

STANDARDS AND EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30pm on 25 April 2019

Present: Sue Daley (Chair) Karen Points
Rudy Berongoy Nikos Savvas, CEO/Principal

In Attendance: Colin Shaw, VP Q&LE Penny Fawcus, ED Andrew Adamson, ED
Cathy Durrant, Pastoral Support Laraine Moody, VP, EE 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 Alan Maltpress and Jim Gazzard.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2019

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.

In the absence of the Assistant Principal for Higher Education the Clerk informed the Committee concerning the retention rates of Access to Humanities and Access to Science as previously reported these courses were at risk with low retention rates of 78% and 82% respectively.

The low retention (78%) of Access to Humanities at Haverhill was due to two students leaving. One had significant mental health issues, and a drug problem, which had not been disclosed at enrolment. The other absence was due to poverty and had to leave the course to increase their working hours in order to survive financially. It was noted that this course at Haverhill will cease at the end of this academic year due to low cohort sizes and cost inefficiency.

Attendance on Access to Science stands at 82% and retention is at 84%. This is due to the personal circumstances of five students; 1 is due to mental ill health; 2 are caring for dependents, 1 due to pregnancy related absence and 1 is a withdrawal system error (i.e. the system is showing that they have withdrawn but they are still in learning).

4 Key Performance Indicators

Overall vocational attendance ended the term at 88% for both 16-18 and 19+ students. This is in line with the same period last year. A more detailed analysis of attendance also identifies poor attendance at Careers and Connections and Directed Study sessions.

Careers and Connections have recently moved to the Head of Pastoral Support, Cathy Durrant, and a new programme has been put in place to ensure the sessions are better tailored to each vocational area, while still having common themes and a centrally co-ordinated approach. The staff delivering these sessions are also based in offices with vocational teams to help further develop relationships. This is the same model adopted by PSTs and initial feedback from both staff and students has been positive.

Directed study is in the process of being redesigned and the number of hours a student can attend Directed Study is being reduced from 6 to 4 hours. Curriculum Executive Directors are currently in the process of supporting their teams to develop digital materials for students to engage with, which can be completed outside of the classroom. This time can be counted towards funded hours but can be completed external to the College.

It was highlighted that there is an attendance gap that continues to exist between Maths and English sessions and vocational sessions, and a recent audit has identified several students with 4-week non-attendance, which is being dealt with as a priority. At the time of reporting there were 139 students who had not engaged and after focussed effort this number is now down to 76 and staff are working hard to positively re-engage these students back into learning to achieve. Functional Skills exams have taken place and another week of exams are planned for May.

Attendance by level identifies that there is still an issue for 16-18 students at Level 1, as attendance remains at 81%, the same position as at the last report. Poor attendance has been found in Business Tourism and Events Diploma Level 1 (76%), Progression to Automotive Engineering (79%), Animal Care Diploma Level (69%), Project U (75%), Princes Trust Team (60%), Painting and Decorating Diploma Level 1 (63%) and Carpentry and Joinery Diploma Level 1 (77%). The Committee asked for updates at future meetings to cover curriculum planning. Are we delivering the right courses, attracting the right students and delivering the right content that delivers the right impact? This will undoubtedly be a focus under the new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and governors would like to be informed about how our curriculum is shaped, developed and delivered; intent, implementation and impact. Curriculum Review/Development will be added as a standard agenda items for this Committee.

JBridges

The Committee was pleased that assessment progress in most areas remains either on or ahead of target, with Access to HE, Plumbing, Electrical, Art and Design, Culinary Arts and Hairdressing and Holistic Therapies courses continuing to do well. It was noted that Science has continued to make good progress and is now on target although Animal Care and Healthcare and Early Years continue to lag behind on progress. The Executive Director, Debbie Coomes, was tasked by the Committee to report back to the next meeting to be held in June 2019 to evidence and demonstrate how progress has improved.

DCoomes

It was reported that retention remains strong for both 16–18s at 94% and 19+ at 96%; however, this is a 2% decline since the last report to the Committee for 16-18 but is in line with the same point last year. The focus now is on achievement and it is anticipated that all students who have been retained to this point will achieve.

The Committee noted that Apprenticeship performance remains strong with 49% of total starts but is 71.4% of total leavers (Current Leavers Ach%) with 317 students left to achieve. Best-Case achievement remains strong at 79.3%.

5.i **ESFA Communication on Minimum Standards** *Minimum Standards*

The Committee was informed that on 23 April 2018, the ESFA issued additional conditions of funding to the College because the required

Minimum Standard for a small number of additional qualifications for 16-18s in the 2016/17 academic year had fallen below the threshold.

It was reported that the ESFA is now satisfied that our actions have remedied the issue because the College met the Minimum Standard for 16-18s in the 2017/18 academic year, as published in the DfE Performance Tables in January this year. In addition to this, the College no longer offers the qualifications that were below the threshold in the 2016/17 academic year. Accordingly, the letter received from the ESFA recently confirms that the conditions of funding are now lifted.

Value Added

As mentioned above, the DfE Performance Tables published in January this year show the results for all College and Courses. For West Suffolk College, the results show, as we had identified in our SAR, that 107 of the 3000 students (16-18s) at the end of applied general study had a Value-Added Score of -0.7%. This means that 107 students did not make the progress required and/or did not get the best outcome. These students were on Applied Science (31 students who didn't get the grades as profiled. They all passed with pass or merit but not what had been predicted based on their previous achievement), Computing (32 students who did not achieve), Place 21 Funded project (40 students on programme with 20 students who didn't take the qualification) and Health Studies (4 students).

There were also 17 students on Level 3 Progress Academic programmes where the value added score was -0.17%.

This standard uses a progress measure and underperformance is confirmed if the value-added score is below -0.58.

The Committee was reassured that a number of actions had been put in train back in September that have been monitored throughout the year and signs of improvement are already being seen.

The Vice Principal Quality and the Student Experience confirmed that we have stopped curriculum areas registering 16-18s with Awarding Organisations and controlling the area centrally. Qualifications have been reverted back to QCF and only Learning Plus UK qualifications are still to be moved to RQF once training for staff has been completed.

It was noted that the College is not required to report back to the ESFA on the actions that we have taken to improve the performance in the targeted areas but no doubt at Inspection, Ofsted would want to see the evidence of the steps that we have put in place to improve the underperformance of these courses.

5.ii National Achievement Performance Tables

Adult English GCSE achievement rates show that the College is Number 1 across the Country as a General Further Education College with achievement rates of 69.7% (grades 4-9) which is 29% above the national rate. This puts us Number 6 across the Country for all provider types. The top 5 are all 'other Public funded providers' (i.e. County/Borough Councils).

Adult Maths GCSE achievement rates show that the College is Number 4 across the Country with achievement rates of 61.3% (grades 4-9) which is 28% above national rate. The other 3 Colleges with better achievement

rates only had cohorts of 30-40 adults where we had a cohort of 140. Across the Country West Suffolk College is Number 17 for all provider types and Number 6 for institutions with cohorts in excess of 100 students.

6 2018/19 Quality Improvement Plan Update

The Committee was pleased to note that there has been significant improvements in the year against the College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Each curriculum area has its own QIP which is reviewed at the termly performance review board meetings (PRB); Employer Engagement has a QIP which is review fortnightly following the IQR findings in October and in addition to these there are strategies for implementation such as a digital strategy and a curriculum strategy which outlines the plans for change to share with managers and is monitored through the College QIP.

As well as monitoring progress against areas for improvement that came out of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2017/18, the Committee was informed that the QIP also includes business development plans such as preparing for the new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and the new functional skills.

As an update since the last report it was noted that progress has been made and recorded against the improvement areas concerning the rollout of pivotal behaviour management training, Pacific Institute High Performance Culture training, preparation for an Ofsted inspection, Curriculum Manager development work, regular quality improvement meetings with Employer Engagement, development of a digital learning and digital strategy, HR updates and sampling of Spotlight reviews, Sycol work and Character Strength projects, reviews of the careers and connection sessions, the introduction of LPUK (Learning Plus UK) and target grades, and central co-ordination and management of exam registrations.

7 Early Leavers and Withdrawals

The number of withdrawals for 16-18s is 139 to date, which is 48 more than the report to the Committee in February 2019. For the 19+ students it is 17 which is 1 more since the last report, as an Access to HE student has withdrawn due to childcare issues.

As a comparison the report at the same time last year showed a total of 135 16-18 students had withdrawn so we are 4 above the same point last year. Withdrawals for 19+ students continue to drop with a total of 48 in 2016/17 down to 30 in 2017/18 and 17 to date in this academic year. Although we are not anticipating any more withdrawals so close to the year end the Committee did recognise that life issues sometimes cannot be avoided and the Head of Pastoral Support, Cathy Durrant, gave some current cases where students have such difficulties in their lives to overcome that it will not be surprising if we lose a handful more due to the issues in their life taking priority.

The number of Apprentices who have withdrawn to date totals 38, and this is an increase of 7 withdrawals more than the last report to the Committee and is 10 students more than at the same point last year for 16-18s but is 3 less withdrawals for 19+.

The main reasons for withdrawals of 16-18-year-old students have been due to gaining employment (36% - 50 students), gaining and apprenticeship (22% - 31 students) and illness (10% - 14 students).

For 19+ students the main reasons for withdrawal are employment (29% - 5 students), financial reasons (18% - 3 students), altered family commitments (12% - 2 students) and course no longer related to their plans (12% - 2 students).

It was noted that all withdrawals for employment or apprenticeship reasons are passed on to the Apprenticeship team to follow up and the key reasons for withdrawal are due to breaks in learning through sickness, childcare issues, caring for relatives and/or loss of employment.

The Committee asked if future reports could somehow detail the reasons why these students have left and where they have gone to. There were 140 students that gained employment or went onto an apprenticeship and we need to understand why the College course wasn't the right choice for them and why they have chosen to move on. The report needs to be split by curriculum, age, level and time of year when they left so that we can see if there are any trends emerging in the number of withdrawals.

CDurrant

8 Lesson Observations, Learning Walks and IQRs

The Committee was informed about the two IQRs that were carried out in February and March 2019 in Access to HE and a themed IQR on marked work. The marked work IQR focussed on the standard of students' written work and the quality of developmental feedback and targets relating to both vocational content and the standard of English.

The report received by the Committee detailed the observations made throughout the IQR process, the strengths observed and the improvements to be made and records of best practice.

The report also detailed the observations of teaching, learning and assessment activities in the spring term and the caseload of observations undertaken by the Innovation Coaches. In summary 85% of Learning Walks and Development Observations are good or better (green flag status), 13% require improvement (amber flag status) and 2% were observed inadequate (red flag status). The latter represented 3 cases of underperformance, one is being referred to capability, one is under performance management with a Personal Development Plan in place, the other is working with a challenging group of students and is working with the Innovation Coach to explore Teaching Learning and Assessment strategies that better engage the learners.

9 Any other business

9.i Youth Obligation Project

The Committee was pleased to be informed about the positive notification we received for our entry to the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) Youth Obligation Project into the National Festival of Learning Awards. While our application was shortlisted, we were not selected for the award, however, in recognition of the commitment and contribution to learning, we have been informed that we will be presented with a certificate of achievement and that we should celebrate this achievement with our team, which of course we will do.

In preparation for the new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework we need to reinvigorate our Directorate Governor Links with curriculum areas and invite Governors into the classroom as we have done in the past with Governors' First Hand. There is a chance for governors to experience the

life as a student and get the opportunities to talk with them and learn about their experience here at the College.

Date of next meeting

Thursday 13 June 2019 at 4.30pm. Room TG1.16

The meeting closed at 6.25pm