

HCA Governing Board – Meeting Minutes

Date: 4:30pm on 12th May 2025 **Location:** A10, College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mervyn Jones (<i>Chair</i>) ▪ Abigail Appleton (<i>Principal/CE</i>) ▪ Clive Hodgeman ▪ John Auckland ▪ Judy Balderson ▪ Ellie Bunston ▪ Jennette Arnold ▪ Nicola Hewitt ▪ Christy Bolderson ▪ Russell Roberts (<i>Online</i>) ▪ Peta Darnley (<i>Online</i>) ▪ Ian Axtell (<i>present until the conclusion of item 9</i>) ▪ Oliver Cameron-Swan (<i>Staff Governor</i>) ▪ Myfanwy Page (<i>Staff Governor</i>) ▪ Charlotte Semus (<i>Student Governor</i>) ▪ Rosy Miller (<i>Student Governor</i>) <p>Collectively referred to as the “Board” and individually as a “Governor”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Justin Gregory (<i>Vice Principal of Higher Education, “VPHE”</i>) ▪ Xaviere Hughes (<i>Vice Principal of Further Education, “VPFE”</i>) ▪ David Hawkins (<i>Vice Principal of Business Development and Student Experience, “VPBDSE”</i>) ▪ Tim Williams (<i>Finance Director, “FD”</i>) ▪ Abigail Boyce (<i>Clerk to Governors, “Clerk”</i>)
<p>Quoracy: Meeting was quorate in accordance with paragraph 1 below.</p>	<p>Absent: Helen Hurford and Kate Seekings.</p>

1. Quorum

The meeting was duly constituted as a quorum of 16 members was present, representing 89% of the total membership. This satisfies the 40% quorum requirement set out in Article 13(1) of the college’s Instrument of Government.

2. Apologies and Declarations

- a. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies for absence were received from Kate Seekings. Helen Hurford was absent without notification.
- b. **Declarations of interest:** there were no new declarations of interest.
- c. **Governor update:** The Chair informed the Board that Kate Mori has resigned from her position as a Governor and will no longer serve on the Board. The Board conveyed their sincere thanks to Kate for her dedicated work and valuable contributions to the college.

3. Minutes of last meeting

- a. **Approval of minutes of meeting held on 03rd March 2025:** the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.
- b. **Matters Arising:** all actions were noted as complete or as in progress.

4. Governor appointments for approval

The Search & Governance Committee has recommended the appointment of Christy Bolderson to the Board as a Governor. It is proposed that she also serve as a member of the Audit Committee.

Decision: Board agreed to approve this appointment.

5. Principal's Reports

a. Principal's Reports

The Principal presented her report and highlighted key areas:

- **Recent College Events:** The Principal reviewed recent highlights, particularly emphasising the success of the Radical Care talks. These events were noted for their contribution to educational thinking. Additionally, the Principal acknowledged the value of FE trips in broadening students' perspectives and suggested that it would be beneficial to highlight associated data to better demonstrate their impact.
- **Recruitment data:** The Principal presented the latest recruitment data, highlighting that numbers are up in both FE and HE compared to the previous year. FE recruitment is close to target, though not yet fully achieved, while HE has seen an 11% increase since last year. It was noted that student recruitment is influenced by a range of factors, some within HCA's control and others external. Actions are being taken to improve these figures, including strengthening relationships with schools and colleges and enhancing marketing efforts. Attention was drawn to a drop in applications for the Contemporary Design Crafts course, which is believed to be due to the course being split across two cohorts. A potential solution may involve renaming the course, and it was noted that this will be explored further and report back to the Board in due course.
- **Academic Update:** The Principal then presented the FE and HE academic update, addressing questions raised at the previous Board meeting regarding how progress is tracked throughout the year. Traffic light indicators were provided for key themes, with the RAG rating offering a clear overview for the Board on the current status of quality and improvement.
- **Cybersecurity:** The Principal provided an update on cybersecurity, and noted that human error remains a key vulnerability, and therefore staff training will be prioritised through ongoing professional development. In addition, the college will implement measures to raise student awareness of cyber risks, particularly around periods such as loan disbursements when students may be more susceptible to targeting.

A Governor suggested exploring Cyber Essentials funding through Herefordshire Council. The Principal agreed to look into this further.

- **Estate Strategy:** The Principal provided an update on a recent visit from Department for Education (DfE) funded consultants who are supporting the development of the College's estate strategy. The purpose of this work is to break down the strategy into manageable stages to better position the College for potential financial support. While the visit was constructive, it also prompted critical reflection on the use and purpose of existing space. In response to Governor queries, the Principal confirmed that the project is fully funded by the DfE and, while not a comprehensive estate strategy, it will inform future planning. Consultants will be recommended by the DfE once the proposed approach has been agreed. The leased premises at College Road will be included in the scope, with support from the consultants in identifying a suitable lease arrangement. Governors also raised questions regarding the College's obligations to

implement any recommendations made and whether associated costs would be funded. The Principal confirmed there is no obligation to enforce recommendations, nor is there an expectation of additional funding for their implementation. The long-term implications of the College's estate size and opportunities for income generation through facilities usage will be considered further in discussions with the DfE consultants during their next engagement.

- **Office for Students:** The Principal informed the Board that the Office for Students (OfS) would be visiting the College on the day of the Degree Show Private View. It was noted that the OfS has been engaging more actively within the sector.
- b. Report on KPIs and objectives 2024/25:** The Principal reported a decline in the RAG ratings for Level 6 retention since start of course, attributed to a small number of students pausing their studies for health reasons. In accordance with Office for Students (OfS) guidance, these students will still be included in completion data if they return within four years. Responding to a Governor's query, the Vice Principal for Higher Education clarified that while these students are not reflected in HCA's current internal cohort data, they will appear in OfS metrics. A further query regarding funding was addressed by the Finance Director, who explained that these students would not be counted for funding in the year they take a break, but would be eligible in the following year if they return. The Principal also confirmed that narrative objectives remain rated Amber, indicating progress but not yet at the level required for a Green rating. The Board discussed the importance of ensuring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are presented within the relevant committees, to better align discussions with strategic priorities and inform decision-making. A new Governor requested that previous papers be made available to support understanding of how objectives have developed over time and asked for further clarity on how the objectives are assessed and aligned.

ACTION: Clerk to provide previous papers to the new Governor.

- c. Risk Register:** The Finance Director (FD) reported that there were no updates to the Risk Register. The FD also confirmed that the leases for the Hive and Chapel had been signed. Additionally, the FD informed the Board that an additional capital grant from the Department for Education (DfE), has been allocated to HCA, to be spent by March 2028. The FD clarified that this grant was not applied for, but was directly allocated to the college. The FD provided further clarification on this matter and confirmed that the funds are restricted to being spent on the Folly campus.

6. Finance Update: including Management Accounts and key risks

The Finance Director (FD) reviewed the February accounts, noting that the post-16 budget grant, initially confirmed at £30k, has been adjusted to £34k. The FD informed the Board that the Association of Colleges (AoC) believes the National Insurance recovery will be approximately 80%, although this has not yet been confirmed. As a result, it is expected that around £8k per month will be recovered, rather than the £10k previously provisionally accounted for. These changes were highlighted to the Board, and it is hoped that the March accounts will be available this week. A Governor inquired whether the issue of holiday pay had been resolved and if it was included in the forecast. The FD confirmed that it had been resolved and was accounted for in the forecast.

7. Update on: English & Maths Funding Requirements

The Vice Principal for Further Education (VPFE) provided an update on new national funding requirements mandating a minimum of 100 scheduled teaching hours for English and Maths,

acknowledging sector-wide concerns about the practicality of these expectations. Currently, HCA offers three hours per week and plans to meet the requirement by extending teaching into the summer term, starting from induction, and using one bank holiday; however, late starters may face up to a 50% funding reduction. While a national recommendation suggests providing four hours of Maths per week, HCA has opted not to adopt this, given it is non-mandatory and challenging to deliver across the sector. The VPFE assured the Board that staffing is sufficient to support the plan, though attendance may decline after exams. To mitigate this, the college will offer practical sessions such as university application support, an approach welcomed by governors for promoting both academic and personal development. The VPFE also explained that twilight sessions are not viable due to transport issues, and online delivery is prohibited under current funding criteria requiring face-to-face teaching. To encourage early engagement, English and Maths will be included in “Meet the Tutor” events, with timetables issued to ensure the first sessions can be recorded. It was clarified that the 100-hour requirement refers to scheduled teaching hours rather than student attendance.

8. Update on Curriculum Development:

- a. **Portfolio Development:** The Principal presented the Higher Education portfolio development strategy, identifying potential growth areas including enterprise and business skills in respect to the Arts. It was noted that the proposal is based around developing a platform for broadening the degree portfolio. A Governor raised a query regarding the inclusion of architecture, highlighting its highly competitive nature and must also demonstrate clear employability prospects. The Chair clarified that the report was intended as an aspirational overview rather than a definitive list of courses under development. Regarding recruitment challenges in Digital, the Vice Principal for Higher Education commented on the difficulty recruiting to Digital Content Creation despite this area growing nationally. The Chair concluded by describing the strategy as a considered and sustainable approach to expanding the Higher Education provision in an interdisciplinary and cost-effective manner.
- b. **HCA Empower:** The Principal introduced the HCA Empower framework, which aims to support student success by embedding the development of personal and professional skills within the curriculum. The Principal noted that the delayed implementation would enable more effective integration. Governors expressed support for this approach, favouring it over a standalone model. The Board discussed how the impact of the framework could be evaluated, with suggestions including student surveys and portfolio-based outputs (such as a “creative LinkedIn”). Members were invited to propose appropriate metrics, including behavioural and team-based indicators. The Vice Principal Higher Education noted that there are freely available models that could be adapted for this purpose. A Governor recommended exploring perception-based and transformative learning approaches.

***Post-meeting note:** A Governor subsequently shared with the Clerk a number of relevant platforms and tools for the team to consider in gathering and analysing data to measure the framework’s impact.*

9. Draft Accountability Statement

The Vice Principal for Business Development and Student Experience (VPBDSE) presented the draft Accountability Agreement Statement, outlining HCA’s current position in light of recent changes to Department for Education (DfE) guidance and how it compares to the previous year. The statement is intended to reflect national and regional priorities, including possible alignment

with the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), and will serve as a strategic document published on the college website. As such, formal Board approval is required under DfE guidance, and it was confirmed that this cannot be delegated to the Principal. A Governor recommended including further detail on HCA's socio-economic context. Given the 30 June submission deadline and the Board's meeting schedule, it was agreed that final approval would be delegated to the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

10. Committee and Board Meeting Dates for 2025/26

The proposed Committee and Board meeting dates for the 2025/26 academic year were presented to the Board by the Principal. The Board reviewed the schedule and confirmed they were content with the proposed dates.

Decision: The Board approved the 2025/26 meeting dates as presented.

11. Chair Recruitment update

The Search and Governance Committee Chair updated the Board on the recruitment of a new Chair. She indicated that progress to date is limited, with ongoing networking by herself and the Principal. It was acknowledged that the Committee will now explore engaging recruitment agencies, with interviews planned to identify suitable partners for recommendation. The current Chair confirmed they would be willing to remain in post on an interim basis until December, if required, to allow time for a suitable appointment to be made.

12. Committee Meeting Minutes

The following draft committee minutes were presented and noted by the Board:

- a. Curriculum and Quality (FE) held on 25 March 2025
- b. Curriculum and Quality (HE) held on 25 March 2025
- c. Curriculum and Quality (Combined) held on 25 March 2025
- d. Search and Governance held on 31 March 2025
- e. Audit Committee held on 07 April 2025
- f. Finance and General Purpose held on 31 March 2025

13. Any other Business

The Chair invited the Board to raise any other business. As no further matters were identified, the Chair proceeded to the confidential item and requested all staff and student governors to leave.

14. Confidential Item

The Chair moved on to the confidential item, and all staff and student governors left the meeting at 18:38. The confidential discussion took place with only the Principal and Independent Governors present. Please refer to the separate confidential minutes for details.

15. Close of Business and Date of Next Meeting

With no further business to discuss, the Chair closed the meeting at 19:05. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 07th July 2025, at 4:30 PM.