

ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2012

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19
September 2012

Author: Clerk of the Corporation

Action: Approve

Status: Open

Present: David Mitchell (Chair)
Keith Cann Evans
Tom Cantwell
Gail Etherington
Darren Heathcote
Allan Steele
Mark Taylor
Richard Thorold

In attendance: Jackie Doxford
Judith Doyle
John Gray
Gwyneth Jones
Tim Poolan
Andrew Robson

1. Welcome/Apologies

David Mitchell welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Brian Rapkin.

The Chair invited members to declare any interests on any item on the agenda. No interests were declared at this stage in the meeting; however, members noted that should the direction of debate on any item result in a potential conflict of interest, this should be indicated during the meeting. Members were also reminded to advise the Clerk of any changes to be made to declaration of interests.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2012 were accepted as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising which were not substantive items on the agenda.

4. Success Rates Data for Academic Year 2011/2012

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality introduced a report which updated the Committee on learner responsiveness college performance for academic year 2011/2012. The base data included in the report had been taken from the most reliable and most widely acceptable source (Pro-Achieve). Some achievements (particularly for short and

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very short provision) are still being received and processed therefore the report presented an emerging view of performance close to the likely outturn rather than a final picture. It was noted that the data has been presented in a way which addresses the fact that this is an emerging picture.

There is more certainty about Success Rates for long provision and some of the long course Success Rates are fully confirmed. Some short and very short courses have just completed or are still in progress, therefore not all the data is on the system at this point. Whilst this is the case, significant efforts have been made this academic year to process achievements and data as early as possible. The impact of this work is evident with all long course success rates at a more advanced position than a similar stage of Academic Year 2010/2011. Any data not yet on the system has been identified down to individual course and student level, and is being tracked to ensure that no achievements are overlooked. Progress is monitored by Weekly Performance Reviews. As not all achievements are yet on Pro-Achieve, Success Rates are presented as two values: a current Success Rate and a forecast Success Rate. A current Success Rate which usually represents the minimum level that the Success Rate can be; this figure can only go down in very specific circumstances (eg if there were additional 'Starts' for low performing very short courses to be added to the system). A forecast Success Rate which has been carefully built-up from a course-by-course, student-by-student analysis of remaining achievement data.

Andrew Robson, Strategy Manager – Quality & Performance, advised the Committee that since the circulation of meeting papers, an updated version of the Success Rates Data for Academic Year 2011/2012 was now available and distributed copies to members. He explained that the figures showed that in all cases the rates had moved closer to the Forecast Success Rate and in some cases had exceeded them. In the original report prepared for Academic Standards Committee the Current Success Rate was 60.8%, in the updated version it was now 70% and the Forecast Success Rate was 85.0%.

The SSA Reports in the tables showed long level provision, long, cohort and short. They show the mix and balance, how many short and long courses there are and have a focus on long level success rates. During the recent OFSTED Inspection, the College had been criticised for not having enough data therefore there was now a more rigorous approach to data. The figures showed some improvements in 16-18 but it was not as good for 19+. It was an improved position generally but there were still areas to look at around Adult Provision – Level 2 and Level 3.

The Principal commented that there was a stark difference between 16-18 and 19+ and he indicated that he had done a crude analysis adding two percentage points. He enquired whether the difference was to do with retention or achievement. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality replied that there was more influence on achievement for 19+ and retention for 16-18 and therefore a greater impact on success rates if students did not achieve within the timeframe. In 19+ there were modular examinations and there were problems in Area 15 re: AAT (Adult Provision). The Principal suggested that the Committee should request that the person responsible for each area which had declined should come along to the Academic Standards Committee to explain the situation.

A member enquired whether Gateshead College had done everything to get 2011/2012 figures. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality replied that there was a high level of qualifications and awarding bodies were too busy to honour requests. The deadline for information to be received was 1 December 2012. She indicated that three full-time Achievement and Retention Managers had been appointed to focus on this work.

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Another member commented that he was alarmed to hear that people entered on the system did not exist. The Principal replied that they existed as students but that they do not complete the courses. The College was reducing its reliance on franchised partners as discussed at Finance and General Purposes Committee. The member indicated that it would be helpful if the tables provided explained what the SSA areas related to and contained more detail/information focussing on large numbers and obvious underperformance.

The Chair commented that most of the 19+ targets were well off 2011/2012 targets. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality replied that 16-18 had achieved whereas 19+ long success rates had been affected by professional courses in Area 15. The Chair enquired about the targets for 2012/2013 and the Principal replied that there was a need to revisit how targets are set and establish whether it is achievement or retention which is causing underachievement.

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality indicated that targets at course level would be available for the next meeting and that these may make the situation clearer. She advised the Committee that OFSTED had based their recent inspection on data from 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 and would not acknowledge the 2011/2012 data. She indicated that she expected the College to be inspected by OFSTED again in 2013.

Mark Taylor left the meeting

Andrew Robson, Strategy Manager – Quality & Performance, gave an overview of each of the Subject Sector Areas.

SSA 1: Health Care and Early Years

Grade 3 in Self Assessment
Struggled with Long Level 3 – difficult period
Two year programme – problems with retention
Curriculum changes are planned for new Academic Year (2012/2013) with an emphasis on getting back to what the College does well
Some achievements are still to come in; 16-18 Long Level 3 is poor, as is 19+.
Management and staff sickness issues have affected performance in this area.

SSA 2: Maths and Science

The figures represent a reasonable position and show improvements in Long Level 3.

SSA 4: Engineering and Automotive

This was fairly similar and still had some achievements to come through. There had been a lot of movement since the last report produced on 12 September 2012. OFSTED had graded this area as Grade 2.

SSA 5: Construction

More achievements to come in; 16-18 Long Level 1 is expected to go up to 71% Forecast Success Rate. There are some issues around part-time provision and retention issues.

SSA 6: ICT

Pleased with the rates for 16-18; doing very well and there are still achievements to be included.

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Some work to do with Adult e.g. ECDL as 19+ rates are declining. Curriculum delivery and curriculum offer looked at.

SSA 7: Service Industries including Retail

Historically, a strong performing area; improved Long Level 3; most results received except for short provision e.g. warehousing. Should be quite high achieving in the end.

SSA 8: Sport and Leisure

High performing in several ways. Some success rates are not as high as expected. Working hard to try and drive up the long adult courses. OFSTED had graded this area as Grade 2. There are lots of achievements coming through and work is ongoing.

SSA 9: Creative Industries

The position is improving but it has not quite hit the national rate. Strong area for 16-18, with more achievements for 19+ to come through.

SSA 11: Social Sciences and HEFCE access provision

HEFCE access – An improved picture but a lot of work still to be done. This is always a difficult area for retention.

SSA 12: English and Languages

'A' levels are LL3, GCSE LL2. A lot of students achieved 'D' in GCSE English Language; therefore LL2 performance is down. It was noted that the College has reformed the GCSE Curriculum.

SSA 13: Teacher Education

Small handful of 16-18 learners (Classroom Assistants); 19+ very strong area with high retention and achievement.

SSA 14: Preparation for Life and Work

Basic skills, literacy and numeracy, ESOL. Difficult area in which to record success and the area which has the most to do. It is a complex process with learning aims and different outcomes.

SSA 15: Business, Management and Law

This area struggled last year; studying is over two years; position for 16-18 is improving. Some rates in this area have exceeded their forecast. Adult (19+) affected by professional programmes such as AAT; there is a more rigorous process this year. 19+ is not good enough in this area.

The Principal commented that the trend had not improved at all and the College could not continue to offer programmes which it could not deliver. It was a long way off the National Rate.

A member commented that the 16-18 offer should be general education and that the Post 19 offer needed to focus on specialist areas in which the College can offer high quality and expect to achieve good outcomes. The Principal commented that it was likely that the

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introduction of the new student loan scheme was likely to force the College to take this route.

There was discussion on rebranding and on the fact that Sport is a significant specialism which is not offered anywhere else in the region except for a small number of courses at East Durham and Houghall College. Members sought further information on very short provision and franchising, target setting, courses which might be discontinued and on areas of study in which the College might focus in the future.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

5. Post Inspection Action Plan

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality introduced a high level document which set out the Draft Post Inspection Action Plan, which was tabled at the meeting on 20 June 2012. The draft plan had been updated in the light of the publication of the final inspection report and the discussions which took place at the last committee meeting. Members noted that the Action Plan also now has a 'progress to date' column which details the activities which have so far taken place, to address the Areas for Improvement.

Actions are listed against every issue as the College is required to have a plan as a 'working document' to report on in summary form. The Post Inspection Action Plan must go to the Board for formal endorsement but implementation will continue to be monitored by Academic Standards Committee.

RESOLVED

i) to note the contents of the Post Inspection Action Plan

ii) to recommend the Post Inspection Plan to the Board of Governors for approval

6. Self Assessment Report 2011/2012

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality gave a verbal report which updated the Committee on the changes which had been made to the Self Assessment Report for 2011/2012. She explained that the document would look different and it would be data focused, richer and more rigorous. The Self Assessment Report would include SSA Reports, Overall College Overview, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding, 14-16 provision, A-level and Employer Response Provision. Members noted that OFSTED had commented that Gateshead College was 'over grading and underperforming'.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

7. Any Other Business

The Chair advised the Committee that it was the Clerk to the Corporation's last meeting as she was retiring at the end of September 2012. He thanked her for all the support she had provided to the Academic Standards Committee.

8. Date of the next meeting

The Chair indicated that additional time would be needed at the next meeting to discuss the Self Assessment Report 2011/2012 and suggested bringing forward the start time to 3.00pm.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 14 November 2012 at 3.00pm.