

# WQE & Regent College Group

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## Minutes of the Extraordinary Corporation Meeting

Held virtually via Zoom on  
27 August 2020 at 17:00

### Members of the Corporation present:

Stuart Dawkins, Chair  
Joyce Black, Neil McGhee, Nisar Navsariwala, Ing'utu Palmer, Philip Parkinson, Jim Phillips, Amrik Singh, Paul Wilson, Aaron Winterton & Jimmy Zachariah

### In attendance:

Tim Cullinan, Carolyn Davies, Andrew Jackson,  
Sarah Oldfield, Donna Trusler & Rachel Middleton

### Apologies for absence:

Wayne Allsopp, Jasmine Andean, Jo Cooke, Bernadette Green,  
Alistair Lockhart-Smith, Walija Fatima

#### 1. Welcome, apologies for absence and ground rules

The Chair welcomed all present, including a special welcome to Rachel Middleton, incoming Clerk to the Corporation, who was invited to introduce herself and inform the governors about her professional experience to date.

Thanks were conveyed to Dawn Haywood for her commitment to attending Corporation meetings and taking minutes over the course of the last academic year.

**Action:** RM to cascade thanks to Dawn

#### 2. Declarations of interest

None.

#### 3. Minutes – Paper 001

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 30 June 2020 were approved as an accurate and true record of proceedings and would be signed by the Chair as soon as possible.

**Action:** RM/SD organise the signing of the minutes

#### 4. Record of Matters Considered – Paper 002

The record of matters considered by the Corporation during the period 11 June to 30 June 2020 was received and adopted.

The Chair confirmed that, unusually, there was one substantive agenda item for the meeting – the Principal's Update.

#### 5. Principal's Update: Covid-19 and the College's return for the 2020-21 academic year – Papers 003A-D

Through a presentation on screen, the Principal updated members on the following matters:

- A positive return by staff to campuses, with all but the most vulnerable returning – 11 staff exceptions initially (7 shielding, 2 self-isolating and 2 other sickness absences)
- Risk assessments continue to be reviewed, with Health & Safety Committee and union support
- HR consultants offering support for personalised risk assessments and plans to support staff returning
- Five new teaching staff and ten new support staff have joined the organisation
- Estates development work has progressed with a refurbished basement at Regent Road, as well as new office bases for curriculum teams.

#### **Exam results 2020:**

The Principal provided governors with context relating to the release of exam results. The lack of clarity from government around the mode in which results would be calculated, provided confusion and challenges for the College staff and students. WQE students fared well in the distribution of algorithm-based results in the main. Whereas nationally 39.1% of students were downgraded, at WQE this was 27.7%. Most students were not downgraded more than one grade. There continue to be issues regarding Pearson releasing vocational BTEC grades to students. Universities and training providers have worked productively with the College to support students' next steps where BTEC grades are awaited.

#### **Enrolment:**

The Principal updated governors on the infrastructure which had been created to handle online enrolments and the scale of effort across the staff to support the successful enrolment of students. An update was provided on the current student figures enrolling and a further update will be provided at the September Corporation meeting.

**Action:** PW to provide an update on enrolment at the 23 September Corporation meeting, including an outline of any threats or opportunities arising.

The Principal responded to several questions from governors. He confirmed that universities were very supportive of students and contrary to expectation, more students were being accepted at university for an autumn 2020 start than anticipated. Where there were university place deferrals, generally these were at the request of universities rather than students concerned about study during the pandemic.

In light of governors' questions, the Associate Principal for Curriculum and Planning stated the prescriptive grounds for A Level grade appeals, as well as sharing the significant number who had initially applied through the College's internal review mechanism. This had undoubtedly been increased as a result of the mixed messages from government about the potential role of mock grades within appeals. It was further confirmed that of those reviewed internally only a small number could reasonably be sent by the College to the formal appeal process, mainly due to potential administrative errors that had been identified. Students cannot do this in their own right, this is the responsibility of the institution. He also confirmed that the number of students wanting to retake exams was not yet clear as there was some way to go to the deadline. Statements of interest from students are being submitted to determine take up at present.

#### **Student return:**

This is planned for 7<sup>th</sup> September. In summary, students will be in a single location every time they visit campus, with seating plans to facilitate track and trace, should this be required. The Principal shared the induction timetable for students with governors, confirming the regularity and duration for engagement on-site, as well as with remote learning and online seminars. The timetable will be reviewed and refined ongoing.

The Principal responded to governors' questions about the teaching model, addressing queries relating to readying classrooms for socially distanced teaching and learning, lesson changeovers, and ensuring teachers have the appropriate skills to facilitate remote discussion and deliver remote learning.

The Principal confirmed that the risk assessments were dynamic and living documents and that subject leaders had been asked to look at their own curriculum delivery and flag up any delivery and health and safety issues, which would need to be addressed. Team leaders are also being asked to engage their staff with Continuing Professional Development to support their IT expertise and develop confidence to deliver remote learning and student engagement. This was reiterated by the Assistant Principal (Learning & Improvement).

The Principal shared the Priorities for the first term which had also been shared with staff. Re-engagement, reassurance and recovery will be germane to all teaching and student support activity across the College. Disadvantaged and vulnerable students have been supported ongoing over the past few months. Support infrastructures for the vulnerable and disadvantaged, involving Progress Mentors and pastoral support, are in development.

The Principal responded to a query relating to how other colleges were restructuring their student return.

**Risk assessment:**

The Chair repeated the response which the Corporation made at its June meeting (in relation to endorsing support for work on the risk assessment around Covid-19), prior to introducing a member of ELT responsible for driving the work on the risk assessment forward.

The Associate Principal (Finance & Resources) provided a verbal update on the risk assessment relating to Covid-19, stating this had been refined in light of a visit on-site by Health & Safety consultants the day prior to the meeting. She confirmed the risk assessment was based on reducing risk with a number of mitigating factors but confirmed that it was impossible to remove all risks. She affirmed the fact that the risk assessment is a dynamic, living document, subject to ongoing review and refinement.

She confirmed there is a list of actions which needed to be addressed and quality assured before students return on 7<sup>th</sup> September.

She confirmed there will be a list of Frequently Asked Questions produced for all staff to support them further. Staff social distancing is a challenge, and this was further corroborated by Public Health England who confirmed that social times often see relaxed social distancing, and are hotspots for potential transmission. Balancing the tone and regularity of messaging to staff to ensure they continue to engage, will continue to be a challenge.

The Assistant Principal (Students & Welfare) responded to a governor question about any risks relating to safeguarding. She confirmed there were some challenges around confirming identities of individuals when face mask wearing is prevalent. This has prompted a different mechanism for taking students' photos. There is also provision being made for a safe place in each of the buildings on campus to enable students to make disclosures, should the need arise.

The College needs to ensure that there is no scapegoating of pupils who are exempt from the wearing of face coverings.

Further signage and instructions about safe handling and disposal of face coverings will be forthcoming to students and staff.

The Principal confirmed that where students were deliberately flouting health and safety measures relating to Covid-safe environments, there was recourse to action through the Discipline Policy.

The Associate Principal (Finance & Resources) confirmed that staff teams had been asked to focus on business continuity plans, should a member of staff fall ill. She outlined the fact that the College had a robust internal track and trace system in place and that PHE confirmed this to be the case, when reporting two recent staff cases.

The Assistant Principal (Learning & Improvement) confirmed that work was being undertaken with Cover Supervisors on the delivery of lessons, when staff may be absent due to Covid-19.

The Chair asked the Assistant Principal (Finance & Resources) for confirmation about the regularity with which the risk assessment was being revisited. This was confirmed as weekly, and a version of the RA with marked up changes, along with a synopsis of what was going well and what was of concern, would be highlighted during Monday briefings.

**Action:** CD to provide an updated risk assessment at ongoing Corporation meetings.

Tim Cullinan left the meeting at this point.

#### **Chair's summary:**

The Chair thanked all members for their engagement with the papers and for such constructive discussion. The Chair summarised the statement of approval which governors had endorsed on 30 June, in relation to the Covid-19 risk assessment.

*'That the Corporation:*

- i. recognises the continued thoroughness of the process followed and the reasonableness of the additional controls identified;*
- ii. endorses the submitted document, whilst accepting that it is dynamic and will continue to change and evolve over time;*
- iii. asks that its continued grateful and appreciative thanks be conveyed to all the College's staff, particularly for the positive and proactive way they have responded to the unprecedented last-minute changes at national level to the criteria for awarding students' qualifications.'*

The original statement, as above, was re-endorsed unanimously by the Corporation's governors.

The Chair thanked all staff involved in producing and managing the risk assessments, asking the Assistant Principal (Finance & Resources) to convey thanks to all concerned.

**Action:** CD to cascade thanks from governors to the RA team

## **6. Any Other Business**

### **6.1 Disaster recovery:**

A governor reported a significant fire had occurred at a Leicestershire college, prompting him to ask whether there was merit in contacting the Principal to talk through lessons learned.

**Action:** PW to discuss disaster recovery with the Principal of the affected college

### **6.2 Mode of working – governance meetings:**

The Vice Chair raised the matter of whether governance meetings should continue to be remote or move back to face to face.

The Chair confirmed that any governance meetings before half term would take place remotely via Zoom, but that this matter should be reconsidered at the 23 September Corporation meeting. Discussion would include reference to the volume and type of matters, which in future, could be circulated by email.

**Action:** SD and RM to table matter on 23 September Corporation agenda

**6.3 How Covid-19 and the A Level results matter affected recruitment:**

Governors asked the Principal to engage with a local sixth form and the two Leicester-based universities for broader context on how Covid-19 and the grading of A Levels has impacted on student recruitment.

**Action:** PW to liaise with Principal of local sixth form and both Leicester universities to gauge impact and report to Corporation at 23 September Corporation meeting (1 or 2 slides incorporated in the Principal's Update).

**7. Confidentiality**

There were no confidential matters.

**8. Date, time and location of next meeting**

Wednesday 23 September 2020, commencing at 5.00 pm, via Zoom.

The meeting closed at 18:39.

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Corporation Chair

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Date

## ACTION LIST

	<b>Actions arising from 27 August Corporation Meeting</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
1.	Cascade governors' thanks to Dawn Haywood	Rachel Middleton	asap
2.	Organise signing of 30 June Corporation minutes	Rachel Middleton & Stuart Dawkins	3 <sup>rd</sup> September
3.	Provide an update on enrolment at the 23 September Corporation meeting, including an outline of any threats or opportunities arising.	Paul Wilson	Paper submission deadline for 23 Sept meeting
4.	Cascade governors' thanks to the Risk Assessment team	Carolyn Davies	asap
5.	Discuss disaster recovery with the Principal of the fire-damaged college	Paul Wilson	Report back at the 23 September meeting
6.	Table agenda item: the format for governance meetings (at 23 September meeting)	Rachel Middleton & Stuart Dawkins	3 <sup>rd</sup> September
7.	Liaise with local 6 <sup>th</sup> form Principal and 2 local universities regarding impact of Covid-19 and A Level grading on recruitment – include in Principal's update for 23 September meeting	Paul Wilson	Paper submission deadline for 23 Sept meeting
	<b>Standing agenda items</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
	Provide an updated risk assessment at ongoing Corporation meetings.	Carolyn Davies	ongoing