

Minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee Meeting

held on 14 November 2019

Present Lance Hanson (*Chair*), Louise Jones (*Vice Chair*), David Williams (*Principal*), David Allen, Lewis Callary, Joanne Chilton

In attendance Joanne Williams (*Director of Learning and Teaching*)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Louise Jones and Mandy Davis.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3 Student Enrolments - In-year 2019/2020 Data

Joanne Williams reported that overall student enrolment had increased, however, this was slightly below the contracted level. There would be subsequent financial impact on 2020/2021 unless mitigated by the proposed increase in the student funding base rate.

In considering reasons affecting student enrolment numbers, particularly for A Level courses, members discussed competitor course offer and entry requirements, in addition to the impact of more challenging GCSE grade boundaries. Members also noted that the previous year, smaller first year A Level cohort had progressed from first to second year of A Level courses.

In moving forward, the College was looking to review course offer to address student need where there may be a shortfall in their entry requirements.

Members considered trends in attrition rates, which were judged in relation to the sector average, in particular the challenges impacting on adult short courses.

Members asked about the changed gender profile with a noticeable increase in the female cohort. David Williams responded that this was, in part, attributable to increased recruitment to subjects more heavily subscribed to by females, which in turn related to students enrolling from the closure of BMet Stourbridge.

Members asked further questions about particular A Level subject dips in enrolment which were discussed in greater detail.

The report was received.

4 Student Performance Report

Members discussed performance, attendance and achievement data.

Overall retention for 2018/2019 was noted as 92% and members considered the detail in relation to faculties. Particular consideration was given to Access to HE and Adult Education, which remained lower for a second year. A range of actions had been undertaken and management continued to monitor the position.

Joanne Williams addressed in detail factors impacting on lower performing areas and actions taken to date. Further review actions included in depth consideration of the value of some courses, in relation to student progression/destination data, potential for taster courses and also the level of flexibility on adult education courses, balancing inclusivity and access with manageability and realistic outcomes.

David Williams highlighted that overall the trajectory for student achievement was good, however, the College was not complacent about areas of underperformance.

A member asked about gender bias and David Williams responded that the College took particular care around a gender minority on any course.

Student destinations were celebrated as a College strength, with excellent examples of student progression and staff support. Members were informed that research had been commissioned to gain further insight on progression of former students.

David Williams noted that Apprenticeship provision was positive with pass rates exceeding the national average. While the timely achievement rate had dipped slightly, this was also above the national average.

Members noted the performance report and that the management team were closely monitoring data and taking actions on areas of underperformance.

5 Value Added Report for 2018/2019

David Williams explained the value added data used by the College, highlighting limitations, where only a relatively small range of qualifications offered were included in Department for Education data.

In considering the data provided, members noted that the College was focused on supporting students to achieve higher grades. A range of actions included staff development, increased differentiated learning for stretch and challenge and use of more frequent assessment points.

Joanne Williams also reported on further data modelling work to be used with staff, to provide greater clarity in what students were working towards.

Higher Education unconditional offers were noted as potentially demotivating students with regard to achieving higher grades. The College was considering ways to counteract this.

The report on value added data was received.

6 Teaching and Learning Report

6.1 Review of Previous Year – 2018/2019

In considering previous year data, 88% of lessons were judged as meeting expectations, with more work identified on stretch and challenge for individual students.

6.2 In-year – 2019/2020

Joanne Williams explained that the faculty reviews would be refocused to meet a change in inspection approach, which staff needed to be prepared for, in particular, the less passive approach to observations. Heads of Department also needed to be able to clearly articulate the value and intent of their courses in relation not just to student attainment, but to work and progression opportunities.

Members noted the change of emphasis and the value in staff doing visits to other areas to support their development.

The reports on teaching and learning were received.

7 Equality and Diversity Report 2018/2019

Joanne Williams reported on the high volume of positive work being undertaken by the College in support of students. Students with declared mental health issues remained the most challenging area of work.

Destinations were good for learners with high needs and Children Looked After, however, not all students were retained.

Where students had left and sought to return, reviews were undertaken to ensure they were ready to return to College.

Members confirmed the passion demonstrated by staff through the Equality and Diversity Forum.

Members also noted the lower achievement rates for Caribbean and White and Black African ethnicity and further supporting management actions already planned, suggested external agencies that could be approached to support groups in raising achievement. These included the Prince's Trust and One Million Mentors.

The Students Curriculum and Quality Committee resolved to recommend to Corporation the Equality and Diversity Annual Report.

8 Pastoral Report 2018/2019 (incorporating Equality and Diversity and Prevent)

Members considered the extensive work that the College was undertaking, commending the excellent range of workshops and asked if consideration of timing of workshops could be given, to support greater student and staff attendance.

Members were pleased to see a celebration of the success of students across the College through enrichment and achievement stories.

The update on safeguarding and high needs emphasised high volume of requests for help by students. Members noted how mental health impacted on student ability to attend College.

Members also noted additional contacts with external agencies, that could further support specific areas of pastoral work and which were shared with senior staff.

The Pastoral Report 2018/19 was received.

9 Self-Assessment

9.1 Progress Report on Quality Improvement Plan for 2018/2019 and & 9.2 SAR 2018/2019 - Presentation

Joanne Williams provided a presentation to members on the draft College Self-Assessment Report. Overall grading was 2 across key measures and a strong position was being maintained on main aims. However, Functional Skills results required improvement.

Teachers were viewed as passionate about their subjects, were good role models and supported students above normal expectations. Student behaviour was good with some behaviour issues exhibited mostly outside lessons. Careers support was excellent, safeguarding was taken seriously and performance management was used where required. However, improvements in attendance and stretch and challenge for high grades were needed.

Detailed review also included cycles of quality assurance, further continuous improvement, key strengths and why the College is good, what the College should do to become outstanding and curriculum grades.

Other strengths and areas for development were outlined surrounding the education programme for young people, adult learning programmes, apprenticeships and provisions for students with high needs.

Members discussed the challenge of fifty-day work placements which were particularly difficult for some curriculum areas. Courses with excellent links included Catering, Travel and Tourism, and Health and Social Care.

In considering grading Joanne Williams highlighted and explained the judgements for areas which had improved, those which had dipped and those which had remained at Grade 3.

Members also noted some excellent apprenticeships and supported internships for high needs students, which were life changing. Members appreciated sight of such qualitative outcomes.

Under next steps, focus would be on a quality improvement plan, courses under notice and performance management.

Members thanked Joanne Williams for her comprehensive presentation ahead of the Corporation approving the final College Self-Assessment Report.

Members noted progress reported in the Quality Improvement Plan monitoring report October 2019.

10 Courses Under Notice

Members received the report on courses which were under notice for a range of reasons. A watching brief was being maintained.

Members suggested further work on taking good practice across subject areas and undertaking more visits to schools.

11 Any Other Business

There was none.

12 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 17 March 2020.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm