

AQUINAS COLLEGE
TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

Date: 14 June 2016
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: The College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Dr P Beatty, Ms H Delahan, Mr B Hickey, Cllr T McGee, Mr A Martin, Mr C Millington, Fr P Munroe, Dr A Smith and Mr D Pearson.

Cllr T McGee in the Chair.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms C Vitti (Vice Principal, Designate) to the meeting. For the benefit of Ms Vitti the Governors introduced themselves.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors and Staff were asked to declare any interest, which they may have in any of the items on the Agenda for this meeting. No interests were declared.

3. COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2016 copies of which had been circulated previously be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

There were no matters arising that were not covered on the Agenda.

5. UPDATE ON A LEVEL REFORM

Mr Pearson gave an update on how linear A levels are being implemented at the college. The changes began in September 2015 and will be fully functional, for new students by September 2017. This means that that from 2015 to 2018 there will be a two tier A Level system. Between September 2015 and July 2018 some students might be doing all linear A Levels, some might do all modular A Levels and some (probably most) will do a combination of the two. From September 2015, 14 linear A levels were introduced but some students will still be entered for AS level examinations.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that his was working in most areas but there had been some concern about entering students for Art and Design AS level because the standards were changing. Therefore, if they are entered for A level fully intending to do the 2 years they would not be entered for an AS. It may put students off if they are not getting the credit that their work deserves. In other subjects the AS would be equivalent to 40% of an A level but it would not contribute to an A level qualification. Interviews will be held with all students to make sure they are carefully considering their progression options.

Mr Pearson informed Governors that next year the college cannot afford to go down the co-teachable route. Students would then follow a 2 year linear A level course of study. The college would look at a review point in the year and would be able, therefore, to make a good prediction of the likely outcomes.

In 2017/2018 Applied A level in ICT and Business will cease. The college has found alternative vocational courses for Business, but there will be a reduction in how much is offered. It is important that the college makes the right choice. Ms Delahan asked if Business was one of the subjects that had the highest number of students. Mr Pearson replied that it was and that there were 11-13 single groups which will probably increase to 15 as we will no longer be able to offer a double option.

In general the move to linear means that once a student starts the course they will have to stay with it. Cllr McGee added that nationally there was a reduction in the number of subjects offered to students from 4 to 3 subjects.

Dr Beatty arrived at this point in the meeting.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that BTECs which are modular are being reformed and that there will now have to be an externally assessed element. For next year only, subjects will be able to follow the old course and will be continually assessed. Cllr McGee advised Governors that as part of the Area Based Review there had been discussions (not that we agreed with this point) about vocational courses only being offered by FE colleges and that sixth form colleges should only offer academic courses. Mr Pearson added that sixth form colleges have a history of having greater success delivering classroom based vocational courses than FE colleges.

Mr Millington (Student Governor) felt that in some subjects it appears that students are not aware of what is happening. He added that it was only today that he had been informed what he would be taught next year. Students were definitely confused and staff were telling students who are following linear A levels that the work they doing will not count which is demotivating. If they drop a subject after one year it feels like a wasted year. Mr Millington advised Governors that at the end of his first year he would be dropping one subject and taking 3 subjects in his second year.

Cllr McGee stated that there are a number of teachers at the college who have never sat or taught an A level linear courses. Ms Delahan agreed and felt that there was a need for staff training. Mr Pearson added that linear A level provided more time to achieve skills development and allowed some breathing space for staff and students alike. The college will be providing training for all its staff.

Mr Hickey asked does it affect assessment as modular and linear courses are being taught alongside each other. Mr Pearson replied that teaching was done in a way to try and suit both linear and modular options. He added that about 25% of students are taking 4 subjects with 75% taking 3 subjects, therefore, both linear and modular are taught across the two years. Dr Smith asked if any AS subjects were planned to be free-standing, Mr Pearson replied no.

Ms Vitti advised Governors that AS subjects are examined at the same level as A levels, it was the content that had been reduced. Mr Pearson added that the college were not expecting results to be as good as in the past for AS subjects where they were at the same

level as A levels. Fr Munroe asked why the college were not expecting good results in philosophy. Dr Smith advised Governors that it appeared that the lead professor for the subject felt that A levels should be at degree level. Other sixth form colleges had experienced the same problem.

Ms Delahan felt that if students were not progressing they are likely drop a subject. Cllr McGee asked for the progression of students to be include as an agenda item for the next meeting

Fr Munroe asked if Japanese would continue to be taught as an A level subject at the college. Mr Pearson replied that it would be taught as an AS level and also at GCSE but not A2. A student from the college was through to the final 6 in a competition organised by the Japanese Embassy.

6. NEW APPROACHES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the system for assuring quality had evolved over the last 5 years and he felt that now was the time to review the system. Mr King would be stepping down and Catherine Phillips would take over his role. Ms Vitti would oversee this area with a view to developing quality systems and delivery. Ms Vitti was asked to prepare a report for the next meeting of the Committee on how things were moving along on this matter.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that following a request from the Audit Committee he would produce a staffing structure of the college in September 2016. Dr Smith felt that the structure was organic and not hierarchical which meant it would be difficult to describe. Ms Delahan indicated that it can be difficult to know who is doing what and why. Mr Pearson replied that he would seek to bring some clarity and to reduce duplication and crossover.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Martin asked if the college had seen the discussion document prepared by the Shrewsbury Diocese on its proposal for Multi Academy Trusts (MAT). Cllr McGee advised Governors that the college will submit its views to the Diocese once the Department for Education (DfE) and the Catholic Education Service (CES) have resolved the legal arrangements for Catholic colleges to become academies. Further information would be given at the Governing Body meeting on 28 June 2016.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting to be held on Tuesday 4 October 2016 at 4.30pm, subject to the Calendar of Meetings being agreed by the Governing Body at its meeting on 28 June 2016.

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____