective of the higher profile of learners in this ethnic category,' and the Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum confirmed that although there were a higher number of complaints from White British learners this related to a growth in the proportion of learners from that background registered on programmes in 2021/22.

Q. If there are systemic issues that arise from complaints to inform improvement how are lessons learned to inform mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement?

A. The process includes a detailed report to SLT each month to allow managers to see emerging themes and investigate and address issues, as appropriate.

The Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum confirmed that the college has a departmental-based 'You Said, We Did' feedback approach to learner voice surveys. She noted that feedback from Focus Groups was also included in this feedback process.

Clarity was sought regarding what was included in the largest category of complaints: 'Staff/Student Communication' and it was noted that it could relate to a range of minor issues that can arise with regard to communication between staff and students. If it was about a more serious communication issue, then it was likely to be categorised under one of the other headings.

Resolved to approve the Complaints Policy.

11. Sustainability and Climate Change Update

The Director of Risk, Control & Compliance presented the report and confirmed that the report underpinned the presentation at the beginning of the meeting. She clarified that SOS was a national, student-led sustainability that had surveyed students establishing that 91% think their place of study should actively incorporate and promote sustainable development. She highlighted appendix 1 of the report that provided the 3 key examples of what the college is already doing to respond to the sustainability agenda.

The revised AOC Code of Good Governance now specified the Corporation's responsibility for sustainability, and this would be further discussed in the new year. **Action.**

Q. Integration into curriculum areas – will the college incorporate this agenda into the annual quality cycle and self-assessment process to demonstrate sustainability in the?

A. The Acting Principal explained that through the Business Planning Process all aspects of curriculum would be reviewed to ensure impact, and this would include the sustainability agenda and particularly with regard to reviewing schemes of work and conducting deep dives. The Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum explained that sustainability was already a key part of the tutorial programme, but it now needed to be fully embedded and contextualised into all curriculum areas, so that it becomes a fully embedded process, just like British Values and equality and diversity.

The Chair noted that this report had provided substantial assurance in relation to sustainability, which was a key priority area for the Corporation.

12. Governance SAR

The Chair explained that the Governance SAR presented Governors' activities throughout the year and set out the touch points with staff and students, regarding briefings, learning visits, SAR validation sessions, focus groups and a range of other activities. During 2020/21 there had been 14 focus groups with students, which allowed Governors to hear feedback about programmes and to triangulate information from the dashboard and meetings throughout the year. The report also sets out objectives for the 2021/22 academic year.

13. Governance Activity

The Chair presented the planned activities for the rest of the academic year.

Learning Visits Feedback [2021-2022] – the Chair explained that 13 walks over 10 subject areas of levels 1, 2 and 3 had taken place, which equated to about 170 students. Feedback had been overwhelmingly positive:

- Students were engaged and positive.
- Students were able to explain what they were doing and what they had learned.
- They spoke about their anticipated progression towards jobs and university.
- Students were enjoying their course and felt safe and comfortable.

There were some issues raised where there were some learners who seemed less engaged than others and where students were struggling with their studies (particular issues regarding some specific software). These issues were being addressed.

A Governor involved in the walks confirmed that she had been very impressed in the improvement she had seen having done walks over a period of years. She saw some newer members of staff who were very enthusiastic. Students were engaged and enjoying their studies.

Thanks were expressed to those that had undertaken a Learning Visit. A further round of learning visits and/or focus groups would be taking place in February 2022.

14. Pay Award

This item was deemed confidential. Staff and student governors left during its consideration.

15. Principal's Appointment Update

This item was deemed confidential. Staff and student governors left during its consideration.

16. Regular Reports

16.1 Bids and Projects Report

The contents of the Bids and Projects Report were received for information.

16.2 Property Update

The contents of the Property Update were received for information.

16.3 Use of College Seal and E-signature

The contents of the Use of College Seal and E-signature Report were received for information.

16.4 Tender Update

The contents of the Tender Update report were received for information.

16.5 Gifts and Hospitality Report

The contents of the Gifts and Hospitality Report were received for information.

16.6 Governors' Register of Interest

The contents of the Governors' Register of Interest report were received for information.

17. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 31st January 2022 at 5pm.

The meeting ended at 7.25pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and a long tail on the 's'.

Signed

Date **31 January 2022**

Solihull College and University Centre
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Present	Barbara Hughes (Chair) Paul Assinder Stan Baldwin Tasleem Chaudary Sarah Horton-Walsh Lucy Lee Tony Lucas Lindsey Stewart (Acting Principal) Harrison Thompson
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In Attendance	Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance) Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services) Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality) Theresa Lynch (Clerk)
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Confidential from staff and student governors.

14. Pay Award 2021

15. Principal's Appointment Update