

STANDARDS AND EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00pm on 27 January 2020

Present: Sue Daley (Chair) Alan Maltpress (Vice Chair) Karen Points
J Wakelam E Lawrance D Jugg
Nikos Savvas (Principal/CEO)

In Attendance: L Moody, VP EE Alison Hurrell, QM Andrew Adamson, ED
Colin Shaw, VP Q&LE Cathy Durrant, HPC Rachel Kirk, E Dean
Rachel Boast, M&ED D Coomes, ED G Jefferson, ED
S Thompson, Interim HR Mgr K Wilden, PL (CPD) D Barton, Adult
J 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

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2019 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.

Agenda item 14 preceded agenda items 4 through to 13

4 Key Performance Indicators

Overall attendance ended the autumn term at 89% for both the 16-18 and 19+ cohorts, which is the same position as this time last year. Analysis of attendance by level identifies that there has been an improvement for 16-18 students at Level 1, from 82% last year to 85% this year.

An attendance gap continues to exist between Maths and English sessions and vocational sessions for the 16-18 cohort; however, there has been a 1% overall improvement in attendance for both GCSE and Functional Skills maths and a 2% improvement for both GCSE and Functional Skills English. The majority of students are fully engaging in these sessions with results from the recent GCSE exams being released on the 16 January.

It was noted that Assessment progress is ahead of the same position last year in the majority of areas. Executive Directors have action plans in place for courses where progress is significantly behind target and these are being reviewed on a regular basis.

As expected for this time of the year, student retention is strong for both 16–18 (98%) and 19+ (98%), which are both the same as this point last year. PSTs are in contact with all students who have not returned from the Christmas break to support them to return to their studies.

The Committee was pleased to learn that Apprenticeship achievements are currently in a strong position with a planned achievement target of 78%, which is a 4% improvement on 2018/19.

It was noted that a focus area for the Committee may need to be automotive so this will be an agenda progress report item for future Committee meetings.

GJefferson

5 Early Leavers and Withdrawals Report

The number of withdrawals for 16-18s is 39 to date and for the 19+ students it is 7. In comparison with the same point in the past two years there were 62 (2018/19) and 81 (2017/18) withdrawals reported.

The main reasons for withdrawal in the 16-18 age group have been due to 13 students gaining employment (33%); 12 students gaining an apprenticeship (31%); and 5 students withdrawing due to illness (13%).

The main withdrawal reasons for 19+ were due to employment (29%) or illness (29%), 2 students each.

The team continues to work hard to monitor, contact and re-engage students that are at risk of withdrawing. Business Management and Tourism had the most withdrawals, followed by Health Care and Early Years, and then Sport and Public Services but it was noted that there was no particular or emerging trend in reason. Withdrawals for an apprentice are referred onto the Apprenticeship Team to support.

6 16-18 Maths and English Update Report

Attendance at maths and English continues to improve. GCSE English is up 2% on the same point last year, at 81% and GCSE Maths has improved at 79% (+1% on same point last year). An upward trend is also noted for both functional skills although it still lags on GCSE attendance.

The GCSE November resit results are now in and results are very encouraging, broadly in line with last year. Students achieved a 34% high grade pass rate for English, with 99% of students achieving a grade 1-9. Students achieved a 37% high grade pass rate for maths, with 100% of students achieving a grade 1-9.

The net result is 54 students achieved their GCSE and no longer need to attend lessons. Critically these pass rates are higher than others in the region who are all reporting high teens to low 20 percentage pass rates for November resits.

The Committee was pleased to learn that 95% of students enrolled on all levels of English functional skills have completed their speaking and listening assessments. Reading exams were sat before Christmas and it was reported that attendance for level 1 and level 2 reading examinations was 90%. Students have achieved 75% pass rate for level 1 and 40% pass for level 2. So, a significant number of students are now two-thirds complete on their functional skills English qualification.

There are planned maths functional skills examination opportunities the week before the February 2020 half term. Maths class sizes have been reduced where possible and 70% of progress tutor intervention is taken up with maths support.

K Wilden left the meeting at 4.45pm

The Maths and English Director was asked to look at the data by Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 separately for maths and English to see how many are taking both qualifications and how many may be withdrawing from one or the other from their main qualification.

RBoast

7 Adult Maths and English Report

Enrolment numbers for functional skills English and maths are significantly increased from last academic year, which bucks the national trend of declining numbers of adults accessing adult basic skills classes.

Workplace delivery of maths and English remains strong with increased enrolment numbers. A new distance learning pilot scheme is being introduced to widen the geographical scope of delivery consisting of 12 weekly lessons, monitored and tracked remotely by tutors.

Entry level learners studying functional skills English and Maths fell below the NR for achievement last academic year, as did retention. Teaching materials and delivery methods are being reviewed and retention is being closely monitored. As a result, we are seeing good in year retention rates across all subjects.

The Committee was pleased to learn that the early pass rates are excellent for the new reformed functional skills, particularly in the English reading unit where 88% of students passed at Level 2 and 97% of students passed at Level 1. In the Writing unit students passed at Level 1 at 69% and Level 2 at 73%. Maths Level 1 is 100% and Level 2 is 65% and it was noted that these are lower cohort numbers.

D Jugg left the meeting at 4.55pm

It was noted that GCSE November 2019 resit results decreased in comparison to the previous year but still remained above NR (50% maths achievement grade 4-9 (high grades) and 69% for English).

It was reported that the data analysis that the Committee had requested previously has identified that 23% of adult students are completing both maths and English qualifications simultaneously. Attendance, retention achievement of these students are tracked throughout the year to determine if there is any difference between students completing both qualifications together opposed to those who complete just one at a time. These results will inform our recruitment for 2020/21.

D Barton left the meeting at 5.00pm

Agenda item 9.i. preceded agenda item 8

8 Level 1 Improvement Report

As reported above attendance overall ended the term at 85% across the Level 1 provision, an increase of 3% on this time last year. Attendance and 'At Risk' students are being closely monitored by Executive Directors, curriculum managers and course teams and support is put in place for students where required.

Level 1 teaching staff are undergoing training on dealing with low level disruption within teaching sessions.

Deep Dives and learning walks have taken place across the provision, in line with the Education Inspection Framework, and feedback includes areas of good practice, areas for development, which has subsequently informed in year improvements to planning, professional learning activities and quality improvement plans and targets. The Committee was informed that some provision areas may require further/ongoing development in the quality of education as this is a limiting grade to include Curriculum Intent/ Implementation and Impact.

It was reported that new programmes have been introduced, offering the same qualifications currently being delivered successfully in other curriculum areas and approach has been standardised. The Committee felt assured that the Quality audits and Performance Review Boards that are taking place will successfully monitor consistency and compliance across curriculum areas and they look forward to receiving future reports.

9 Progress Reports

i. *Plumbing and Electrical Installation*

Plumbing and Electrical were graded a 4 in the SAR due to results last year falling below NR at L2 and L3. Achievement for plumbing last year L1 was 89% (at NR), L2 was 76% (4% below NR) and L3 only 29%. It is thought that this poor performance may have been due to the transition between the old-style diplomas onto the technical qualifications.

Plumbing students had struggled to pass the theory exam on the new Technical Level 3 qualification and because employers are now requesting students are competent at L2 the Plumbing Team have decided to withdraw the L3 Plumbing provision for this year. As a consequence, the Team are introducing milestone assessments, practice theory tests and have been working with the English team on a glossary of terms for students. This will help students understand and interpret what is being asked of them in the theory exam.

The issue with achievement on Electrical Installation appeared to be with the new style synoptic assessments (essentially a series of practical assessment within a given period of time) which students struggled to complete. As a consequence, the Team are now supporting students with extra practical sessions, with a huge emphasis and direction on skill building in the practical setting and students have also been set specific tasks for homework. Extra sessions have also been timetabled for the February half term and the team are about to release some extra lunchtime practical slots in preparation for the synoptics in March/April 2020.

D Coomes left the meeting at 5.10pm

ii. *Science*

Science was graded a 4 in the SAR due to poor performance in the 2018/19 academic year with both Level 2, and first year Level 3 cohorts of students.

As a consequence MarkBook progress is being regularly monitored and is already showing steady student progress with additional support measures in place.

In Science (Level 3) there is one student who is at risk this year due to poor attendance due to ill health, but this is starting to improve. With this exception, the Science Team is forecasting that all other students retained will achieve.

The recruitment process for the Science programmes have been overhauled this year with less emphasis on volume and a stronger focus on recruiting the right student for the right course and due to the low volume of students progressing to year 2, it has been decided that we will only run one, second year pathway this year.

iii. Sport and Public Services and Animal Studies

Both Sport and Public Services provision were graded a 4 in the SAR due to, in the main, poor retention and achievement.

The Animal Studies move to main campus from Newmarket has provided students with more access to welfare and other support services. Staffing levels have increased, timetables reshuffled and additional resources, practical teaching spaces and a wide and diverse range of animals are also positively enhancing the student experience.

There are still some areas of risk but action is being taken to further improve student attendance, for example on Level 3 year 2 Animal Studies where a small proportion of students had poor attendance. These issues are now known and are regularly monitored and interventions put in place to support the students.

Sport and Public Services have been split into respective areas with dedicated Head of and Subject Leader posts to take responsibility. This means that managers can focus on smaller provisions, apply their specialisms within their departments and continue to keep a higher amount of teaching. Early indications show a positive improvement on key performance indicators particularly with attendance, retention and MarkBook progress.

It was agreed that the progress report for the next meeting will also report on Health Care and Early Years as there are a few concerns under focus here too.

AAdamson

Agenda item 8 preceded agenda item 10

10 2019/20 Quality Improvement Plan Update

There has been good progress made against the QIP since September 2019.

A number of improvement areas are reported and monitored separately; English and maths; Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Deep Dives, Level 1 developments and progress, HR and Employer Engagement for example.

The Committee was pleased to note that there are no Red rated targets to report and where amber rates are applied this is because work is in progress rather than of a concern.

The Committee asked it if were possible, some how, to measure how close, or not, the College may be to Outstanding. The Quality Manager will give this some thought.

AHurrell

The Vice Principal Quality and the Student Experience asked that the Committee receives an overview of the College's journey to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarking requirements. This will be added to the agendas for the future Committee meetings in the year.

CShaw

JBridges

11 **Lesson Observations, Learning Walks and IQRs**

Since the start of term there have been two 'Deep Dives' carried out by the Quality team; Cross College L1 provision and targeted 16-19 study programmes. The intention of the Deep Dives is to mirror the new EIF and changes in what Ofsted might 'inspect'. Learning walks have taken place across induction and digital strategy.

The 'Deep Dive' feedback included areas of good practice, areas for development and action plans, and has subsequently informed in year improvements to planning, professional learning activities and quality improvement plans and targets. The Committee noted that some provision (Level 1) may require further/ongoing development in the quality of education (as reported above) as this is a limiting grade in Ofsted inspections.

It was further reported that in addition to the internal quality reviews, academic line managers have planned an annual schedule of developmental observations that have included co-observations in order to verify observation judgements, plan feedback to tutors, write clear judgements, identify developmental targets for Spotlights, and identify referrals for support from innovation coaches. Overall, it was a pleasing report and the Committee looks forward to seeing the impact of this intensive work.

12 **HE Withdrawals and Retention**

The withdrawal rate of starters this academic year (November 2019) is 8.1%, or 49 students. This is fewer than the previous year when the withdrawal rate at the same point was 8.4%, or 58 students.

Based on the current withdrawal rate our retention is 91.9%, compared to last year when it was 91.6%. This is typical at this stage in the year and we will have a clearer indication of retention after the first semester.

It was noted that retention for the past three years has been at or around 96% and this target remains for the 2019/20 academic year.

The Executive Dean reported that Art Practice has increased its withdrawals by five. This is a new Level 5 course where students appear to have left the course and taken up alternative learning with an alternative HEI. The course is on a risk alert with the University.

13 **NSS/ISS Update Report**

As previously reported the outcome of the NSS this year was disappointing with the overall level of satisfaction declining by 9 percentage points from 83% to 74%.

Action plans are in place for addressing key action points identified from the NSS and ISS, at both course level and department level, these have been reviewed in course committee meetings and targets set for achievement of actions.

The HE management team will be rolling out its promotion and preparation for the NSS/ISS surveys from the 23 January 2020 for the start of the NSS on 3 February 2020 and the ISS on the 1 March 2020 respectively.

14 Workforce Update

The Committee was pleased to receive such a detailed report in confidence that the data is now in a reportable and trusted format. In summary the report shows that early work has been undertaken in relation to the GPG submission for March 2020. The submission reflects a snapshot of 31 March 2019 data. Early calculations show that the GPG sits at 7.64% which is well below the national average of 17.9%. When taking a median average of gendered pay rates as opposed to the mean) the Pay gap falls even further to 6.58%. Most interesting is the fact that the mean hourly rate for our female teaching staff is higher than for our male teaching staff. However, the figures for both support and academic managers still show a larger gap between male and female managers, though this is still lower than the national average.

Wellbeing activity continues to support four wellbeing themes; physical, mental, financial and social wellbeing and a range of topics and events have taken place over the autumn terms.

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is live and provides staff with a 24/7 helpline covering a whole host of information and emotional support services. There is also an online portal for staff to access containing four-week programmes, videos and webinars and access to the Health e-hub mobile app.

The Committee raised the continuing concern that not all Line Managers are completing SpotLight reviews with their staff. Statistics show in the report that on average an employee has 3 reviews with their line manager in a year although there is a large proportion who, for whatever reason, are not publishing that a review has taken place. HR have contacted those who are not showing a completed SpotLight and in most cases it appears that review meetings (1-2-1s) are happening but they are completing these outside of the system. The HR Team is looking to acquire a new system that would implement a more intuitive and trackable systems, with fewer steps in between review meetings to encourage better/increased participation although it was recognised that this would not be an immediate solution.

Employee turnover stands at 16.36% (between 1 February 2019 and 31 December 2019). This is below the average reported across the UK and the latest sector figure from the AoC is 17.4%.

Staff absence is also lower than the national average which is 3.91% against the National Average for the Public Sector at 4.7%. Absence due to mental health is equally low with an average of 5.4days lost compared to the national average of 21 days lost.

In the autumn term the College has recruited more support staff than management or teaching posts. There is a total of 117 staff out of 749 who are in their 12 month probationary period

In terms of workforce equality and diversity metrics the report shows that our workforce is 64% female 36% male. 67% of our workforce are not disabled, 4% prefer not to say and 24% unknown, the remaining have declared a disability with smaller numbers disclosing a learning, mental health, physical impairment or would rather not say.

The ethnicity profile of the workforce shows the largest proportion white or white/British (85%) with a few or smaller numbers (1) as Asian, Caribbean, African, other black, mixed race, white Irish, white other European and/or white other non European.

Religion shows 32% are Christian, with 33% unknown, 13% atheist and smaller numbers Buddhist, orthodox, pagan, Islam etc.

50% of our workforce are married, 20% single, 7% divorced and the remaining separated, co-habitations, with a partner, widowed and/or unknown.

43% of our workforce are heterosexual and 55% have not disclosed their sexual identity or prefer not to say.

J Wakelam joined the meeting at 4.15pm

It was agreed the Committee will take HR as a substantive item at future meetings and perhaps a focussed paper of a more in depth review of the SpotLight reviews that have been completed and where a review is absent if confidence exists that 1-2-1s are at least taking place.

SGraham

S Thompson left the meeting at 4.25pm

15 Committee Meeting Times

The Committee confirmed that they wish to continue to schedule the Standards and Excellence Committee meetings on a Monday at 4.00pm for the 2020/21 academic year.

16 Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting

Monday 9 March 2020 at 4.00pm. Room TG1.16

The meeting closed at 5.55pm.