



OAKLANDS COLLEGE

Minutes of the Part 1 Corporation meeting held in the Coaching Rooms, LRC, Welwyn Garden City Campus, at 18:00 on 28 March 2022.

Present	Peter Thompson (Chair)	Jean Fawcett	Phillip Fulton	Neil Myerson
	John O'Sullivan	Rob Payne	Katy Henderson	Simon Counce
	Mairi Watson	Massimo Merlo	Kevin Ibeh	Andrew Slade (Principal & CEO)
In Attendance	Jesmin Haq	Valentina Winch (Student Corporation Member)	Tegan Jones (Student Corporation Member)	
	Harpreet Nagra (DP)	Paul McCormack (FD)	Barbara Jones (Interim HR Director)	David Alder (Dir Mar & Ad)
	Joseph Maggs (Clerk)			
Apologies	Ana Guimaraes (Dir Curr)			

Note: The meeting was preceded by a session provided by the College's marketing team regarding marketing activities and social media.

PART ONE

ITEM NO.	ITEM DISCUSSED
	<i>Before the meeting commenced, the two new Student Corporation Members introduced themselves and were welcomed to the meeting.</i>
28/21	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
28/21.1	There were no apologies for absence from Corporation members.
29/21	CONFIRMATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND QUORUM
29/21.2	No notice had been received of any member becoming ineligible to hold office and the meeting was quorate.
30/21	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
30/21.1	There were no declarations of interest specific to the agenda.
31/21	GOVERNOR TERMS AND APPOINTMENTS
31/21.1	It was noted that John O'Sullivan's term of office was due to come to an end in May 2022. <i>John O'Sullivan left the meeting at this point.</i>
31/21.2	The matter had been discussed at the recent Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee. It was proposed by the Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee Chair and agreed by the Corporation that John would serve a further two-year term to run consecutively following the conclusion of his current term of office. <i>John O'Sullivan re-joined the meeting.</i>

32/21	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING
32/21.1	The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 December 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
33/21	MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
33/21.1	The Corporation noted the progress against actions arising from the previous meeting. All actions were either completed or on track.
34/21	PRINCIPAL'S REPORT – GOOD NEWS STORIES
34/21.1	The Corporation received the Principal's Report which set out key issues not covered elsewhere on the agenda and summarised good news stories from the past term.
34/21.2	The Principal & CEO provided an update regarding the recent Oaklands Wolves Basketball Teams matches in the National Elite Basketball Play-off quarter finals (men and women's teams). Both teams had played well but unfortunately the men's season came to an end at the quarter final stage. The women's team progressed to the semi-final where they subsequently lost a close fought match.
34/21.3	The Chair asked about the extent that the College promotes sporting events. The Director of Marketing and Admissions agreed more could be done in this regard. It was noted that the marketing training session before the Corporation meeting had highlighted 'sport' as one of the top search terms used on the College website, showing that there was an existing level of interest that could be built on.
34/21.4	Other updates highlighted by the Principal & CEO included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hundreds of guests, including students, their family and friends attended the College's St Albans Campus on Thursday 9 December, as it held its first in-person awards ceremony since 2019 for Higher Education Graduates. The Principal & CEO thanked Dr Mairi Wilson (Pro Vice Chancellor at UH) for presenting the awards. • The paper referenced recent government educational updates. Future reports would include an Oaklands College perspective on the updates. • The Principal & CEO was continuing to meet with local partners and stakeholders on a regular basis to build relationships between the College and local community.
34/21.5	The Corporation noted the report.
35/21	RISK REGISTER
35/21.1	The Finance Director presented the latest version of the College Risk Register. The sub-committees continued to review the risks relevant to their terms of reference at each meeting and endorse the register or recommend changes. The Audit Committee maintains an overall view of the register.
35/21.2	Since the March Committee meetings, two risks had been agreed to be removed: M4 – Planned recovery of apprenticeship enrolments, and M5 – HE enrolment.
35/21.3	Following these changes, there were 11 risks rated red, 15 rated amber and 5 rated green.
35/21.4	The Corporation approved the updated College Risk Register.
36/21	KPI DASHBOARD
36/21.1	The Corporation received the latest version of the KPI dashboard. The sub-committees review the KPIs related to their areas at each meeting. The Corporation then consider the top-level KPIs which are based on the KPIs considered at sub-committee level. The Finance Director reported that since the previous report the KPIs had been assigned SLT leads, were linked to the risk register and had also been reviewed against the strategic priorities.

36/21.2	The Chair asked if the process of populating the dashboard was improving. The Finance Director responded that it was but there was more to be done to make the process more automated and streamlined. The recent recruitment of a Head of MIS would support this.
36/21.3	The Principal & CEO added that the targets would continue to be reviewed, commenting that some of the current targets were arguably overambitious. An annual review of the dashboard targets would take place in September. (ACTION)
	REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES
	PEOPLE COMMITTEE
37/21	MINUTES
37/21.1	The Chair of the People Committee presented the key points from the recent People Committee meeting [discussion regarding the EDI and Safeguarding reports is recorded separately in the minutes that follow]: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Interim Director of Student Experience was welcomed to the meeting. • The Committee discussed recruitment and linked to this pay scales and other staff benefits. The Committee had noted that this was becoming a more urgent task as recruitment was becoming more challenged. • In terms of the KPIs, it was noted that appraisal performance was flagging as red and it was the intention to change the appraisal process in the future. • The Committee had discussed the Investors in People Silver Accreditation. The feedback would help to inform next steps to address any issues relating to staff culture. The Committee had heard that one possible finding might be a feeling of disconnect between management and other staff, however the Chair of the People Committee noted that the feedback in that regard had been very positive at the recent strategy workshop he had facilitated with senior staff.
37/21.2	The Chair of the People Committee added that the Committee has begun to receive more detailed updates regarding Health & Safety matters. A recent development of note was in relation to asbestos treatment works. There were 8 outstanding areas to be addressed currently, with three of those to be completed during the Easter holidays. The cost of these works was outside of the planned budget.
37/21.3	TJ asked about student PDRs and whether these could be made more skill based. The Deputy Principal advised she had received similar feedback from first impression surveys and student focus groups. There had been some elements that had to be rolled out quickly but going forward it was the intention to make the PDRs more skills based, such as by looking at the detail of payslips.
38/21	EDI REPORT
38/21.1	The People Committee Chair encouraged the Corporation to read the paper relating to EDI, which sets out the important role of the governing body. The Chair of the People Committee would also take on the role of link governor for EDI.
38/21.2	The Corporation Chair asked about the equality impact assessments. The Principal & CEO said that there would be standard assessment process that the Interim Director for Student Services would help with, but that EDI should run through all College business. He suggested adding EDI impact as an additional section on the Corporation report cover sheets (ACTION) .
38/21.3	The Chair of the People Committee reported that the College was intending to work with Stonewall on the EDI agenda. The Corporation noted that Stonewall had been the subject of some controversy over recent years and some organisations were opting to no longer work with them. It was suggested that some further consideration be given to whether the College should opt to work with Stonewall before a final decision is made (ACTION) .
38/21.4	RP asked how the EDI actions would be tracked. The Chair of the People Committee said this would be at the People Committee meetings and it was also the intention to develop suitable KPI measures.

39/21	SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT REPORT
39/21.1	The People Committee had received the latest update regarding safeguarding. Future reports would begin to include a trend line regarding numbers of referrals and safeguarding activities. The Prevent action plan was also being worked towards. The Corporation noted the report.
40/21	GENDER PAY GAP REPORT
40/21.1	The Corporation received the gender pay gap report for the College for 2021. The data had not been available at the time of the People Committee meeting.
40/21.2	In summary, including bonus payments there was a mean pay gap 15% in favour of males. In response to a question from the Corporation, it was confirmed that it was not the case that females were receiving lower pay for the same job. The pay gap arose because the College employed more female staff in lower graded roles which were often more flexible in terms of working hours. MW suggested that the data be provided for each staff grade level to help inform actions to improve the gender pay gap. The Interim HR Director agreed to undertake that work (ACTION).
40/21.3	It was confirmed that the College is currently paying the living wage.
40/21.4	MW also asked whether names are removed from applications as that may help to make recruitment processes fairer. They were not currently anonymous but the possibility of implementing this system was being considered.
	CURRICULUM AND QUALITY
41/21	MINUTES
41/21.1	The Corporation Chair provided a summary of the key points from the last C&Q meeting, having deputised as C&Q Chair for that meeting. The key points relating to the Student Recruitment paper and SAR and QIP are detailed in section 43/21, below.
41/21.2	The Corporation Chair reported that there had been a good discussion at the Committee meeting regarding the College's blended learning strategy. One of the key conclusions from the discussion of that item was the importance of making sure the approach to blended learning was consistent through other supporting strategies. The Deputy Principal agreed and added that it was the intention to tailor the approach for each curriculum area.
41/21.3	NM had a question regarding the extra funding being received for additional teaching hours from 22/23 and how this would fit with the blended learning strategy. The Deputy Principal said that the principle was more focussed around enriching the curriculum.
42/21	STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND FUNDING
42/21.1	The paper had been considered by the C&Q as well as People Committee at their most recent meetings and was taken as read. There had been more first choice applications received at this point in the year compared with the corresponding point in the previous year, however caution was urged as it was still early in the process and a similar position last year did not then lead to increased enrolments at the end of the process. The Corporation Chair commented that he had recently attended some of the mid-year SAR reviews and believed there was more work to do in relation to admissions.
42/21.2	The Corporation discussed the increase in applications compared to the previous year and the trends in terms of specific curriculum areas. The Principal & CEO explained that the business planning process would consider areas where there had been a significant increase in applications.
42/21.3	MM asked what was known around the reasons for applications not converting into accepted offers. The Principal & CEO said this was being reviewed currently. He suggested interviewing applicants may be beneficial, though acknowledged there were differing views

	on this approach. The point was made that the prospect of an interview may deter some prospective students if neighbouring colleges are taking a different approach.
43/21	SAR AND QIP
43/21.1	The Corporation Chair recapped that there had been a meeting to review the draft SAR and QIP with Heads of Departments in early February, the feedback from which was used to inform the updated version of the SAR reviewed at the March meeting of the C&Q Committee. At the meeting in March, the key question that had been explored by the Committee was the whether the College was right to grade itself higher through the self-assessment process than the Ofsted inspection result. Following a thorough discussion to seek assurance in this regard, the Committee had agreed with the SAR gradings that were proposed.
41/21.2	PF said that he agreed with the line of enquiry that the C&Q Committee had followed. The Deputy Principal explained that the trend data remained strong and showed that the majority of students have a good experience at the College. There were some specific issues that had been rectified and there was further work to do in some areas but external reviews since the Ofsted inspection supported the grading of the SAR.
41/21.3	In response to a question, it was confirmed that the QIP would be updated in-year through an iterative process.
43/21.4	The Corporation approved the SAR and QIP.
	FINANCE AND RESOURCE COMMITTEE
44/21	MINUTES
44/21.1	The FRC Chair informed the Corporation of the key matters discussed at the most recent FRC meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee had received a good report on the College's cyber security position. The provisional findings of the internal audit into cyber security were discussed and the final report would be considered at the next Audit Committee meeting. The College was cyber essential and cyber essentials plus certified. An area requiring further work was the College's legacy systems. • The Committee had received the latest update on the management accounts and the February position was now available and included with the Corporation meeting pack. The FRC Chair considered that the Committee had a good overview of the different aspects of the accounts and performance was largely in line with the budget. • The Committee had received a further update on the process of budget planning for 22/23 and discussed the key variables. The current intention was for a breakeven plan. The paper was included with the private part of the Corporation meeting papers. • The Committee had reviewed the Fees Policy (see below for further details).
44/21.2	The FRC Chair also provided a verbal update from the Capital Advisory Group meeting that had taken place on 25 March [<i>recorded as confidential minutes due to commercially sensitive nature of the discussion</i>].
44/21.3	JF noted the comment in the minutes relating to budget planning that blended learning was an area where savings were targeted. It was clarified that savings and efficiencies were expected to arise from the blended learning approach rather than it being an area where cost cutting was being targeted. The Clerk would update the minutes to better reflect that position (ACTION).
44/21.4	Regarding blended learning, TJ suggested starting with tests in trial areas. She also noted some students were not able to afford the digital equipment needed and the process for loaning it from the College could be lengthy. The Deputy Principal agreed to investigate this (ACTION).
45/21	2021/22 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS & CASH FLOWS / TREASURY REPORT
45/21.1	The Corporation noted the latest version of the 21/22 management accounts and cash flows.

46/21	ESFA FINANCIAL DASHBOARD
46/21.1	The Finance Director reported that the confirmation of the College's financial health grading had not yet been received but was expected to be an 'outstanding' rating.
47/21	FEES POLICY
47/21.1	The Finance Director presented the Fees Policy for approval by the Corporation. The policy sets out the process and logic behind the fee setting. Individual fees are reviewed and set throughout the academic year, reflecting these principles. The policy sets out the process rather than the specific fees.
47/21.2	MW asked the policy be checked to ensure that charging for clothing and consumables etc. is a consistent rate and there is no additional cost for additional items needed for religious reasons for example. She also asked that the policy be reviewed to ensure a student would not have their progress stalled because they could not afford the cost of an essential trip, as this would be potentially discriminatory to students from poorer backgrounds.
47/21.3	The policy was approved subject to checking these points.
	AUDIT COMMITTEE
48/21	AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES
48/21.1	The Chair of the Audit Committee reported on the meeting of the Audit Committee that took place on 28 February 2022. The Committee had discussed the findings of internal audits relating to safeguarding and mental health and well-being with the Interim Director of HR. The Committee had also endorsed a change to the audit pan, with the quality of teaching audit (no longer required following the Ofsted inspection) to be replaced with an audit relating to enrolment.
49/21	SEARCH, GOVERNANCE AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE – LINK GOVERNORS SCHEME
19/21.1	The Corporation was asked to provide any final comments regarding the proposed Link Governors Scheme, under which each governor would be linked to an area or areas of the College to gain a greater understanding of through visiting the site and meeting with senior managers etc. The Corporation endorsed the scheme in principle, subject to any final amendments to the link area allocations. <i>Note: Jesmin Haq left the meeting at this point, at 19:35.</i>
50/21	STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE
50/21.1	The Principal & CEO reported that work continued the development of the College strategy and working group sessions would be taking place in April before consideration at the Corporation Strategy Day in May. There would be a step change in terms of the strategy between now and then, and the operating plan would be worked up alongside the strategy. He also noted that the session facilitated by John O'Sullivan with the Senior Management Team had been very productive and well received.
50/2021.2	There was some discussion regarding the branding and positioning of the College. KI referred to the Russell Group at university level which was hugely effective in attracting students and asked whether the College felt it could position itself in an equivalent way. The Principal & CEO felt that the College was and could be a leader in some areas, but there was more work to be done and this idea could be explored further through the subsequent strategy groups and the away day.
51/21	DRAFT CORPORATION BUSINESS CYCLE 2021/22
51/21.1	The Corporation endorsed the draft business cycle for 2021/22.
52/21	GOVERNANCE: A) MINUTES OF JANUARY COMMITTEE MEETINGS (FRC, C&Q, PEOPLE)

52/21.1	The Corporation noted the minutes from the January meetings of the sub-committees.
53/21	B) REVISED FRC TERMS OF REFERENCE
53/21.1	The Corporation approved the proposed change to the FRC Terms of Reference.
54/21	C) REVISED PEOPLE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE
54/21.1	The Corporation approved the proposed change to the People Committee Terms of Reference.

The Corporation then considered the Part 2 agenda.