

**Solihull College and University Centre
Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 6th April 2022
at Woodlands campus starting at 5.00 pm**

Present

Barbara Hughes (Chair)
Christine Abbott
Paul Assinder
Stan Baldwin (*left at 6.40pm*)
Tasleem Chaudary
Badri Gargeshnari
Sarah Horton-Walsh
Lucy Lee
Tony Lucas
Donna Poole (Staff Governor)
Lindsey Stewart (Acting Principal)
Geraldine Swanton
Harrison Thompson

In Attendance

Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)
Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality)

John Duffy (Head of School, Engineering)
Mary Younan (Dean of HE & Research)
Theresa Lynch (Clerk to the Governing Body)

This meeting was recorded.

Pre-Corporation Presentation: Engineering Intent to Impact!

The Head of School, Engineering provided a presentation and explained that the progression pathway had been streamlined to ensure clarity for students and to incorporate the new T Level and IoT offer. He described the improved English and maths attendance.

Q. How did you achieve such an improvement in attendance?

A. There is a very good personal tutor, and it was a team effort, with an incentive for students who will receive an award if they achieve 100% attendance.

Q. For those not attending mainstream Engineering classes – what are the reasons?

A. COVID has had an impact. Students normally do have a reason, but it is important to always follow up on absence. This focus has made attendance important and is ensuring improved data.

Feedback regarding the Ofsted visit was shared, and it was noted that there was strong intent that was shown through changes in provision to meet employer needs as well as university entry. It was noted that inspectors could see there had been improvements.

The Head of School provided an update on progress against key actions for the area. He explained the key skills, knowledge and behaviours that the students were expected to develop alongside their programme of study.

Q. Employer involvement – to what extent have employers been involved in re-designed curriculum?

A. Employers have been involved in the re-design of the curriculum. For example, the aircraft team have talked through units and pathways with some employers, like Collins Aerospace and others. The curriculum has been aligned to the B-licencing for the degree level and used to inform the level 3. The Head of School explained that it would be useful to have an employer board to discuss curriculum plans and developments in the future.

Q. Are staffing issues resolved?

A. Staff issues were on-going. There had been issues relating to old frameworks being used to deliver engineering apprenticeships. The school did not really adapt appropriately when the new framework was published. There had also been issues in relation to succession planning. Action has been taken to upskill the team and identify crossover in teaching areas. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality noted that the partnership with Aston University was likely to provide more improvements, as PhD students could be employed to deliver some units.

Q. How do you manage employer engagement?

A. There are lots of employers to work with, due to the large number of apprenticeships, so there are many opportunities. These have not necessarily been taken up in the past, so it is anticipated this will be an area for growth and improvement too. An employer board would provide a structure for this engagement.

Q. How are you ensuring that the assessors are skilled enough to be able to assess against the curriculum standards, as well as the behaviours, skills and knowledge?

A. The behaviours, skills and knowledge are aligned to the standards, so assessors are already aware and assessing against them. The assessor team has been disjointed in the past, so there is a need to develop them as a team and with the teaching team.

Discussion took place regarding the current demand in the airline industry, and it was noted that links with airlines at Birmingham Airport were in place and it was hoped this would expand.

Announcements

The Chair noted:

- That there were a couple of new papers on BoardEffects – relating to property and RQF exams.
- Amaan Ukaye (Student Governor) – had left the college as he has an apprenticeship with Emirates, so had ceased to be a governor.
- Social Media, Marketing presentation had been shared with Governors prior to the meeting.
- Key Risks – one in relation to the appointment of a new Principal had been removed. The Acting Principal provided an update regarding the changes to key risks. Discussion took place regarding the on-going potential impact of COVID on students and the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality explained that this had been explored, but data did not suggest that there were sufficient gaps in achievement to suggest that this was a top risk. It was noted that the key risk was now the potential impact of a cyber-attack. Discussion took place regarding whether the transition period and appointment of a new Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality was a top risk that needed to be included. The Vice Principal Finance explained that there was normally a process for assessing risks and it was confirmed that EMT would assess the risks relating to the senior management changes that were underway.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Scott Beasley, Neil Ladwa, Lucy Lee, Zane Richter (Student Governor) and Sally Tomlinson.

2. Declarations of Interest in relation to this agenda

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 31st January and 25th March 2022

The minutes of the meetings held on 31st January 2022 and 25th March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Higher Education Report

The Dean of HE & Research presented the report and explained that the OfS had introduced new quality standards in relation to conditions of registration, that would be introduced on 1st May 2022. She explained that quality was now the responsibility of the delivery organisation, rather than the awarding body. An action plan had been produced and new policies were being produced to address the changes.

The Dean of HE & Research explained that there had also been some changes in relation to Access and Participation Plans and new guidance was awaited. It was noted that OfS had released data for organisations to self-assess against.

Q. The OfS provide the data, but doesn't the college already have all that information?

A. Yes, the college has the data, but the OfS produce data in a different way, which is very complex and detailed for colleges to interpret.

Discussion took place regarding the NSS ratings, and it was noted that these had dropped in 2021. Action had been taken, with focus groups taking place in January 2022 to obtain feedback from students prior to the NSS submission. Students were informed of actions being taken. The 2022 data would be used for the next TEF assessment.

Q. Is there any resource impact of managing the HE provision?

A. There are no resource issues for HE currently.

Clarity was sought regarding the number of HE students:

- HE students - c400
- Higher Apprenticeships – c300 (with professional programmes)
- About 6% of the budget (c£2m)

Q. Are there any risks in relation to HE if the introduction of the changes is not done correctly?

A. The college's experience of HE is good with a positive history in relation to quality assurance. The college has been excellent in terms of quality and standards in HE. The changes can easily be addressed and incorporated into current procedures and processes and can help to ensure continued improvement. There will be a change in culture in terms of who is responsible for key elements. The Acting Principal noted that a data audit was taking place, and this would provide assurance in the annual audit report.

Discussion took place regarding competition and a decline in overall numbers of HE students. It was noted that the HE environment was more complex and difficult in terms of competition from universities. The number of part time students had reduced, as employers were less likely to pay for courses, as they prefer to use the levy to fund apprenticeships.

Q. Will the TEF assessment be the same and is the college likely to get a Gold award again?

A. The assessment is different, and the college may not be awarded Gold.

Q. Are programmes that you see at risk due to B3?

A. Yes, we are reviewing it and looking at students and how to adapt.

Q. Is there a level at which the college would have to reflect on whether to offer HE at all?

A. HE has lots of sub-markets, and to stop offering HE would affect some provision, eg, apprenticeships. So, any review of the area would take place at a programme level, rather than a full HE level. The Chair noted that the college would be reviewing the strategy in due course.

5. Targets Update 2021/22

The Acting Principal presented an update regarding performance against targets for 2021/22. She noted that there would not be movement with regard to the achievement rates until September 2022. COVID continued to have an effective on retention levels. Discussion took place relating to the

improving picture regarding apprenticeship recruitment and the impact of COVID during 2021 due to furlough and employers ceasing some apprenticeships. It was noted that each student had a personalised action plan to support them to move towards achievement.

6. Quality and Curriculum

6.1 Quality Improvement Update, including Ofsted Action Plan and Ofsted Special Interest Group Terms of Reference

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and explained that she had included the areas for improvement as bullet points in the covering report. It was noted that the QIP would be reviewed in detail at the Ofsted SIG in May 2022.

It was noted that forecast rates for apprenticeships was very positive and although attendance has dipped, attendance for maths classes had improved.

Q. Are the Student Executive involved in supporting to improve attendance?

A. It was noted that course reps were more involved than the student executive. Consultation takes place through the year and discussion occurs at the course rep conferences. It was noted that the new initiative, Badgr, was working well and this was endorsed by the Staff Governor.

Q. What is the priority now for the whole college development day, incorporating the Ofsted feedback?

A. There will be a lot of work on safeguarding, with increased emphasis around sexual harassment etc. Issues regarding My Concern and referrals will be dealt with immediately. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality noted that in terms of Teaching and learning that the Worlds Skills programme would be rolled out and that T levels and transition programmes would begin in September 2022.

Q. A change in Principal can initiate an Ofsted inspection – is that likely to happen?

A. The next Ofsted is anticipated to be 3 years. The change in Principal is more likely to trigger an audit from the funding agency.

Discussion took place about how the Corporation could ensure the improvements highlighted from the recent inspection. It was noted that Ofsted had validated reporting to Governors. It was suggested, however, that it would be necessary to have external validation too.

6.2 Deep Dive Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and confirmed that further schools had received a deep dive, although some had been delayed due to the Ofsted visit. Findings were consistent with the outcomes from Ofsted. The 3 and 6 month re-visits were taking place and this would ensure that areas for improvement had progressed appropriately.

Q. Are there deep dives on administrative processes, like Safeguarding for example?

A. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services explained that a series on internal checking processes had been put in place, RSM had carried out an audit and there would be an external review of the area. It was suggested that a deep dive take place – an external review 9 months on with a specialist. The Chair explained that the Ofsted SIG would be reviewing this area.

It was noted that students tended to put themselves forward for Focus Groups, however, in deep dives and learning walks students spoken to tended to be more random.

Q. Staff training in terms of Safeguarding – who are you including within that training?

A. All staff have to take the minimum level of training. There will be focus for everyone in the summer. Most referrals come from tutors who are working with particular students. All staff will have access to My Concern. This includes sub-contracting staff – they all do mandatory training, and their DSLs work with the college team.

Q. Do Governors receive the training?

A. There is mandatory training that Governors are expected to undertake and annual briefings to discuss updates to the guidance, as well as consider case studies and college processes.

6.3 In-Year Progress Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and explained that the report was a live document as assessments were taking place all the time. She noted that 60% were on-track for FE student programmes to achieve stretch targets.

Q. Would you compare these to a more normal year?

A. Yes, the national averages are the pre-pandemic ones 2018/19.

6.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessments Update

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and explained that the data was based on learning walks, which were continuing. She noted that strengths in term 1 continued to be strengths in term 2, with some extra strengths. This was in line with the Ofsted outcomes.

Q. How many learning walks did Ofsted do?

A. Ofsted did classroom visits, but it would be useful to include this information as external assurance. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality confirmed that she would collate the information to add to the quality information. **Action.**

6.5 January Exam Results

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and explained that they were the first exams since 2020. For the students that sat the exams it was the first external exams that they had sat. A lot of work went on to help them prepare. She explained the 'near-pass' grade and confirmed that the level of pass rate matched that in 2020. It was noted that students could re-sit in the summer, if required.

Q. With going back to paper-based exams – will the last 2 years be forgotten?

A. It would seem that the majority of exams are going back to traditional modes, however, some are online, if appropriate for the content being assessed.

6.6 Notes of the Ofsted Feedback meeting that took place on 22nd March 2022

The notes of the Ofsted Feedback meeting that took place on 22nd March 2022 were received for information. It was noted that the Ofsted report was expected 4-5 weeks after the inspection.

7. Equality and Diversity Annual Report and Policy Review

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the report and explained that it met requirements of the college in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. The following had been included:

- A tribute was included to John Callaghan.
- Update on the college's digital accessibility journey.
- The governors' profile.

Discussion took place regarding the Women's Group.

Q. As a document who is the audience or is it a compliance document?

A. It is a compliance document, but also a celebratory document for all which is on the website. It would be useful to have headlines at the beginning to pull out key achievements for that year. **Action.** It is used by range of groups in the college too.

The Chair explained that the Vice Principal HR and Student Services had presented EDI at a recent Governance Conference.

Discussion took place regarding the achievement gaps and how they were addressed, and it was noted that they tended to be addressed at a school level. It is one of the objectives.

Q. Where do we discuss the gender pay gap?

A. The gender pay gap and the ethnicity pay gap are included in the report. Further work was being done regarding the gender pay gap and this would be reported back, in due course. **Action.**

Q. How do we check that employers/sub-contractors are up to similar standards in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion?

A. When the college starts to work with sub-contractors through the induction the policies are shared, but whether they actually live it and breathe it, is more difficult to ensure. Assessors will check this, and information can be gathered through apprenticeship surveys. Employers have duties under the Equality Act, in the same way as the college, so it is expected that they will be meeting these duties. Risk assessments are carried out in relation to work-based placements to check that equality, diversity and inclusion are key aspects of the organisation.

Agreed to **approve** the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

8. Business Support Staff Pay Scales

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the report and explained that this had been driven by the increases in the national living wage and to allow additional incremental bands. Costs were included in the budget.

Q. Do you have a common structure across the disciplines?

A. Different scale for lecturers and one for business support staff. Business support staff scales are from the APT&C scales from local authorities. Discussion took place about having 2 scales.

Agreed to **approve** the revised Business Support pay scale.

9. Tuition Fee Policies for HE and non-HE Students

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and explained that a review had taken place. The Dean of HE & Research had reviewed the HE tuition fee policies to ensure that all information had been cross-referenced. Suggested changes had been highlighted.

Q. How do we make sure students are aware of academic regulations etc?

A. This is made clear at induction and in the advice and guidance available to students. This information is also available on the VLE and the college website. If a student wishes to withdraw students are supported to discuss this with the Course Leader and Finance.

Q. What would an overseas student pay?

A. They would have to pay the full cost fee for the course and would have to have a visa. There would be no additional fees.

Agreed to **approve** the Tuition Fee Policies for HE and non-HE Students, subject to confirmation by the Vice Principal Finance, following discussion with Geraldine Swanton. **Action.**

10. Financial Re-forecast for 2021/22 and February 2022 PMR

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and she explained that in February each year, a six-monthly review took place. She confirmed that the college was achieving targets in AEB/apprenticeships, increased funding for 16-18, HE targets, but was seeing a decline in HE, which affects group numbers. Pay and non-pay costs were increasing due to inflation).

The Vice Principal Finance confirmed that EBITDA was in line with target, and it was planned that a surplus would be generated in 2023/24 for the underlying operating position. Cash balances remained high.

The ESFA Financial Health Model and budgeting software had changed, and it was noted that this may have an impact on the finance information. A Special Interest Group would take place in May to look at the overall strategy with modelling and assumptions.

The February 2022 PMR was received for information.

Clarity was sought regarding the early withdrawals and the Acting Principal noted that J2 were preparing a report that would be shared with the Corporation in due course. **Action.**

Discussion took place about implications for pensions. The Vice Principal Finance confirmed that the valuation had taken place in 2021. She confirmed that the Fund were currently consulting in relation to rates that would come into effect in April 2023. It was noted that the college had paid up front and therefore received a discount.

The potential pay settlement for 2022 was discussed. With inflation at 8.5% it was anticipated that the current assumed pay award of 2% would need to be re-visited. It was noted that the college had consistently made a pay award, which was not necessarily the case in other colleges, but the pay award would be informed by the national settlement when confirmed.

11. IT Update

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and explained that the main area of concern currently was a potential cyber-attack. A Managed Threat Response was being considered, that would provide a managed response 24/7. The link governor for IT had been involved. She noted that negotiations were currently underway.

It was noted that the presentation that had been shared with the Audit Committee would be distributed to Corporation members. Action.

12. Minutes of the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 14th March 2022

The minutes of the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 14th March 2022 were received.

12.1 Membership Report

The Chair presented the report and noted that the self-assessment process would be taking place over the summer.

Agreed to **approve** the extension of the terms of reference for Anne Potter as an external member of the Remuneration Committee and Amirun Nehar as an external member of the Audit Committee to a term of four years to May 2025.

12.2 Code of Good Governance

The Chair presented the report and explained that an action plan was in place to address any areas that needed to be incorporated into college processes.

12.3 Draft Dates for 2022/23

The Chair presented the draft dates for 2022/23 and these were confirmed.

13. Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee meeting held on 14th March 2022

The minutes of the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 14th March 2022 were received.

13.1 Health and Safety Termly Report

The Health and Safety Termly Report was presented for information.

14. Governors' Feedback from Focus Groups – Feb 2022

The Chair provided the feedback from the Focus Groups that had taken place in February 2022. The response to issues raised by Governors had been included and discussion took place about how feedback would be given to students about how the issues they had raised were being responded to. It was noted that this would be through tutorials, posters and on the Hub.

15. Property Update

This item was deemed confidential.

15.1 Notes of Stratford Residences Special Interest Group that took place on 10th Feb 2022

The confidential notes of the Stratford Residences Special Interest Group were received for information.

16. Minutes of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 28th March 2022

EMT, the Clerk, Staff and Student Governors left the meeting for this item.

The minutes of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee meeting held on 28th March 2022 were received.

16.1 Update for EMT Targets for 2022/23

This item was deemed confidential.

16.2 Clerk's Targets 2022/23

This item was deemed confidential.

Feedback following the Remuneration Committee Meeting

16.3 Principal's Appointment Update

This item was deemed confidential.

16.4 Resignation of Acting/Deputy Principal

This item was deemed confidential.

17. Procurement Termly Report

The contents of the Procurement Termly report were received for information.

18. Items for Information

18.1 Bids and Projects

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

It was noted that the college was now on the Register of Apprentices.

18.2 Use of the College Seal and E-signature

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

18.3 Tender Update

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

18.4 Gifts and Hospitality Report

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

19. Date of the Next Meeting

The next Corporation meeting was scheduled for Thursday 26th May 2022 at 5pm at Stratford Campus.

The meeting ended at 7.55pm

Signed 

Date 26 May 2022

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Present

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- Christine Abbott
- Paul Assinder
- Tasleem Chaudary
- Badri Gargeshnari
- Sarah Horton-Walsh
- Lucy Lee
- Tony Lucas
- Donna Poole (Staff Governor)
- Lindsey Stewart (Acting Principal)
- Geraldine Swanton
- Harrison Thompson

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 to the Governing Body)

This meeting was recorded.

15. Property Update

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- Lindsey Stewart (Acting Principal)
- Geraldine Swanton
- Harrison Thompson

In Attendance Theresa Lynch (Clerk to the Governing Body)

16. Minutes of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 28th March 2022

EMT, except the Acting Principal, and Staff Governor left the meeting for this item.