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Academic Committee
Minutes

Meeting Time and Date	1000 on 10 March 2021
Meeting Location	Zoom Online
Members	James Wisdom (Chair)  Dr Heather Barrett-Mold OBE (Vice Chair)  Malcolm Goodwin (Principal)  Sarah Moreland MBE  Sarah Seery (Staff Governor)  Claus Matthews (Student Governor)  Lauren O’Leary (Student Governor) Jarryd Russell (Student Governor)
Observers	Dr Sheila Cunningham Roger McClure  Cengiz Ali (HR)  Christine Bianchin (Academic)  Damien Fallon (Finance)  David Scott (Estates)
Minute Taker	Joanne Coffey (Clerk)
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	Action
<p>1. Apologies</p> <p>1.1. Apologies were received for Sheila Cunningham, Lauren O’Leary, Jarryd Russell and David Scott.</p>	
<p>2. Declaration of Interests</p> <p>2.1. None.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes</p> <p>Resolved to</p> <p>3.1. Agree the minutes of the Academic Committee meeting held on 23 November 2020 as a correct record and authorise the Chair to approve them.</p>	
<p>4. Matters Arising</p> <p>4.1. As the College was still progressing its application for Tier 4 status, to accept international students, the matter would remain on the Matters Arising report.</p>	

5. Report of the Vice Principal (Information)

Principal / Super SAR

- 5.1. The concept of a Principal / Super SAR is an overarching review of the long-term and cross-College journey to outstanding. It has been created because the College has self-assessed as 'Good' (grade 2) for 2020-21 and self-assessed as 'Good' for at least the last 10 years and the SAR only focuses on in-year improvements.
- 5.2. The Super SAR asks what outstanding looks like, where the College is in relation to that vision and what else needs to happen.
- 5.3. The Super SAR represented an honest reflection about the challenges the College faces, some of which include narrative about the pay and conditions, staff development and culture.
- 5.4. It was clarified that the Super SAR was for high level debate at Governor and senior level at this stage, and there were potentially negative observations that would need to be carefully communicated to the wider College.

Organisational development

- 5.5. It was recognised that the culture of excellence was being quite widely demonstrated at teacher-level where they were questioning the way in which they teach and sharing best practice.
- 5.6. The Committee acknowledged the upward and downward squeeze on middle management, including Heads of School, who could be under constant time pressures which sometimes allowed only urgent focus. As these were such critical roles, it was essential to invest in their development in order for them to manage and drive excellence.
- 5.7. It was also important for managers and tutors to recognise the benefits to their own sense of achievement which would organically enhance their delivery.

Defining excellence

- 5.8. To provide clearer focus, it was suggested to describe what Outstanding actually looked like, initially for academic staff, with clear objectives appropriate to their department, which would ignite their own ambitions.
- 5.9. These objectives for achieving excellence could then provide a clear structured timeline that could be monitored by managers, through to the appraisals process and targeted Continual Professional Development (CPD).

Academic

Student experience

- 5.10. The Committee agreed that the aim was for every student to leave the College having achieved all of their required skills.
- 5.11. Giving autonomy to students, by encouraging them to become 'partners in their own education', would likely equate with more committed, serious, engagement and allow them to deliver their own excellence.
- 5.12. Although this would be ideal for some students, those who required more support may find this more of a challenge.
- 5.13. The Student Governor agreed that different students thrived on different approaches, and that providing a variety of methods was the most helpful. He also felt that more engaging methods of learning, rather than lecture-type lessons, would benefit students, which the Principal agreed with.

English and maths

- 5.14. The College had fully invested in its delivery and engagement of English and maths, with a new Head of English and maths, and that investment was proving effective.
- 5.15. The Committee noted that if students felt good about their English and maths progression, this psychologically boosted their confidence in all of their other studies.

External factors

- 5.16. As London does not have a deep-root investment in traditional land-based culture, it was key for Capel to define a new environmental culture that is appropriate for a capital city, to open up environmental career opportunities.
- 5.17. Attracting staff who have an interest in green skills would also add to the inspirational ambience of the College.
- 5.18. As international teachers may be attracted to a London-based institution, it was important to maintain a global outlook.
- 5.19. As fractional staff from outside of London already came onsite to give presentations, the Committee suggested expanding their offering to fulfil a wider role. This could be facilitated by offering overnight staff accommodation.

Strategic culture of excellence

- 5.20. The College has a culture of excellence that has kept Capel Good, without slipping backwards.
- 5.21. Governors felt that having a strategic checklist of activities/behaviours on the path to outstanding, some completed,

some in process, would clearly demonstrate Capel's achievements and aspirations.

5.22. The Committee also highlighted the importance of excellence amongst the administrative people and processes, which are key to move the College forward.

5.23. The Staff Governor suggested that a Quality Manager for administration may also serve a worthy appointment.

T Levels

5.24. The introduction of new Level 3 qualifications 'T Levels' will see the removal of funding for current Level 3 qualifications where a T level alternative is available.

5.25. The first 3 T level areas were available from Sept 2020 with another 15 rolled out in 2021-23.

5.26. The planned introduction of land-based T levels in 'Agriculture, Land Management and Production' and 'Animal Care and Management' is 2023.

5.27. With the development and roll out of T Level qualifications at Level 3, the Government is looking to streamline the number of qualifications on offer to direct students to 'Academic' or 'Technical' routes.

5.28. The Committee discussed the potential gaps that may initially exist and were hesitant over the T Level structure being fit for purpose.

Exams

5.29. Due to the impact of the pandemic on learners, the Government has set out an alternative assessment approach to replace exams.

5.30. They have specified that functional skills should still be assessed through in-house examinations.

Ofsted interim visit

5.31. The [results of the Ofsted interim visit](#), held on 3-4 December 2020, had been published with encouraging feedback.

Augar Review

5.32. The Government has recently published its interim response to the Augar Review which reinforces the importance of FE in working with employers linking training and employment, the need for a 'Lifetime Skills Guarantee' and a review of funding systems.

<p>5.33. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had been awarded a £3m grant, which may create opportunities for Capel.</p>	
<p>6. Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020-21 (Decision)</p> <p>6.1. The College's Quality Improvement Plan for 2020-21 was progressing well.</p> <p>6.2. The Principal QIP had one outstanding action to progress, to improve the response rate of the Garden Design students to the Learner Satisfaction Survey.</p> <p>6.3. Governors felt that quality improvement had continued to be demonstrated throughout the pandemic, which was to be congratulated.</p> <p>Resolved to</p> <p>6.4. Accept the QIP 2020-21 and recommend it to the Governing Body for approval.</p>	<p>A: Governing Body (Appendix I)</p>
<p>7. Review of Academic Risk (Decision)</p> <p>7.1. The Principal Risks now included a new risk agreed with Governors: A failure to maintain the safety and wellbeing of staff and students.</p> <p>7.2. It had been agreed by the Finance and Resources Committee to amend the description of the risk (currently 8) of a failure in the Governance and leadership of the College, to include that the Board would respond to strategic threats.</p> <p>Resolved to</p> <p>7.3. Confirm that the principal risks represent the main internal and external risks and remain fit for purpose.</p>	
<p>8. Learner Satisfaction Induction Survey 2020-21 (Information)</p> <p>8.1. The Learner Satisfaction Surveys are hosted by an external company QDP Services. This provides the College with the ability to compare the College's satisfaction ratings against that of 1,337,178 learners in 109 other colleges.</p> <p>8.2. There are two surveys each year, an Induction Survey for learners starting a new course and an Exit Survey for those learners completing their studies.</p> <p>8.3. Due to an administration error with the host company QPD, the initial Induction Survey 2020-21 which took place in November 2020 did not include all questions usually surveyed which led to a re-issue of the full survey to ensure in year comparisons.</p>	

<p>8.4. The survey received an 85.3% response rate from both full time and part time students across all centres, which is 'good' (2nd highest rating) for this type of survey compared to 109 colleges and a 3% increase on 2019-20.</p> <p>8.5. Additional questions were added relating to the pandemic, in terms of Covid protocols, online learning and assessment.</p> <p>8.6. Feedback was largely positive in most areas with further work to be done on the process of recruitment and engagement with Moodle.</p> <p><u>In-house survey</u></p> <p>8.7. As the College had in-house capabilities for its own online surveys, this had been in consideration by SLT.</p> <p>8.8. Although Capel's own surveys would lose the automated benchmarking data, as the other colleges that use QDP are mainly GFE colleges, rather than land-based, this meant that benchmarks were not currently a good comparison.</p> <p>8.9. By moving to an in-house system, an additional mid-year survey could be used to effect change in year.</p> <p>8.10. Governors agreed that in-house surveys would be appropriate, as long as the College could find another way to benchmark their data. The sharing of a sample of data could be arranged with other, more appropriate, colleges (not only land-based) which would provide another way to benchmark for all of the colleges involved.</p> <p>8.11. Governors supported SLT in moving to in-house surveys and a new benchmarking system.</p> <p>8.12. It was also suggested that the design of a survey included a sub-question to ask 'how important is this question to you?', to analyse what is important to students about their experience of the College.</p>	
<p>9. Academic Performance 2020-21 (Information)</p> <p>9.1. Overall College retention has been consistently outstanding for the last 3 years at 98%, which is 7.6% above the national average.</p> <p>9.2. Student retention had been good and facilitated by the new ProMonitor system that allowed for early intervention. It was clarified that, as the system was sensitive to identify higher numbers of potential at risk learners very early on, the immediate targeted interventions meant that this was more likely to lead to successful outcomes.</p> <p>9.3. Overall College attendance stands at 83%. Foundation Learning attendance is lower at 79% due to smaller cohorts and identified</p>	

<p>individual circumstances. This continued to be a challenge and had not statistically changed during the move to online learning, despite some affected students engaging more online.</p> <p>9.4. Governors requested that future reports showed data by campus.</p>	<p>Academic</p>
<p>10. Higher Education (Information)</p> <p>10.1. The total number of students on Level 4, Level 5, Foundation Degrees (FdSc) and Bachelor Degrees (BSc) for 2020-21 are 64.</p> <p>10.2. The College had gained approval to run a BSc (top-up) in Animal Conservation (subject to validation) in liaison with the Royal Agricultural University (RAU) to run alongside the current BSc (top-up) Animal Management and Applied Zoology for delivery in September 2021.</p> <p>10.3. BSc applications for 2021-22 were currently at 23, compared to 8 at the same time in the previous year, which gave a promising outlook.</p> <p>10.4. The Government commitment to a 'Lifelong Loan Entitlement' for Adults including loans for Level 4+ will allow the College to expand the Level 4 vocational offer including arboriculture, animal training, outdoor adventure and environmental management.</p>	
<p>11. Curriculum Planning 2021-24 (Information)</p> <p>11.1. The Vice Principal is updating the three-year strategy in consultation with SLT and Governors, and in line with design principles and College strategic objectives for growth.</p> <p>11.2. The 2021-22 targets, of 1,200 16-18 year olds, were ambitious in order to provide critical funding in 2022-23.</p> <p>11.3. Governors felt that curriculum planning at the College had significantly improved since the current Principal and Vice Principal had been in place.</p> <p>11.4. As progression was a fundamental principal of Capel's mission, this would be made clearer in future reporting.</p> <p>11.5. Governors requested that Crystal Palace and Mottingham centres were positioned next to each other on the Headcount by Centre graph (and any others), to also demonstrate South London as a whole.</p>	<p>Academic</p> <p>Academic</p>
<p>12. Academic Board Minutes (Information)</p> <p>12.1. The Academic Board meetings continued to demonstrate good discussion and challenge. The Staff Governor felt that they were strong meetings where members were committed and invested.</p>	

<p>13. Student Disciplinary Report (Information)</p> <p>13.1. There were 5 resolved Gross Misconduct Disciplinary Hearings for the year so far.</p> <p>13.2. The 5 Disciplinary Hearings accounted for 2 separate incidents compared to 12 incidents in the same time last academic year.</p> <p>13.3. This was likely to have been impacted by less people onsite.</p> <p>13.4. As English and maths lessons had been online, this had led to better behaviour from students who were more open to distraction from their peers.</p>	
<p>14. Student Complaints Report (Information)</p> <p><u>Academic Provision Complaints</u></p> <p>14.1. There had been 1 complaint received by the College relating to academic provision.</p> <p><u>Specific Covid-19-related Complaints</u></p> <p>14.2. There had been 4 specific Covid-19 related complaints received by the College, requesting refunds due to the move to online teaching.</p> <p>14.3. These had been investigated and not be upheld, in-line with similar complaints received in 2020, as learning was still in place and the quality remained high.</p>	
<p>15. AOB</p> <p>15.1. None.</p>	
<p>16. Timed Update from Head of School</p> <p>16.1. Sarah Seery, Curriculum Quality Manager, gave an insightful presentation on ‘Taking Teaching and Learning Further’.</p> <p>16.2. The Committee had a full discussion about having a new mentoring framework at the College, of which they were highly supportive.</p>	
<p>17. Date of next meeting</p> <p>17.1. The next Academic Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday 22 June, 2021 at 1000.</p>	
<p>18. Farewell to James Wisdom</p> <p>18.1. James Wisdom was retiring from the Governing Body on 31 March 2021, after 21 years of service.</p> <p>18.2. Heather Barrett-Mold and Christine Bianchin gave words of thanks.</p>	

<p>18.3. James was thanked for his excellent chairing of the Academic Committee with such enthusiasm and attention to detail and for his academic challenge.</p> <p>18.4. It was highlighted that James had always prioritised the student experience, keeping students at the heart of everything that Capel does, along with championing the staff.</p> <p>18.5. Roger McClure noted that Capel had consistently demonstrated good academic performance, even during difficult times. Such quality maintenance was a fantastic achievement and the College owed him a considerable debt.</p> <p>18.6. As Malcolm Goodwin was called away on an urgent safeguarding matter, he would express his thanks at the forthcoming Governing Body meeting.</p>	
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APPROVED MINUTES	
CHAIR:	Heather Barrett-Mold
	DATE: 22 June 2021
APPROVAL:	Remote confirmation: CONFIRMED
	Or signed: