

# WIGAN AND LEIGH COLLEGE: GOVERNING BOARD

## MEETING OF CURRICULUM AND STUDENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

**TIME/DATE** 5.00pm, Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**VENUE** VIRTUAL: MICROSOFT TEAMS

Committee Members

Andrea Ferguson (Chair)  
Ann Harrison  
Jenny Bullen  
Anna Dawe (Principal)  
Jennifer Cockram (Staff Governor)  
Rebecca Turley (Staff Governor)  
*Reni Terezova (Student Governor)*  
*Kodie Anderson (Student Governor)*

Clerk

Robert Smith

Vice Principal, Curriculum  
Vice Principal, Corporate Services  
Assistant Principal, IT, MIS and  
Sub-Contracting  
Assistant Principal (Curriculum)  
Head of Department (Construction)  
Head of Quality

Claire Foreman  
Louise Brown  
Dave Harrison  
  
Sam Stevens  
Neil Campbell  
Jim Parker

*Italics denotes absence*

## MINUTES

Item	The meeting opened at 5.02pm and was quorate with at least 3 members being present.
<b>1</b> <b>CSM/21/03/01</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>  There were no apologies for absence.  The Chair welcomed the Assistant Principal (Curriculum) and the Head of Construction who would be making a presentation to the committee.
<b>2</b> <b>CSM/21/03/02</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>  There were no declarations of interest.
<b>3</b> <b>CSM/21/03/03</b>	<b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2020</b>  The minutes were approved as a correct record and authorised for signature by the Chair.
<b>4</b> <b>CSM/21/03/04</b>	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>  The Chair advised that one of the matters on the Action Sheet was not due for completion until the autumn term and the other matter would be partly addressed under the current agenda.
<b>5</b> <b>CSM/21/03/05</b>	<b>CURRICULUM PRESENTATION: CONSTRUCTION</b>  The Head of Department explained that his presentation would focus on the ways in which the Construction Department had delivered improvements in recent years and the challenges that remained in terms of delivering on areas for improvement identified in the latest self-assessment report (SAR). He began by explaining the department's new

statement of intent, which was based on the acronym SPACE and individual headings of safety, problem solving, accuracy, communication and empowering. Members noted the key behavioural expectations under each heading and the way in which they would combine to create a clear and focused route to deliver improvements.

In outlining the department's journey so far, the Head of Department provided a summary of the way in which team culture had been changed over the previous three years and how a change in focus from values to behaviours had helped to improve the focus on students, with every decision expected to be good for students and not necessarily the easiest for the department itself. It was noted that the behaviours focused on loyalty to the student, the department and to the wider college. It was also noted that the behaviours were intended to inspire students and colleagues.

Members acknowledged that the department had grown during this period and that staffing numbers had increased by 12%. They also noted that the department had used innovative approaches to reduce vacancies and find ways to develop teaching staff from candidates working in the construction trades. The Head of Department was pleased to report that this had also helped to recruit and retain staff in hard to recruit areas such as plumbing and electrical installation. He also outlined a case study of one student who had been excluded from school and had joined the college with challenges in terms of the extent of engagement with teaching and learning. Members were pleased to learn that this student had made significant progress and was now one of the team's best students, who really understood the value of learning and the way it improves future opportunities.

The Head of Department outlined the progress made during the pandemic in terms of developing high quality online teaching and learning. He acknowledged that the first lockdown presented a real challenge in adapting to online arrangements. However, he was pleased to report that this had improved continually throughout the pandemic and the team was now able to deliver high quality provision across all construction trades. He highlighted positive improvements in attendance as demonstrating the way in which daily timetabling and the development of online provision was supporting practical elements of courses in such a way that students remained engaged and committed.

The Head of Department advised that the department had developed individual quality improvement areas for all trade areas, which had helped to increase accountability and improve focus on improvements in each area. He also outlined changes to the team's walk-through processes, which had been put in place to increase feedback provided to all staff, including those asked to champion specific priorities.

Members noted the key future challenges facing the department, including the introduction of T Levels. The Head of Department advised that the department would be commencing a Carpentry T Level in September, in addition to the planned Civil Engineering T Level starting at the same time. He explained that it was a very good, modern qualification that could be largely delivered onsite, and that it used modern concepts such as 3D printing and off-site modular construction. The Head of Department also outlined work with industry partners, including Galliard Try, Laing O'Rourke and Taylor Wimpey. Members were pleased to note that these partners were working with the college in the development of plans for T Levels and the ways in which work placements could be used to support this and other qualifications.

Members noted the key future strategic challenges, including aligning objectives with

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	<p>those of employers to ensure that the college's students met employers' needs, the development of digital CVs to help students stand out for work opportunities, and improving understanding of the ways in which new technologies were influencing the construction industry. The Chair asked how the department would ensure that staff were regularly upskilled to ensure they remained up-to-date with technological developments across the sector. The Head of Department responded that staff development plans included working with employers to develop opportunities for staff to spend time in industry to learn about new developments. He gave the example of Laing O'Rourke offering opportunities for college staff to see sector-specific examples of robotics in action. He explained that this had been impacted by Covid-19, but reported that the company had provided an alternative of recorded footage showing how drones were used in construction.</p> <p>The Chair of the Board stressed the importance of ensuring that Level 1 and Level 2 courses could continue and the fact that feedback to the current White Paper would need to highlight this. She also asked whether the team had the equipment it would need to effectively deliver T Levels. The Head of Department confirmed that adequate equipment was in place but stressed that this would remain a challenge as it was likely that the courses would continue to develop and the need for additional equipment was likely to continue. The Chair of the Board also highlighted the fact that this week had included International Women's Day and asked what the gender balance was on construction courses, and what was being done to encourage applications from female students. The Head of Department confirmed that there was a clear majority of male students but commented that female students appeared to do very well, especially on higher level courses. He also advised that one of the college's female staff was leading on activity to encourage improved recruitment of female students. The Assistant Principal (Curriculum) added that the college now had six female staff across Engineering and Construction, including four new female staff recruited in the previous eighteen months.</p> <p>The Chair of the committee asked whether the Head of Department expected there to be a positive movement when the SAR process was concluded in the autumn term. The Head of Department confirmed that he expected there to be clear positive improvements by this time.</p> <p><b>The Assistant Principal (Curriculum) and Head of Department left the meeting at 5.40pm.</b></p>
<p><b>6</b></p> <p><b>CSM/21/03/06</b></p>	<p><b>CURRICULUM REPORT</b></p> <p>The Vice Principal, Curriculum provided a summary of the Curriculum Report and highlighted changes in attendance and retention data. She commented that the data position was notably positive, especially given the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to continue teaching and learning online. It was noted that the attendance position was very similar to that of the previous year with small increases across all levels and age ranges. The Vice Principal explained that many colleges across the sector had struggled to maintain high attendance rates whilst delivering online and that she was pleased that Wigan &amp; Leigh College had been able to maintain year-on-year attendance rates. Members asked why the college had been able to maintain positive attendance and the Vice Principal responded that this was largely down to the quality of its online teaching and learning. She added that this had continually improved as more had been learned as further lockdowns had been required.</p>

The Vice Principal also outlined retention data and it was noted that this was also strong. However, the Vice Principal commented that this would need to be further monitored when students returned to college after the lockdown. She also advised that retention remained high for most subcontracted activity, with the exception of one partner whose students were sometimes disengaged and needed the face-to-face delivery to remain focused and committed to their courses. It was acknowledged that the lockdowns during the pandemic would inevitably impact on this sort of provision.

Members discussed the impact of the pandemic in terms of increasing numbers of apprentices on breaks in learning. They recognised that some would be at risk of losing their jobs when the furlough scheme ended and, if the college was unable to help students find alternative employment, they would also be at risk of non-completion of their courses. It was noted that this may well have an impact on outturn data for apprenticeships.

The Vice Principal reminded members that high grades was an area of focus for 2020/21 and that, whilst the pandemic had made this more challenging, this remained a key focus for the college. The Vice Principal also outlined the college's approach to producing evidence for teacher assessed grades, including the use of gateways such as mock exams and the use of tests to set stages at which evidence could be established. She also explained that the college would aim to close evidential gaps for individual students when they returned to college.

Members noted that work placements had been affected by lockdowns and that this would raise potential problems in terms of establishing evidence for those courses where workplace assessments were essential. The Vice Principal gave the example of childcare settings and the need for students to be seen managing groups of children in line with evidential requirements. She added that she was hopeful that the planned lifting of lockdown restrictions would increase opportunities to carry out these assessments.

The Vice Principal summarised the overall position as very positive, with a good picture on skills development, compliance and meeting Ofsted expectations. The Chair commented that the picture was very encouraging, especially given the challenges presented by the pandemic. She highlighted data on attendance and retention as particularly positive news and also the ways in which the college was trying to bridge evidential gaps in order to complete the process for teacher assessed grades. The Chair asked whether the breaks in learning for apprentices would impact on recruitment of new apprentices in 2021/22, given that staff capacity would also need to focus on the previous year's apprentices catching up on skills development and assessments. The Vice Principal confirmed that there would be an impact on college capacity in the way the Chair had suggested, but also advised that the college was expecting to carry out a significant recruitment campaign for new apprentices in most areas. She commented that an impact on capacity was expected but she remained hopeful that this would not have an overly significant impact on overall numbers or income.

The Chair of the Board commented that the report demonstrated that a great deal of good work was being done and congratulated all managers and staff for the way in which they had adapted to and overcame challenges throughout the last year. However, she highlighted the extensive need to move to new teaching frameworks and qualifications brought about by recent developments, such as a move to new apprenticeship standards and the introduction of T Levels. She asked how staff were coping with these additional

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	<p>demands. The Vice Principal, Curriculum responded that college staff had proved to be very flexible and committed, and appeared to be coping better than might be expected. The Vice Principal, Corporate Services added that staff had been continually well-engaged during the pandemic and that clear communications had helped to retain staff focus and flexibility.</p> <p>A number of members referred to recent link visits they had attended and confirmed that there had been very clear evidence of staff flexibility, creativity and commitment. They also commended the college on the quality of its online teaching and learning and the creative ways in which they had kept inspiring students and kept them continually engaged. The Chair highlighted her own visit to the Hair &amp; Beauty Team and commented that the transition to online learning had been remarkable, especially given how reliant this subject area would appear to be on the development of practical skills. She referred to feedback she had received from students to say that the theoretical focus and additional detail covered online had actually had the effect of improving their confidence when transferring this knowledge into practical application.</p> <p>The Principal explained that a lot of work had been done to prioritise the welfare of staff both before and during the pandemic. She suggested that there would be good and bad things learned from the pandemic in terms of the delivery of course content. It was noted that some positive changes would be continued in the longer term but some changes may not have fulfilled requirements completely. The Principal explained that, in these cases, there may be a requirement as in the previous year for some work to continue over the summer period and ahead of the new academic year. It was noted that the welfare of staff and how this would be delivered was under review. Members acknowledged that this would be closely monitored so that additional support could be provided to staff where necessary.</p> <p>The Vice Principal, Curriculum asked the Teaching Staff Governor whether the picture painted within the report and described during this meeting matched her own understanding. She responded that the report accurately reflected the position and confirmed that staff appeared to feel well supported and valued. She also agreed that clear communications had helped to retain positive staff engagement and flexibility, whilst also acknowledging that the following year would be challenging with more support being required.</p>
<b>7</b>  <b>CSM/21/03/07</b>	<b>QUALITY &amp; CURRICULUM KPI DASHBOARD</b>  Members noted that the Quality & Curriculum KPI Dashboard had been covered in detail under the previous agenda item.
<b>8</b>  <b>CSM/21/03/08</b>	<b>T LEVELS ROLL-OUT</b>  The Vice Principal, Curriculum reported that the college would be commencing six new T Level courses in September 2021, with a target recruitment of 120 students. She also reported that an A Level / T Level transition course in Health would be launched at that time. The Chair asked whether the college was confident on the recruitment target. The Vice Principal responded that individual targets of at least 15 students per T Level and an overall target of 120 should be achievable.  It was noted that employer engagement was developing well but that plans to trial work placements for T Levels in 2021 had been severely impacted by Covid-19. The Vice Principal confirmed that placements would now have to go ahead without initial trials. She

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	<p>also advised that these were likely to start in January 2022 as students would need to complete part of the course before going out on placement. Members acknowledged that placements for computing, construction and engineering were likely to be the most difficult to set up but noted that the college was actively engaging employers in these sectors to try to get plans firmly in place. The Vice Principal commented that she was reasonably confident that these could be finalised during the remainder of the current year and the start of the next.</p> <p>The Vice Principal highlighted recent changes in qualification frameworks, including moving to RQF qualifications and from apprenticeship frameworks to new standards. She suggested that this experience should hold the college in good stead when putting in place the required changes to deliver T Levels. She also highlighted T Level content as a potential challenge for some learners due to the fact that they appeared to be pitched at an academically higher level than current equivalents. Members noted that this would represent a significant leap for some students and would be potentially problematic in those areas where equivalent subject BTECs would no longer be offered. However, she also commented that the college was often pleasantly surprised at the way students were able to adapt, providing the college gets the teaching right and provides the right level of support. The Vice Principal also highlighted an additional challenge in that students could only successfully secure a T Level qualification if they are successful in every element. Member acknowledged that this was different to some other qualifications where individual modules could be secured even if others were not.</p>
<b>9</b>  <b>CSM/21/03/09</b>	<p><b>STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: MID-YEAR UPDATE</b></p> <p><u>Quality</u></p> <p>The Vice Principal, Curriculum reported that staff development had continued during the pandemic, although many initial plans had not been possible to deliver. Members noted that this included some vocational updating, which would have needed external industry settings. It was acknowledged that this had also been discussed under an earlier agenda item. The Vice Principal reported that the college was reviewing English, Maths and other competencies that would be needed by staff delivering T Levels, and that specific competency training was being delivered in March 2021. She also outlined work taking place to enable students to participate in additional activities associated with use of digital equipment, employability, careers and other value added elements. Members were pleased to learn that this focus had not been lost, despite teaching and learning moving online.</p> <p>Members were also pleased to learn that HE recruitment for 2021/22 appeared strong in many areas, although some areas would need further progress. The Vice Principal confirmed that internal progression was improving, although further improvement was still required. Similarly, she advised that more work was required in collecting destinations data in order to improve the extent to which the college could identify outcomes and impact.</p> <p>The Chair asked whether there were real or perceived barriers for internal students progressing onto higher education courses. The Vice Principal responded that a large proportion of the college's students were from 'widening participation' postcodes and were often the first in their families to consider going onto higher education. Members acknowledged that this would mean that additional support was necessary in bridging perceived barriers. The Principal added that this position could also be seen in the high demand for apprenticeships in Wigan, rather than higher education. Members recognised that this was reflected in a general trend of a high employment and low wage economy. The Principal explained that, whilst this progression could be challenging, the college remained fully committed to encourage and support all students to have clear ambition and confidence. She added that bringing employer-aligned higher education opportunities into the Rushton Building could help to drive this further.</p>

	<p><u>Place</u></p> <p>The Principal outlined activity to date, including engagement with partner schools which had continued with online activities. It was noted that this included the addition of online sampling for students considering a move to college in September 2021. It was also noted that the college was reviewing ways in which it would be able to support lost learning for those students moving from school to college in September.</p> <p>The Principal advised that 16-18 applications for 2021/22 had again increased and were currently 85 higher than the same point in the previous year. The Principal also reported that applications for apprentice opportunities were lower than in the previous year, although these students had been guaranteed a place on study programmes should it not be possible to match learners with an employer. Members acknowledged that it was inevitable that employers would be advertising fewer apprentice vacancies at this time, given the circumstances of the pandemic. Members were pleased to note that plans were in place to develop courses for delivery over the Easter and summer periods in order to utilise remaining AEB funding.</p> <p>The Principal outlined the college's work with Edgehill University, Wigan Council and other partners in the Skills Partnership and reported that projects were underway including T Levels, Health &amp; Social Care courses and business start-up initiatives. She also outlined progress in the Institute of Technology (IoT) bid process. The Chair asked whether there was now a clear timeline for the IoT bid process. The Principal responded that the timeline was not entirely clear, although she expected the first stage to be confirmed this Spring and the stage 2 to be submitted before the end of May, with an aim to launch in September 2022. The Principal commented that there was a clear need in the borough for improved pathways into Level 4 and above and suggested that the IoT could make a real difference in delivering this. She added that she hoped to see significant impacts in three to five years' time from strategies being developed now.</p>
<p><b>10</b></p> <p><b>CSM/21/03/10</b></p>	<p><b>HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC UPDATE</b></p> <p>The Vice Principal, Curriculum outlined Part A of her report, which provided a backdrop and context in which the college's higher education provision was being developed. This included higher technical education reforms, including the development of higher technical qualifications, the launch of plans for Institutes of Technology and increased use of labour market intelligence to identify areas for expanded higher education provision. It was noted that pathways were becoming clearer, including the position of apprenticeships within overall study and career pathways. The Vice Principal stressed the importance of the college having a strategy that aligns to these developments and also to respond to technological and digital changes.</p> <p>The Vice Principal also advised that the college was aiming to develop facilities for digital engineering, digital diagnostics and other areas of new technology. She added that these developments were aimed at keeping the college at the technological forefront. It was noted that it would also be important that lower level courses embraced technology in order to fit into pathways onto technical higher education. Members acknowledged that recent developments of the college's estates strategy and approach to IT infrastructure would help to support the college's ability to adapt to technological change. The Chair of the Board commented that this report showed clear ambition and an inspirational vision for how higher education would develop in the future. The Vice Principal concurred with these comments and suggested that, whether or not the college's IoT bid was successful, its plans for higher education, as well as other college strategies demonstrated a clear readiness for expected change.</p> <p>The Chair of the committee asked whether the college was at risk of passing the point in its recruitment numbers where it would cost more to continue recruiting than any financial benefit to be gained from the increased numbers. The Principal responded that, whilst there was likely to be a point at which 16-18 recruitment reached an optimal number,</p>

	<p>there was greater flexibility in terms of adult and HE recruitment. It was noted that this was because there was greater flexibility in terms of space requirements and delivery options.</p> <p><b>The Head of Quality joined the meeting at 6.55pm</b></p>
<b>11</b>  <b>CSM/21/03/11</b>	<p><b>EMPLOYER &amp; STUDENT FEEDBACK REPORT</b></p> <p>The Head of Quality advised that his report was split between externally driven feedback and feedback obtained internally, although it was noted that both sources were equally used in developing improvement plans.</p> <p>It was noted that 16-18 and 19+ provision was usually subject to the external FE Choices survey, but that this had not taken place this year due to the pandemic. The Head of Quality commented that this was disappointing as Wigan &amp; Leigh College had been the best performing college in the Greater Manchester area for four consecutive years and that it would have been good to see whether this had been maintained for a fifth year. The Head of Quality outlined feedback from the FindMyApprenticeship survey, which had commenced in October 2018 and now included 154 responses relating to the college. It was noted that overall satisfaction had been categorised as 'good' or 'excellent' in 89.6% of cases, which classified the overall feedback position as 'good'. It was also noted that this survey did not break down into individual years but instead was a continuing running total from the outset in 2018.</p> <p>The Head of Quality advised that the HE NSS survey would be carried out as planned and the college would receive outcomes in the summer. The Clerk agreed to add this to the agenda for the autumn term meeting. The Head of Quality also advised that the college carried out a similar survey for those HE students not covered by the NSS survey, which applied to 257 students. It was noted that this survey had not been fully completed but that early indicators from other internal surveys suggested that outcomes were better than national averages for the NSS survey. It was noted that these outcomes would be reported along with the NSS survey.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Action: Clerk</b></p> <p>The Head of Quality outlined key data from the SPOC 1 survey, which was completed at the start of every year. It was noted that the most significant improvement had been on HE programmes and the Head of Quality highlighted the impact of the Step-Up campaign in delivering these improvements. However, it was also noted that feedback on Electrical courses was not as positive as in other HE areas. Members were pleased to note that SPOC 1 generally provided positive data, which also extended to subcontracted provision where the feedback had been excellent. They were also pleased to note that there had been improvements in the vast majority of questions associated with apprenticeships. It was noted that the SPOC 2 survey would be completed later in the term.</p> <p>The Head of Quality outlined the findings from curriculum reviews, which had been carried out online this year due to the pandemic. It was noted that this had resulted in a significant increase in learner voice activity (1600 student responses), with the overwhelming majority of feedback being positive. It was also noted that the increased number of responses meant that the college would be able to drill down to specific courses more effectively.</p> <p>The Head of Quality summarised the feedback position as very positive, with average positive scoring across all surveys of around 8 out of 10. He also commented that there were clear green shoots in some areas previously identified as areas for improvement. He acknowledged that the feedback identified clear areas for further focus, which would be used for additional improvement planning. The Chair asked whether induction day presented recurring issues in terms of feedback. The Head of Quality responded that it was likely that, despite clear communication, some students would arrive at the wrong part of college or get lost looking for induction venues. He suggested that feelings of</p>



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	uncertainty whilst getting used to the premises would almost certainly impact on feedback ratings. However, he also highlighted that induction day feedback had improved in recent years as more and more support was put in place to make sure students were confident in finding their way around.
<b>12</b> <b>CSM/21/03/12</b>	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>  There was no further business.
	<b>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING:</b> 5.00pm Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
	<b>The meeting closed at 7.10pm</b>