

STANDARDS AND EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30pm on 14 June 2018

Present:	Sue Daley (Chair) Rudy Berongoy	Alan Maltpress (Vice Chair) Nikos Savvas, CEO/Principal	Jim Gazzard
In Attendance:	Rachel Kirk, AP HE Ruth Sadler, HR Director Jules Bridges, Clerk	Colin Shaw, VP S&LS Andrew Adamson, ED	Gary Jefferson, ED Laraine Moody (VP EE)

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

Action

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Karen Points. Non-attendance will be recorded for Jake Mann. Christine Harvey, Penny Fawcus and Debbie Coomes, who are all Executive Directors, also passed on their apologies for the meeting.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2018

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 Review of Committee KPIs

Overall attendance has dropped by a further 1% in the first half of the summer term from 90% to 89% (16-18) and 88% to 87% (19+) which is 1% lower than the same point last year. The decline in attendance has been echoed in Maths and English session, which remain consistently lower than attendance in vocational sessions.

Assessment progress has improved across all areas of curriculum and will continue to improve as staff enter grades into MarkBook following the PAR (Progress And Review) week (w/c 14 May 2018). Areas such as Art and Design and Conservatoire EAST will have their Final Major Projects completed by the end of the summer half term and will therefore have the majority of the students completing their main qualification.

Student retention remains strong for both 16-18 at 95% (the same as the previous report) and 19+ at 94% (an increase of 1% since last term). This increase is due to continued enrolments onto adult Maths and English programmes.

Student achievement is currently predicted to be strong and there is the potential for achievement to slightly exceed last year's achievement rates. However, while the predicted outturn takes students at extreme risk of failure into account, it does not account for students failing externally marked exams. Support is in place for any student who fails an exam prior to them attempting a resit.

The Committee noted the issues in Automotive and Teacher Education although these are small cohorts of students. These issues are covered in more detail in later reports of this meeting.

Overall Effectiveness

5 2017/18 Quality Improvement Plan Update

Good progress is being made against the plan to date; i.e. progress monitoring of underperforming courses, engineering reputation, start of year planning for Maths and English enrolments, work experience tracking and monitoring Observations of Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

A number of targets involve the planning for improvement 2018/19 so will be ongoing; i.e. Observations of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Staff learning and development plans etc. Sustained focus at this time of year remains around student retention and achievement and exam results.

It was noted that the one red improvement outcome concerning Apprenticeship achievement below national rate is now reported to have improved with Construction Services in particular now higher than national rate.

Outcomes for Learners

6 Engineering Update

Engineering FE provision is operating at a dramatically improved level with forecast overall success rate of 97% for this academic year. The staff are working collectively as a team to support students' capacity to achieve but are also operating autonomously, developing their own materials and methods, to optimise the potential of each and every student.

HE provision has also improved significantly, with high pass rates forecast across all courses, although there have been concerns raised over the clarity of guidance and information provided for students, from one group.

Level 2

The Level 2 course has performed well, with students all on track to complete. At this point there is predicted 100% achievement for this course.

Level 3 Year 1

The majority of teaching has now been completed with students focussing on completing their assignments. The staff are now running focussed assignment sessions to ensure the students achieve and on time. At the time of reporting achievement is predicted at 93% (42/45) for this course.

Level 3 Year 2

The second year students are also focusing on completing the remainder of their outstanding assignments and end of year project portfolios. At the time of reporting achievement is predicted at 100% for this course.

HE

The ISS results for the BEng first years are not favourable, with the main cause for concern being their dissatisfaction over confusion with one of their assignments, with regard to the specific word count and clarity over the required format for a technical report. The issue has been resolved, with the students having the clarification they needed but this has clearly caused them some level of stress while trying to complete their assignments. It appears that while their experience with the assignment was not good achievement is good with most reaching a mark of over 80% against a pass rate of 40%. A forum has been held with the students to clarify their concerns which has confirmed their frustration, as reported in the ISS survey.

As a positive this has identified the need to provide support for the tutor to ensure that firstly they provide clarity of requirements from the outset with students and do not move the goal posts and secondly, that the College provides de-escalation and customer service training for all in the Engineering team.

7 Maths and English Update

As at 4 June 2018 our Condition of Funding rate was 95.9%.

The process for allocating Maths and English classes for 2018/19 has been streamlined, with an 'Enrolment Confirmation Week' planned for w/c 28 August 2018. All students with offers will come into College, have their GCSE results checked, do a Maths and English initial assessment and get placed on the appropriate class at the appropriate level by the Maths and English team. The aim is to have the majority of students in the right place first time both in terms of meeting Condition of Funding and ensuring students are in class to receive appropriate teaching and learning from week 1.

The first GCSE Maths paper was sat by 570 students (16-18 and 19+) on 24 May 2018. Attendance was pleasing at 94%. The first English paper was sat on 5 June 2018 with a similar turnout rate. The second Maths paper was sat on 7 June 2018 and the second English paper on 8 June 2018. On average across these exams attendance has been 95%.

GCSE revision sessions were held over the Easter break. Attendance was double that of February half term but still low for the number of students studying with us. Sessions were also held in the May half term and from the end of April we have been running drop in workshops in the MESS for Maths revision all day every day. Some 'borderline' students have been referred in order to maximise their chances of passing but the opportunity was open to all. Low numbers of students have accessed this facility despite repeated reminders in class and plenty of publicity.

A second round of Functional Skills exams took place w/c 14 May 2018. Staff are reporting that there are still significant issues with the POP (Pearson Online Portal) testing system despite a visit and reassurances from Pearsons. A review of the way in which Functional Skills exams are administered is planned for after the GCSE period. We continue to work hard with Pearsons to resolve the technical issues with their system.

Results from the most recent round of testing were in at the beginning of June 2018 and this has identified the students who will be called in for intensive workshops from this week onwards.

The Committee was disappointed to learn that the Head of Maths and English, Rachel Gent, has tendered her resignation. She is due to leave the College this month and recruitment is already underway to find and secure her successor with a good balance of both management and teaching capabilities. The data and logistics plan (to overhaul Maths and English enrolment, timetabling, movement of student transfers and ensuring that each student is put on to the right course at the right level) is to be shared with the Committee (by email) to review and scrutinise its fitness for purpose and provide their comments back to Colin Shaw who takes line management and responsibility for the new post holder.

Colin Shaw

The College has agreed to participate in the Mathematics in FE Colleges study which aims to produce evidence-based advice on how to improve provision for students below GCSE level.

In addition to this, the College will also be participating in the Basic Maths Premium Pilot, which will test the impact of paying a premium to post 16 providers to support attainment in basic Maths. Additional funding of up to £500 per student will be allocated for the 2018/19 academic year for every student enrolled on a 16-19 study programme without prior attainment of a grade 4 or above in GCSE Maths.

To redress the balance for English the College is putting in a bid for a research grant from the Education Endowment Foundation. The overarching theme will be to investigate and evaluate strategies to re-engage the disengaged through in-class dialogue to address learning histories/barriers. Tracking and monitoring of Character Strength progress is also to be mapped against their attainment.

The Committee asked that Maths and English continues as a focus area at their meetings in the next academic year. The Clerk will ensure that this stays as a standard agenda item for these meetings.

Jules Bridges

8 Complaints and Compliments

To date there have been 18 complaints and 40 compliments received by the College. While there are no common themes emerging in terms of the complaints, processes and/or training have been put in place to help improve our services in the future.

While complaints are of a varied nature, 50% may not have resulted in a formal complaint being made if there had been effective, supportive and considerate communications in place with the aggrieved party from the initial point of contact/disclosure. It would appear that some complainants felt the need to escalate their complaint formally because they didn't feel listened to or did not believe they received an adequate response. To help address this issue, customer service training is being put in place for student facing staff from September 2018 and complaints will continue to be reviewed to see if the training has had an impact.

In terms of compliments, again these are varied across the College, but it was pleasing to note that Sudbury Learning Centre stands out with 8/40 compliments received and the Chair reported that staff there were delighted to know that their efforts had not gone unnoticed by the Committee.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

9 Lesson Observations and Internal Quality Reviews

Two Internal Quality Reviews were carried out in April 2018; Healthcare and Early Years and Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy.

The report set out the strengths of these areas, the areas for improvement and a number of recommendations. The retention rate for some Healthcare and Early Years courses are lower than expected although it was recognised that a high proportion of students listed as 'withdrawn' have internally transferred to other courses in the College or had progressed onto Employment (including Apprenticeships) so this may have skewed the data. A review of the IAG (Information Advice and Guidance) and recruitment processes and course offer is to take place to ensure that the pathways

meet the student and employer needs and aspirations in relation to the issues around withdrawal and work with internal colleagues so that early withdrawals are recorded and handled appropriately and swiftly.

In Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy an agreed set of professional standards that reflect work place expectations are to be developed. The teams are also to share best practice across different curriculum areas to showcase the beauty organisation, planning and communication and competition work in hairdressing.

10 **NSS/ISS Update**

The outcome for the NSS report for 2016/17 provided the College with some action points, some of which were for the whole HE provision and others for individual course areas where students' satisfaction levels were particularly poor, these were HN and FdSc Mechanical Engineering, FdSc Construction Management and FdA Hospitality and Event Management.

In these areas a 'risk alert' was put in place and the courses were monitored through monthly meetings. All courses still have action points being reviewed. In areas where student feedback is improving, the risk alerts will be closed at the end of the academic year. Where there are remaining areas requiring improvement, the risk alert will stay active into next academic year to maintain rigorous checks on these courses.

A programme of focus group meetings continues across the whole of the HE provision and these have enabled the team to respond quickly to issues raised by students.

The current NSS/ISS window has now closed and the results for the ISS for 2017/18 are in. The results show an improvement in overall student satisfaction from 75% (2017) to 81% this year.

For all eight themes of the survey there is an overall improvement on the scores last year. Across each of the 27 questions, there is an average improvement of 7% and in some individual cases as much as 10%-15% improvement. The response rate to the survey has also improved from 31% in 2017 to 47% this year.

Of the eight sections, it was noted that there are three that have been identified by the HE management team as being areas requiring further investigations and improvement for the whole HE provision; IT resources (in Learning Resources) achieving only 68% satisfactions; Timely feedback (in assessment and feedback) achieving 71% satisfaction; and Student Voice (in Student Voice and Communication) achieving 50% overall. All of these satisfaction rates however are the same as last year or a significant improvement this year has been expressed (IT Resources for example saw an improvement from 60% last year to 68% this year).

11 **HE Retention and Withdrawals**

The withdrawal report for May this year shows that there have been 26 withdrawals across all HE courses which equates to 4.1% of students. This is 0.5% (5 students fewer) improvement on the same reporting point last year.

This positive impact is due to the early contact with students to track their non-attendance together with the triangulated support offered through the use of ProMonitor and the work of the HE Learning Support Tutor.

Having analysed the data the Committee was pleased to learn that there are no trends emerging of any specific subject area that is at greater level of risk than another.

Reasons for withdrawal are due to personal/financial/health reasons (16), academic failure (1), lapse of time (4), wrong institution/choice/career (3) or other (2) reason.

The current retention rate is 96.9% against a target of 96%.

12 Access to HE Retention

All Access to HE courses are being well supported by the PST who meets regularly with the course directors to identify and agree support packages for those students listed as being at risk. All students currently retained on the courses are on target to achieve.

There are three courses however that are considered as 'at risk'; Humanities, Nursing and Business. In all cases actions plans are in place and there are weekly monitoring and review meetings between course teams and the PST.

The subject leader has rectified register issues previously reported to the Committee and MarkBook completion continues to be monitored.

Students who have not been attending, have all received a letter and invited to see their Course Director and/or the Subject Leader. This has been positive as a number of students have now re-engaged further to this contact.

Overall retention on Access to HE stands at 85% and this is improving as issues with registers continue to be rectified.

13 Awarding Organisation Activity Report

The report provided the Committee with an overview of the activity to date of work completed, ongoing actions and visits/reports pending from awarding body visits, exams and reports.

The Committee noted the extensive range of visits undertaken and the positive progress and approvals awarded.

It was noted that the issue with the Health and Social Care paper has been resolved with the awarding body. This was a national issue with the theory paper and students have been re-entered for the exam and they are currently preparing for their resit.

14 Leadership and Management Staff Development Update Report

In the year the College has provided a wide range of professional development opportunities to staff including attendance at Conferences, cross College training, mandatory training, qualification based training, external workshops and team training events. By May 2018 the total annual budget has been committed/spent.

The next Professional Development day for staff is scheduled to take place on 4 July 2018 and involves combination of external training, manager overview of the College community and a teaching and learning showcase for delivery staff. On 5 July 2018 Counter Terrorism training has been organised for all staff.

The work with Sycol continues. This year this project has focussed on the development and embedding of character strengths into the College culture, processes and practice.

The focus for the 2018/19 CPD plan will be on College improvement targets, innovation and management training. A staff development application form is also being developed in Folio so that training and development requests can be managed and the budget controlled.

15 Workforce Update

Confidential Item under Paragraph 18(2) of the Instrument and Articles of Government

16 Any other business

There were no other business items for discussion.

Date of next meeting

Thursday 11 October 2018 at 4.30pm. Room TG1.16

The meeting closed at 6.10pm