

## CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

### Minutes of a Meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee held on Thursday 23 October 2025 at 5pm on Teams

#### PRESENT

Mrs Jane Carter - Chair	Ms Abi Chesterton
Mrs Wendy Harris	Ms Doina Surchicin

#### IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Rachael Aston	Assistant Principal – Quality and Engagement
Mrs Alison Buick	Head of Governance
Mr Mike Dixon	Assistant Principal – Curriculum and Innovation
Mr Richard Hewitt	Assistant Principal – Business and Growth

#### CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed all to the first meeting of the newly formed Curriculum and Quality Committee, thanking Governors for attending and the management team for the papers provided. She also commented on a number of external factors affecting the college, including the recently published Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper and the delays to the expected SEND White Paper.

It would be assumed that papers had been read so questions would be taken.

#### **01/26 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)**

Apologies were received from Darren Shaw.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **02/26 COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND ANNUAL CYCLE OF BUSINESS (ITEM 2)**

A draft Committee cycle of business for 2025/26 had been included with the papers. It would be used as the basis for drafting agendas for each meeting year, but would remain flexible to allow Governors and the Executive Management Team to change items as necessary.

**Resolved** – that the Committee annual cycle of business was approved.

The draft terms of reference for each of the Board Committees and Task & Finish Groups had been approved at the Board meeting on 18 September 2025. The Terms of Reference for this Committee were included in the papers for this inaugural meeting for information.

#### **03/26 CHAIR'S ACTIONS (ITEM 3)**

None.

#### **04/26 CURRICULUM INNOVATION (ITEM 4)**

The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Innovation had provided a written overview of activities within his areas of responsibility, including:

- 24/25 Outcomes for Young People
- 24/25 Outcomes for Adults
- 24/25 Outcomes for SEN and Inclusion
- Curriculum Changes and Developments for 2025/26

The Chair asked about the viability of small A Level groups. It was acknowledged that some of the groups were small but it was hoped that the opening of CLQ would encourage growth in enrolments. The college had previously been in a city-wide group looking at A Levels and had shared some provision. This had been challenging so the focus now was on maximising the opportunities to grow through CLQ.

The Chair noted her attendance at an AOC event about the Post 16 White Paper earlier in the week and that there had been comments about new V Level qualifications. The Assistant Principal agreed that the concept was interesting but noted that it was not yet clear what V Levels would look like. More information was awaited. There was some potential to mix A Levels and V Levels, depending on ability of learners.

The Assistant Principal Quality and Engagement noted the intention to re-brand A Levels as 'City Sixth' once the move to CLQ was complete. There was a great deal of competition for sixth form students in Wolverhampton so a unique selling point was needed. Particular areas of focus would be careers and employer engagement, as these were strengths of the college.

A Governor commented that many West Midlands colleges had similar levels of competition from their local schools and there needed to be a compelling reason to compete in this market place given the cohorts and how results would be judged against the schools. The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Innovation confirmed that EMT were aware of this and that it had been discussed. The challenges were accepted but it was felt that there was a need for the provision at this time. Many students wished to study A Levels but also wanted a change from their school environment. There were aspirations to improve results. A dedicated Progress Coach was available to support A Level students.

The Staff Governor added that there was a Maths agreement with the Local Authority and college staff were able to visit schools to talk about Maths GCSE. Where appropriate they also discussed the college A Level offer.

The Chair asked if there were any further comments from EMT about the GCSE results, which had been discussed at the September Board meeting. The Assistant Principal Curriculum Innovation shared his screen and confirmed that his written report for this meeting had added more details, including a breakdown of grades 1 to 9. There had been a significant increase in GCSE exam entries this year. The high grades for Maths and English were noted. A Governor asked for a three year trend analysis of this for future reports. Some information on this was already included but it was agreed that this would be reviewed. Action: Assistant Principal Curriculum and Innovation.

The Chair also suggested some further analysis of the U grades would be helpful, including whether there were any trends in student characteristics or vulnerabilities. The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Innovation noted that in many of these cases, attendance had been poor.

The Chair asked what actions had been identified for improvements through the QIP and QEB meetings. The Assistant Principal Curriculum Innovation explained the process for Courses in Intensive Care. Such courses were reviewed frequently with

Curriculum Managers and the Head of Faculty. The Quality team were involved in learning walks and other assessments of teaching and learning quality. Some of the identified areas had a high proportion of agency staff. QEB meetings in December would be looking at courses with results below national averages. The root causes of low achievement would be identified and actions agreed.

A Governor noted the level of agency staff and asked if this was due to sickness or inability to recruit specialist staff. They believed that the sector sickness rate was 10% compared to national average for all sectors of 3.5%. It would be useful to know how HR were supporting recruitment and management of absence. It was confirmed that this was principally due to problems in recruiting in some areas. Turnover was particularly high in some areas of construction but this appeared to be a sector issue and not unique to Wolverhampton. There was a short discussion about salaries, remission, incentives, training and CPD for lecturers.

The Chair asked if there were any specific comments on adult provision. The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Innovation noted that the RO14 funding return had been submitted earlier in the week and that it showed a significant improvement in adult achievement to 89.7%. Overall college achievement was 89%, which was national average. A Governor asked for a split of adult data between funding streams and for subcontractors, to be added to the next report. It was confirmed that this information was all available on Proachieve so could be added. Action: Assistant Principal Curriculum and Innovation.

The Chair asked how quality of subcontracted provision was reviewed. The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Innovation outlined the processes, which were robust and similar to those for college provision. It was noted that a recent WMCA audit had taken place and some recommendations to improve Funding and Compliance processes were being discussed. No concerns had been raised about the quality of provision. There was a possibility of a clawback but this was to be confirmed.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Innovation commented on SEND provision. SEND students on vocational courses were doing well. An independent review of Futures provision had been done by Natspec. Their feedback had been received. There was more work to do to address issues raised at the last Ofsted inspection.

There was a short discussion about SEND. Governors agreed the need to have higher aspirations for SEND students, particularly given the firm focus on inclusion in the latest Ofsted inspection framework. Further information about the achievements of EHCP compared to non-EHCP students would be provided for future meetings.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Innovation concluded his agenda item with a brief overview of the curriculum changes, including to T Levels. Lack of enrolments had resulted in Digital and Electrical not running this year, although there were BTEC alternatives. There were still national concerns about high entry criteria and lack of support from parents. BTECs generally had a broader curriculum than T Levels, which was more attractive to some students. The plans for new V Levels were awaited.

## **05/26 QUALITY AND ENGAGEMENT (ITEM 5)**

The Assistant Principal Quality and Engagement was invited to comment on her report, which gave a wide ranging update across all areas of her responsibility.

### Emerging QIP

- Work was ongoing to finalise the QIP, which would be brought to the next meeting for detailed discussion. The emerging themes were noted, including SMART target setting and developing better tracking of skills and behaviours of EHCP students.
- Apprenticeships data showed improvement on the previous year.
- Attendance to Maths and English needed improvement.
- Further work was needed across the college on aspects of meeting skills needs.
- Student participation and development rates needed strengthening.
- All departments would have their own agreed QIP.

### Learning Evaluation Activities

There had been much activity and details were noted, as set out in the written report. Impacts and future actions had been identified. Planning for enrolment and induction would start earlier next year. There would be a review of the Learning Innovator roles.

Learning Innovators were discussed. Incentives to take on this role were to be considered. The Chair suggested a coaching qualification if appropriate. How such staff were performance managed and who they reported to needed to be confirmed.

Schemes of work were also discussed. The Assistant Principal Quality and Engagement was reviewing how schemes were currently used alongside lesson plans. There was potential scope to streamline planning expectations. The Staff Governor confirmed that curriculum teams shared planning to minimise duplication.

### Quality of Education Data Trends

Data had been provided to Governors for information and there were no concerns to highlight.

### Next Steps

Key areas had been identified:

1. Joint learning walks with Quality Managers and Curriculum Managers
2. Regular meetings between Quality Managers and Curriculum Managers
3. Starting points and targeted audit sampling
4. Ofsted strategic planning day
5. New Quality Strategy
6. New college QIP

### CPD and Future Activities

The list was noted for information.

### Student Support Activities

These included:

- 'Right course reviews' and 'Swap not drop'. 52 students had been seen. 39 had stayed on their original course and 13 had moved to other study programmes.
- Enrichment and freshers week
- Three Principals briefings for students and a further three for parents. These had covered expectations, attendance and entitlements to support.

### Participation and Development

Monthly topics had been agreed, including for Careers, British Values and Prevent. The new CORE framework (Communication, Ownership, Resilience, and Entrepreneurship) had been introduced. Students were completing a self-assessment and then an action plan to ensure that CORE skills were being developed.

### SEN and Inclusion

Enrolment numbers were noted. There were 288 EHCP students compared to the target of 300 and 260 in 2024/25. 102 of the 288 were within the Futures provision, with the rest in a range of mainstream curriculum areas.

Seven students were being supported by Educational Psychologists.

The Chair asked if any students had needed unexpected or urgent referral for assessment. The Assistant Principal Quality and Engagement confirmed not.

### Care Experienced Students

There were 69 such students currently enrolled, of which 12 were adults. The majority were from Wolverhampton but a significant number were from further afield. This number could increase once CLQ opened and transport links improved.

### Student Union

102 class reps had been recruited.

There had been successful Turing bids for trips to Portugal, Italy and Japan. 120 students would be attending these in 2025/26.

### Counselling

Support had been provided for 92 students last year, of which 91 had completed their course.

12 students had been supported so far in 2025/26.

A Governor asked how quickly counsellors were able to see referred students. The Assistant Principal Quality and Engagement would check this but thought it was within a week. Action: Assistant Principal Quality and Engagement.

### Progress Coaches

Two Coaches had supported 373 students in 2024/25. Of these, 85% were still at college, 5% had moved to higher education and 10% were in employment. Impact was therefore very good. An additional two Coaches had been employed for 2025/26.

### Admissions

Data showed that:

- The College's central Admissions team had interviewed 7,416 potential candidates during 24/25, converting 4,973 into an enrolment for September 2025.
- 2,722 young people enrolled for a September 2025 start, against the agreed contract of 2,510.
- Adult enrolments to date were 2,189. The target was 4,875. Enrolments would continue throughout the year.

## 06/26 **BUSINESS AND GROWTH (ITEM 6)**

The report provided an overview of the College's apprenticeship performance for the academic year 2024/2025, with a specific focus on the key metrics in the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework.

Governors noted the following:

- Achievement for 2024/25 was expected to be 61%, an increase of 10% on the previous year.
- The majority of the metrics were now rated as green, which indicated that change and improvement was being seen. The Accountability Framework continued to be used to drive necessary improvements.
- Focus was now on withdrawals and out of funded learners.

A Governor noted the complexities in the standard for electrical installation and asked how learners were being tracked through the various elements. The Assistant Principal Business and Growth explained the role of the dedicated Quality Manager for apprenticeships and the use of the e-track system. E-track was under review. There were standardised spreadsheets for tracking. These, and all other apprenticeship related documents, were held on Sharepoint.

The Assistant Principal Business and Growth noted that the curriculum area with the largest number of out of funded learners was electrical. However, a new trainer assessor had recently been appointed so there was now a full team. It was expected that the backlog would be addressed. Other work was being done with HR to ensure appropriate succession planning in other areas.

The new Ofsted inspection framework had a different focus for apprenticeships and this had been reviewed.

A question had been asked about the impact of CPD with the apprenticeships team. The Assistant Principal Business and Growth outlined the work done with AOC and the Apprenticeships Workforce Development programme. There had been particular focus on progress reviews as key elements of monitoring as well as the need for regular three-way discussions with the apprentice, employer and college.

Enrolments for the current academic year had started well and it was expected that there would be a shortfall of around 20 against the target for term 1. This was encouraging given external pressures on businesses and small employers. The target for the year was 250. Additional starts were expected in January 2026 due to recent contract wins.

More financial data would be included in the next report but at this stage it could be seen that income to the end of September 2025 was £1.8m, compared to £1.5m in September 2024.

The Chair asked about employer feedback and it was confirmed that this was very good. As the designated skills lead for the college, the Assistant Principal Business and Growth would continue to work with Curriculum Managers to plan provision and ensure quality of teaching and support for apprenticeships.

Forthcoming events were noted, including a Business Breakfast on 19 November and Green Careers Week from 3 November. Good links were also being established with EON. It was hoped that some upskilling for staff and learning opportunities for students would be generated.

**08/26 CONFIDENTIALITY (ITEM 8)**

No items were agreed as needing to remain confidential.

**09/26 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 9)**

Thursday 20 November 2025, 5pm on Teams.

The meeting ended at 6.55pm.