

Minutes of a virtual meeting of Learning & Quality Committee at 2pm on 17 June 2020

Present: Katie Danvers Hewitt, Tim Mason & John Royston-Ford (Chair).

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Liz Davies Quality & Standards Manager
Kara Hall Learning & Development Manager
Sue Martin Interim Vice-Principal Quality & Learning
Craig Mincher Director Employer & Commercial Services
Paola Schweitzer Clerk to the Corporation
Penny Wycherley Interim Principal

Minutes

1 – Standing Items

21 Apologies for Absence

Items for decision were considered when the meeting was quorate. The remaining Agenda items were discussed and are recorded below as notes of meeting.

22 Membership

Paola stated that Corporation would shortly consider Committee membership.

23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

24 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 April 2020 were **Agreed** as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair.

25 Matters Arising: Minute 013: Paola had spoken with Martin and Penny who had agreed not to explore Secondary Heads representation on the Board at present.

2 – Matters for Decision

26 Learner Voice

Sue presented paper 2668/20/F&E summarising the framework for Learner Voice

engagement. The framework built on existing good practice and would enable feedback on all aspects of the learner journey and college life to be formalised and acted upon. It was proposed that the new quality cycle for 2020/21 would be revised to include the different learner voice forums and mechanisms. Members believed the learner voice was central and supported this comprehensive framework, asking that it link to governors through, for example, the liaison programme and involvement in the SAR. Members **Noted** the established current learner voice forums and **Agreed** the various methods of engagement to collect the learner voice and also that learner voice engagement was included in the overall quality cycle in 2020/21. Learner Voice reports would be brought to the Committee and summarised in the Principal's Report to Corporation.

27 Quality & Data Monitoring

Sue presented paper 2664/20/F&E providing a headline summary of College performance for all provision types compared to the same point in 2018/19. The report identified a number of key issues concerning attendance and retention.

Overall in-year **retention** for classroom-based provision was 95.1%, above the national average (NA) for provider groups at 92.9% [not 86.7% as erroneously reported, which is the NA achievement rate]. Apprenticeship retention showed a 2% decline to 78% (due to Covid-19) compared to the previous reporting period, representing an increase of 15.6% compared to 2018/19. Level 3 in year retention was 82.7%, a decline of 8.1% behind the NA of 90.8% and below the 2018/19 final. Level 3 retention (excluding A level data) was 91.1% compared to 92.2% the previous year. Overall College **attendance** was 86.2% compared to 86.5% at the same point last year and was comparable of the general FE sector. Attendance in maths and English had increased by 5.2% to 81.79% from the same point last year. Low attendance in Built Environment (85.8%) and Automotive (77%) meant these areas were being closely monitored through the intensive care support process.

Members had previously discussed the College's 90% attendance target and the negative impact on staff commitment of setting unachievable targets. Sue noted that 90% attendance was significantly above the levels in Ofsted graded '*good*' general further education (GFE) colleges. It was therefore proposed to reduce the target to 87% for classroom-based provision, still a significantly stretching target for some areas. Members supported this approach, believing it was hard for staff to have a target they were unlikely to achieve and noting that the target could increase as and when attendance levels increased. They therefore **Agreed** the revised College attendance target of 87% for 2020/21. Members **Noted** the areas of improvement highlighted in the report, the areas showing a decline in performance and the support in place to mitigate against poor achievement and reduced retention in level 3 provision considering the withdrawal of A level provision.

Notes of Meeting (this part of the meeting was not quorate)

Present: Liz Davies (Quality & Standards Manager), Kara Hall (Learning & Development Manager), Sue Martin (Interim VP Quality & Learning), Tim Mason, Craig Mincher (Director Employer & Commercial Services), John Royston-Ford (Chair), Paola Schweitzer (Clerk) and Penny Wycherley (interim Principal).

Covid-19 update with particular reference to learning outcomes and quality assurance. The current emphasis was to bring vulnerable students into the College as well as those needing to do assessments to finish their course. One group of adult learners, NHS pharmacy technicians, were also coming into the College to finish their learning and assessments. The 2020/21 College calendar had been set and all students had at least half a day in College for induction with their tutor (unless they were shielding). Timetabling was underway and teaching staff were developing blended learning schedules (online and face to face teaching). The intention was to create '*bubbles*' of students allocated to designated rooms with staff moving between rooms. John congratulated staff for their hard work in keeping the College open and students in learning.

The **Learning & Quality Risk Register** (paper 2663/20/L&Q) identified three learning and quality risks and actions to mitigate these risks. *Failure to meet retention, achievement and success targets:* Robust assurance was being maintained via online methods. Managers received weekly reports enabling swift action in areas of concern. A controlled number of learners were completing assessments and exams. *Poor learner recruitment:* Action included progression interviews for all learners, virtual open events and keeping warm strategies for new students. Support would be provided over the summer to prepare students for their return to learning. *Failure to meet standards in external quality reviews:* Ofsted had currently suspended its inspection regime. Tim complimented staff on the online open event, stating that he had been impressed with the videos.

The **Quality Improvement Plan** (paper 2665/20/L&Q) had been updated to show progress against actions and impact up to the end of May. Progress was in line with the expected cycle of the learning journey and impact of actions could be evidenced in most areas. Full achievement data was not available due to changes in final exams and grading. Positive progress included improvement in retention in courses receiving intensive care support (apart from automotive) and students participating in online focus groups expressing satisfaction with their course, support and online learning. Areas requiring further development included attendance in Automotive and retention for level 3. Penny noted that poor level 3 retention was due to one or two students leaving across a number of courses which suggested it was a generic issue. One solution was to provide robust support for students towards the end of their first year to ensure they were ready for their second year. A deep dive concerning level 3 retention would be carried out at the end of the academic year to identify actions to secure improvement. This would be reported to the Committee.

TLA Update: Advanced Practitioner Report (paper 2666/20/L&Q) provided an update on the activities of the teaching and learning excellent team, including Advanced Practitioners (APs). The report covered support for staff before and during lockdown, learning walks and lesson observations, student and staff focus groups, Subject Specialist Support Network and Flying Start. A total of 33 online learning walks had taken place since Easter and APs were also reviewing resources shared with students. There was an emphasis on a more supportive approach to improve staff morale. Following a successful pilot, the College was purchasing a full licence for Nearpod, software that allowed teachers to create interactive, online lessons. Further work was required in some areas such as training for new APs in lesson observation and feedback and there was a need for lesson intentions to have sufficient stretch and challenge and to be used effectively in designing lessons. 24 focus groups had taken place with students generally very positive about the transition to online learning however, they had expressed concern about the state of their industries so additional support for their next steps was being provided. Members supported the introduction of NearPod, with one member stating the College needed to be a digital champion. Penny reported that the College was currently seeking funding to support digital learning and to support the College's wireless capability.

Apprenticeship Update (paper 2667/20/L&Q). Craig stated that Covid-19 posed risks to apprenticeships in a number of areas, for example apprenticeships were not complete until final assessments had been completed and there were delays to carrying out these assessments in some areas. Declining numbers were expected in some traditional courses however, business development had been relatively positive with a new cohort of payroll apprenticeships starting recently. In addition the College was awaiting the outcome of a bid to enlarge the pharmacy technician programme involving NHS trusts and Queen Alexandra Hospital. The ESFA had confirmed that it did not wish to give the College's apprenticeship provision a notice to improve and that this would be reviewed in October. Tim asked about new opportunities arising as a result of Covid-19 in areas such as health and social care. Craig stated that whilst there were likely to be opportunities in this area, these apprenticeships had the lowest funding bands and highest risks so it was important to identify the right partners and make a long-term plan. There was a brief discussion about whether the College had enough APs with both Penny and Kara stating that securing more APs/more AP hours was a priority.

The meeting ended at 4.15pm.

Date of next meeting 23 September 2020.