



MINUTES OF LEARNER COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30TH MARCH 2017

Present:	Bailey Casson	Student Governor
	Peter Clark	External Governor - Chair
	Diane Cothey	Co-opted Non-Governor
	Richie Dunk	External Governor
	Roy Everett	Co-opted Non-Governor
	Greg O'Shea	Staff Governor
	John Rees	Chief Executive/Principal
	Pete Sanderson	External Governor
In Attendance:	David Clapham	Assistant Head of HE (minutes 93 to 141)
	Rachael Hennigan	Vice-Principal (Learning & Achievement)
	Alistair Mollon	Interim Assistant Principal (Quality)
	Karen Robson	Head of HE & Professional Studies (minutes 93 to 141)
	Lesley Venables	Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

93 Apologies for absence were received from Lettitia Ingham (Student Governor) and Jenny Grainger (External Governor Elect).

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

94 There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

95 **Resolved -** That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING

97 The Committee noted that all matters arising had either been completed or were featured on the agenda.

98 Under minute 87, the Vice-Principal reported that increasing levels of learner engagement would be a key priority for the newly-appointed Assistant Principal (Quality) and that future reports to the Committee would include all learner voice activities.

OVERALL COLLEGE PERFORMANCE REPORT

99 The Interim Assistant Principal (Quality) presented for information a report on performance against key curriculum indicators to date for 2016/2017.

Attendance

100 The Committee was informed that overall attendance was 88.2%. Despite being below the challenging target of 90%, this was an increase of 2.5PP compared to the same point in 2015/2016.

101 Governors commented that the target set by management was challenging, but were advised that there had been a significant improvement in attendance compared to last academic year, with the majority of learners reaching or exceeding their individual attendance target.

102 16-18 English & maths attendance had continued to improve and increases in HE and apprenticeship attendance were also evident. Although attendance amongst 16-18s in Construction remained a concern (85%), there had been an improvement of 1.7PP compared to 2015/2016.

Retention

103 Overall retention was 94%, which was 1PP above the College target. For 16-18 learners retention had increased compared to 2015/2016 and was 3.1PP above the target, however, for the 19+ cohort the corresponding figure was 0.5PP below the College target.

104 A total of 9.7% of learners had been categorised as 'at risk' and that this was a reduction of 3% on the February figure. Each learner was assigned a RAG rating, dependent on a number of factors. In response to questions the Committee was advised that a range of intervention measures were in place to improve this situation, but once these had been exhausted learners were withdrawn from their programme of study.

105 Governors asked whether these learners were transferred to another category if they were no longer considered to be 'at risk'. The Interim Assistant Principal advised that the College's main focus was on appropriate target-setting for individuals, which was carried out by the progress coaches and aimed to extract the best performance possible from learners above their target.

106 A standard definition of 'at risk' had been provided to staff as a benchmark against which to assess performance. The College had introduced programmes such as the Prince's Trust and Step Up to Success, to build employability skills in preparation for undertaking a full programme next academic year.

107 It was noted that the majority of learners on English and maths qualifications had made progress compared to their starting point. The Vice-Principal reported that the measures introduced were supporting Level 3 learners to achieve greater amounts of value added from a low baseline.

108 In total, the majority of learners were performing at or above their target grades. Meetings had been held recently with each curriculum manager to identify the likely level of progress learners could make prior to the year end. This level of analysis would need to be replicated for 19+ learners.

109 A differential between retention rates amongst male and female students was noted. Usually in the 16-18 category, female retention exceeded that of males, but at the College the statistics show the opposite, due to the profile of the cohort.

Destinations

110 The Interim Assistant Principal reported that the majority of destinations for learners were now known, which was a significant improvement compared to 2015/2016. It was noted that in 8% of cases the destination was negative and governors queried the level of NEET learners (Not in Education, Employment or Training) against any available benchmark. The Vice-Principal responded that only partial information was published on this measure by the Department for Education, so it was not possible to make any meaningful comparison.

111 The sample size for the survey of destinations for 2016/2017 would be set at 90% for 2016/2017.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

112 The Committee received for information a progress report against each of the Areas for Improvement identified in the Quality Improvement Plan.

113 The issues surrounding Attendance and Retention had already been discussed under an earlier agenda item.

114 In the GCSE mock exams there had been a pass rate of 16.6% for English and 16% for Maths. The main area of focus for curriculum staff was supporting learners currently at a grade 4 to achieve a grade 3. Approximately half the cohort was showing an improvement in their skill set, as measured through diagnostic assessments at the start of the academic year and again in January. A new specification was now being studied and, consequently, any predictions would be based on grade boundaries established through cluster groups as these were yet to be identified.

115 The College's staffing for GCSE English and maths was similar to 2015/2016. It was noted that student performance levels were adversely affected by poor levels of attendance.

116 A total of 40% of 16-19 year old learners had undertaken external work experience against the target of 50%.

117 All identified actions for apprenticeship achievements were on track to be delivered by the end of the year. There had been further increases in performance compared to 2015/2016 and staff were currently attempting to narrow the gap between achievement and timely achievement.

118 The Committee was advised that the high level of monitoring and interventions had brought about a significant improvement in value added for Year 1 Level 3 applied general qualifications.

HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT

119 The Head of Higher Education presented a report on current levels of performance compared to previous years.

120 In 2015/2016, retention was 80%, the pass rate was 92% and the achievement rate 74%. For the current year (2016/2017), the retention rate had improved to 87.32%. Governors questioned the 80% target for retention, which had not increased for a number of years and emphasised the need to make this more challenging in future. The Head of HE responded that the College had to balance setting an ambitious target for retention against predicted levels of achievement.

121 Three curriculum areas had been identified as causes for concern – Health & Social Care, HND Business and Foundation Degree Year 2 in Sound & Music.

122 Overall attendance was 86.11% against a target of 85%. Five courses were performing below this level and the underlying reasons were provided to the Committee.

123 The Committee received an update on progress against the Teaching Education Foundation process. At the previous meeting, the Committee had approved the quality assurance submission to HEFCE. Since then, the College had been asked for further information on the overall satisfaction rates from student surveys.

124 Governors reminded management that at the December meeting the Committee had been informed that this area would not be closely scrutinised by HEFCE during its assessment. The Assistant Head of HE reported that the TEF formed only one part of the review process and that the query from HEFCE had centred around overall student satisfaction levels, which were difficult to identify, compared to more quantifiable data such as that derived from teaching and learning information. Governors asked the Head of HE to obtain any feedback from HEFCE on the additional documentation that had been provided.

125 The Head of HE was asked what issues had been identified from the profile of questions in the learner survey. It was noted that organisational management had evidenced a significant reduction in satisfaction, but that this was probably due to a small number of disaffected students who had participated in the survey. Future course design would need to address the individual needs learners if the College's rating against the new National Student Survey was to improve.

126 A report would be presented to the next Learner Committee meeting aggregating learner responses to the survey and this will form part of the College's Learner Voice Strategy.

127 The Committee felt that there was a synergy between the reasons for non-attendance given by both HE and 19+ learners. The Vice-Principal responded that the target level of attendance for Access and HE students had been set at a lower level than for mainstream 19+ programmes (85%), but that this was partly historic and would be reviewed following changes to the line management of HE provision.

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2018/2019

128 Governors were advised that the College wished to introduce an Access Agreement for its HE learners from 2018/2019. This would provide additional fee income for the College and, in line with current guidance, the monies generated could be reinvested in supporting learner priorities.

129 The amount of fees chargeable was dependent on the profile of the institution, for example, colleges with a high proportion of learners from widening participation postcodes could expect to receive between 15 and 20% from the Access Agreement.

130 Further discussion of issues such as the fee levels and flexibility would take place at a future Committee meeting and would form part of a formal proposal.

131 Due to the deadline for the initial application being set at 25th April 2017, the Clerk suggested that approval in principle should be sought from the Board and that the Chair should be given delegated authority to approve the documentation on behalf of the Board.

- 132 **Resolved -**
- 1 That the Board **be RECOMMENDED** to approve in principle the submission of an Access Agreement for 2018/2019
 - 2 That the Board **be RECOMMENDED** to give delegated authority to the Chair to sign off the initial Agreement by the deadline of 25th April 2017

LEARNER VOICE REPORT 2016/2017

133 The Assistant Principal reported that three formal surveys had been arranged or carried out during the 2016/2017 academic year (on entry, in Feb/Mar and in June). Two of these were internal, with a further survey undertaken jointly by the Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency.

134 The overall satisfaction level was 92.63%. Areas where the College had performed well included assessment, behaviour and raising expectations, with English and maths provision rated relatively low (59%).

135 A total of 50% of the student cohort completed the survey on entry to the College. The group with the lowest level of satisfaction was 16-18s learners (88.01% compared to 94.16% for 19+).

136 The long-term aim of the Learner Voice Survey was to examine broad themes and to ensure that the full range of provision was covered.

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT ON LEARNER JOURNEY

137 The Committee received for information a copy of the recent Internal Audit report on the Learner Journey. This was felt to be a good example of how non-learning areas of the College could impact on the curriculum. It was agreed that the performance monitoring of these areas should not be totally separate from the curriculum Self-Assessment Review process.

138 The Auditor had commented that the College had failed to meet its recruitment target for a number of years, but this had not been highlighted in the SAR process.

139 In terms of marketing, having the right students on the right course was paramount and each stage was part of the overall learner experience. There needed to be a balance between the College's offer (informed by labour market intelligence and the ability to deliver job outcomes) and the type of courses demanded by learners and employers: otherwise, levels of retention would be insufficient for long-term sustainability and attendance and achievement would reduce.

140 There was a discussion as to which of the Board's committees should be responsible for reviewing any such future reports ie should they just be presented to Audit Committee or should the committee within whose remit the content sits also be involved in their consideration. The Clerk was asked to produce a set of proposals for discussion at the July Board meeting.

141 **Resolved -** That the Clerk submit a report on future committee responsibilities to the July 2017 Board meeting

Karen Robson and David Clapham left the meeting at this point.

TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT REPORT

142 Governors received for information a report on Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

143 There was a consistent approach to differentiation in the classroom to enable learners to be stretched and challenged. Staff had focused on progress, including development for lesson observers.

144 A high proportion of lessons were considered to be engaging (91.43%).

145 English & maths would be embedded in the vocational curriculum where appropriate (this was currently 90.57%). Apprenticeships and HE would be included in next version of Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy/Strategy to ensure that every area of provision was treated in a consistent manner.

146 The Committee was informed that a total of 24 staff were due to be re-observed in 2016/2017, four of whom had already successfully completed the process. It was noted that a second re-observation automatically placed a member of staff in the performance management process.

147 Management was asked about the origin of the standards against which lecturers were assessed and responded that these were derived from the Ofsted criteria (even though Ofsted no longer graded observations) and were clearly communicated to staff.

148 Actions to be addressed in the remainder of this academic year included improving the accuracy and consistency of judgements, ensuring that the right themes were in place for learning walks and a improving how high levels of performance amongst teaching staff were celebrated.

ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE BOARD

149 The Committee agreed a list of items that would be report to the Board on 6th April 2017:

- Detailed performance monitoring report and progress report against the actions identified in the QIP report received for information
- Access Agreement was recommended for approval, with the final submission to be approved by the Chair
- Update on HE issues
- Information received on outcomes of Learner Voice Surveys in 2016/2017 and Teaching, Learning & Assessment
- Internal Audit Report on Learner Journey presented for information – report on future committee responsibilities to be submitted to July Board meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

29th June 2017, 4.00 p.m.

Signed _____ **(Chair)**

Date **29 June 2017**