**Corporation of Sir George Monoux College**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Quality & Performance Committee**

**held on 11 February 2020**

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| **Present** | Alastair Owens (Chair), Tanha Ahmed, Raafay Javed Bhatti, Caroline Evans, Stephen Jones, Jagdev Kenth, David Vasse. |
| **In Attendance** | Holly Bembridge (Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality), Robert Smith (Clerk to the Corporation). |

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| **1** | **Apologies for Absence and Quoracy**    All members were present. |
| **2** | **Declarations of Interest**  None. |
| **3** | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting (3 December 2019)**  It was noted that the draft minutes had been approved by the Chair of the Committee for circulation.  They were approved as a correct record of the business transacted and *prima facie* evidence of the proceedings to which they relate. |
| **4** | **Matters Arising from the Minutes (3 December 2019)**  It was agreed that accompanying the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality during learning walks within the College is a valuable experience for Committee members who were urged to avail themselves of the opportunity. The Vice-Principal was asked to circulate March dates of learning walks to members. |
| **5** | **Board Level Risks**  It was noted that board level risks pertaining to the Committee’s remit relate to agendum 6 below.  No other risks requiring the Audit Committee’s attention were identified in the course of the meeting. |
| **6** | **Attendance: Data, Evaluation and Actions**  A paper prepared by the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality was received and considered.  It was reported that: |

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|  | **.** | the need to improve attendance and punctuality is a perennial issue for the College with a continuing effect on its outcomes; |
|  | **.** | London colleges tend to experience greater issues with attendance, possibly because of students’ more complicated travel patterns as well as the frequency of transport giving them the illusion that they can put off leaving until ‘the last minute’; |
|  | **.** | there is no valid and publicly available benchmarking for attendance, but at the last inspection the College’s attendance was deemed by Ofsted to be at the sector average, and a 2018 national survey from the Association of Colleges found FE 16-18 attendance for the academic year to have been 85%, with attendance for the same group at foundation English and Maths courses measured at 80%; |
|  | **.** | in the academic year 2018-19, the attendance of students improved slightly from the previous year, but several factors in the current academic year have created new challenges, namely: |

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|  |  | **.** | at the start of the year there had been fewer staff engaged to call students on days when they were absent (largely because of budgetary constraints as SCIF funding ceased); |
|  |  | **.** | there had also been fewer permanent personal mentors owing to staffing issues; |
|  |  | **.** | following a decision not to move A Level students to alternative programmes unless it is clear that they otherwise risk failure, or have a good reason for seeking to change, a slightly higher proportion of poorly attending A Level students were admitted into the second year; *and* |
|  |  | **.** | there had been three strike days as part of NEU’s national campaign of action, with a fourth strike day proposed for mid-February. |

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|  | **.** | the following systems are in place and operating: |

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|  |  | **.** | entry periods at which students are required to tap into the Zone with their college card between 9.35 and 9.55, therefore being on time for their first lesson; |
|  |  | **.** | the ten-minute rule, whereby students who are more than ten minutes late for a lesson are not admitted, but escorted (in the first period) or directed to the library to complete work under the supervision of the team of progress coaches; |
|  |  | **.** | attendance calling, whereby students who are marked absent are called on the day by the attendance calling team, with texts sent to parents; |
|  |  | **.** | personal mentors (of up to 50 students at any one time), who track attendance and lead on interventions aimed at increasing the resilience of students who often have emotional and behavioural problems; |
|  |  | **.** | fitness to study, including dealing with emergent health issues affecting attendance and punctuality, under which procedure the ALS and curriculum teams meet with students and families to agree reasonable adjustments; *and* |
|  |  | **.** | the disciplinary procedure to address persistent issues, under which curriculum managers meet with students and families, and can ultimately exclude students. |

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|  | **.** | other measures had been introduced in the Autumn and Spring terms to address specific attendance issues; |
|  | **.** | in terms of overall attendance the College is currently tracking 1% below last year, but on an upward trajectory since it was tracking 1.3% behind at the start of January; |
|  | **.** | there is a pattern characteristic of both A level and vocational year groups, whereby second year students continue to attend more poorly and first year students a little better; *and* |
|  | **.** | a particular strategy for addressing poor attendance in functional English and Maths (FEM) has shown early signs of notable success which, if it is sustained, may provide an example to be rolled out more broadly across the College. |

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|  | In reply to a question from Stephen Jones, it was confirmed that, being more reliable, attendance data is collected at the start of the day rather than on a lesson-by-lesson basis.  The following reasons for poor attendance had been observed: |

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|  | **.** | poor punctuality; |
|  | **.** | missing lessons in order to complete coursework which would otherwise be overdue; |
|  | **.** | teacher absence (e.g. the effect of strikes on student attendance over subsequent days); *and* |
|  | **.** | shift working by students. |

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|  | It was reported that significant College resources are applied to monitoring and improving attendance, and that there is little capacity to devote a larger share to such measures. It is necessary to concentrate resources on those students whose attendance falls below 80%.  Persistent absentees frequently demonstrate a nexus of difficult issues having mutually negative impacts.  The Chair of the Committee observed that there is a trade-off between devoting resources to supporting classroom activities and chasing absentees, and this places limits on the extent to which such resources can be sensibly applied to the latter.  It was agreed that prompt action in the early weeks of the first term to emphasise the necessity of attending classes is important and should remain a priority.  It was reported that a significant proportion of entrants with poor school references have issues with unauthorised absence pre-dating their admission to the College, and that this highlights the importance of the College’s relationship with prospective students and their parents. Securing the admission of more committed and supported students, with very many fewer students being enrolled without parental involvement, is the key to improving attendance and punctuality.  It may also be necessary to apply more stringent selection criteria to internal progression with a lower tolerance of students being allowed to proceed where attendance and progress are marginal.  It was noted that it is intended to increase the size of the personal mentoring team in 2020-21. |

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| **7** | **Student Survey Report: December 2019**  A report on the survey conducted in December 2019, with specific regard to those matters falling within the Committee’s terms of reference, was received and considered.  It was reported that: |

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|  | **.** | surveys had been conducted in December 2017, 2018 and 2019 with participation rates of 47%, 81% and 83% respectively; |
|  | **.** | a full survey from February 2017 (64% response rate) provides a baseline as many of the current strategic initiatives had not been commenced at that point, though only two of the ‘well-being’ questions are preserved from that survey, which also did not include a question on course organisation - so the baseline does not work as a comparator in all instances; |
|  | **.** | a smaller survey of internally-progressing students at the June 2019 Passport Day (65% response rate) had also been also included for data comparison purposes; |
|  | **.** | the following key results were reported: |

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|  |  | **.** | a significant and sustained improvement is evident across the vast majority of categories since February 2017; |
|  |  | **.** | the trend could be even more pronounced because it was mandatory for students to complete the December 2018 and December 2019 surveys, thereby including much higher numbers from those groups who are less likely to otherwise participate in the survey and report satisfaction; |
|  |  | **.** | substantial and strong trends of improvement in student opinion are observed across all categories of teaching and learning, with the strongest improvements in agreement with the statement that ‘the teaching on my course is good’ (+10), ‘the course is well organised (+9), ‘the teacher understands my needs and plans to meet them’ (+8), and ‘when I meet the hand-in date I receive quick feedback’ (+8), though the smallest improvement is observed in ‘my teacher knows their subject well’ (+4); |
|  |  | **.** | there is little variation between Pathways – with Teaching & Learning summary scores for Pathways ranging from 69 to 77 in the most recent survey, compared with wider discrepancies (54 to 71) in December 2017; |
|  |  | **.** | whilst some subjects with few students appear at the top and bottom of the distribution and, because of the small numbers, are subject to year-on-year volatility, larger subjects (which because of their size are less subject to data instability) reveal vocational IT scoring highly, but Health and Social Care and some Business courses less well; |
|  |  | **.** | there has been a sustained improvement in the rating students give to the College with over 90% of students now agreeing that they would recommend the College to a friend; *and* |
|  |  | **.** | although Black British (African) and Black British (Caribbean) students continue to be less likely to recommend the College, their overall positive rating of it has also significantly improved. |

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|  | It was accepted that the survey measures opinion and is not to be relied on as objective evidence of improvement. Nevertheless, the transformation from survey results before February 2017, when student opinion about the College had shown negative trends, is especially welcome.  The key questions were agreed to be those relating to the quality of course teaching and the preparedness of students to recommend the College to a friend. Both had shown a clear positive trend.  A continuing issue was identified concerning Black British students, especially those of Caribbean heritage. Although reflective of a national trend, and common to both genders, the issue merits further investigation and focus groups are to be convened for the purpose.  The issue of student perceptions of personal safety was recognised as an issue for the External Relations Committee, but it was remarked that it could be open to multiple interpretations on the part of respondents. For example, might a student feel “unsafe” because of the demands of the course they are studying and the attendant risk of failure and losing their College place? |

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| **8** | **Date and Time of Remaining Meeting 2019-20**  The following approved date and time was noted:  ***Tuesday 9 June 2020 (6.30pm)*** |
| **9** | **Any Other Competent Business**  The newly-published 16-19 Study Programmes Inspection Data Summary Report prepared by Ofsted was made available to members together with an explanatory overview prepared by the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality.  It was noted that the Report draws from publicly available data in the Department for Education 16-18 performance tables, as can be found on the [schools and colleges comparison website](https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/schools-by-type?step=default&table=schools&region=all-england&for=16to18). It summarises this data for the purposes of inspection, aiming to emphasise areas of interest owing to particularly good or bad performance, whilst minimising less valid data, e.g. where numbers are very small. Inspectors use it as a primary data source to prepare for inspection, and during inspection.  The majority of the College’s students are studying L3 vocational qualifications on the older QCF framework, none of which appear in performance tables, which measure only the newer RQF framework. This year, for the first time, the College’s Level 2 vocational courses also do not appear, as the government will now only report on technical certificates (qualifications deemed particularly appropriate to prepare students for employment or further technical study at Level 2).  In determining which students appear in the 16-18 data tables, there are three criteria, any of which can apply, namely: |

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|  | **.** | the student has entered for at least two qualifications, each of which is at least the size of an A level, or they have entered for at least one qualification the size of at least 2 A levels, in the reporting year; *or* |
|  | **.** | the student has been allocated to the same school or college for the last two years; *or* |
|  | **.** | the student is 18 at the start of the reporting year and has not been reported in the performance tables at their current allocated school or college. |

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|  | The College can defer reporting on students who meet either or both of the first two criteria (provided they have not yet turned 18), but must report any student meeting the third criterion. In effect, this means that a student joining for a term or two who leaves and does not re-enter education so as to appear in another college’s data return will be recorded as negative College data in the year they become 18.  There are five headline measures:progress, attainment, English & maths progress, retention, and destinations. Considering each in turn: |

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|  | **.** | Progress - the main focus of the accountability system, and a very important measure. It looks at how students perform at the end of their GCSEs, how they achieve at the end of Level 3, and how the progress made compares with what happens nationally. Only the College’s A Level cohort is recorded, as other qualifications are discounted. |
|  | **.** | Attainment – the average grade attained by students on their main qualifications, expressed both as a grade and as an average point score. Again, only A Level data is recorded. There are additional A level attainment measures. The ‘best of three’ takes the overall A Level points from the best three A levels and divides them by three. Students on mixed A Level/vocational programmes do not show well in this measure, as only A Levels are counted and the score is still divided by three, even where only one A Level has been taken. The ‘AAB’ measure looks at the proportion of students gaining AAB at A Level, with at least two ‘facilitating’ subjects. |
|  | **.** | English and Maths Progress – if students do not gain a 4-9 grade by the age of 16, they are required to keep studying these qualifications at college. The measure shows the average change in grade separately for English and Maths. If students do not sit examinations, are not entered, or achieve at a grade/level lower than at 16, it will be recorded as ‘negative progress’. |
|  | **.** | Retention – the proportion of students retained to the end of their main programme of study. Because of the discounting of vocational qualifications, this records A Level data only. A student’s programme is defined by their core aim. As long as they complete at least one A Level, they will count as retained. If they move from an A Level to a vocational programme, they will not count as retained. There are additional measures for retention. ‘Returned and retained’ records students who returned for a second year of A Level study. ‘Retained and assessed’ shows students who were retained to the end of their course and also assessed. *It is important to note that retention data for 2018-19 is not expected until March 2020.*  The College’s retention data for A Level is poor compared to local and national benchmarks. This is because of poor retention on A Level courses over the period 2015-2018, partly resulting from a high proportion of students switching from A Level to BTEC (e.g. at the start of 2016-17, only 60% of A Level students progressed from their first to their second year, with 24% leaving the college altogether and the rest restarting a Level 3 vocational programme. At the start of 2019-20, 87% of A level students progressed to their second year, and only 7% leaving the College). |
|  | **.** | Destinations – a very important measure under the new inspection framework, but the data provided in the Report is considered provisional, and inspectors will therefore ask for, and give greatest weight to, direct data from schools and colleges. Destination measures record the percentage of students staying in education or employment for at least two terms in the year after they left. For this measure only, students below 18 may be counted if they are considered to have left this phase of education. The 2018-19 data will report on students who were deemed to have reached the end of 16 to 18 study in the 2016-17 academic year and identifies their education and/or employment destinations in October to March of their destination year. |

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|  | Members tasked with meeting Ofsted inspectors are urged to familiarise themselves with this Report and the reasons why College outcomes may not always be appropriately recorded therein. In the event that inspectors rely too heavily on data recorded in the document as a basis for challenging comment, they will need to be resolutely challenged in turn by governors familiar with the Report and its limitations, who by so doing will have thereby demonstrated their firm grip on College performance and its rationale. |