

ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE



GATESHEAD COLLEGE

WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY 2014

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20
November 2013

Author: Clerk

Action: Approve

Status: Open

Present: David Mitchell (Chair)
Keith Cann Evans
Tom Cantwell
Catherine Dennis
Judith Doyle
Gail Etherington
Darren Heathcote
Ivan Jepson (Observer)
Mark Taylor

In attendance: Zac Aldridge
Gillian Forrester
John Gray
Sally Hargreaves
Gwyneth Jones (Minutes)
Kevin Lewis
Kevin Marston
Angela O'Reilly
Samantha Pritchard (Clerk)
Tim Poolan
Andrew Robson
Kevin Smith

1. Welcome/Apologies

David Mitchell welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. He introduced Catherine Dennis (Teaching Staff Governor) as a newly appointed member of the Committee and explained that she would be attending on an interim basis. He also introduced Ivan Jepson, Vice Chair of the Board who was attending the meeting as an observer.

Apologies for absence were received from Ian Renwick who had recently been appointed to the Committee. The Chair advised that Robin Mackie, the Chair of the Corporation, had intended to be at the meeting but unfortunately had been unable to make it.

The Chair explained that the purpose of the meeting was to hear and see evidence from the College in relation to the Self-Assessment Report. It was for Governors to assess whether they were happy with the judgements being made and to see whether the evidence provided supported the grades recommended. He said it was intended that Governors asked challenging questions.

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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 Wednesday 25 September 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 September were accepted as a true record.

The Chair highlighted the section about the Self-Assessment Report on page 3 which explained how the assessment had been put together.

A Governor referred to page 7 which stated that 'Gillian Forrester had indicated that she would provide a brief update on Teaching and Learning at the next meeting'. Gillian confirmed that she would not be providing the update today.

3. Matters Arising

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

4. Self-Assessment Report 2012/2013

Background, overview and context of the Self-Assessment Report "SAR"

The Chair confirmed that the feedback from Ofsted on the SAR previously had been that it was turning into a 'weighty tome' and that it had become difficult to get the heart of the matter. The Chair thanked the authors of this year's SAR for producing a concise, well managed and consistent report.

The Principal gave a verbal report which provided the background, overview and context of the SAR. She explained that following feedback on previous SARs, the SAR is now a more effective and concise document and provides information against sections of the Common Inspection Framework. In particular it is clear which low-performing courses are to be monitored, the key issues relating to Subject Sector Area ("SSA") reports are summarised along with the proposed judgement, and areas which are in need of improvement are dealt with in greater detail. She explained that the process which the College had gone through to produce the SAR was far more rigorous than in previous years. There has been moderation at many levels, including high level involvement which was stronger and focussed, and the College has involved external consultants to review the SAR and advise on the moderation of grades to ensure that previous criticism relating to being over generous with grade allocation without sufficient evidence was addressed.

It was noted that Andrew Robson, Strategy Manager, Quality & Performance, had led on the SAR at the Senior Management level and that it was a well-embedded college document with contributions to its content from many individuals.

The Principal confirmed that it was not the role of the SAR to set out what the College intends to do in the future. This information is contained within the Quality Improvement Plan.

The Self-Assessment Report could be published on the Provider Gateway to allow the inspectorate and SFA to view its content, if the Board so decided at their December Board meeting.

Subject Sector Area Reports

SSA 1: Health, Public Services and Care

Sally Hargreaves (SH), Head of Group, Sport & Development presented to the committee on SSA1. Please see pages 45-47 of the SAR for further detail. She proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 3)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

The overall effectiveness in area SSA1 in the academic year 2012-13 is judged as satisfactory.

All grades are the same as for the previous academic year save that Effectiveness of Leadership and Management improved from grade 3 to grade 2.

Discussion and challenge:

The Principal noted that 'Outcomes for Learners' was proposed as Grade 3, the same as in the last academic year. She asked how close the college is to achieving a Grade 2 in this area.

SH responded that there had been underperformance on Long Level 3, so despite a 10% increase at Long Level 2, Long Level 3 success rates had still not reached national rates. This was due to two courses in particular and was currently being addressed. She thought that the college was very close to achieving grade 2 in the next academic year.

The Principal asked how many students are involved in the Long Level 3.

SH responded that there are 132 (16-18) and 154 (19+). Success Rates for 16-18 Long Level 3 have significantly improved by 12.5% in 2012/2013.

The Chair acknowledged this improvement but highlighted that the success rate had been particularly low last year and that for 19+ Long Level 3 the figure was similar to that in 2011/2012.

SH responded that this was the legacy of a two year part-time course but that this would be ending this academic year.

The Chair referred to Equality and Diversity and queried whether SSA1 paid sufficient attention to the achievement of ethnic minority students.

SH responded that there was good support to meet the identified needs of learners including those students from ethnic minorities and those with learning disabilities. There were a few learners with moderate learning difficulties (32) which was below benchmark. In other areas there were very few significant achievement gaps.

The Principal confirmed that this was different to last year where there were more significant achievement gaps.

[discussion redacted]

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SH confirmed that they were on track for functional skills and targets for individual learners and had a robust approach to tracking during the year.

The Chair noted that the grade for Leadership and Management had improved from a Grade 3 to a Grade 2 (Good) and that this was due to better monitoring of data, listening to learner voice, weekly meetings, filtering information to teams and an approach that was designed to meet the needs of learners. The Chair asked whether the governors can expect the outcomes for next year to significantly improve.

SH confirmed that they could.

A governor asked why student numbers had jumped.

SH explained that the curriculum had been designed around employability and that there had been a good recruitment drive. There were lots of short courses which were proving to be highly successful.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 1 as stated above.

SSA 4: Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies

There was no presentation on SSA 4. The grades proposed for SSA 4 are:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 2)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

Discussion and challenge:

The Chair noted that despite having two out of the three areas graded at 2, the overall grade was a 3. He asked why this was.

The Principal explained that the quality of teaching had a significant part to play and informs the overall effectiveness to a great extent. It was clear that the 'Outcomes for Learners' reflected the better teaching, learning and assessment which had taken place. However the area was not as good in English and Maths as it could be and progress is being monitored. Some observations had been poor. She felt it would be inappropriate to propose anything other than a Grade 3 for the Overall Grade but felt confident that this area would get better this year.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 4 as stated above.

SSA 5: Construction, Planning and the Built Environment

Due to the absence of Tracy Ashcroft, Head of Group, Engineering & the Built Environment, Andrew Robson (AR), Strategy Manager, Quality & Performance presented to the committee on SSA 5. Please see pages 53-55 of the SAR for further detail. He proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 4)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)

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- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 3)

He explained that in 2011/2012 this had been an area of concern due to poor success rates. Previous experience had been that learners in this area had struggled to maintain motivation over long part time courses. Academic year 2012-2013 was a year of putting in place strategic intervention, including moving towards much shorter courses.

Discussion and challenge:

The Chair said he was sorry that Tracy Ashcroft had not been able to attend the meeting. He thought that the promised outcomes for SSA 5 have not materialised. He thought this brought into question whether the Overall Grade (Grade 3) was the right grade given the poor outcomes.

A Member referred to the table listing success rates for SSA 5 on page 28 of the SAR. He commented that there was a huge variance in the success rates for 2012/13 across the different programmes varying between 100% and 37.5%. He asked for further commentary.

AR responded that there had been a focussed move to short term employability programmes within 19+ provision. The variation was the result of inconsistent teaching and learning which was very poor early on in the academic year, a key time for learners. A lot of damage was done and this, along with learners leaving programmes, affected the learning success. As the year continued the teaching and learning has improved which has raised some of the success rates, but not all of them.

Another member commented that on the three year trend for 16-18 learners on 'All Short' courses the success rate went from 82.3% in 2010/11 to 94.4% in 2011/12 then dropped to 37.5% in 2012/13. He commented that this was a huge variety in the percentages for success rates. He had looked for further commentary within the narrative about this trend and was surprised to find none. Further commentary was requested.

AR replied that there were fewer 16-18 students taking on the qualification: from 141 learners in 2010/11, to 18 in 2011/12, to 16 learners in 2012/13 which affected the position.

The Principal further explained that variance also reflected the changes in the College's funding streams. All courses in this area will continue to be monitored. By way of example, the data includes a three year plumbing course that was already failing at year one and contained a significant number of learners. This has inevitably had a knock on consequence on the current data, which is a legacy from two years ago. There have also been a lot of staff changes. The data hides some of the good work that is being done and is not a reflection on 2012/2013.

Kevin Lewis also explained that there have been some effects on data as a result of a change in policy which prevents someone from setting up as a plumber after a two year programme. The work based programme is now an absolute element. There is now a separate NVQ.

A Governor recommended that someone should look at the way in which the data is presented to see whether this is the best way to express it, given these issues. He thought it was better to look at actual student numbers rather than percentages, which did not necessarily give an accurate picture.

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The Chair said this area was very resource intensive with a large amount of space on Team Valley and a lot of facilities. He asked for commentary on why the College should continue to invest in areas that were not as good as they should be.

It was confirmed that good outcomes were expected which was why the College should continue to invest.

He suggested that the internal management of SSA 5 and the ongoing work on driving up standards should be discussed at the next meeting of Academic Standards Committee on 29 January 2014.

The Principal confirmed that she thought that the Outcomes for Learners should be Grade 4 because of the legacy issues on Long Level success rates. There had been teaching and learning improvements in-year in 2012/2013 impacting on a positive Grade 3. Leadership and Management should be Grade 3 as it required improvement.

The Chair concluded that Ofsted would say that Teaching and Learning was improving even if Outcomes for Learners was currently not. He was happy to go with the proposed grades and have an in-depth look at SSA 5 at the January 2014 meeting.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 5 as stated above.

SSA 6: Information and Communication Technology

Kevin Marston, Head of Group, Business & Technology presented to the committee on SSA 6. Please see pages 56-58 of the SAR for further detail. He proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 3)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 3)

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the Overall Grade, Outcomes for Learners grade and Teaching, Learning and Assessment grade.

The Committee agreed that the grade for Effectiveness of Leadership and Management should be increased to Grade 2.

In summary the grades for SSA 6 were agreed as follows:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 3)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

SSA 7: Retail and Commercial Enterprise

Angela O'Reilly (AO), Head of Group, Service Industries & Retail presented to the committee on SSA 7. Please see pages 59-62 of the SAR for further detail. She proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 2)

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- Outcomes for learners (Grade 2)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 2)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

Discussion and challenge:

A Member referred to the Success rates for 19+ All Short courses which had been 100% in 2010/2011 but were 51.4% in 2012/2013, and the decline in Success rates for 16-18 Long Level 3 which had been 91.4% in 2011/2012 and were 79% in 2012/2013. He recommended that the reasons for these variances should be mentioned in the narrative.

The Chair was pleased to see the success of students with disabilities and those learners from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Another member commented that there had only be two observations of teaching for short courses, however the Chair confirmed that he was comfortable with this.

The Chair noted that this area was graded as 2 last year and again this year. He asked how SSA 7 would get to an outstanding grade.

AO replied that the improvements in this area showed a good trend, it had not been significant enough to be graded as outstanding yet.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 7 as stated above.

Mark Taylor joined the meeting at 4.00pm

SSA 8: Sport, Leisure and Recreation

8.1 Sport, Leisure and Recreation

Sally Hargreaves (SH), Head of Group, Sport & Development presented to the committee on SSA 8.1. Please see pages 63-66 of the SAR for further detail. She proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 2)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 2)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 2)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

SH also advised that Gateshead College had won British Colleges Sports College of the Year in 2012 out of 220 colleges nationally making the Academy for Sport recognised as a national leader and a model of best practice.

Discussion and challenge:

The Chair enquired about the Traffic Light system.

SH explained that the introduction of the RAG rated system fitted in with the concept of a 'red card'. Students were not allowed to attend competitions if they had not attended their academic studies. Students got a 'Red Card' if they had not attended twice.

The Chair referred to the Dame Kelly Holmes Mentoring Education programme and asked if it had been worthwhile.

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SH replied that it had because it had raised the confidence of students and they had learnt how to deal with social media. The students who had taken part had something special to put on their CVs so it was good for employability. The College was also mentioned in the media in the USA as a result.

The Chair noted the improvement in Outcomes for Learners from grade 3 to grade 2 and felt that there was a lot of consolidation and a realism of assessments had taken place.

The Principal said there had been a significant improvement in Outcomes for Learners and noted that added value was highly significant in this area. She felt that the quality of Teaching and Learning was obvious.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 8 (8.1) as stated above.

8.2 Travel and Tourism

Angela O'Reilly (AO), Head of Group, Service Industries & Retail presented to the committee on SSA 8.2. Please see pages 67-69 of the SAR for further detail. She proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 3)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

The grades reflected the improvements that had made in strong Leadership and Management.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 8 (8.2) as stated above.

SSA 9: Arts, Media and Publishing

Kevin Smith (KS), Head of Group, Creative & Cultural presented to the committee on SSA 9. Please see pages 70-71 of the SAR for further detail. He proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 3)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 3)

Discussion and challenge:

KS felt that there continued to require improvements in student behaviours on attendance and punctuality. There was a need to move towards shared best practice across areas, for example, Games staff working with Arts staff.

The Chair indicated that he was encouraged by what he had heard and asked Mark Taylor (MT), 19+ Student Governor if he had anything further to add.

MT replied that there had been effective improvement on the management of student behaviour from a teacher's perspective as well. There was a great determination between staff and Curriculum Leaders and he had seen positive improvements since he

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had been involved. There was excellent teaching and learning in this area and he was proud to be part of it.

The Principal said the improvements in Long Level 3 success rates were very encouraging and they were targeting staff who were not working effectively.

The Chair asked about employment opportunities and what the market was like for people with these qualifications.

KS replied that learners in this area will ultimately be looking at a portfolio career. A significant number of learners will also progress into Higher Education. For those that wish to go directly into employment, we are preparing them for this by developing skills such as problem solving, new challenges and networking which will give them the best opportunity to take a range of opportunities that arise rather than one. Ultimately, students will be looking at between two and four different employment opportunities. KS thought therefore that the course was a good reflection of the environment students would face upon leaving College.

A Member said that it was worth remembering that the creative industry is the second biggest industry in the country.

A Member reiterated that this flexibility is incredibly important. Particularly as the feedback from employers is that they need a range of approaches so that they can move with opportunities presented to them.

A Governor commented on working in silos and referred to the lesson observations which had shown a profile where only 39.1% of lessons observed could be graded as good or better. He suggested that a lot of best practice should be shared across the areas.

KS replied that one of the challenges was that the curriculum created silos but he was trying to mix things up, with regular meetings and a focus on Teaching and Learning. He was bringing teams together, moving staff into different teaching teams, undertaking learning walks and practitioner activity.

Gillian Forrester, Strategy Manager, Teaching and Learning Development, referred to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Forum. What was being done in sport was being fed back to other areas of the College.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 9 as stated above.

SSA 13: Education and Training

Gillian Forrester, Strategy Manager, Teaching and Learning Development, briefly presented to the committee on SSA 13. Please see pages 72-74 of the SAR for further detail. She proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 2)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 2)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 2)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

There was a specific problem with a core member of the team so therefore proposed good this year in preference to outstanding.

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[discussion redacted]

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 13 as stated above.

SSA 14: Preparation for Life and Work

Kevin Lewis, Strategic Leader, Apprenticeships and BID, briefly presented to the committee on SSA 14. Please see pages 75-77 of the SAR for further detail. He proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 2)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 2)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 2)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 13 as stated above.

SSA 15: Business, Administration and Law

Kevin Marston (KM), Head of Group, Business & Technology presented to the committee on SSA 15. Please see pages 78-79 of the SAR for further detail. He proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 2)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 2)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

KM referred to the Academic Standards Committee in November 2012 and the significant underperformance on adult long provision in relation to AAT. In January 2013 there were early positive signs of strategies and the confirmed data for 2012/2013 continued to show significant improvements. Now the report in 2012/2013 was showing key successes in previous areas of weakness.

Discussion and challenge:

The Chair commented that this area had painted a very gloomy picture in 2012 and Governors had appreciated the honesty and realism last time. He said that Kevin Marston and his team should be proud of their achievements in the past 12 months and asked whether the performance was sustainable.

KM replied that a lot of programmes had been introduced; the area had built on the successes of last year and they were sustainable but needed to move forward. There was still significant work to make it a grade 1 and Teaching and Learning is the main priority.

A Governor enquired whether there was a good on-going relationship with Amacus.

KM confirmed that it had accounted for 150 learners on Long Level 3 in comparison to 4 learners in the previous year which clearly represented significant growth.

A Member confirmed that he was happy that the quality of outcomes was proven.

KM confirmed that they were above the target which was 85%.

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The Principal commented that the outcomes were spectacular and very noteworthy. She queried why Teaching and Learning was proposed as Grade 3 and not Grade 2.

KM replied that 67% was below target and where the team thinks it should be and that there was still a lot of work to do. It was not just about the Teaching and Learning grades but also about the impact on skills and value added.

The Chair thought it was a big step to go from Grade 4 to 2 for the Overall Grade and asked whether the Principal was confident about the proposed grade.

The Principal confirmed that she was satisfied that the data was solid. She wanted to keep an eye on Teaching and Learning as she did not think it was yet a 'strong' grade 2, but was confident that a grade 2 overall was a secure grade.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for SSA 15 as stated above.

The Chair thanked Kevin Marston for bringing around the turnaround.

A Level Provision

The following grades were proposed:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 3)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 3)

Discussion and challenge:

The Chair thought there were some disappointments in relation to A-Level provision.

The Principal thought that a Grade 3 was a disappointing but fair result for A Level Provision. Provision is still inconsistent notwithstanding being slightly above the national average.

The Chair queried on pg42 of the SAR why some figures were crossed out in the tables. Andrew Robson, Strategy Manager, Quality & Performance advised that some of the figures in the 2012/2013 column of the 'Success Rates for A/AS Level' table had been updated. Total Starts for 16-18 should be '509' and not '520' and the Success Rate was 84.1% and not 82.3%. The Total of All Ages Success Rate should be 83.4% and not 81.8% as listed.

He explained that it was possible for learners to progress to Apprenticeships so that was why there were some late outcomes. He agreed that requiring improvement seemed sensible for A Level Provision.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for A-Levels as stated above.

Apprenticeship Programmes

Kevin Lewis (KL), Strategic Leader Apprenticeships & BID presented to the committee on the Apprenticeship Programmes. Please see pages 84-85 of the SAR for further detail. He proposed the following grades:

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- Overall Grade (Grade 2)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 2)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 2)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

He explained that apprenticeship programmes were measured differently to other areas of the College. It is measured against overall success (the number of successes achieved regardless of time constraints) and 'timely' success. The team focus primarily on timely success which gives a window for improvement.

Data for apprenticeships doesn't close until mid-December however the success rate will only go up, it will not fall.

Apprenticeships are affected by external economic factors more so than other areas of the College. When employers shut down, this has an impact on statistics. KL thought that the turbulence within the sector is levelling out now.

Apprenticeships in the health sector had been affected by the Southern Cross collapse.

It was noted that apprenticeships in the RAF could now apply for a break in learning which will contribute towards timely success percentages.

Two Critical Friend visits had placed an emphasis on outcomes. However, much more emphasis on monitoring, reviewing in the workplace was needed. There could be a possible improvement in success rates but it was work in progress. KL indicated that under the Common Inspection Framework, Outcomes for Learners was not quite at Grade 1.

Discussion and challenge:

The Chair noted that last year there were two grade 1s for this area and questioned the reduction to grade 2.

It was confirmed that upon moderation the grades were reduced to grade 2s because economic factors had been overstated.

A Governor queried how National rates for 2012/2013 could be produced.

Andrew Robson replied that the National Rates for 2012/2013 were the figures for 2011/2012 carried forward.

KL advised that National Rates for 2012-13 are not produced until January 2014.

The Principal confirmed that if Ofsted came tomorrow, it would measure against 2011/2012 rates.

A Governor observed that National Rates had stayed the same or declined slightly whereas the College had declined more. He questioned why this was the case.

KL replied that environmental factors such as employers going under and lapses outside timely success rate, and taking on too many health and social care placements (which were subsequently affected by the collapse of Southern Cross) meant that the College had to re-home learners. There was a huge volume of learners within the Health and Social Care framework which should have had an 18 month framework instead of 12 months. If the framework was 18 months it would have made the figures look completely different.

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The Governor commented that other colleges would also have the same environmental factors.

The Principal said that it was because too much of a focus had been directed towards social care placements, and that this had had a consequence on success rates.

The Chair concluded that the area remained very positive overall and thought that highlighting the areas of improvement was encouraging to see.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for Apprenticeship programmes as stated above.

Work place learning programmes

Zac Aldridge (ZA), Head of Department: BID, National Business Development and Curriculum presented to the committee on the Work place learning programmes. Please see pages 82-83 of the SAR for further detail. He proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 2)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 1)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 2)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

Discussion and challenge:

The Chair noted that there were strong grades proposed and that the data backed this up. He queried whether there was any further room for improvement.

ZA replied that this area is a declining provision. They would be looking at the apprenticeship frameworks available including functional skills and would increase assessments.

The Chair indicated that he was happy with the grades and the Principal agreed too.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for the Work based learning programmes as stated above.

14-16 Provision

The Chair asked about 14-16 Provision and Andrew Robson replied that the area had reduced in size with only 300 enrolments in 2012/2013 from Key Stage 4 learners based in secondary schools. He thought there could be more stretch and challenge.

The following grades were proposed:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 3)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 3)

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for 14-16 provision as stated above.

College Overall Grades

Andrew Robson (AR), Strategy Manager, Quality & Performance presented a summary of the report and proposed the following grades:

- Overall Grade (Grade 3)
- Outcomes for learners (Grade 2)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Grade 3)
- Effectiveness of Leadership and Management (Grade 2)

As a whole the improvement of the College is clear and is demonstrated over an impressive three year improvement trend.

A number of success rates that were below National Rate are now in a position where they compare favourably. For example 16-18 All Long was now 3% above the national rate and A/AS Level sat comfortably above too. In terms of 19+, Long Level 1 was 1% above national rate, Long Level 2 was 4% above national rate and Long Level 3 sat below national rate; one programme (HEFC) had affected this last result and if it was removed the figure would be 5% above national rate.

Success rates overall including All Long and All Short courses was 91.2% which painted a very impressive picture and had been achieved through a persistent use of data.

There were a couple of areas that required further work but generally we are consistent.

Outcomes for Learners

Areas for improvement include Value Added, Target Setting and Progress.

The College was good at getting students through and passing exams but more stretch was needed.

A list of programmes had been compiled where problems to target had been identified.

Conclusion: Outcomes for Learners had shown strong, positive trends and therefore justified the proposed Grade 2.

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The College needed to improve further the percentage of lessons at good or better and a new performance management process had been introduced to complement the new unannounced observation procedure.

The monitoring of individual student progress needed to improve.

English and Maths delivery needed to improve. 7.8% of teaching observations were rated as 'inadequate' and this figure was relatively high.

It was felt prudent to have a Grade 3 for Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

He thought that very shortly within this academic year, teaching, learning and assessment would reach Grade 2, possibly by the end of term.

Leadership and Management

There was a need to develop further the skills of delivery staff to evaluate their courses effectively in Course Review and Evaluation.

There also needed to be stronger cross-college management and co-ordination of English, Maths and Functional Skills.

Grade 2 was proposed for Leadership and Management as there were elements of outstanding improvement.

Discussion and challenge:

The Chair commented that he had reviewed Outcomes for Learners through SSA: eight areas were good or better (Grade 2 or 1); seven areas were below that line so the balance was just in favour of a Grade 2. The evidence was much clearer, focused and showed significant improvement. He asked the Principal if she was sure that there had been enough success to merit a Grade 2 for Outcomes for Learners.

The Principal replied that she was absolutely sure that this should be a Grade 2. Outcomes were about the trend improvement and the College had moved 10% in two academic years.

[discussion redacted]

The Principal proposed that Teaching and Learning should be Grade 3 but recognised that the College was on the cusp of being a Grade 2. Success rates had improved but there was still more work that needed to be done. It was hard to say that Gateshead College was still a Grade 3 for Overall Effectiveness.

A Governor, who was observing at the meeting, said he had been privileged to hear everything he had heard today. He referred to the unannounced observations approach, and said it was important to have the best performance on every single day. Benefits in the long-term would get the College where it needed to be. It was a good College and the staff should be immensely proud of what they had achieved.

The Principal advised that she wanted to review the mid-year position in January 2014 and it would be a Grade 2 but there was no evidence available now.

The Chair concluded that the proposition was based on last year's performance and, not now, so it was appropriate to be a Grade 3. He was much encouraged and thanked everyone who had worked so hard. The focus was on improvement and what needed to be done.

He thanked everyone including Andrew Robson who had presented at today's meeting.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed with the grades proposed for the College's overall grades as stated above.

5. Any Other Business

[discussion redacted]

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Academic Standards Committee meeting on 29 January 2014

The Principal indicated that topics for discussion at the January meeting would include the HMI Visit and the Mid-Year state of play. She indicated that she would present the updated Self-Assessment Report and there would be another discussion to validate the document in particular in relation to SSA 5.

A Governor asked if Teaching and Learning and Learner Engagement would return to the agenda for the January meeting and the Chair and Principal confirmed that they would.

In response to a question from a Governor about the two biggest ethnic minority groups in the Gateshead area, John Gray, Strategy Manager, Customer and Learner Services, replied that there was a closing achievement gap for BME students. He was putting together an Equality and Diversity report showing comparisons with ethnic minorities in conjunction with Gateshead Council and this information would be shared with Governors.

The Chair said that there was positive feedback from students on the College.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 29 January 2014 at 4.00pm.