

Further Education Corporation
Meeting of the Board of Governors
APPROVED MINUTES (Part A)

Date and timings:	Monday 18 th May 2020 18.00 to 19.56
Location	By teleconference
Present (Governors):	Elizabeth Sipiery (Chair) Angela O'Donoghue CBE (Principal and CE) Roland Anderson (from 6.15pm) Lee Freeman Dr Rod Gray Nikki Hill (Staff Governor) Richard Launder (Co-Vice Chair) Jo McGee (Staff Governor) Robert Patterson Andy Ray Estrella Rodriguez-Ponce (HE Student Governor) Sue Saxton Sarah Stone Maya West Gwynn Williams (Co- Vice Chair)
In attendance	Sarah Lane (Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality) Anthony McGarel (Deputy Principal and CE) Matt Twitchett (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality) Melissa Drayson (Clerk to the Corporation).
Apologies for absence	None received
Quorum (8)	The meeting was quorate throughout

Item	Action lead
1 Preliminary items	
1.1 Apologies for absence As listed above.	
1.2 Declarations of interest Previously declared interests were carried forward. There were no new declarations of interests.	
1.3 Governor resignations and recruitment The Chair reported that, sadly, David O'Halloran had written to say that, for family reasons, he was no longer able to give the time to his	

governor role. His resignation from the Board had been accepted with regret. Governors asked that their best wishes be passed onto David.

Mark Harrison had also resigned from the Board due to work commitments.

Terry Knight's earlier retirement from the Board created three additional vacancies. The Chair of Search and Governance Committee reported that this did not represent an immediate issue whilst the board was operating its emergency arrangements. However, there were now skills shortages on several committees so preparations should be made to bring new governors in when it was possible to resume face to face meetings. It was noted that there had been some strong candidates from the most recent governor recruitment round who had not met the needs of the Board at that time, but who might be reapproached.

It was hoped that all three retiring governors would be able to return for a leaving event with the Board once the college reopened.

AGREED: That the Chair of SGC and Clerk would put together a recruitment plan, including: **RG/MD**

- **Approaching the recruitment consultants for advice**
- **A review of CVs of individuals interviewed in the last recruitment round;**
- **A search for additional candidates from volunteering websites and local organisations.**

1.4 Urgent other business notified in advance

The DFCE asked to raise two items of other business

2. Minutes

2.1 Board of Governors on 30 March 2020

The Minutes were APPROVED as an accurate record.

2.2 Emergency Governance Committee 20 April and 4 May

The Minutes of both meetings were NOTED. A minor amendment was agreed to item 4.1.

2.3 Written resolutions

Supporting paper by the Clerk

RESOLVED:

- (i) **that the written resolutions passed on 6 April be APPROVED relating to:**
 - a. The appointment of Richard Launder as temporary Co Vice-Chair**
 - b. The Terms of Reference for the Emergency Governance Committee**
- (ii) **That subsequent amendments to the EGC Terms of Reference, recommended by the EGC be APPROVED.**

3. Matters arising from previous meetings

Supporting paper by the Clerk

It was confirmed that all actions arising from the minutes had been addressed.

4. Update on College Response to Covid-19

4.1 Covid-18 risk register

Supporting paper by SLT

The risk-based approach agreed at EGC was outlined. The risk register had been updated to include a separate set of risks relating to the current response to Covid-19 (C-code); plus an additional section relating to reopening the college upon the release of lockdown (PC-code). This was a dynamic situation, so the risk register would be kept under continuous review. The risk register would ensure a focus at governor meetings on areas of most risk, and mitigating actions being taken. It was confirmed that it was now assumed that the college would not be operating normally until September at the earliest, although some students would return from 1 June. Vulnerable learners would be prioritised including students with learning disabilities, as would students at risk of not completing their qualification because of practical skills requirements. Further guidance was awaited on this from the awarding bodies. Government had also announced that 16-19 day release apprenticeships should also be returning. Level 2 and 3 students, who were nearing completion of their courses, would not be returning.

There were already indications that parents and students were resistant to returning as early as 1 June, especially if this involved travel on public transport.

Several of the Covid related risks were covered under other agenda items. Governors were reminded that existing college risks were monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee.

Questions were raised about the following:

Risk C1: Teacher awarding grades

Was there an indication of potential student outcomes?

It was confirmed that results must remain confidential until they had been through the awarding body moderation process. The College had now completed its rankings For GCSE and A levels and would be sending the data to the awarding bodies shortly.

Was there any discussion with other Colleges regarding Maths and English GCSE grades?

Conversations with other colleges focused on the method for awarding grades as guidance from awarding bodies had been vague. In common with most colleges, grades were based on mock results and classwork. The staff team had done an excellent job in producing a robust set of data within the timeframe given.

Risk C7: Safeguarding

Are there similarly strong procedures in place to safeguard the health and wellbeing of staff as students?

A range of supportive measures are in place including regular Teams meetings; daily contact with staff during Mental Health Awareness Week; a twice weekly Principal's briefing; access to a online resources,

a free confidential counselling service and mental health first aiders. All staff who were shielding were known and were receiving regular contact. The first all staff Principal's meeting was being held the following day via Teams.

Has contact now been made with all high-needs students receiving additional learning support?

All students bar five had been successfully contacted and RAG rated; the college was working with local authorities to ensure the 5 uncontactable students were supported.

Does the college have a communications plan in place in the event of a negative news story, eg. college students or staff breaking lockdown?

The college had a very strong marketing and PR function, with regular messaging to students and staff, so was well-placed to deal with such eventualities. There was a good relationship with local press.

Comment was made about the scoring of some risks as Amber rather than Red, particularly those relating to student recruitment and cashflow. It was **agreed** that although cashflow during the current year was 'Amber', it was a 'Red' risk next year.

5. Curriculum, Quality and the Learner Experience

Learner recruitment 2020-21 (FE and HE)

Supporting paper presented by the DP Curriculum and Qual

i. FE Recruitment

The 16-18 student number target was 5052, with an ESFA allocation for 4736 students. There would, therefore, already be a cost to delivering to any students above the allocation due to lagged funding. Current application levels were higher than the same point the previous year for both 16-19 and adults, including internal progression. Pre-enrolment support was being provided by curriculum staff, careers advisors and the admissions team to encourage as much internal progression as possible to appropriate courses.

Governors asked whether there was contact with parents to keep students in learning. It was confirmed that effort had been made to engage with parents but it was not possible to assume that all would be supportive.

It was difficult to judge the impact Covid-19 would have on enrolments despite the higher application levels. However, it seemed that many were choosing to remain at college because of uncertainty about other options, especially employment. The statistic that half of all employees were currently furloughed was mentioned. Students who would have traditionally chosen an apprenticeship route were now applying for FE courses, due to the drop in apprenticeship opportunities. There was a risk that, even with higher initial enrolments, students would leave to start work if jobs became available.

The financial implications of over-enrolment were discussed. The challenge of teaching such increased volumes on a lagged funding basis would be considerable. If social distancing measures continued into September, concerns about travelling by public transport might

reduce the actual numbers enrolling. There would also not be the capacity to accommodate all students all of the week if the college was still required to apply social distancing in the college building. Scenario planning and modelling was taking place to decide how curriculum might be delivered, including through continued online delivery.

Governors asked what actions were being taken to develop remote learning further, given the likelihood of continued online delivery. It was reported that a college working group was in the process of evaluating different models, software packages and learning technologies. Some staff upskilling may be required, although staff had adapted very quickly to remote delivery so far.

The question was also raised whether the provision of face-masks might give greater confidence to parents and students. Current government advice was not to wear masks in educational settings, but this would be kept under review.

ii. HE Recruitment

It was confirmed that higher numbers could be accommodated but remodelling of HE course delivery would also be needed. HE classes tended to be smaller and were delivered mainly within the Forum and HHPP. It was difficult to predict how HE recruitment would be affected as the market was highly volatile and competitive; the cashflow reflects a worst-case scenario.

5.2 Update on assessment of learners

Supporting paper by the VP Curriculum and Quality

Governors were now familiar with the process being followed to assess GCSE and A-Level students. There had been recent consultations for vocational qualifications. Awarding bodies had been asked to sort their courses into three 'buckets'. Bucket 1 (B1) would rely on only predicted grades; Bucket 2 (B2) would require some additional adapted assessment; Bucket 3 (B3) would require a delay to accreditation pending the ability of students to come into college to complete their qualifications. B3 should be the last resort.

The college was on schedule to submit grades for GCSE and A Levels. Guidance from awarding bodies was now coming through on other courses, but information about the courses in B3 was still awaited.

It was confirmed that the assessment processes would not apply to HE. The validating universities with which the college worked had adopted a collaborative approach to agreeing with the College how each HE course would be validated.

The pressure on teaching staff and the exam team of complying with the assessment requirements was recognised by the Board. It was suggested that staff might be surveyed to assess personal impact, concerns and support needs. Redeployment of staff from other areas was also being explored, as long as this was permitted by the awarding bodies due to confidentiality restrictions.

AGREED: that questions would be added to the planned staff survey on personal impact and concerns.

AOD

6. Finance, Policy and Resources

6.1 Financial planning – options and cashflow

Supporting paper presented by the Deputy Principal and Chief Executive

A confidential minute was taken of some of this item, to be reviewed when the matter was in the public domain.

The two key options for discussion were highlighted:

1. A large-scale cost reduction programme to offset any income deficit caused by Coronavirus and subsequent under-enrolment
2. Operating a smaller cost-reduction programme and living with a larger deficit, seeking government financial support if available.

Governors asked for an update on the forecast out-turn for 2019-20. It was confirmed that the college was in a better position than originally forecast for the point in the year and this had been worked into the starting position for 2020-21. Cashflow next year would, however, be seriously impacted, especially in March. The worst-case scenario showed negative cashflow in this month.

(Recorded within separate confidential minutes)

The point was made about the importance of the context in terms of steps being taken by other colleges. It was known that some were considering starting redundancy consultation now, to make staff cuts at the start of next year. Most colleges were in a similar position to SEC with the majority seeing the impact in the first half of next year. Some colleges had already got cashflow problems and were approaching the ESFA for financial support

It was confirmed that the deadline for submitting the first revised forecast to the ESFA was 31st May with another forecast required by end of June. It had been confirmed that only high-level information would be needed, rather than a full updated IFMC. The difficulties in putting together an accurate forecast were recognised; the figures were based on a best estimate, but gave a realistic picture of the risk to cashflow in March 2021.

6.2 Regional and national comparisons

The report was noted. The Chair drew governors' attention to the AOC paper referenced in the report, which demonstrated the situation across the FE sector.

6.3 Capital Projects

Confidential item, minuted separately.

7. Search and Governance

7.1 Governor reappointments for approval

Supporting paper by the Clerk

RESOLVED: that the following recommendations from the Emergency Governance Committee, acting in place of the Search and Governance Committee, be APPROVED:

- (i) That Robert Patterson be reappointed for a third term of office, from 1 August 2020 to 31 December 2021**
- (ii) That Gwynn Williams be appointed for a third term two-year of office in the first instance, from 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2020.**

It was also noted that the Search and Governance would review the policy on terms of office in the light of sector and corporate governance guidance, at its next possible meeting.

7.2 Meeting dates for 2020-21

The proposed meeting dates were noted. The proposed date for the summer Board Development Day of 7th June would be double checked to ensure that there was no clash with GCSEs.

8. Dates of forthcoming meetings 6 July 2020

There being no further business, the Meeting finished at 19.56

Signed.....Dated.....