

## Minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee Meeting

### held on 17 June 2020

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*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*)  
Mandy Davis (*Director of Learner Services*)  
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

#### **1 Apologies**

There were none.

#### **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

#### **3 Minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee Meeting held 14 November 2019 and Matters Arising**

The Clerk noted a correction on attendance.

The minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee Meeting held 14 November 2019 were approved as a correct record, subject to adjustment of the attendance list.

There were no matters arising.

#### **4 Online Learning – Review of provision across curriculum offer and current students**

Joanne Williams provided a comprehensive overview of success, student feedback, developmental needs and key issues to progressing online learning for students; recognising much sector debate and ongoing work on key issues facing students and providers around student access, protocols, quality of provision, measures for engagement and developing capacity.

Joanne Williams reported on the results of a student survey and had provided a sample, across a range of courses of the feedback received.

Members noted that engagement for English and Maths GCSE and Functional Skills was low, which appeared to be the case nationally. The approach for September was being considered, including use of new products and individually tailored homework.

For September, it was planned to provide fifty percent online and fifty percent classroom delivery, with some necessary variation, such as greater classroom delivery for courses at Level 1.

With regard to student access to online learning, members noted the work already done to provide equipment, and continued approaches to secure further funding to support this. However, there were wider issues where for some students online learning access was more complex, and the College sought to address this.

Joanne Williams also explained that while staff had been very responsive, the College would provide further support through upskilling and building confidence in online delivery.

Members also noted that monitoring engagement and assessment was an unfolding picture, and discussed a range of mechanisms whilst awaiting greater clarity on measures. However, it was positive to note that online assessments had been addressed.

Members asked a range of questions to further understand the breadth of work and issues facing the College, to address learner needs now and going forward in the new academic year.

With regards to digital equipment on campuses members were informed that in addition to students using their own devices, students would be given their own silicon covers for specialist computers and antibacterial wipes provided.

In addition to seeking further funding to support students in need of devices, it was suggested that charities or schemes for repurposing old devices be considered. Members further discussed digital divide and online protocols.

In response to questions on the College coach travel provision, Joanne Williams detailed the precautions being taken, including demisting between each journey.

Answering questions on the reach of student surveys, Joanne Williams explained measures taken to ensure feedback is taken from across the student base. Recent College surveys had been done through a text link.

Further questions were asked about consistency for students in using digital systems. Mandy Davis outlined the work through My Halesowen and the platform Navigate to support students through digital enrolment and a six-week induction period. The College aimed to capture information about digital access and any issues of digital divide to be addressed.

Members thanked staff for their commendable work in adapting and responding.

## **5 Learner Progress - Assessments/Qualifications; Covid-19 impact**

Joanne Williams detailed for members how assessed grades had been predicted and provided through each of the awarding body centres. Standardisation undertaken also supported expected achievement grades. Overall, students had not been disadvantaged by not undertaking exams. Improved performance in Public Services with positive destinations was welcomed, with good destinations for Higher National students, in addition to good Higher Education acceptances.

Joanne Williams outlined the planned for students returning to College in June, under safe distancing and safety guidelines across three campuses. These included Hair and Beauty, Catering, Accountancy and A Levels.

It was also noted that there continued to be some concerns over A Level retention and action was being taken to mitigate this.

Members were informed that a second student survey had garnered over seven hundred responses. This assisted managers in understanding and responding to areas of most concern for students in their studies and in returning to College. A large concern was regarding academic work missed across three months. The College had yet to receive guidance from awarding bodies about 2020/2021 to help allay student anxiety.

Members asked how the loss of three months face to face education would impact on transition for year 13 learners. Joanne Williams responded that the College would do all that it could to support through advice and guidance, the UCAS process including additional classes, whilst not overburdening staff and students. David Williams reported a positive meeting with the University of Worcester and work with HE Providers which could support gap year students.

## **6 Curriculum Review**

New curriculum/course offer in light of Covid-19 impact and Curriculum Plan 2020/2021

It was noted that the emerging picture of unemployment indicated that low level workers and senior executives were most vulnerable. An increase of 48% unemployment across the Black Country was indicated.

It was felt that the College should be clear in what it could offer to 16-19 year olds and be open to new learner enrolment for a much longer period, with potential January start dates.

Joanne Williams reported that the College was looking to courses to help students in stepping up to HE or employment, including Higher National modules and Extended Project Qualifications. Adult provision, in relation to proposals to the West Midlands Combined Authority, would focus on areas where there was identified need across the area. Halesowen planned to offer Business, Health and Social Care, Science and Health Care Science. The College recognised it may need to employ staff with the specific skills to be a job coach/mentor. In addition, a new Pre Apprenticeship programme would position students to move into an apprenticeship or continue to pursue a business qualification.

Members further discussed curriculum review and risk mitigation with new courses. Joanne Williams responded that the modelling process conducted, worked to ensure any new course was appropriate in qualification, for progression opportunities and could be supported by appropriate staff, citing examples.

Members also discussed work being done to keep year 11 students engaged, through work with feeder schools, in particular with vulnerable learners. The planned longer induction period was geared to support transition through a recovery curriculum, to catch up and reintegrate into learning in a safe manner. Students had been written to and had opportunities such as live subject chats. Mandy Davis noted that there was

potential to use Navigate, or a similar platform to provide a seamless transfer of a student's portfolio between chosen providers. It was also noted that a parent/carer survey was being conducted through social media, in preparation for September start.

Members also noted that an employer survey was being conducted.

## **7 Pastoral Update/Learner Support - including Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity and Wellbeing**

Mandy Davis outlined the effective work undertaken by the Safeguarding team of staff in reviewing and contacting vulnerable learners, explaining the approach of the Vulnerable Impact Group.

With regard to mental health, Mandy Davis reported that;

- a new mental health resource The Big White Wall had been purchased to support both staff and students. This would receive a high profile launch at student induction. In addition to self-help guides, the resource offered 24hr cover across seven days a week through trained clinicians,
- a mental health adviser for Shenstone House was to be appointed,
- College counsellors were supporting students through Teams.

Members noted the commendable work achieved by the Learning Support Team in addressing a high volume of Education Health Care Plans. The College was increasing in its reputation as a caring and supportive provider. This was further evidenced in both a successful and growing Intern Programme and an exemplary new programme, whereby students who are Looked After are training teachers to engage with students who are Looked After.

Mandy Davis reported to members that the College had sensitively addressed social media traffic and released a statement on Black Lives Matter. The College had not added on to its current approach, but reinforced the Ready, Respectful, Safe approach, had reviewed what the College does, and would continue to work through the Equality and Diversity Lead and Forum and operating plans. The College would also be continuing with the Leaders in Diversity accreditation. Members also noted the work that students would cover during induction and the tutorial programme which included an Equality pledge, Freedom of Speech and Unconscious Bias as well as engaging students in tutorial debates on local, national and international news items. Student Equality and Diversity Ambassadors would be appointed shortly and the E&D calendar circulated. Mandy Davis concluded that the planned activities on Windrush would now be provided as a digital resource.

Members noted that the College was undertaking a Covid Safety Accreditation.

Members thanked Mandy Davis and her team for taking such a proactive and inclusive approach to Equality and Diversity, an approach that was embedded through College, with students central to activities. They also asked how Black Lives Matter was being addressed through the curriculum. Mandy Davis noted the necessary strategic overview, through lesson observations, however, the start would be with unconscious bias and then the use of, and support through, a breadth of resources.

In addition to reported information, members noted that a Virtual InfoFest Day was being held on Wednesday 8 July.

## **8 Recruitment Review - Planning for 2020 enrolment**

Following on from the information shared on the digital enrolment process, work with applicants and feeder schools and students progressing, Joanne Williams reported that the College had an increased number of applications and good progression. The College may also recruit more adults under current economic pressures.

Members discussed how local recruitment patterns may be impacted by Covid-19 and that this was hard to predict. The College coach provision was considered an asset, however students could seek to avoid using transport and attend their nearest provider. Competition may therefore increase in intensity. David Williams referred to data that illustrated market share across local providers had varied by one percent over the previous five years.

Joanne Williams also noted the work the Association of Colleges was undertaking with regards to Colleges not being negatively impacted by the lagged funding model.

Members asked if a virtual tour of the College was being used by Marketing. Joanne Williams answered that yes, the College virtual material would show the campus facilities and the social distancing measures in place. There were also plans to include the safety measures undertaken by the coach provider.

## **9 Review of Committee Terms of Reference**

Members concluded that the review of committee terms should be deferred to enable the Corporation to take stock of at least a full year of the new model of working and the impact of Covid-19 on governance arrangements.

## **10 Any Other Business**

There was none.

## **11 Date of Next Meeting**

The Clerk explained that the calendar of meetings awaited approval by the Corporation, therefore the date of the next meeting in November 2020 is to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm