

**STANDARDS AND EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30pm on 19 April 2018**

**Present:** Sue Daley (Chair)                      Alan Maltpress (Vice Chair)                      Jake Mann  
                    Jim Gazzard                                      Karen Points                                      Nikos Savvas, CEO/Principal

**In Attendance:** Rachel Kirk, AP HE                      Colin Shaw, VP S&LS                      Gary Jefferson, ED  
                    Ruth Sadler, HR Director                      Andrew Adamson, ED                      Penny Fawcus, ED  
                    Laraine Moody (VP EE)                      Cathy Durrant (H of PS)                      Jules Bridges, Clerk

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 Rudy Berongoy. Christine Harvey, Executive Director also passed on her apologies for the meeting.

**2      Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 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.

The retention on Access to HE courses was included in the paper linked to the matters arising sheet received by the Committee. PSTs and Course Leaders have actions in place to support students stay on track. Of the three Access courses on the At Risk report, two are being robustly managed and the manager who has been absent for the third course is now back at work and leading the progress of the course and students. Discussions to improve the Access to Nursing course are in place as there have been longstanding issues with student progress. It is planned that short and fat modules are to be introduced rather than long and thin which should aid better retention and progress for students. The Assistant Principal for HE was asked to continue reporting on retention for Access to HE within her HE Retention and Withdrawal Report to the Committee.

Rachel Kirk

Agenda items 10, 12 and 13 preceded items 4 through 9 and 11

**4      Review of Committee KPIs**

The Committee was provided with an overview of the College's quality performance against a set of key performance indicators that also highlighted the actions in place to address the areas of underperformance.

In summary the KPI report shows that the quality of teaching as observed through learning walks remains strong with 83.5% of staff being identified as being good or better (green). We are still awaiting feedback from the UCU representatives regarding the College's suggestion to move away from graded lesson observations to unannounced learning walks but initial discussions with UCU have been promising that this change will be acceptable.

Overall attendance dropped by 1% but remains good at 90% (16-18) and 88% (19+) which is the same as this point last year. Attendance at Maths and English however remains consistently lower than attendance at vocational sessions and improvement is required.

Maths GCSE		English GCSE	
16-18	19+	16-18	19+
78%	85%	79%	78%
Maths Functional Skills		Functional Skills	
16-18	19+	16-18	19+
76%	83%	79%	82%

Assessment progress did pick up as predicted at the end of the term, with more progress expected following the Easter break when assessments submitted prior to Easter have been marked and entered onto MarkBook.

Student retention remains strong for both 16-18 (95%) and 19+ (93%), although 16-18 retention has dropped by 2% and 19+ dropped by 1% over the term. Retention for both 16-18 and 19+ remain above the year end retention rate of 91%.

The Committee asked to see the updated data in the next report leaving the current data in so that movement and/or improvement can be seen between reports.

Colin Shaw

### ***Overall Effectiveness***

#### **5 2017/18 Quality Improvement Plan Update**

Managers have updated their progress against the QIP for March 2018.

There have been a number of additional items relating to developmental actions to further improve and strengthen the self-assessment ambitions and to take the College to a sustainable position of outstanding, recognised by internal and external stakeholders.

Items included for development relate to improving the quality and consistency of Teaching, Learning and Assessment through targeted and rigorous quality assurance; quality improvement strategies focussing on sharing best practice and developmental observation, tutor support for TLA improvement and innovation; CPD for managers focussing on culture change; curriculum review and planning an eLearning strategy.

The Committee commented that the 'new' Quality Improvement Plan felt rigorous and robust with separation of the planning and improvement developmental actions and clear distinction of planned and measurable end dates with use of associated and appropriate RAG rates.

Debbie Coomes left the meeting at 5.25pm

### ***Outcomes for Learners***

#### **6 Engineering Update**

Student retention and forecast achievement has dramatically improved from the 2016/17 position. There have been some staffing changes; however disruption to delivery and the unsettling of students has been minimised. 90% of students are on target with their assignment completions, with the 10% attending focused assignment support sessions to help them get back on track.

### **Level 2**

Historically the Level 2 criteria has not had milestone assessments in MarkBook due to the qualification being largely dependent on an end point exam and synoptic test. A new way of monitoring 'artificial' milestone

assessments has been developed and in the last report to the Committee it was reported that assessment completions were at 17%, this has now improved to 53% against the target of 60% for this point in the year. 100% achievement for this course is predicted.

### **Level 3 Year 1**

One student withdrew in the February half term to take a position in full time employment and a second has since withdrawn as they have started a career with the RAF. Assignment support sessions to increase the assignment completion rate are being held and at this point a 100% pass rate for the remaining students (96% achievement) is predicted.

### **Level 3 Year 2**

These groups' non-vocational lessons have been restructured, so their tutors now staff all of them. These sessions are for additional project based activities, encouraging students to apply the skills and knowledge that they have learnt on their programme, to help motivate and engage them. Assignment support sessions to increase the assignment completion rate are in place and again a 100% achievement rate is predicted.

### **All Courses**

The team are empowered to develop new ideas and they are exploring opportunities for a new curriculum design, to ensure that programmes are the most current and engaging offer available and are developing a digitalised manufacturing module to run alongside our programmes.

## **7 Maths and English Update**

As noted above under the KPI report attendance for Maths and English remains the priority focus for the teaching teams.

Revision days were planned for Easter and information about the sessions, revision resources and dates of the exams have been sent home.

Plans are well underway for a 'Mock' exam week this month. This will enable the College to predict a likely outturn for results as well as providing a 'dry-run' of the exams to the students and staff.

For Functional Skills, a robust revision and testing schedule is being planned. It is proposed that in addition to the GCSE revision days in May half term there will also be Functional Skills workshops.

The teaching timetable from 11 June 2018 is to be suspended and intensive workshops and exam sessions for all students who have not yet achieved are to be held. These will run for 3 weeks to the end of June 2018. Students who do not achieve will be invited in August to ensure positive progression and higher achievements.

The number of completed speaking and listening assessments carried out by the vocational areas requires more focus to obtain the evidence to support student achievement. Only 29% of evidence for Level 1 Speaking and Listening assessments has been received and 20% for Level 2. There is a significant push for evidence submission being undertaken by the Executive Director for Maths and English, Andrew Adamson.

Predicted outcomes for Functional Skills reflect a declining trend from 2015/16 and we may be seeing the effect of success in prior years leading

to a plateau effect among continuing students. There are support plans in place for each student and the team is working with them to maximise achievements.

There is a significant number of students on GCSE programmes who have low predicted grades and may have been better suited to a progression qualification. This will inevitably impact on pass (grade 4 and above) and achievement rates. A rough cut of our data suggests that between 13 and 17% of GCSE English students and between 7 and 10% of GCSE Maths students do not meet the entry criteria of a grade 3, D or L2.

In year retention rates for 19+ are all above national rates with the exception of Entry Level 1 English. Achievement numbers for Level 1 and 2 Maths and English are currently showing as low as many results are yet to be reported through ProAchieve.

ESOL in year retention overall is 93% which is at national average. The Committee was concerned to learn that the numbers of ESOL students has significantly dropped. The Vice Principal Employer Engagement confirmed that the report only reflects the first cohort of students. The second cohort are yet to be entered onto the system and historically are better retained and achieve so statistically the report is set to improve. The Committee will receive an update in the next report to be received in June 2018.

Andrew  
Adamson

Jake Mann left the meeting at 5.40pm

## **8 HE Withdrawals and Retention**

As at March 2018 there have been 19 withdrawals across all HE courses which equates to 3.6% (24) of students. This is 0.7% (6 students) improvement on the same point last year.

Early chasing of non-attendance and the triangulated support offered through the use of ProMonitor and the new HE Learning Support is having a positive impact. It is therefore anticipated that the withdrawal rate will level out over the remainder of the academic year leaving a final withdrawal rate not dissimilar to last year.

The majority of withdrawals are for personal, financial or health reasons. These are issues that are usually unresolvable due to the nature of the students (often mature with responsibilities) and the circumstances.

The current retention rate is 96.5% against a target rate of 96%.

## **9 NSS/ISS Update Report**

As previously reported to the Committee the outcome of the NSS Report provided the College with some action points, some of these are for the whole HE provision and others for individual course areas where the student satisfaction levels were particularly poor. These were HN and FdSc Mechanical Engineering, FdSc Construction Management and FdA Hospitality and Event Management.

In these three areas a 'risk alter' has been put on the course and these are monitored through monthly meetings with the Assistant Principal for HE and the Head of HE. All courses still have action points being reviewed and feedback from students is improving.

The current NSS/ISS windows close at the end of April 2018 and 76.50% of eligible students have completed the NSS and 45.51% (in 2016/17 the response rate was 31.1%) have completed the ISS to date. The UoS at WSC has the highest response rate of any of the UoS partner Colleges or the Ipswich hub for both the NSS and ISS surveys.

Results for the NSS will not be available until the end of August and for the ISS the end of May 2018. The Committee is to receive a report of the results at the first available meeting for both Surveys (ISS and NSS results October 2018).

Rachel Kirk

Agenda item 10 preceded items 4 through to 9 and 11

#### **10 Early Leavers and Withdrawals Report**

The number of withdrawals for 16-18s has risen just above this time last year by 2 students. It now sits at 135 students against 133 for the end of March 2016/17. The PSTs have been working hard to re-engage and support students that have not returned from the Christmas and half term holidays but have now had to withdraw in some cases. This explains the increase in withdrawals for December, January and February.

The 19+ withdrawals are still seeing a reduction on last year's figures with 30 withdrawals compared to 48 at this time last year. The main reasons for withdrawal in the 16-18 age group have been due to gaining employment (24%), gaining an apprenticeship (15%) or illness (13%) accounting for 52% of all withdrawals. For 19+ students the reasons include illness (27%), employment (17%), altered family commitments (13%) and personal reasons (13%).

N Savvas joined the meeting at 5.00pm

When looking at apprentices we can also see a year on year reduction in the number of withdrawals. To the end of March 2018 there have been a total of 30 (16-18) students and 42 (19+) students withdrawn compared to 63 and 99 respectively from the same period last year. It appears that the majority of withdrawals is due to the employee (apprentice) leaving the employment.

Generally there is an improvement in retention across all areas although some cases for withdrawal are still coming through. Healthcare and Early Years, Art, Automotive, Hairdressing, Computing and Construction Crafts have lost the most students. The main reasons are still employment or apprenticeships with illnesses being the third most common reason. Many of these will be mental health issues.

18 of the withdrawals from FT courses 19+ are from the Access to HE courses and another from Hair and Beauty so these would be our mature students. The main reasons for the 8 withdrawals this month are illness (4), employment (1), apprenticeship (1), personal reason (1) and other (1).

#### **11 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Lesson Observations and Internal Quality Reviews**

The report highlighted the Learning Walks and IQRs undertaken at Angel Hill, Business Management and Tourism, Engineering, Maths and English and Science.

Angel Hill is an area for further development and clear guidance on expectations to improve have been communicated and documented. The

Vice Principal for Quality and the Student Experience, Colin Shaw, has met with the course team of Angel Hill and evidence of the procedural documentation does exist and is in place. More work on the quality of teaching and the student experience in the classroom is to be substantiated and performance reviews are in place for May and July 2018. The Committee asked to receive an update report at the next meeting of the Committee in June 2018.

Penny Fawcus

Three unsatisfactory outcomes arising from learning walks and lesson observations were reported in Plumbing, Bricklaying and Functional Skills Maths. Staff are being supported and are working through detailed action plans to improve.

The next wave of IQRs/Learning Walks are happening this week through to 27 April 2018 and include Art, Design and Performing Arts, Engineering, Business, Management and Tourism, Hairdressing, Beauty Therapies and Culinary Arts, Healthcare and Early Years and the Milburn Campus. A number of Governors have volunteered to attend and participate and the Executive Director for Quality Improvement, Penny Fawcus, was asked to review the process of Lesson Observations and Internal Quality Reviews so that governors are able to clearly see the links between what they observe and learn from a learning walk with the reports that they receive at Committee meetings, allowing them to better monitor the effectiveness of this quality improvement tool.

Penny Fawcus

Agenda items 4 through to 11 were taken after agenda items 12 and 13.

### ***Leadership and Management***

#### **12 Workforce Update**

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

Colin Shaw joined the meeting at 4.50pm

#### **13 Gender Pay Gap Report**

The Equal Pay Act 1970 and Equality Act 2010 aimed to eliminate less favourable treatment between men and women in terms of pay and conditions. Inequalities remain so the focus is on Gender Pay reporting to work toward equality. Employers of 250 employees or more must publish their Gender Pay Gap data by the end of March 2018 and the College data was published on 29 March 2018.

Equal pay as opposed to gender pay gap deals with the pay differences between men and women who carry out the same jobs, similar jobs or work of equal value. It is unlawful to pay people unequally because of gender.

The Gender Pay Gap shows the difference in the average pay between all men and women in a workforce. If a workforce has a particularly high gender pay gap, this can indicate there may be a number of issues to deal with, and the individual calculations may help to identify what those issues are.

The College's data was communicated to governors, the College Management Team, Unions and Staff prior to the publication of our report on the College website and the Gov.uk portal. This was accompanied by a set of FAQs to ensure that everyone had the information and the opportunity to ask questions.

The College action plan was shared with the Committee and progress against the plan will be reported back as part of the Workforce Update report.

Ruth Sadler

In summary the College report has not identified any significant gender pay gap and data analysis of the six required calculations are all positive. There is an even split of men and women in the workforce. Women make up the majority of both our Business Support posts and of our Senior Management Posts.

The published results of the hourly calculations for the FE Colleges in our region were shared with the Committee. The percentage differences relate to how much less women are paid per hour compared to men in each organisation. West Suffolk College was fifth out of the nine Colleges with a 17.3% difference in the median hourly rate (37.3% being the highest). The Committee was interested to learn of the results of other public sector organisations and the HR Director will take a look to see what data is publicly available for benchmarking in the next report.

Ruth Sadler

The HR Director announced that she is due to leave the employment of the College to take up a career opportunity with a Pharmaceutical company in Cambridge. She leaves the employment of the College in early July 2018.

L Moody joined the meeting and Ruth Sadler left the meeting at 4.55pm

**14 Any other business**

The Committee wished to formally extend their thanks and gratitude to Kerry Heathcote, Director of Quality, for her hard work, commitment, extensive and comprehensive reports to support the work of the Committee, this has been much appreciated. Kerry leaves the College tomorrow to take up an opportunity with Edinburgh College.

The College has successfully been reaccredited with the Matrix standard. The inspector was pleased to report that students had stated that 'staff really care; they are not paid to care', which was a great accolade for staff to be proud of.

The Committee was reminded of two events that are happening this weekend; the Master Chef event and West and Loud automotive event. All are welcome to attend.

**Date of next meeting**

Thursday 14 June 2018 at 4.30pm. Room TG1.16

The meeting closed at 6.05pm