

STANDARDS AND EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00pm on 1 December 2015

Present:	S Daley (Chair) A Maltpress	K Heathcote J Bloomfield	A Head N Sawas
In Attendance:	R Carter, Chair R Kirk, AP QI J Bridges (Clerk)	L Johnson, VP C&Q S Steeds, HE Director	T O'Sullivan, HR Director M Snell, Consultant

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest to declare in relation to the items of this agenda.

Action

Election of Vice Chair

The Clerk invited members to express interest to take the post as Vice Chair to the Committee. J Bloomfield has acted as Vice Chair in the interim of appointing. A Maltpress was nominated to take the role. **Proposed** by J Bloomfield and **seconded** by N Sawas.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from J Gazzard. L Moody, Vice Principal Employer Engagement and B Unwin, Quality Manager also sent their apologies.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2015

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record subject to amending the date recorded as 204/15 in Chapter 16 on page 6 of the minutes to 2014/15.

JBridges

3 Matters Arising

The matters arising from the meeting were summarised in the report and all changes reported had either been commended to the SAR or, where appropriate an update had been provided to confirm the status.

Each matter arising was reviewed by the Committee as follows:

4 College Self Assessment Report 2014/15

i. Chapter 6 – Effectiveness of Leadership and Management

The bulleted points have been reviewed and now evidence the distance travelled. The key evidence has also been reviewed and additional points to reference the work of promoting British Values and improved governance are now referenced under LM10. Areas for improvement now include Maths GCSE, Functional Skills and Apprenticeship timely. Student Voice is mentioned as an improvement area under Chapter 8, Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare of Learners. Members felt that these changes better evidenced why leadership and management is outstanding and reflected the areas where improvement is expected and required.

The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality was asked to ensure that an accurate statement about high grades was used in the SAR as no national rate exists. Members therefore asked that the statement explicitly details the percentage of courses with high grades.

LJohnson

ii. Chapter 7 – Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The aspirational targets have been removed from the SAR. The comments made by parents in the survey about the positive experiences with PSTs has now been mentioned as a strength. Reference to GCSE English has been removed from the improvement section leaving the development of teaching, learning and

assessment of Functional Skills and GCSE Maths as area for improvement. After review members concurred that the grade should remain at a 2 as insufficient teaching and learning is outstanding.

iii. **Chapter 8 – Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare of Learners**

The positive destination outcomes have been added as strengths to the SAR. Reference has also been made to the Positive Intervention Programme and how this supports the students' personal development, can improve their behaviour and looks after their welfare issues; providing the wrap around support. It was noted that progression is referred to under chapter 9, outcomes for learners.

iii. **Chapter 9 – Outcomes for Learners**

The grade for Maths in the profile summary (page 16) has been lowered to a 4 in recognition that GCSE Maths at 17% success is poor. The Chair commented that at West Suffolk College 98.5% of our students were entered for GCSE Maths. This is significantly higher than other Colleges so WSC success, although higher than the national rate, is not comparable when most other Colleges entered a much lower percentage of students. That being said, a success rate of 17% is not something that the College is celebrating and members agreed the amendment to a grade 4. Maths and Functional Skills are to be added as a focus area on agendas for the Committee meetings in the year.

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Progression has been added as a strength in this section of the SAR. The statements concerning GCSE English have been strengthened and reference has been made that over the past 3 years 16-18 success rates have risen significantly and are now exceptionally high. Members asked that a value added statement is also included as a strength.

LJohnson

iv. **Chapter 10 - Safeguarding**

Measuring the impact of safeguarding has been added as an area for improvement.

v. **Chapter 11 – 16 to 19 Study Programmes**

The actual number of vocational courses (8) has replaced the words 'a very small number'. The number of students in the third bulleted point has also been added.

vi. **Chapter 12 – Adult Learning Programmes**

The towns where Local Learning Centres are located has been used rather than stating that the College maintains centres in each town.

vii. **Chapter 13 - Apprenticeships**

Evidence of employer engagement (criterion A2) now includes the strength statements that employers contribute to the design of the apprenticeship offer, and participate in employer forums informing the design of the curriculum.

viii. **Chapter 14 - Traineeships**

Despite the high percentage (98%) of traineeships that lead to employment and/or apprenticeships it would be difficult to justify a grade 1 as upon investigation the Maths and English results from within the Traineeship do not support outstanding. The Committee agreed to approve the grade as good (2).

ix. **Chapter 15 – High Needs Learners**

The creation of SENDAT Multi Academy Trust is now mentioned as a strength in this section of the SAR. The provision of High Needs Learners was confirmed as a grade 2, as there are no gaps in achievement, but it is not sufficiently high to be outstanding.

x. **Chapter 3 – Grade Profile Summary**

Effectiveness of leadership and management overall is grade 1. All elements are graded outstanding apart from Apprenticeships and High Needs Learners (both graded a 2).

The Committee **approved** overall effectiveness at grade 2 and will put a recommendation to the Corporation at the 11 December 2015 meeting. All staff involved in the development of the SAR received thanks for their hard work in producing such a comprehensive document. Specific thanks were given to Lindsey Johnson and to Rachel Kirk, Colin Shaw, Sarah-Louise Neesam, Kerry Heathcote, Calvin Marshall, Nick Stevens, Laraine Moody, David Ruddy and Barbara Unwin for their involvement with particular chapters.

iv. **Quality Improvement Plan 2015/16 – Chapter 17 (Page 12)**

Four priority areas for improvement have been commended to the Quality Improvement Plan: more rigour on apprenticeship success rates; GCSE Maths; student engagement; and improving stretch and challenge. A review of the 2015/16 Quality Improvement Plan will be added as an agenda item for the Committee meeting to be held in January 2016.

5 **HE 2014/15 Performance Report**

Attrition in 2014/15 has risen and where it has been noticeably high (Business Management, Music and Technology) investigation has taken place to identify the underlying causes of dissatisfaction or poor performance. No patterns were apparent and the reasons for withdrawal were specific to individuals and where there was poor performance this was not anticipated based on previous attainment.

For Combined Routes and Counselling it has been noted through course committee that those who progress onto HE from an internal Access to HE course perform better than those that do not. It appears that attrition happens at Access to HE level and once progressed onto HE students know what to expect and the commitment required so early leavers from HE programmes is lower.

For 2015/16 recruitment has increased. The graph provided in the report shows a steady decline in HE enrolment from 2011/12 to 2014/15. This trend has been reversed in 2015/16 which has seen a return to growth and future HND enrolments are expected for February 2016. The blue line in the graph shows the number of starts. This is the actual number of individual students enrolled. The red line shows the Full Time Equivalent (FTE). A full time student (on 120 credits) equals 1.0FTE and represents 1 student whereas a part time student (on 60 credits) equals 0.5FTE. Two part time students therefore would equal 1.0FTE but represents 2 individual students.

Members asked how staff are encouraged to develop and introduce new courses to the Curriculum such as the new Interior Design course being delivered in this academic year. This is achieved through Curriculum Planning and Strategy. The Strategy is currently being developed and will provide a 5 year curriculum development plan. Market intelligence is also used together with our work with employers to establish their workforce needs. The LEP Skills Strategy is also a key document that helps inform how our curriculum needs to evolve. The Curriculum Strategy, once developed, will be shared with the Corporation and will cover all areas of provision including Apprenticeships, Classroom Based Learning and Higher Education.

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The HE Director was asked by members to provide an update on the attrition rate at each meeting of the Committee. The update should include the number of students who have left their course and the reasons why. It was noted the HE Director should use the UCS BSE calculation of attrition and not that of UCS Hub which includes internal transfers and non-starters within attrition rates.

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6 **NSS Survey Response Report**

The Committee queried the negative comments made in the students' responses to the survey. It was noted that in some instances where questions are not relevant to individuals the option in the survey to skip the question or reply as not applicable is not available and therefore, if a student is asked for example about whether the learning resources they need have been made available and the student has responded no, this is not necessarily because they've not been available but in many cases the resource has not been required. Such responses therefore can distort where dissatisfaction actually exists.

Despite the marginal improvement on Assessment and Feedback from 68% to 73% (now at national rate) one aspect, 'feedback on work is prompt' remains well below the national rate at 60% (NR = 70%). The Committee was concerned that although improvement has been made on the previous year (52%) students clearly remain dissatisfied and this could lead to students making the decision to leave the course. The Committee asked to receive a report to confirm what initiatives and actions are to be put in place to improve prompt feedback to students. A timed action plan with specific targets is to be presented to the Committee. This will also detail how the improvements will be seen, measured and evidenced and the specific action to be taken. The report will be presented to the Committee at the next meeting to be held in January 2016.

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7 **Complaints and Compliments**

The report informed the Committee of the complaints and compliments received since September 2015. There were no issues arising. The Clerk commented that the full report linked within the paper could not be accessed and will check all hyperlinks contained in the pack of papers. The Clerk will reissue the pack to the Committee electronically once the links have been fixed.

JBridges

8 **Internal Audit Reports**

i. ***Examinations Department***

The report was received for information.

ii. ***Maths and English***

The purpose of the internal audit work was to ensure that the framework in place to deliver Maths and English in the 2015/16 academic year is adequate, that the lessons learned from the 2014/15 academic year have been acted on and that an appropriate means to determine the study level to be delivered is followed.

The audit work reviewed a sample of students to check compliance for the condition of funding issued by the EFA in 2014/15. The sample found 98.5% compliance compared to a significant number of Colleges that had much lower compliance rates. The College has now developed a report that shows all enrolled learners that fall into the condition of funding for Maths and English. This enables the College to identify the students that do not have the required grades (C or above in Maths and English) so that they can be enrolled onto the appropriate course to gain the qualification.

A Head left the meeting at 5.30pm

9 **Workforce Key Performance Indicators**

The report shows that long term absence has increased slightly over the year and absence over the summer months was due to time lost for serious illnesses suffered by six people. Members noted that Stress is the fourth highest reason for leave and asked about the stress management strategy of the College. The HR Director confirmed that the College works closely with Occupational Health services; referring each member of staff and analysis of stress management is undertaken by the College's Health and Safety Committee which receives termly statistical and detailed reports.

Members noted that the number of business support staff absent has increased substantially compared to previous years and asked the HR Director to explain why. A report will be presented to the Committee at the meeting to be held in January 2016. The Committee asked that the report also looks at the age and gender profile of those absent, the reasons why and to look for trends in days of the week or if absence coincides with events in the year. It is important to understand any underlying reason why staff are absent. Is it because they feel undervalued, they won't be missed or that their place in the organisation is unimportant for example? The HR Director should also check that the numbers of staff absent in previous years also include Fixed Term and Hourly Paid staff to ensure a fair year-on-year comparison.

Staff turnover is based upon those on permanent contracts only as staff on fixed term or hourly paid have contracts that are due to end and are therefore excluded. This calculation is comparable with other College's in the sector. Turnover is steady at 10.5% and there are no concerns to report at this time.

10 **Workforce Update**

The most critical functions for recruitment remain engineering and maths and it has continued to be difficult to recruit teaching staff from the UK to these areas. The College has, for the first time, approached the European markets and has advertised vacancies there. The response has been excellent with well qualified candidates applying for posts. A new recruit from the EU starts with the College in the New Year. Accommodation for new recruits is problematic. Bury St Edmunds is relatively expensive to Europeans so the College is looking to find accommodation for them initially and work with them to find more permanent lodgings once in post.

Participation in the staff survey rose by 30% compared with the previous year and over 400 staff took part. The Committee was surprised that the response to statement 7 (training and development opportunities at the College help me to do my job well) was noticeably lower than the other areas. This could be because training and development is now targeted and relevant to the post as opposed to staff undertaking the training and qualifications that they would like to develop themselves. Members suggested amending the statement to read 'I receive the relevant training and development that enables me to do my job competently'.

11 **Framework for Pay**

Confidential item under paragraph 18(2) of the Instrument and Articles of Government

12 **Workforce Risk Management**

SMT has reviewed the risk register for the 2015/16 academic year. Four risks appear on the register in relation to our workforce. Risk movement was detailed in the report. Risk R050 (Inability to recruit specialist staff) has reduced to a score of 10 (green status) further to the initiative to recruit from the EU. Members asked

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that the impact score of R050 is reviewed again because if specialist staff are not recruited, the impact would be high. The Committee asked that the SMT considers including a risk on the register that recognises a potential that employee relationships decline due to pay constraints. Members feel that it is important to keep in scope the potential impact if there are no future pay increases and this needs to be identified on the register. The SMT also needs to consider adding a risk about equal pay audits and to think about whether a lack of accommodation negatively impacts the College's ability to recruit from overseas.

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13 Committee Self Evaluation

The Chair commented that it is her intention to improve the timeliness of meetings. This can be partly achieved by looking at the appropriateness and length of papers. We need to think about how we can reduce the number of pages, make better use of the executive summaries and hyperlink documents to the reports for the background details. The Committee agreed that there should be an expectation that all members come to the meeting prepared and read the papers before attending. Likewise it is expected that the authors of the reports are able to highlight the issues at the meeting and not read the paper verbatim. It was noted that further improvements may be recommended as a result of the external review of our governance arrangements that is currently being undertaken by Mike Snell through the Learning Board Programme. His report will be available to governors at the Corporation meeting to be held in March 2016. Members were pleased at the general positivity of the evaluation and particularly that students are clearly our main focus and concern.

14 Any other business

None

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 26 January 2016 at 4.00pm. Room TG1.16

The meeting closed at 6.00pm