

WIGAN AND LEIGH COLLEGE: GOVERNING BOARD

MEETING OF CURRICULUM AND STUDENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

TIME/DATE 5.00pm, Tuesday 16th June 2020

VENUE VIRTUAL – Microsoft Teams

Committee Members

Andrea Ferguson (Chair)
Ann Harrison
Jenny Bullen
Anna Dawe (Principal)
Rebecca Armstrong (Staff Governor)
Rachel Coombs (Student Governor)
Kodie Anderson (Student Governor)

Clerk
Vice Principal, Curriculum
Vice Principal, Corporate Services
Assistant Principal, IT, MIS & Subcontracting

Robert Smith
Claire Foreman
Louise Brown
Dave Harrison

Head of Higher Education
Head of Studies, Higher Education

Janet Thompson
Anne Frear

Italics denotes absence

MINUTES

Item	The meeting opened at 5.00pm and was quorate with at least 3 members being present.
1 CSM/20/06/01	APOLOGIES Apologies for absence were received from Rachel Coombs and Kodie Anderson. It was also noted that Janet Minto had now resigned from the Governing Board.
2 CSM/20/06/02	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.
3 CSM/20/06/03	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10th MARCH 2020 The minutes were approved as a correct record and authorised for signature by the Chair.
4 CSM/20/06/04	MATTERS ARISING The Clerk advised that the first of the two actions on the committee's Action Sheet had not been completed as the dashboard would not be presented at this meeting because the Covid-19 crisis had meant that official national benchmarking data would not now be produced for 2019/20 and that most internal data was of little value due to the college closure during the Covid-19 lockdown. The Clerk also advised that the second action on the Action Sheet was not due for completion until November 2020.
5 CSM/20/06/05	CURRICULUM PRESENTATION: HIGHER EDUCATION The Head of Higher Education outlined the key strengths and areas for improvement identified in the November 2019 self-assessment. She highlighted key strengths including rigorous annual monitoring and reporting processes, sharing of good practice, professional body accreditation with the IET and the use of HE transition strategies to attain higher grades. She also highlighted areas for development and improvement, including improvements in levels of satisfaction in the student

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experience, improving outcomes for students, the development of delivery models to support new higher and degree apprenticeships and ensuring that students and staff were well supported during changes to staff mid-programme.

Members noted the key actions put in place since the self-assessment, including the introduction of a new Head of Studies post to lead a renewed focus on student engagement and experience, the recruitment of a Head of HE Engineering post to provide increased management support, recruitment of learning mentors to provide increased individual support to students, the launch of a 'Step Up' campaign for the whole programme and the integration of HE into college quality assurance processes.

The Head of Studies outlined the key aspects of her new role and explained that it was fundamentally about being a student champion, with a focus on the balance between support and discipline. It was noted that, for higher education students, it was important that the nature of the support provided was flexible and tailored to individual needs. The Head of Studies also explained that her role was to keep the whole department focused on delivering continuous improvement and that this needed to be on the minds of all staff at all times. Members noted that the department had also focused on improving procedures and guidance in relation to informal and formal interventions, improving communication with employers and introducing new regular communication bulletins for staff.

The Head of Studies also outlined work that had taken place to improve the ways in which students were supported. This included better liaison with the Additional Support and Wellbeing Team, ensuring that reasonable adjustments were put in place, improving safeguarding support, re-launching the Access Fund for those in financial hardship and improving interview arrangements with those students thinking of leaving.

The Head of Higher Education provided a summary of impact to date from the improvements put in place. She reported that retention to date was 85.1% which was a significant year-on-year improvement. However, it was noted that there were further students at risk of leaving before year-end and that work was ongoing to provide support to minimise the impact of this risk. The current position for OfS continuation data was also noted and the Head of Higher Education confirmed that the position of this data did not raise concerns in terms of OfS expectations. Members were pleased to note that there had been a significant improvement in overall student satisfaction since the previous year with 82.5% of responses indicating an overall satisfaction with the quality of courses. However, it was noted that this was slightly below the national average of 83.6%. The Head of Higher Education confirmed that issues had been broken down by department so that appropriate action could be taken in relevant areas.

Members discussed the outcomes of the UCLan Periodic Review and it was noted that the college had been commended in a number of areas, including the wide and appropriate access to resources for students, the robust transition strategy to support student progression, sharing of good practice and the Additional Learning Support Team's responsive approach to student need. It was also noted that the panel had identified a number of areas of innovative practice, including the University College Advantage fund offering unique opportunities for students to explore and widen understanding of subjects, the encouragement of students to gain IET membership

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and understand the importance of professional bodies in industry, and added value to sports programmes through opportunities to gain employment qualifications in fitness. The Head of Higher Education reported that the review had identified one condition and had made two recommendations for further improvement. She confirmed that the condition requirements had been implemented and the plans were underway to implement the improvement recommendations.

Members also discussed plans in place to improve higher and degree apprenticeship programmes and a number of recent apprenticeship successes.

The Chair recognised that a lot of work had taken place to consolidate the college's HE expertise into a single team and acknowledged that this would be an important factor in delivering further improvement. She asked whether there was any clarity in relation to the reasons why organisation and management had received some negative responses in the student feedback. The Head of Higher Education responded that this had mainly been due to organisational issues at the start of the Autumn Term and communications between staff and students. She commented that she expected this to improve when the results of the national NSS survey were published in November. The Chair also asked whether an increased focus on higher apprenticeships would mean that resourcing issues would arise from the extra requirements for individual visits to employers' premises. The Head of Higher Education responded that a team was already in place for this work and that it was unlikely that significant increases in resources would be required under the planned expansion in this area.

Members sought clarification as to whether staff turnover issues had impacted on student satisfaction. The Head of Higher Education advised that the turnover of staff was at a manageable level and that the challenge of embedding new staff had been more of an issue as new posts had been created, such as the professional mentors. Members asked how much of an issue student discipline was at this level. The Head of Studies responded that discipline requirements could be maintained at a low level provided there was a strong focus on pastoral care and other student support. Members also asked whether the recent Covid-19 lockdown had impacted on safeguarding issues. The Head of Studies advised that safeguarding activity had continued as normal, although had relied on online meetings. She added that the team had still been able to draw on internal college support and external support where necessary.

The Staff Governor asked whether the retention risk identified in the presentation was due to Covid-19. The Head of Studies responded that it was a mixed picture with many students performing better than expected, whilst others had struggled working with online content.

The Chair thanked the Head of Higher Education and the head of Studies for their presentation.

The Head of Higher Education and Head of Studies left the meeting at 5.45pm.

6 CURRICULUM & QUALITY REPORT

CSM/20/06/06

The Vice Principal, Curriculum reported that the college had been in a strong position at the time of the Covid-19 lockdown, with retention rates similar to the previous year,

and strong exam attendance and outcomes. She commented that she had been pleased with this position, given the significant number of changes to curriculum requirements introduced at the beginning of the year. Members noted that student engagement in online activity during the lockdown had been very strong, with up to 84% of students engaged in at least 60% of the activities available to them. They also noted that there had been good compliance with the requirement to send in assignments. The Vice Principal suggested that these positive outcomes were partly the result of significant improvements in the college ILT over the last few years and a strong focus on staff development in the use of new ILT, which had ensured that staff were comfortable with the online arrangements during the lockdown. However, the Vice Principal also highlighted the importance of supporting those students who were not well-engaged, both for academic and safeguarding reasons.

Members noted that many areas of college activity, such as A Levels, had been able to calculate student performance based on already completed work and achieving course completion was straightforward in these cases. However, they also noted that many students in occupational courses would still have key assignments and assessments outstanding. The Vice Principal explained that these students were the key focus on re-opening and would be the first ones invited into college to ensure plans were in place to complete their courses.

It was noted that developments in relation to Higher Education had been covered under the previous agenda item. Members discussed the current position in relation to apprentices and noted that a high proportion had been furloughed during the lockdown, with around 75% furloughed in construction. The Vice Principal reported that many were now returning to work but some no longer had a job and would be unable to continue their apprenticeship unless they could secure alternative employment. She also reported that work was now underway to carry out site visits and to bring apprentices into college to ensure that they remained on programme. The Vice Principal commented that, although there was a relatively new management team in this area, she was satisfied that they had made a positive start and that key issues were being addressed.

The Vice Principal provided an update on staff development and advised that the usual Friday morning staff development sessions had continued throughout the lockdown period. She also provided an update in relation to online teaching and learning. It was noted that this had seemed to go very well but that it would be important to learn what had worked well and what had not to help to improve future online delivery, especially given the college's previous experience of poorer outcomes for online courses. The Vice Principal advised that a staff questionnaire had been used to try to get a better understanding of their experience of online teaching and learning during the lockdown. She also advised that the college had monitored the use of online tools to understand which had worked well and been popular with staff and students. Members recognised that there were likely to still be challenges associated with Covid-19 at the start of the Autumn Term and that it would continue to be important to use online resources effectively.

The Principal highlighted a concern that may impact on Wigan Borough in terms of potential increases in young people categorised as NEET. She explained that there was a risk of some learners not completing their courses in-year due to final assignments or assessments being required. It was noted that this may lead to them becoming disheartened and not returning to complete in September. The Principal explained that this risk applied to around 600 students but added that the college would be working very hard to complete as many as possible in-year to help reduce the level of overall risk. Similarly, the Principal highlighted those apprentices who would have lost their jobs during the lockdown as an additional risk in terms of increasing NEET numbers. Members noted that a further update on these issues would be provided at the next meeting.

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	<p>The Chair asked what impacts the current situation would have on those wanting to progress next year. The Principal responded that many who wished to progress would be able to do so without difficulty as awarding bodies had been flexible in completing learners where possible. However, she highlighted those who would need to complete at the beginning of September as a challenge. She explained that an additional hour per week had been added to programmes (36 hours) for vocational and other relevant courses to enable progression, whilst still covering anything missed in the current year. She also highlighted apprentices who had lost their job as potentially returning on study programmes as an alternative.</p> <p>The Chair also asked what strategies would be put in place to help complete learners in-year and suggested a possible 'boot camp' approach during the summer break. The Principal responded that, although not referred to as a 'boot camp', a similar approach was planned to bring relevant learners back in August to try to complete assignments and assessments. She also outlined other planned strategies, including timetabling changes to accommodate overlap and alternative delivery models where required.</p> <p>Members commented that there was a risk of a lost generation of young people, where many would leave without qualifications or become unemployed without completing apprenticeships. They also commented that it was important to understand that the online learning had worked well during the lockdown partly because a relationship of trust had already been established between staff and students. It was noted that there was a risk that this may not work so well for online learning that is introduced from the outset of a course when there had not yet been an opportunity to develop that relationship. Finally, members commented that care would need to be taken in relation to all of the proposed measures and changes not to excessively increase pressures on staff.</p>
<p>7</p> <p>CSM/20/06/07</p>	<p>CURRICULUM PLAN 2020/21</p> <p>The Vice Principal, Curriculum outlined the key elements of the Curriculum Plan for 2020/21 and it was noted that this had been changed to reflect the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Vice Principal explained that the plan was aimed at significantly reducing the numbers on site to enable more effective social distancing. She advised that the plan aimed at delivering 55% of content on a face-to-face basis, with the remaining 45% being delivered online. It was also noted that most adult provision would be delivered in the evenings to further reduce numbers on site at any one time, with Leigh Adult Education Centre being open for more evenings than in 2019/20 in order to spread adult courses through the week. In relation to Higher Education, the Vice Principal advised that most groups were small enough to maintain social distancing, but that some larger groups, such as in Engineering, may need to be split. Members recognised that this would lead to additional cost through increased overall teaching hours. They also recognised that this would apply to the face-to-face elements of most FE provision. The Vice Principal explained that work placements were also likely to be significantly affected by Covid-19 and that overseas trips were likely to be minimal.</p> <p>The Vice Principal outlined the key approaches adopted within the Plan, including a continuation in the development of more modern qualifications across the curriculum. She explained that this was in order to better prepare students for the workplace, to meet employer demand more effectively and to offer courses onto which students would want to enrol. Similarly, it was noted that this included further movement onto new apprenticeship standards and a reduction in the delivery of the older frameworks. The Vice Principal reminded members that the college would also start delivery of new T Levels in 2021 and that work would continue in coming year to prepare for this</p>

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	<p>introduction. She summarised the Plan as focusing on meeting local authority initiatives and employer demand, whilst maintaining a focus on high quality teaching and learning and an improved student experience.</p> <p>Members discussed specific curriculum changes, including increased digital provision, extended Access, new full cost professional updates for trades, and new entry to work programmes. They also noted that the college would trial new online flexible options, including ESOL and English & Maths. Members considered changes in apprenticeship provision in more detail, including expansion of higher apprenticeship provision in Engineering, such as a new Level 4 Civil Engineering apprenticeship. It was acknowledged that job certainty would be an issue in 2020/21 and that there was likely to be a significant reduction in apprenticeship opportunities for school leavers in the Autumn Term. The Vice Principal commented that she hoped that those who did not secure an apprenticeship could be encouraged to enrol on study programmes. Members discussed T Level plans in more detail and noted the potential to use the Rushton Building for some T Level delivery, subject to a successful capital bid to redevelop the building as required. The Vice Principal outlined the next steps for T Level preparation, including curriculum design, increasing staff awareness and developing relationships with key employers. She also highlighted further T Levels to be introduced from 2022.</p> <p>The Chair asked what proportion of T Level activity was assigned to work placements. The Vice Principal responded that over 300 hours of work placement was required during the course of each T Level. She commented that this would be a very challenging aspect, particularly for those courses where it was not appropriate to spread the placement activity across the whole of the programme. It was noted that the college's existing nursing course had a similar delivery model that worked well and which could form the basis to plan the modelling for future T Levels. The Chair also asked who would have responsibility for finding work placements. The Vice Principal explained that this would be a college responsibility, although there may be cases where students were able to secure their own placements. She commented that the large scale placement requirement would mean that the college would have to increase its focus on developing placement arrangements with larger employers able to take on multiple students.</p> <p>Members commented that the T Level plans were extremely ambitious and would take a significant commitment from all managers and staff involved in the relevant curriculum areas. They also highlighted the risk of adding further pressures onto staff by implementing a lot of change at the same time. The Vice Principal responded that it had become clear that government plans aimed to bring in significant changes in further education and apprenticeship courses and the way in which they were delivered. She commented that it was better to introduce the first changes reasonably early in the roll out to avoid staff being faced with trying to deliver even more change further down the line and with much reduced deadlines.</p>
8 CSM/20/06/08	CAREERS STRATEGY UPDATE The Principal outlined progress to date in delivering the college's Careers Strategy. Members were pleased to learn that the strategy appeared to be working well and it was noted that only minor changes to the strategy were proposed. The Principal advised that these changes included the introduction of a new role of Lead Governor for Careers & Destinations and that a recommendation would be presented to the

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	<p>Governing Board to appoint a governor into the new role. It was also noted that the strategy had been reviewed by stakeholders, including the college's Enterprise Co-ordinator and Enterprise Advisor who had been allocated to the college as part of the GM Careers Hub.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i) That the Governing Board be recommended to approve the proposed revisions to the Careers Strategy; andii) That the Governing Board be asked to consider adding approval of changes to the Careers Strategy to the delegated responsibilities of the Curriculum & Student Matters Committee.
9 CSM/20/06/09	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>There was no further business.</p>
	<p>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: To be confirmed by the Governing Board on 7th July 2020</p>
	<p>The meeting closed at 7.00pm</p>