

ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY 14 MAY 2014

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 12
March 2014

Author: Clerk

Action: Approve

Status: Open

Present: David Mitchell (Chair)
Catherine Dennis
Judith Doyle
Darren Heathcote
Nick Hurn
Mark Taylor

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

1. Welcome/Apologies

David Mitchell welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular new Governor, Nick Hurn. Apologies for absence were received from Keith Cann Evans, Tom Cantwell, Gail Etherington, Ian Renwick, and Ivan Jepson who had planned to be an Observer at the meeting.

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 declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 29 January 2014

Andrew Robson referred to page 3 and said that his comments relating to RAF apprenticeships needed to be amended to read 'were not able to complete their apprenticeships in a timely way. He was working with the Funding and Data Team and Work Based Learning Team to address that issue.' Following these amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2014 were accepted as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

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

Commercial in Confidence

4. Learner Performance Report

Andrew Robson (AR), Strategy Manager, Quality & Performance introduced the Learner Performance Report. He explained that there had been a couple of slight changes to the data. An extra column showing retention at 1 March 2013 was included on the Provision Overall table and apprenticeship provision was now broken down by SSA.

Discussion and Challenge:

The Principal indicated that the measure for success rates was the number of learners retained who have achieved. Due to historic issues with Long Level 3 relating to a poor curriculum, a number of learners who left such programmes some time ago are still affecting the data this year due to the length of the programme, in particular in SSA 5: Construction, Planning and the Built Environment and SSA 11: Social Sciences.

The Principal said that a point of note was the main focus on 16-18 provision and key aspects on stretch and challenge around Long Level 3.

AR said that having the in-year performance by SSA for both success and timely achievement for Apprenticeship delivery was a better way of presenting the information. He explained that reports were based on learners who had left the programme. This meant that 2013/2014 success rates for Apprenticeships could go up or down whilst Classroom based learning could only go down.

The Chair said that he understood the new format for apprenticeships and asked what had been concluded from the column for 2013/2014 based on learners. AR replied that it showed what the College was doing to date and through the year it would be more useful to compare progression.

The Chair clarified that the data was not a predictor and AR replied that it reflected where the College is now. The Chair said he had scanned the SSA in Classroom-based provision and his impression was that the tables in March 2014 were showing a downward trend in comparison to January 2014 with more reds appearing.

AR said that very high retention in January had declined slightly in some areas; largely in Adult Long Level 3, however, other drops were slight and of less concern. The Principal said that when figures change in-year it might result in a downturn. Unlike previous reports where comparing to the end position, this report was looking at 'like for like'. 19+ was showing a significant upward trend. The Chair asked whether there was generally a downward trend and AR replied that long provision had declined throughout the year: 19+ was not quite as strong as in January 2014 but it had declined more than 16-18.

A Governor asked if he knew why this was and AR replied that it depended on how well infill works with 19+ into 16-18 groups; if one person in the group leaves they aggregate together but there seems to be a pattern of it not meeting learner needs. The Governor asked if they looked at recruitment for those learners and Tim Poolan (TP), Strategy Manager, Curriculum, commented that life gets in the way the longer adults are on programmes. AR agreed that two years of an adult's life was a long time.

The HE Access course was used as a passport to progress to higher education or university. This could prove too much when people have families. The Governor asked if any colleges had cracked it and AR replied that there had been a lot of research into HE Access and it was a common pattern.

Agenda No: 2

Kevin Marston, Head of Group, Business & Technology, advised that HEFC was one of his areas. He said that adults returning to education eg midwifery was a real leap of academia and a commitment to two years was very different. There was a need to remove the current programme and replace with one that meets needs eg a condensed one. Nobody had cracked it; those more successful colleges had looked at a one year academic programme. TP commented that if there were a significant number of learners who wanted to do something you could put something together. However, it was more difficult if there were only one or two people as they needed to look at how to engage with the learners.

The Chair requested a further update at the next meeting in May 2014.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

5. Progress Report Update SSA 5 Construction

Tim Poolan (TP), Strategy Manager, Curriculum, gave a verbal progress report on SSA5 Construction. He explained that his report for the last meeting had focussed on the internal management of the area. Main concerns were poor/inadequate data performance, however, better in-year retention figures for this year should deliver better performance and focused strategies had been put in place. He said that Tracy Ashcroft, Head of Group, Engineering and the Built Environment, and Terry Taylor, Curriculum Operations Manager, Construction had done a good job.

Data was similar to January 2014 with one Long Level 3 19+ course lost and a 19+ Long Level 2 electrical programme lost; in general, retention was still holding up.

Area 5 (Classroom based learning) was one of the areas under scrutiny by the Ofsted visit and it had been graded internally as an Inadequate grade 4. It was subsequently graded as a grade 3 overall as the inspector thought there was a clear foundation to build on for the future.

Discussion and challenge:

The Principal said that she had expected Construction to be inspected. More students were staying on programmes; the inspection was good because it facilitated a grade 3. A Governor enquired what was weak in this area and TP replied not keeping learners but a lot was down to the design of the programmes. There was poor tracking of learner achievement and this needed to be more tightly monitored.

The Chair commented that young people were engaged by the work based part of the course. They would not come into College as much and teachers needed to inspire them. TP said that they now needed to do English and Mathematics too.

The Chair congratulated TP for his efforts in this area.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the verbal report

6. Quality Improvement Plan

The Principal introduced a report on the Post-Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). She advised that it was a regular monitoring document and anything for self-improvement would go into the QIP. Since the recent Ofsted visit, the QIP had developed to become a Post-Inspection Action Plan too. The document would be brought to future Committee and Board meetings; it was a partially completed document which needed to have some detail added now.

Agenda No: 2

Andrew Robson (AR), Strategy Manager, Quality & Performance, advised that they would build in the inspection feedback to the PIAP/QIP informally. The key actions in the document could be summarised under five themes:

- To improve Success Rates and eliminate pockets where improvement was inconsistent.
- To improve stretch and challenge of learners.
- To improve delivery of English and Maths and the number of qualification outcomes which learners achieve.
- To improve teaching, learning and assessment with more good and outstanding sessions from teachers.
- Embedding equality and diversity within delivery.

The QIP identified a range of key priorities to achieve and the Ofsted visit had led to firming them up. The Executive Team understand where the College is and where it needs to improve.

Discussion and challenge:

The Chair referred to the columns 'What going to do', 'By whom' and 'By when' and asked how they would know what had been done and what was the evidence. AR replied that there would be a version with a column for 'progress' and as the year proceeded the progress update would go into outcomes. The 'Completed (Date)' would be when the action was effectively done and closed.

The Chair enquired whether new things could be added into the document re: Ofsted. AR replied that key cross-college SSA would be detailed into particular programmes. The Chair indicated he liked the idea of having some strategic aims but it was not obvious to him how action points matched up with them. AR replied that the 'Source of action' referred to the theme and the Chair said that it could relate to more than one theme. The Chair asked how they would know what were 'Smart Targets' and the Principal replied that some were done and some would need to be on-going.

The Chair concluded that it was a good document and he looked forward to seeing a more developed version for the next meeting.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

7. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Report

The report and the record of discussion are 'closed to public access' until such time as it is considered to be no longer sensitive

8. Development of English and Maths across the College

The report and the record of discussion are 'closed to public access' until such time as it is considered to be no longer sensitive

9. Any Other Business

There were no items for discussion.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair listed the reports that would be brought to the next meeting:

Agenda No: 2

- Performance Report (Andrew Robson)
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Gillian Forrester)
- Ofsted report feed comments into Quality Improvement Plan
- Verbal report on SS5 (Tim Poolan)

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 14 May 2014 at 4.00pm.