**Corporation of Sir George Monoux College**

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

**held on 21 September 2021**

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| **Present** | Alastair Owens (Chair), Nehendra Jonas, Stephen Jones, Anisa Khadija, David Vasse. |
| **In Attendance** | Holly Bembridge (Vice-Principal: Curriculum), Robert Smith (Clerk to the Corporation). |

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| **1** | **Apologies for Absence and Quoracy**    Apologies had been received from the following member of the Corporation: Jagdev Kenth.  The meeting was quorate. |
| **2** | **Declarations of Interest**  None. |
| **3** | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 8 June 2021**  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: 8 June 2021**  None except as provided for within the meeting agenda. |
| **5** | **Board Level Risks**  It was noted that board level risks pertaining to the Committee’s remit relate to agenda 6 and 7 below.  No other risks requiring the Audit Committee’s attention were identified in the course of the meeting. |
| ***6*** | **Report on Student Achievement 2020-21**  A report prepared by the Vice-Principal: Curriculum was received and considered.  It was noted that:  *students at the College had been at least as likely as students across all sixth form colleges to stay on their programmes, and more likely to achieve their qualifications, despite being significantly more disadvantaged than the national cohort;*  *a larger cohort of* ***A level students*** *had achieved at slightly better than the national rate for sixth form colleges, with a very high pass rate of 99% - undoubtedly, the way assessments were made this year presented fewer problems for students than traditional examinations, and probably led to an inflated pass rate, but their work was nonetheless good, rigorously checked, and the examination boards verified all of the grades awarded;*  *the retention rate for* ***level 3******vocational students*** *had shown a 1.9% drop by comparison with the previous year, bringing this cohort below the sixth form college average - uniquely, level 3 vocational students who began courses in the autumn of 2019 were on a two-year linear programme (therefore students who left in the first year, or over the summer of 2020 were included in the retention for 2021, rather than in the previous year or not showing up at all, lowering the rate of retention for 2021, and raising it for 2020 – when this is allowed for, the overall outcome is positive;*  ***Level 2 students*** *had continued to achieve at better than national rates, although they were less likely to be retained than in former years, with retention dropping to the sixth form college average - the majority of those lost were male and displayed a range of low-level behavioural issues (such as very poor attendance, little or no work done outside of class, and/or a tendency towards immature behaviour, with the lowest rates of retention being on level 2 Business courses);*  *across level 2, teachers reported that students had seemed academically less well-equipped than in previous years, which was perhaps to have been expected given inflated GCSE scores in 2020, though this did not seem to have been so prominent an issue in other cohorts;*  ***Students on GCSE courses*** *had continued to pass and be retained above national rates for sixth form colleges, as has been the case for several years, though there was a decline in the retention rates for these courses, reflecting the retention rate of students’ main programmes (often on level 2), since students are only removed from these courses if they are leaving the college altogether;*  *overall, students had achieved well, but* ***disadvantaged students*** *had achieved exceptionally well, being retained at markedly higher rates, contrary to national trends;*  *across all level 3 programmes,* ***disadvantaged students*** *had achieved higher grades, again very much contrary to the national picture - across level 2 programmes (including GCSE) disadvantaged students were less likely to achieve high grades, although they achieved at greater rates;*  *83% of female students had met their target grades, with the equivalent figure for males being 73%;*  *analysis of level 3 progress by the largest* ***ethnic groups*** *had shown some variations (although no strong trends) across level 3, with 69% of Caribbean students meeting their targets on QCF courses, as opposed to 78% of African students and 82% of Pakistani students – however, Caribbean students had outperformed their peers on the newer RQF qualifications, with 88% meeting target grades, as opposed to 75% of African students and 83% of Pakistani students (a similar pattern had been discerned on A level programmes where 90% of Caribbean students met their target grades, compared to 74% of African students and 84% of Pakistani students);*  *attendance had been good throughout most of the year, and was slightly improved by comparison with 2019-20;*  *rates of internal progression are high at this point, and above College targets;* and  *early indications suggest that 14% of students have progressed to Russell Group universities, a better rate than in previous years.*  It was further noted that the teacher-assessed grades had been derived from a rigorous internal College process, and that all those submitted to examination boards had been accepted as representing reasonable judgements.  It is acknowledged that, because of internal assessment, there had been an element of “grade inflation” throughout the education sector, but that it had been least marked among sixth form colleges.  The Committee Chair asked how the College would transition back to traditional modes of assessment. In this regard, it was noted that the DfE is proposing a graduated return to standard practices, rather than an immediate resumption of purely external examinations as the basis for judging achievement, though the details of such a step-by-step adjustment would need to be clearly articulated and understood. In any event, the College intends to maintain its culture of hard work, high expectations, honest feedback to students and the active encouragement of structured independent study, and to reinforce these positive work habits early in the students’ College careers.  It was acknowledged that many College entrants lack a developed culture appropriate to learning, and need to acquire and master vital study skills at the earliest opportunity.  A particular anxiety attends the performance of Y12 students entering the College with grades 4 in Maths and English who may have benefitted from the “grade inflation” applying to GCSE results in 2021.  Questions were asked in relation to Applied Law and Applied Science grades, and it was noted that special circumstances affecting those courses in the 2020-21 year furnished explanations for the less positive outcomes and are being addressed.  GCSE Maths had benefitted from a more stable teaching team under improved leadership. Significantly, there had been no student complaints about teaching standards during 2020-21. However, the progress of some students in A level Maths continues to provide a challenge.  It was observed that female students had outperformed male students, though not in a way disproportionate in terms of national averages. It was thought that teacher-assessed grades might suit female students better than their male counterparts, some of whom respond better to the challenge of a culminating examination.  Whereas students identifying themselves as Caribbean had under-performed where achievement is determined by a single examination, this difference had not been observed in the context of teacher-assessed grades. However, an historic correlation between lower attendance and poorer examination outcomes might once more be determinative for these students if their attendance is not improved when single examinations once more become the norm.  It was agreed that the impact of disadvantage is the primary factor on a student’s ability to attend classes, study effectively and achieve well.  Members were gratified to note that the progress made by the College is being well-sustained against sector benchmarks, with the overall course of improvement being continued. |
| **7** | **College Improvement and Development Plan 2020-21**  The College Development Plan updated by the Principal was received and considered. It was noted that it constitutes the plan’s final iteration ahead of an Ofsted inspection.  Measures falling within the Committee’s remit were noted in relation to three of the four development themes for the College, namely: |

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|  | **.** | how students demonstrate engagement with the College’s mission through their values and behaviours; |
|  | **.** | how teams and individual staff develop skills, make progress and take on challenges; *and* |
|  | **.** | the optimal use of all spaces with clear routines. |

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|  | The column, reiterated across all sections of the Plan, “Is this action having a *sustained* impact”, records measurable actions. Entries in the column should therefore be read in conjunction with those in the equivalent row of the column “What does this look like currently?” to gauge the standards attained.  It was noted that, out of 21 measures relating to matters falling within the Committee’s remit, 10 had been judged to have been successfully achieved, a further 9 require additional evidence obtained over a greater span of time to properly assess their effectiveness, whilst the remaining 2 had not been met and require further close attention.  In response to a question from Stephen Jones, the Principal set out the clear criteria for staff progression (ref. Page 7, Point 4), citing the effect of the Monoux Teacher Framework, one to one coaching opportunities, and network events.  In response to a question from the Committee Chair as to the evidence that staff are being positively developed, attention was drawn to the high retention of probationary staff, the presence of multiple internal candidates included on shortlists for advertised College posts, and the success of internal candidates against competition from outside the College. The role of learning coach had especially afforded increased opportunities for staff to gain knowledge and skills to help them in their careers.  In response to a question from the Committee Chair regarding the ability of the College to maintain group workshops for GCSE English and Maths (ref. Page 4, Point 4), it was confirmed that their continuation depends on the availability of Covid recovery funding, upon which they are dependent. In the circumstances of its withdrawal, the College would make its best endeavours to support students by alternative means.  In response to a question from the Committee Chair as to which had been the most impactful interventions during the lifetime of the Plan, the following were proposed:  *communicating a clear sense of the College’s value-driven professional view of the learning environment, as for example through the Monoux Teacher Framework;*  *keeping students actively engaged and on site throughout the College day, as exemplified by Talent Lab;* and  *the orderly, disciplined nature of the College with its consistent routines (e.g. entry periods) intended to foster a controlled and supportive space for learning.*  It was finally noted that, following inspection, a new plan is to be developed, based on the Ofsted findings, to support the College’s future development. |
| **8** | **Dates and Times of Remaining Meetings: 2021-22**  The following approved dates and times were noted:  ***Tuesday 30 November 2021 (6.30pm)***  ***Tuesday 8 February 2022 (6.30pm)***  ***Tuesday 7 June 2022 (6.30pm)***  In accordance with the decision of the Corporation at the meeting held on 11 May 2021, the format and location of meetings will be determined by each Committee Chair in consultation with members of the Committee, but such meetings will be either face-to-face at a location to be agreed (with the right of any member, including staff in attendance, to attend virtually without restriction), or will be entirely virtual. |
| **9** | **Any Other Competent Business**  None. |

There were no actions arising from this meeting.