

Curriculum and Student Matters Committee

Tue 14 June 2022, 17:00 - 19:00

GW B, Parsons Walk Centre, Wigan & Leigh College



Attendees

Andrea Ferguson

Present: Andrea Ferguson (Independent Governor - Chair), Ann Harrison (Independent Governor), Jenny Bullen (Independent Governor), Harinder Dhaliwal (Independent Governor), Steven Tomlinson (Independent Governor), Anna Dawe (Principal), Rebecca Turley (Staff Governor), Jennifer Connor (Independent Governor), Andrei Gheorghita (Student Governor), Lizzy MacKenzie (Student Governor via MS Teams)

In attendance: Joanne Platt (Clerk to the Governing Body), Alison Rushton (Vice Principal Employment and Skills), Dave Harrison (Vice Principal - Data and Funding), Louise Brown (Vice Principal Corporate Services), Ursula Hoyles (Head of HE - for Item 4), Jomana Aref (Student Governor elect and observer).

The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made for the benefit of new members of the Committee.

Meeting minutes

1. Apologies for absence

CSM-22-06-01

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

CSM-22-06-02

There were no declarations of interests.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

CSM-22-06-03

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting and agreed that they were an accurate record of the meeting.

Action CSM-21-03-06 was incomplete. It was agreed that a weblink of the FEPDG pilot programme conference would be sent to members of the Committee and that an update on the Programme would be given to the Governing Board at its October meeting.

Action CSM-21-03-13 was complete.

Resolved: The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting for signature by the Chair.



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The Committee considered a report and presentation providing an update on the Access and Participation Plan (APP). It was noted that the APP is a requirement of registration with the OfS.

The College has a very small HE population in comparison to the HEI sector generally, yet access data highlights the College has higher than average numbers of students with disabilities, largely because it is recruiting from areas of poor participation and economic deprivation.

A new business intelligence dashboard now allows the College to split the data by each characteristic and mode of study, mirroring the OfS dashboard and this is helping the College to target its activities.

The Committee noted that the APP has largely been delivered but further work to evaluate its success is planned, albeit that the OfS has indicated that it does not require further data or assessment and that the College has successfully passed the desk data review and is not considered to be an institution of concern.

Areas of concern noted by the Committee are continuation rates for full time students and keeping in contact with alumni to enable the College to monitor destinations. A new outreach manager has recently been appointed which will strengthen the team and enable timely and robust evaluation and overview of projects in the plan.

It was noted that an updated plan has to be submitted to the OfS by the end of July 2022. OfS has asked that this be an addition to rather than a change to the existing plan. A summary plan is also to be developed that is more transparent and easier to understand.

In response to a question from a Governor, it was confirmed that the targets in the APP are set by the College rather than the OfS, although it was noted that the targets are subsequently agreed by the OfS.

Governors asked what happens when students withdraw from their programmes and it was confirmed that discussions take place to encourage students to continue, additional learning support is made available if needed and students also have access to a HE adult learning mentor. Data on reasons for withdrawal is available to the College to monitor trends, although it was noted that this is not required by the OfS. The College is also looking further at how UC Advantage funding is utilised to support students.

The Committee noted that revisions to the APP will be brought back before the Committee.

The Committee noted the update.

5. Curriculum presentation: Maths and English (16-18 and 19+)

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

6. Curriculum Reports and KPI Dashboards



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6.1. Study Programmes and Dashboard

The Committee considered the Study Programmes Report and KPI dashboard, noting that retention is predicted to be a little lower than 2018-19 by the end of the year.

Level 2 retention continues to be the area of greatest concern, as this cohort has found the transition into College the most challenging. As these students typically take maths and English as well as their vocational course, every leaver counts as three enrolments.

Theory Examination re-sits in technical subjects are high in some subjects and as students cannot pass their qualification without a pass grade in these, the re-sit programme is critical to achievement rates, which are expected to fall this year for the first time in many years.

It was noted that the national achievement rate in vocational City and Guilds programmes was just 30% in January examinations. This is due to the cohort of students not having ever sat an exam before and it was noted that Teacher Assessed Grades during COVID have resulted in many students needing more support to meet the requirements of the course.

Although the College's pass rates is in most cases above national averages, they are still low compared to the same courses when no examination requirement was mandatory. This is a national issue and has been taken up by the GM Colleges Group who wrote to City and Guilds for a resolution. An update will be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

Mental health, behaviour, the challenge around retention, and prior educational experience has all contributed to this, and it was noted that first time pass rates of external exams sat in January and March 2022 is lower than expected. Accordingly, revision and re-takes will dominate the last half term of the academic year. In relation to behaviour, it was noted that the College has not lowered its standards of acceptable behaviour and accordingly exclusions have increased. There has also been a corresponding increase in support both inside and outside the classroom along with increased counselling provision.

Practical examinations have been continuing successfully and overseas trips are taking place with 320 students due to experience an overseas trip this year.

Work-placements are in place where they are mandatory but this continues to be an area of challenge, largely due to the high number of SMEs in the locality, not all of which are equipped to take on work placements.

The Careers Ready programme is focusing on supporting those who have applied to University to actually attend in the autumn, as well as on internal progression

Despite the challenges, the Committee noted that student satisfaction has remained high and a new parent survey has been trialled and will be rolled out across the entire provision in 2022-23.

Curriculum reforms continue at a pace and the College will expand its T-level provision in 2022-23.

Governors expressed concerns about the predicted achievement rate for vocational programmes and concerns about what would happen to students who failed their re-sits in their theory examinations. It was recognised that this is national policy issue and that changes will be required to support these students, who are likely to excel in their practical skills but who don't pass their theoretical exams.

The Committee noted the report and noted that actions are being taken by the College and regionally to address the issues identified. The Committee was assured that standards of behaviour are being upheld by the College, albeit that this has resulted in an increase in exclusions.



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The Committee reviewed the Adult Provision report and KPI dashboard, noting that adult attendance continues to be a challenge with pockets of poor performance on study programme in-fill and discrete full and part time adult programmes. Legacy issues from COVID and the impact of inflation, have caused some adults to opt out of their programme to take up employment.

Retention on some adult programmes is an area of focus with headline performance dipping below the College target. Work is ongoing to address areas of poor performance and to support learners to stay on programme and achieve their qualifications.

It was noted that destinations reporting and closer scrutiny of students with learning difficulties and disabilities have been strengthened through the development of a new suite of management reports and positive learner outcomes had been reported on sector work academy programmes (SWAPs).

Indications are that student satisfaction is high, reported through the interim findings of the second survey of student perceptions of the College. Curriculum development continues in adult learning in line with the College's strategic intent and the Committee noted that a summer family fun day is planned in June to introduce family learning to the community learning offer.

Destinations is also a key area of focus and data on this will be available for future reports.

The Committee noted the report and was assured by the actions being taken by the College to address falling performance in retention and attendance.

6.3. Apprenticeship Provision and Dashboard

The Committee reviewed the Apprenticeship Report and KPI dashboard, noting that attendance continues to be strong and above target in the large majority of areas for apprentices in classroom based learning.

Comparison with 2018/19 (pre-COVID) shows achievement to have improved year to date and predicted end of year achievement is in line with targets and is above national rates.

The Committee noted that the College has received notification of its successful bid to continue delivering apprenticeships to Electricity North West for the next five years. Successful employer events have also been held including a Business Breakfast with a focus on recruitment and a 'Meet the Employer' event for progressing students.

The interim findings of the student perceptions of college survey show significant improvements in apprentices' opinions of their programmes.

The Committee discussed achievement in some areas of the curriculum that are still at risk due to the legacy impact of the pandemic. This includes L2 16-18 Hairdressing, Engineering (Electrical Installation) and Construction which were subject to delayed end point assessments and completion of practical portfolio work during lockdown and L2 and L3 24+ mainly in Health and Social Care which was significantly impacted by the Pandemic.

Governors noted that the College does an excellent job in engaging with employers but also noted the challenge faced by a high number of SMEs nationally, with demand for apprenticeships outstripping supply, particularly in technical areas.

In response to a question from a Governor, it was confirmed that students who are unable to secure an apprenticeship work placement would generally stay on at college for a further year. It was noted that employers are being proactive and are approaching the College with vacancies. It was also noted that the College is expanding its apprenticeship portfolio, particularly in digital subjects, to meet local needs.

The Committee noted the successes identified in the report, noting that the hard work of the staff is evident in high satisfaction and achievement rates.



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The Committee reviewed the HE Report and KPI dashboard, noting that retention and attendance are on track to be above 2020-21 levels and that there are no significant concerns.

Although student satisfaction is lower than during the pandemic (due to many students preferring remote working), it is still higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Significant improvements to the Pagefield site arising from the capital project have been made and work is continuing on the development of the Institute of Technology.

Governors noted that data visibility has improved for the Access and Participation Plan which will help to prepare the College for the TEF submission in the autumn term.

It was also noted that the first HTQ will be launched in September 2022 and Edge Hill University will start delivery of the part time Primary School teaching degree at the College's University Centre.

Exam boards are pending and final results remain high on the agenda at this time.

The Committee noted the report.

7. Careers Strategy update: presentation

The Committee received a presentation on delivery of the Careers Strategy, noting that the College has maintained 100% for all eight Gatsby Benchmarks and that a new Enterprise Advisor who is head of learning at Sofology has been working with the College since January and has supported the development of the career's programme.

A number of joint AoC / Careers & Enterprise Company workshops and events have taken place, including Building a Whole College Approach to CEIAG, Integrating Careers across the Curriculum, Creative Ways to Engage and Work with Employers and Increasing Access and Update of Vocational and Technical Education.

It was noted that the College is leading on the FE College Community of Practice and is involved in the Bridge GM Careers Hub. There are termly best practice meetings and a Careers conference has been held.

The Education Skills Partnership has been pivotal to the development of the Careers Strategy, work placement and resource development.

The Committee was advised of a number of key activities that have taken place and reviewed data on work placements, noting that placements had been found for all T Level students and that work is underway to find T Level placements for students studying in 2022-23. Placements for CDF Industry, qualification requirement placements, FE qualification requirement placement, HE qualification requirement placements, Study Programme placements and work related learning are all on track for achievement.

The Committee noted the continued commitment to establishing stronger and more strategic relationships with new and existing employers for placement opportunities and an increased willingness from employers to have students back at their site in a placement.

The Career's Team is working more cohesively in its approach to employer engagement and cross selling support and also works closely with the Business Services Team and the Apprenticeship Team. Opportunities have also been identified through business breakfasts and networking sessions.

The Work Placement Team is working very closely with the Marketing Team to increase visibility and the College website has been re-designed to generate further employer engagement and leads. Student satisfaction is high.

The Committee noted that the College is continuing to develop parental engagement, adult programme and careers support and a higher technical offer as well as bespoke careers support for the Centre of Advanced Technical Studies.

Governors noted the impact of the Pandemic on the development of the Careers Strategy and that post-pandemic, there is a mixed model in place, with a combination of face to face and on-line speakers at careers events.

The Committee noted the update.

Jomana Aref left the meeting at 6.38pm



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The Committee received a presentation on the Curriculum Plan and noted that in future, this will be developed with the Committee at its March meeting (following the Governors Strategic Workshop), with a full report and final approval being sought at the July meeting of the Governing Board. An update on enrolment and curriculum activity will then be presented to the October meeting of the Governing Board, showing headlines for the academic year.

The Committee noted that Level 3 curriculum reforms continue to provide a landscape of T levels, A levels or Apprenticeships with few exceptions and that Level 2 and below curriculum reforms are under consultation and could result in significant changes with, for example, the one year Level 2 construction trade qualifications becoming two year technical programmes.

Minimum expected guided learning hours have been increased by 40 hours for all study programmes and the College is focusing on providing additional support for L1 and L2 students.

Level 3 curriculum reforms continue to be progressed with the consolidation of existing T levels in terms of expanding the number of groups in year 1 and developing and delivering year 2 provision. New T levels are being launched in September 2022 and it is expected that the total number of T level students will increase from c.100 to 270.

The Committee was advised that the College is planning for further T level introductions in 2023 and of areas where it considers there is currently insufficient information available to introduce T Levels until 2024. It was noted that 2024 is the first year BTEC funding will start to be withdrawn.

Consultation on curriculum reforms to L2 programmes and above is progressing with significant potential changes to Level 2 programmes in the near future but not for 2022-23. The key proposed changes to the curriculum for 2023 were discussed.

In relation to HE, there is a year of preparation for the Institute of Technology and level 4 / 5 programme expansion, with the introduction of the first HTQ in September and three or four HE Apprenticeship programmes. There will also be full cost Higher National modules available from January 2023 and the re-introduction of HND in some areas.

Refresh of the UC Advantage that has been focused during the pandemic on the provision of technology will be broadened again to include specialist trips and visits and Edge Hill University will deliver the part time Primary School teacher degree in UC from September 2022

Adult curriculum changes following the roll out of LSIPs and SDF funding were discussed and it was noted that the proposals for the adult curriculum in 2022-23 will deliver on funding targets and contractual obligations efficiently for AEB, L3 Loans, L3 NSF and increased flexibilities, Community Learning funding streams and access to new funding streams where appropriate.

The College will continue to develop its Adult curriculum offer to ensure impactful, place-based, learning solutions with a clearly defined 'Skills escalator' from community-based / entry-level learning to higher education and employment, with a focus on the re-introduction of Level 3 programmes through the National skills fund and GM increased flexibilities.

There will be expanded Lifetime Skills Guarantee to fund low earners / unemployed with a L3 qualification, a Multiply numeracy programme to support people to gain or improve their numeracy skills, in-work progression Champions in JCP who will make connections between employers, local authorities and skills providers and support for disabled people and people with health conditions to get into work

The Committee noted that nationally, Apprenticeship funding was to be increased to £2.7bn by 2024-25. There will be an enhanced recruitment service for SMEs, making it easier for Levy transfers. New funding rules include recognition of prior learning, off the job training, improved payments systems and English and maths requirements.

The Committee discussed the proposed Apprenticeships curriculum strategy for 2022-23, noting that it would deliver on funding targets and contractual obligations efficiently with a strong focus on quality, a growth in the volume of Apprenticeship and Higher Apprenticeships across the borough and wider region and an increase in the volume of the College's own students progressing into apprenticeships.

The apprenticeship portfolio would be widened to address employers needs further and both national and local priorities and skills shortages.
There will also be a growth in pre-apprenticeship provision and traineeships.

The Committee noted the report and agreed that in future, this will be developed with the Committee at its March meeting (following the Governors Strategic Workshop), with a full report and final approval being sought at the July meeting of the Governing Board and an update on enrolment and curriculum activity being presented to the October meeting of the Governing Board.



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9. Link Visits report

CSM-22-06-12

The Committee considered feedback from the Link Visit to the School for the Arts that had taken place in May and noted that actions to address the issues raised by Governors who attended the visit had been taken.

The Committee thanked the Executive Team for addressing the concerns raised, noting that this demonstrated the value of the Link Visits.

The Committee noted the report.

10. Link Visits Scheme

CSM-22-06-13

The Committee considered the Link Visits scheme for 2022-23, noting that there would be visits before each meeting of the Committee.

Each visit will have a theme to enable Governors to focus on key issues from the SAR / curriculum review / progress.

Governor feedback will be collated and reported at the following meeting of the Committee.

It was agreed that the dates for the Link Visits in 2022-23 will be added to the Board calendar before submission to the Governing Board for approval at its meeting on 5 July 2022.

In response to a question from a Governor, it was confirmed that members of the Committee should seek to attend three Link Visits if possible and it was noted that other Governors would also be invited to attend.

It was noted that whilst the dates for Link Visits would be fixed, the subject areas may change if deemed appropriate, as issues emerge over the year.

Resolved: The Committee approved the Link Visits Scheme for 2022-23.

11. Student Disciplinary and Suspension Procedures

CSM-22-06-14

The Committee reviewed the revised Student Disciplinary and Suspension Policy, noting minor amendments only to clarify notifications and communication mechanisms, the addition of the specific example of carrying a weapon or item to be used as a weapon as an example of a case that normally results in automatic exclusion, and clarification that exclusions are normally for a minimum of 12 months from the date of incident.

Resolved: The Committee approved the Student Disciplinary and Suspension Procedures for 2022-25.

12. Any other business

CSM-22-06-15

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Andrei Gheorghita and Lizzie McKenzie for their contributions as Student Governors in 2021-22 and for their help in promoting the role of the Student Governor and helping to identify a new Student Governor for 2022-23. She also wished them good luck in their exams and for the future.

The Committee agreed that the concerns about achievement rates for learners on City and Guilds vocational courses discussed under Item 6.1 above, the success of T-Levels and apprenticeships, the Curriculum Plan and the Careers Development Programme be included within the Chair's report to the Governing Board.

13. Date and time of next meeting: TBC

CSM-22-06-16

Chair

The meeting ended at 7.15pm.



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