

AQUINAS COLLEGE  
TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

Date: 2 February 2021

Time: 4.00pm

Venue: Virtual

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Dr P Beatty, Miss M Braithwaite, Mr R Harris, Mr B Hickey, Mr G Hynes, Mr A Martin, Miss E Shuttlewood, Dr A Smith, Mr M Taylor and Mr D Pearson.

In attendance: Ms C Phillips (Assistant Principal – Curriculum & Quality)

Dr A Smith in the Chair.

Dr Smith welcomed Mr Hickey to his first meeting following his appointment as a Foundation Governor and referred to the complex issues that the college was facing as a result of Covid 19 and felt that the college, having more mature students, had coped better than schools with younger pupils.

1. OPENING PRAYER

The meeting began with a prayer led by Dr Smith.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr Harris for his late arrival.

3. 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.

4. COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2020 copies of which had been circulated previously were approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

6. IMPACT OF COVID 19

Mr Harris joined the meeting whilst this item was being discussed.

Mr Pearson introduced a paper that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. The paper outlined the decisions that the college had made in dealing with Covid 19. Mr Pearson advised Governors that since the latest lockdown in January 2021 the college was open just for vulnerable students (69) and those whose parents who are critical workers. However only 10-15 students had taken up a place. The Pathway students (20 of 28 possible) are in college for four days a week and arrangements have been made for staff in that department to be vaccinated. In addition, support staff are working on a rota basis to cover reception and around 20 staff are in college to teach students.

Ms Phillips advised the Governors that the paper gave an overview of the changes that had been made at the college since October 2020. It showed the impact of Covid 19 on learning, teaching and assessment and support for students. The paper covered the following areas:

i) Use of Google Classroom as a College-Wide Platform

The college has moved to a whole-college policy of using Google Classroom and this has become key in ensuring quality assurance and the quality of curriculum delivery. The standardisation of resources, assessment of student work and tracking and monitoring of students can be accessed remotely and overseen in terms of quality by Heads of Department and senior staff. Staff have received support and training through the E-gurus group and within departments during the shared weekly meeting (Curriculum Planning Time). There has been positive feedback from staff about the use of this platform and all have said they will retain this aspect of their course organisation, delivery and assessment in the long-term.

ii) Teaching and Learning – Delivery

There have been significant changes to the teaching of remote and blended learning since the summer term of 2020 and both students and staff have adapted rapidly to the demands of blended and remote learning. Planning has been flexible and subject to frequent changes and revisions.

In the Autumn Term 2020 there was a streamed model of teaching and learning, where half of each class were physically present in all lessons and the other half attended remotely. Every week the two streams changed round so that each student experienced half their timetable in person and half remotely. The decision to deliver in this way was in order to prioritise the safety of staff and students whilst maintaining the quality of learning. It also enabled students to follow the structure of the college day and be ‘present’ at every one of their timetabled lessons during the week.

In January the college were planning for the U6 to return on-site full-time, whilst the L6 remained in their streamed classes, but planning was overtaken by the DfE decision to close schools and colleges at the beginning of January 2021.

In the Spring Term 2021 a full remote curriculum is being taught with students attending all remote lessons ‘live’ during the week. All students are expected to follow the timetabled day and will be (remotely) present in all lessons. Live lessons, through Google Classroom allow for greater interactivity with peers, assessment opportunities and group work that replicates the real classroom experience as far as possible. Students are also able to complete and upload formal and timed assessments during a lesson, with the teacher supervising for the duration of the assessment.

Where the demands of practical subjects or assessment require an adapted method of delivery in a given week, students are given clear instructions as to what is expected of them and the work to be completed within each session, along with relevant deadlines for completion.

Dr Smith asked if the college had been affected the same as primary schools when they opened for one day and then closed. Mr Pearson replied that the college was not due to open on the Monday because they finished later for Christmas than others. Dr Beatty asked Governors to note that the college was functioning well and had been ready to move forward in January 2021.

Ms Phillips advised Governors that the college was well prepared to operate on a fully remote basis and had developed good use of Google Classroom and was, for example, using breakout rooms for group work.

Miss Braithwaite asked how were the college dealing with practical subjects for example chemistry. Ms Phillips replied that the examination boards have had to adapt their requirements and that lab technicians were recording practicals for students to observe.

Mr Hickey asked how was the attendance rate and engagement of students. Ms Phillips replied that a register was taken as normal and that there was a process in place for the referral of student who were not engaging. Mr Pearson added that attendance and engagement levels were high, although there had been more leavers than normal at this time of the year, and that students were engaging more because they have to make a positive impression. The structured timetable in place for students helps them keep to a routine.

Dr Smith asked was Google Classroom used instead of Moodle, and is Google meet linked to Google Classroom. Ms Phillips confirmed it was and replied that the Google apps were on the same platform and that Google Meet was the main way of communicating with students.

### iii) Assessment

In the usual pattern of our assessment calendar, there are 7 formal assessments and reporting points across the 2 year course of study with 2 taking the form of mock exams (L6 – May/June and U6 – January). This year the college has aimed to remain as close to its usual Assessment Calendar and reporting points, with some adjustments and changes, as detailed below:

- a) The L6 End of Year (Mock) exams were moved to the beginning of October so that students were able to complete a realistic exam-style assessment of the content of their L6 exams that was not possible in the Summer Term. The exams were completed in the Sports Hall with the necessary social distancing in-place and with invigilation. A number of students were self-isolating during this week and we held a follow-up Mock Week for these students, with Heads of Department providing additional unseen papers so that we were able to make comparisons between student performance as fairly as possible. A very small number of students with ALS were allowed to complete the Mock Exams at home, with (remote) teacher supervision.
- b) Students sitting GCSE Maths and English resit exams were able to sit these in November 2020 and the results were issued in January 2021.
- c) Mock Exams were introduced for the new BTEC qualifications that have examined elements (Science, IT, Health and Social Care) in December 2020, ahead of the scheduled January 2021 unit exams. But the real unit assessments did not go ahead, following the government lockdown announcement in January 2021, and BTEC students completed exams remotely in January 2021 so that they can be assessed on the work they have prepared.
- d) Due to the ongoing uncertainty about whether exams would go-ahead in the summer, plans have been made to supplement the usual U6 Mock exam with an additional Mock in April. This will be reviewed when the outcome of the Ofqual consultation on summer assessment is known.

The scheduled January Mock exam has been moved to w/c 22 February, in response to feedback from the Student Council who felt that students would benefit from additional preparation time so that they could produce their best work in the exam.

e) There will be a fully remote formal assessment for the U6 in February which will be reduced in scope for most subjects. Whilst the college is awaiting the outcome of the Ofqual consultation, the remotely invigilated February assessment will give students some certainty and enable them to continue revision and preparation and to get feedback on their progress. The rationale behind the college's decision has been explained to all students.

Mr Hickey asked how many re-sits had there been for Maths and English. Ms Phillips replied that there had been 111 for Maths and 37 for English.

iv) Consultation

Mr Pearson advised Governors that The DfE and Ofqual are consulting on the summer assessment for 2021. It is their strong belief that:

*“Students need grades to continue to the next stage of their education or training, or into employment. Grades must reflect what a student knows, understands and can do, and they must be widely understood and respected. In place of exams in summer 2021 we propose that a student's grade in a subject will be based on their teacher's assessment of the standard at which they are performing.”*

This is a different approach than the one taken last year (taking little account of the disruption suffered) and the consultation seeks views on a number of proposals. The main themes being the extent to which you agree that:

- a) students should continue with their education covering all the content during this academic year
- b) a student's grade in each subject should be based on their teachers' assessment of the standard at which the student is performing (using a range of evidence)
- c) a set of papers should be made available in each subject, to be used as a major part of their assessment.
- d) assessments need to be fair and consistent and that exam boards should train teachers in this regard
- e) the final assessment is made towards the end of the academic year May/June
- f) teachers continue to assess any non-exam assessment
- g) teachers be allowed to draw on a range of broader evidence of a student's work
- h) students studying independently must also be given an opportunity
- i) students should be able to appeal their grade.
- j) staff should undertake internal moderation, provide the evidence used and explain the approach taken
- k) centres/ teachers would submit grades to the exam boards by mid-June
- l) external quality assurance by the exam boards would be ongoing throughout June
- m) results would be issued to students once the QA process is complete, most likely in early July
- n) student appeals could be submitted immediately following the issue of results and would first be considered by colleges so as not to hold up their progressions.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the consultation closed on 29 January 2021 and that there had been over 90,000 responses of which 60,000 were from students. He added that the results day could be brought forward to give time for colleges to hear appeals.

A full discussion took place and Governors were concerned that many of the proposals lacked clarity on how they would be achieved and that it was placing additional work and pressure on teachers. Mr Pearson added that he felt that the Centre Assessment Grades proposed last year would have worked well had they been adhered to.

Mr Taylor felt that there would not be a level playing field and asked what were other colleges views. Mr Pearson replied that he had spoken to Loreto and Xaverian colleges and whilst they had different assessment patterns their views were broadly the same as the college. There is a meeting of north west colleges next week and this item would be high on the agenda.

## 7. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SAR AND QUALITY REVIEW MEETINGS UPDATES

### i) Changes and updates to Quality Assurance Processes

The college aims to provide students with the best education possible during this disrupted period. The college has, therefore, aimed to follow the quality cycle as it would in a normal year but have adapted this to reflect the current circumstances.

Towards the end of 2019, it was planned that the Section Head Team would evolve into an Improvement and Standards Group (ISG) to strengthen and influence the contribution of Heads of Department in overseeing the improvement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment in their departments. The Improvement and Standards Group have responsibility for cross college quality and L, T and A and each of the group members has an overarching strategic and operational responsibility for a particular area. During this period, the link between ISG and departments has been retained so that Heads of Departments can be supported through this uncertain and “remoting” period.

The processes for Professional Review have been adapted so that teachers can be supported with the delivery of blended learning. Staff were asked to report and focus on one target relating to the quality of teaching and learning.

Staff have been encouraged to support one another by completing a remote ‘Peer Watch’ where a teaching and learning focus and/or use of a particular technology can be observed informally so as to share good practice and develop departmental expertise in remote and blended learning.

Curriculum SAR and QIP documents have been updated with a focus on targets for improvement and development in blended learning. Our Quality Review Meetings have gone ahead at the time we usually complete these annually. These have been held with Heads of Department, the Principal, Assistant Principal Quality, Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and other senior colleagues.

These have enabled feedback to be gained on the quality delivery and any issues experienced by departmental teams, as well as sharing good practice. Information from these meetings has been fed back to the college’s ISG and have helped to develop training and areas for development. Curriculum departments and SAR/QIP have not been graded for 2019/20 but the college is continuing to work with those departments identified as in need of additional support in 2019. The following departments are being additionally supported by the ISG: Physics, Business, Geography, Psychology, Media.

The Quality Review Meetings have led to agreed key actions for each department to focus on and to follow-up in February/March. Curriculum departments are completing the DfE document 'Reviewing your Remote Learning' to identify strengths and areas for development and this has also been completed at cross-college level and reported back to SLT. The ISG BTEC lead works closely to assure quality in the subjects and oversees external validation processes and standardisation/moderation.

#### ii) Learning, Teaching and Assessment - Learner Voice

Due to the new nature of this experience for both students and staff, it was particularly important to gather feedback from students, at departmental and whole-college level, so that the college could respond and adapt our delivery and practice, in addition to providing staff training on key areas. The following ways of gathering student feedback are occurring throughout the academic year:

- Focus groups - College LTA priorities - (student response to feedback & academic skills)
- Subject specific learner voice - QIP priorities, current cohort analysis
- Whole college LTA, (including remote provision for this year).

#### iii) Student Attendance and Engagement

It was very important to track and monitor student engagement and motivation, a simple weekly traffic light system was introduced as a way of monitoring and following-up student engagement, both at curriculum level and pastorally. There is a weekly review of completion and issues or concerns by SIS, Senior Tutors, Acting Vice Principal and Assistant Principal.

Group Tutors continue to have 1:1 meetings over Google Meet with their students on a weekly basis. Senior Tutors with support from Student Services will maintain an overview of tutor group attendance and engagement. Senior Tutors will also contact all students in their cohort with an active safeguarding concern on a weekly basis.

Pastoral concerns are shared with parents/carers wherever necessary and parents/carers will receive a weekly email alerting them to any unauthorised absences.

Students receive a weekly email from the acting Vice Principal updating them on developments and highlighting key messages. A 'Personal Disclosures' box is available on MyAquinas, for students to notify teachers and Group Tutors if they are struggling remotely with a particular problem or circumstances.

#### iv) Core Curriculum and General RE

The college's core curriculum is continuing to run remotely as it has done since the start of this academic year. Students are required to complete weekly tasks for 10:10 (tutorial) and General RE on a weekly basis. Task completion in core studies will be monitored by Group and Senior Tutors. Students are required to attend a weekly pre-recorded virtual assembly, via their tutor group's virtual classroom.

#### v) Support for Student Well-Being

During the period of remote learning, the college have been supporting the well-being of students in a number of different ways:

- a) Sharing access to the 'Kooth' online mental well-being community
- b) A student-focused booklet on the subject of anxiety has been shared with all students
- c) Online Enrichment offer, that includes a number of well-being sessions

- d) A Student Council weekly social
- e) Mentoring opportunities for current students that is being launched by an ex-Aquinas student.

Dr Smith asked Mr Harris how were the staff feeling. He replied that there had been challenges but they were engaged with the new model of teaching and keen to support students. He added that it was a different experience for everyone but everyone was adapting to the new way of teaching and learning. Mr Harris felt that the benefits of keeping to a timetable was good and that the college were faring better than other sectors. Mr Pearson felt that sixth form colleges had probably had it easier due to accessibility and student independence. The college makes sure students are coping and that everyone has access and is engaged, he added that the Student Council had been very helpful.

Miss Shuttlewood added that Google Classroom was good and that students had to be well organised. She added that a well-being survey had been sent out to students and over 200 replies had been received in 24 hours. Students felt that their workload had increased.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college had not got the usual data to report to this committee and that the main focus had been in dealing with Covid 19.

The Governors thanked Mr. Pearson and Ms Phillips for their comprehensive reports.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Any Other Business

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

15 June 2021 at 4.00pm

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_