

STANDARDS AND EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00pm on 29 November 2016

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| Present: | S Daley (Chair) J Gazzard | A Maltpress (Vice Chair) N Savvas, Principal | K Points |
| In Attendance: | R Carter, Chair R Kirk, AP QI | C Shaw, VP S&LS R Sadler, HR Director | L Johnson, VP C&Q J Bridges, Clerk |

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

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from J Winter, Staff Governor and L Moody, Vice Principal Employer Engagement.

2 Minutes of the meetings held on 31 October 2016

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record.

3 Matters Arising

The matters arising from the meeting were summarised in the report and all actions reported had either been resolved or, where appropriate an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.

4 College Self-Assessment Report 2015/16

Effectiveness of Leadership and Management

It was noted that the table of contents on page 3 is to be updated in the final copy to the Corporation as the contents had not populated through correctly in the version received by the Committee.

Action

LJohnson

All of the comments made by governors at the last meeting about specific content of the SAR have been commended to the report. The Chair of the Corporation is to forward his further minor amendments to the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality so that these can be made before the Corporation is recommended to approve the document at the meeting to be held on 15 December 2016. It was noted that resilience isn't mentioned as a value on page 13 of the SAR yet it is a published value in our strategic plan. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality confirmed that as the SAR is retrospective resilience was not a value in the 2015/16 academic year but is a value in the 2016-19 strategic plan.

RCarter

The Committee confirmed the grade 1 overall judgement for this area.

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The Committee confirmed the grade 1 overall judgement for this area.

Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare of Learners

The Committee confirmed the grade 1 overall judgement for this area.

Outcomes for Learners

The Committee confirmed the grade 1 overall judgement for this area.

QIP for 2015/16

The Committee was satisfied that the Quality Improvement Plan for the 2015/16 academic year was complete.

Overall Effectiveness

The Committee approved the overall grade 1 judgement and will recommend that the Corporation approves the SAR at the meeting to be held on 15 December 2016. **Proposed** by A Maltpress and **seconded** by J Gazzard.

QIP for 2016/17

The 2016/17 plan derived from the SAR was agreed by the Committee. Progress against the plan will be monitored in year by this Committee.

5 HE 2015/16 Performance Report

The paper provided the Committee with an update further to the HE self-assessment report (RiME) submitted to the UoS at the end of October 2016. Recruitment has reduced (5% below the enrolments for 2015/16) with 661 students enrolled, 549 FTEs. Student satisfaction in 2015/16 however has improved by 5% compared to the previous year and similar levels of increased satisfaction across all questions in the NSS survey. Teaching and Learning at 87% (85% the previous year), 79% satisfaction of assessment and feedback (73% the previous year) and 83% satisfaction of academic support (77% the previous year).

Through analysis it has been recognised that there were significant issues that impacted enrolment numbers and achievements over the last three years; students achieving awards in 2013/14 were the last cohort of students who paid the lower levels of fees; the change in fees in 2012 had a negative impact on enrolments in that year; and students in 2014/15 were the first intake to pay higher fees to achieve and so the lower enrolments would have also appeared in the lower achievements.

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

Maintenance of student numbers is measured in three different ways at the UoS; attrition, retention and non-progression. Attrition is the measure of the proportion of students no longer active on a course of those who were expected to arrive. Therefore it includes those who did not turn up, those who transferred off the course and those who withdrew for whatever reason. Retention is the measure that the College is interested in as this measures the proportion of those students who made a start on the course (were still enrolled on 1 November, census point) but were no longer enrolled at the start of June and this measurement determines the level of income received. Retention has been between 6.6% and 6.8% but there is optimism that this will lower to around 5% with support for students in place.

The number of students achieving an Honours degree in 2015/16 was 95 (82% of those who started the course). This was consistent with the previous year but was a 9% drop on those who achieved in 2013/14. First Class degree awards have seen an increase of 1% on 2014/15 and the number of students achieving a 2:1 has increased in the same period. However, achievement of both 2:1 Classification and First Class degrees is down on 2013/14 by approximately 4% and 11% respectively. A similar picture can be seen with Foundation degrees where the numbers of students eligible to achieve an award for a Foundation degree has reduced from 134 in 2013/14 to 92 in 2015/16. It was noted that some of the lower achievement rates could purely be a consequence of the fewer student enrolments because of the higher fees and not necessarily that fewer students were achieving their awards compared to previous years.

Destination data is collected from undergraduate students in the six months following the successful completion of their studies. The number of students going into work only on completion of their studies has remained consistent for the last three years but a focus for future years must be to increase the numbers going into work and supporting students to gain employment from their studies. This is the lynchpin of the HE strategy for the College as well as looking to introduce degree apprenticeships in September 2017 and find the employer relationships to support these placements.

6 National Student Survey Progress Report

Since reporting on the outcome of the NSS survey in October 2016 a robust action plan has been put in place and has been identified as the priority task for the new Head of HE to deliver. Activities that have been initiated which respond directly to the specific topics of the action plan include; ensuring effective and timely feedback (feedback on my course is prompt); feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand; quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (staff make the subject interesting); IAG and progression support (I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies); student experience (the library resources and service are good enough for my needs); student experience (I am satisfied with the student union); and NSS/ISS Survey understanding and responses.

The priority target is to concentrate on the responses of the ISS and NSS surveys. We have been engaging with students through focus groups to find ways to make the library resources more accessible and inviting. Two student reps, one a trainee teacher, have designed and delivered a programme for campus rep training which includes a section on engagement with the University and management team here and promotes the role of the course reps as part of the management of HE in terms of promoting and sharing student union activities. A student Facebook page has been created to promote events, share information and generally encourage communication between students. A range of student social activities have been organised around Edmunds Restaurant and a number of students are booking the restaurant for quiz nights.

Course reps have been approached to work with the new Head of HE to create focus groups to address the ISS/NSS survey questions. The focus groups will aim to improve understanding of the questions. Specific course areas will be discussing questions which achieved low responses and will review expectations and understanding to ensure that students have a clearer understanding of feedback for example. With the University, and in response to student request, the next ISS survey will be modelled on the new NSS questions. Personal growth questions have been removed and the phrasing of some questions subtly changed i.e. feedback is timely rather than feedback is prompt. Teaching staff are also being encouraged to embed the language of the NSS questions into their teaching so that students recognise terms such as library resource, timely and feedback and the different guises/formats in which they can appear.

The HE PST is focussing on attendance monitoring and closely supporting those students who have indicated concern at an early stage. Course Directors meet with the PST regularly for an update on students' pastoral care and so are able to provide close support in lessons. It is important that student progress monitoring is being constantly investigated so that teaching staff are able to recognise struggling students easily and introduce the appropriate support quickly.

Course Directors are focussed on assessment schedules to ensure a balance of submission throughout the year rather than front or end loading; allowing staff to provide feedback to students in a timely fashion to ensure that feedback can be digested and students are able to develop, respond and learn from it.

The Committee was pleased to learn that students are being involved in decisions and shaping the HE provision of the future. The next survey will be carried out in February 2017 and it was noted that participation in the survey is important to the reputation and future student recruitment to the UoS at WSC. Their feedback can significantly impact the perception of the provision here so the process needs to be carefully managed.

The HE Strategy is looking to provide students with the opportunity to fulfil the aspiration that their studies will lead to employment, that their career prospects will be achieved and that they will leave their education with us having gained quality links with employers and real work related experience. We are currently working with Develop Anglia to make, find and secure student/employer connections and this work is slowly gaining pace and interest with students and will undoubtedly become one of the USPs for the UoS at WSC in the future.

It was noted that the UoS will not be participating in the TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) and the Colleges in the UoS Learning Network have also opted not to participate. The UoS achieved Bronze status and therefore chose not to participate.

It was questioned if the request of students to review the use and design of common spaces was a code for not wanting to share space with FE students. The Assistant Principal for Higher Education confirmed that this was not the case. Students wanted make use of common spaces but found that they were not comfortable areas. The suggestions for improvement are around repainting, moving and changing furniture (bean bags, sofas) and displaying more HE related images and notices. The aim is to give the communal areas more focus and purpose.

7 Complaints and Compliments

The Committee was pleased to note that there were no significant issues to report and that the number of complaints reported had reduced. Committee members were interested to know how and where the compliments are received and the nature of those reported. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality confirmed that most compliments arise from good experience stories of students and their teachers. Thank yous tend to go to the individuals concerned so it is important that we get better at capturing these.

The standard template and process for reporting and recording complaints has helped the College to capture and respond to complainants promptly. There is recognition that complaints can come from a variety of sources; Facebook, Twitter, Email, letter, telephone etc and in whatever form they are received the aim is to resolve them straight away and find the root cause. Capturing our complaints and compliments has enabled us to analyse the types of complaints received and assess if patterns or trends in the complaints expose an emerging need for the College to change its practice or policy. A good example a couple of years ago was around the disperse process of the bursary. An increase in complaints from students enabled the College to recognise that its working arrangements needed to be changed so that students received the support they needed to complete the bursary application process and receive the much needed financial support to continue with their studies. Since changing College

arrangements we can see that no complaints have been received showing that the College has appropriately responded to meet the needs of students.

8 **Workforce Update**

New recruitment techniques are currently being trialled to address the difficulty to fill roles in Engineering, Plumbing, Electrical and Construction Craft areas, including international recruitment, employee referral schemes and the introduction of a new relocation package. It is important to get managers on board and for them to use their professional networks to attract skilled staff. E-shots to students as leavers will be a marketing ploy to sow the seed that lecturing could be an opportunity for them in the future once they have industry experience. We are also making contact with the known businesses and companies that are making planned redundancies to offer their vulnerable staff job opportunities and prospects. International recruitment has been targeted at Poland, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain and Greece and decent levels of responses and applications are being received. The HR team are telephone screening competency and levels of English and ascertaining the actual interest of candidates to relocate to the UK. Skype interviews and cheap flights to Europe once short listed are planned.

To ensure that we are future proofing the College in terms of progression paths into management and hard-to-recruit roles, we have introduced a new tool to aid succession planning and to document plans to cover key roles in the event of emergency. This ensures business continuity, allows us to plan and develop the skills we need in future and promotes internal progression. Succession plans are to be reviewed bi-annually.

Absence continues to be managed and the Bradford factor trigger point of 200 used to capture repeat absenteeism and trend offenders. We are looking to improve the Occupational Health provision to ensure it best serves the College and its staff in terms of recommendations of support.

Emotional resilience training is being organised to take place in 2017 for all staff. This is a more proactive approach than stress management training as it provides understanding of how people can make themselves more resilient to the stresses of the modern world both at work and in their personal lives with an aim to reduce the chances of stress or mental health conditions occurring.

A Health and Wellbeing group has been created of volunteers from across the College and plans for projects and initiatives have been put forward. The group meets regularly with sub groups working on their own projects. Progress on the projects are expected to be available for the next meeting of the Committee.

The new regular, bite sized employee feedback tool, Spotlights, has been launched this academic year. The new approach has moved away from annual appraisals to a more timely and effective way of managing employee performance through quality dialogue which is flexible and tailored to the individual. Training has been provided for managers and the new FOLIO form will go live at the end of November 2016. The new system will ensure that we are able to focus on high quality staff performance and demonstrate this to Ofsted as part of our high performance culture. The Chair of the Corporation commented that he has participated in the use of Spotlights for his performance reviews of his line reports and had found that the forms looked and felt much better than the automated process in ClearVision. He questioned though how the College intends to make sure that timely discussions of managers with their staff have actually taken place. The HR Director confirmed that the new e-form on Folio has a mandatory field to book the next session which will prompt managers to put these in place. The HR

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team will pull reports on this field to audit that meetings have taken place with the expectation that at least one review per term will be carried out. Compliance against this will be monitored and the system will track the objectives achieved and provide opportunity for new objectives to be added. If performance issues are identified in the Spotlights process the manager is to inform the HR team so that staff can be supported and performance management documented.

9 Framework for Pay

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

10 Workforce Risk Management

It was noted that the scores of risks R050 and R053 in particular would need to be reviewed, particularly given the discussion above that there are hard to fill posts in areas such as Engineering, Plumbing, Electrical and Construction Crafts. The risk about the inability to recruit specialist staff has a residual score of 10 and should feature higher on the register whereas the risk about the culture of excellence being in decline should be a lower score on the register. These will be adjusted.

11 Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 24 January 2017 at 4.00pm. Room TG1.16

The meeting closed at 5.45pm

JBridges