

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

**Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors
held on Monday 7 June 2010 at 5.00pm in the Conference Centre, Paget Rd**

PRESENT

Dr M Hardacre (Chair) Mr G Peebles
Mr J Crockett Cllr J Rowley
Mr I Millard

Ms S Meddings (Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr B Dhir
Ms S Nicholson
Mr P Plummer (for item 7)
Mr J Stretton

In welcoming everyone to the meeting the Chair extended a particular welcome to Mr Graham Peebles, newly appointed staff governor, who was attending his first Standards Committee meeting.

The Chair suggested that agenda item 6 – Employer Responsive Performance 2009/10 – be taken as the first report to enable Mr Dhir to leave the meeting early.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Ms R Bansal.

08/10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING – 25 JANUARY 2010

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2010 be approved as a correct record.

09/10 MATTERS ARISING

Learner Progression

Arising on Minute No 02/10, in response to a request from the Chair for contextual information on the reported figure of 76% of applicants successfully placed on HE courses each year, the Committee received a paper on “progression to University” and noted the following:

- In 2009, the College had 718 Full-time 16-18 level 3 students and 257 19+ Full-time level 3 students. A total of 975 Full-time learners all ages;
- Of the 975 Full-time level 3 students – 468 were second years;
- 417 out of the 468 applied and 327 took up university places. 90 were not placed or withdrew from the process.

- Of the 327 university destinations, 156 learners went to Wolverhampton University.

In considering the information the Chair commented that given that the College often picks up the learners that school sixth forms don't want, and that the natural progression was to Wolverhampton University, the number of students who went to other universities was impressive. The Chair congratulated College staff on these outcomes and ambitions for young people.

The Principal reported that the College was one of if not the largest provider of undergraduates to Wolverhampton University.

In discussing the 90 learners who were not placed or who withdrew from the process, officers were requested to look in more detail at what happened to these learners and to bring the information back to the Committee.

Teaching and Learning Service – Progress Review

Arising on Minute No 05/10 the Chair reported that the “diagrammatic depiction of the learner journey” discussed at the previous meeting had been developed and was attached as an appendix to agenda item 5.

Internal Audit Service Review of Quality Improvement Planning

Arising on Minute No 06/10 from a review of the College's Quality Improvement Planning undertaken by the College's Internal Audit Service, Governors were requested to consider how the Committee would wish to monitor the Self-Assessment Report Improvement plans.

In noting that the College operated a system of internal monitoring of the improvement plans which included a regular review three times a year, the Chair proposed that the outcomes of the reviews be brought to Committee three times a year in the format of a summary sheet of subject sector areas flagged as Red, Amber or Green.

The Committee agreed this proposal.

10/10 CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee received as correspondence copies of the recently published LSIS Guide – “Equality, Diversity and Governance”.

11/10 EMPLOYER RESPONSIVE PERFORMANCE 2009/10

The Committee received and noted a summary of performance relating to Employer Responsive provision for the 2009/10 (i.e. current) year to date.

In presenting the report, Mr B Dhir informed the Committee that the College was the thirteenth largest college provider of apprenticeships in the country and the second largest provider in West Midlands.

Mr Dhir further reported that Train to Gain had a limited lifespan and was likely to be replaced by a larger apprenticeships programme. The challenges for next year also included a more rigorous system of contract management.

The Committee noted that there had been a number of changes over the last year in how the College has undertaken Employer Responsive activity with the move from a partially centralised to a fully decentralised structure in order to increase flexibility of delivery. New cross college management processes had also been implemented to co-ordinate a widening portfolio.

The Principal drew governors' attention to the following sections of the report.

- From 2009/10 funding for some Employer Responsive contracts funding has been split across 2 "windows" (August 2009- March 2010 and April 2010 – July 2010) which reflected the LSC's financial year contract periods. Each window has a capped value and under or over-performance cannot be vired between periods. The Principal reported that this disaggregation of the contract allocation was a concern and was likely to become more difficult to manage as in future the review process was anticipated to be on a monthly basis.
- In respect of success rates for the College's Apprenticeships programmes, it was reported that the College was operating above the national benchmark rate for Minimum Level of Performance (MLP) in most sectors. Construction had been identified as an area of concern and a range of actions had been taken to address this.

12/10 OUTLINE OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT 2009/10

The Committee received a report on the arrangements for Self-Assessment for 2009/10 including the structure of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and the timescales for the Self-Assessment process. The following were noted:

The format of the Self-Assessment Report and the provisional timescales culminating in a draft report to Standards Committee in November 2010 and a final report to the Board of Governors in December 2010;

The introduction for 2009/10 of a separate Governance SAR in response to the higher profile of Governance as an important component of the Leadership and Management section of the Overall Effectiveness summary.

Revisions to the grading procedure arising from the findings of the mock internal inspection of three curriculum subject sector areas undertaken in autumn 2009. The mock inspection was undertaken to investigate whether any "grade drift" had occurred and whether curriculum areas were sufficiently addressing the key aspects of the revised inspection framework, namely Equality and Diversity and Safeguarding. As reported to Standards Committee at the previous meeting, the Inspectors did find "grade drift" which related to lack of an evidence base rather than lack of good practice. The 2009/10 process would therefore require each SSA to provide additional supporting information relating primarily to Equality and Diversity and Safeguarding.

For 2009/10 grades awarded to each element of the grading grid would be determined by each Subject Sector Area's ability to demonstrate and provide evidence. The Committee noted that limiting

grades, where performance falls below set standards, would apply as follows:

- To achieve a grade 2 or above: success rates for key skills must be above 55%, by subject by level: success rates for long levels 1, 2 and 3 must be above 70%: timely Train to Gain achievement must be above 60%: and apprenticeship success rates must be above 75%
- Attendance for courses that are monitored must be at 86%
- For Safeguarding and Equality and Diversity, training must have been completed in line with college targets and evidence must be cited throughout the SAR showing how the area has actively promoted the two themes
- A grade would be awarded for following EV protocols and this would reflect the sanctions that have been applied to the area
- The Learner Voice must be evidenced throughout the SAR and linked to actions to improve the students experience
- For budgets/staff utilisation/resource deployment, the metrics to award the grade would be linked to the “balanced score card” which is used to track appropriate resource utilisation.

It was noted that a further round of internal inspections was planned for the 2010/11 autumn term, focusing on SSA 5 (Construction and the Built Environment) SSA 7 (Retail and Commercial Enterprise) SSA 10 (History, Philosophy and Theology) and SSA 11 (Social Sciences).

It was reported that based on the College’s current performance, satisfactory progress has been made to date against the improvement plans from last year. The analysis of success rates and the profile of lesson observations would be reviewed in detail as part of the process for generating the 2009/10 Self Assessment Report and would highlight any deficits which require close monitoring and intervention.

In noting the contents of the report and following discussion about the future of the external inspection regime, the Committee endorsed the proposals for completing the Self-Assessment Report for 2009/10.

Mr B Dhir left the meeting.

13/10 QUALITY PROCESSES – IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

Governors received a report outlining changes to the quality system and processes within the College and demonstrating how the implementation of the changes would support improvements to the “Learner Journey”.

It was reported that over the last three years the curriculum environment within which the College operates has undergone some dramatic changes. The College’s portfolio of provision has also increased (a greater emphasis on foundation learning for example, including NEETs) and the inspection and monitoring frameworks from Ofsted and the LSC have changed considerably.

The changes to the College’s quality improvement processes were in response to these changes with the aim of ensuring continual improvement in the College’s performance and the experience of its stakeholders.

The Committee gave detailed consideration to the “Good Practice Taxonomy” a diagrammatic representation of the learners’ journey through the College.

Ms S Nicholson explained that this would be used for a number of reasons. Although it was primarily designed to focus on full-time students, most of the headings relate equally to work-based learners, part-time students and those engaged on shorter term programmes such as NEETs provision or Princes Trust. The Learner Journey as depicted in the diagram encompassed the widest range of issues that the College needs to be mindful of in designing a quality system and in assessing its impact and usefulness.

The diagram also provided a schematic guide to where the College should invoke quality assurance systems and could therefore be used both for quality assurance and as part of the quality improvement strategy.

Additional benefits were that the diagram provided headings around which policy could be written underpinned by procedures and the diagram provided an indication of issues which needed “spot checks”.

As a means of building on existing work and developing the “Learner Voice” it was reported that in 2010/11 ten College managers, including senior managers, would be following a group of students through the Learner Journey from their point of contact for advice and guidance through to their exit from the College and immediately beyond.

The sub-headings detailed under the main headings in the Leadership and Management topics in the diagram would provide a checklist to ensure that appropriate policies and their procedures were available, understood, implemented and monitored as part of a whole College approach to “World Class; Nothing Less”.

The Principal commented that the Taxonomy was key in trying to make sense of the complex provision offered by the College and it was the intention to share it widely across the College

In discussing the importance of the Learner Voice it was suggested that this should be captured by “watermarking” the voice of the Learner across all three levels of the taxonomy.

Ms Nicholson was thanked and congratulated for producing an excellent piece of work.

14/10 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT

The Committee considered a report on developments, progress and future developments in respect of equality and diversity issues relating to students.

It was reported that the College was subject to a great deal of equality related legislation covering disability, age, gender, religion/belief, sexual orientation and race/ethnicity. Given that most of these focus on outcomes, the report was intended to evidence the steps the College has actively taken to promote equality of opportunity, promote good relations between the different groups and to address any issues of discrimination.

The new framework for Ofsted inspection has a much stronger focus on Equality and Diversity, with significantly greater scrutiny of equality progress and practice. In addition, the inspection grade for Equality and Diversity is a limiting grade, for the first time. The grade would contribute to, and may limit inspection grades for Leadership and Management, and Overall Effectiveness.

As part of the College's commitment to equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity, the performance of learners by gender, ethnicity, disability and age is routinely monitored. Good progress was being made in respect of equality monitoring of students at a curriculum level. The data collected is analysed and used to set improvement targets and strategies. The Committee noted the following:

- Enrolment data for 2008-09 shows that of the total number of learners 65% were white, 33% BME and 2% ethnicity Unknown. However analysis of the data in relation to students with a Wolverhampton Postcode shows that 41% of learners were of BME background as compared to the BME population of 22.2%.
- In respect of overall success rates, the different ethnic groups all showed a decline in performance. This mirrors the dip that the College experienced overall, especially in relation to 16-18 year olds at level 1 and 2. Retention was largely unaffected.
- Over the past 3 years the gap between female and male enrolment figures has continued to close, from 26% to 16%. In some vocational areas however men and women are still disproportionately represented. For example in the area of Construction and Engineering, Male learners account for 89% and 97% respectively, whereas Female learners account for only 11% and 3% respectively.
- The proportion of learners from the total number of enrolments, who have declared themselves as having a disability, has remained roughly the same at 0.6% for the past 3 years. Achievement rates show consistently high performance for this group of learners
- Success rates between the age groups are broadly the same, with those for 16-18 remaining very constant over the past three years.
- Over the past 3 years, 63 students were excluded with 44% white, 38.5% BME and 17.5% ethnicity Unknown. Reasons for exclusion ranged from fighting, damage to college premises/property, disruptive and aggressive behaviour and inappropriate behaviour.

The Committee further noted a review of equality and diversity initiatives including the continuing Me, You Us and Them programme and College events held to celebrate diversity including the celebration of Black History month and International Women's week.

In respect of equality and diversity in teaching, the issue of inclusivity in the curriculum and an understanding of diversity and equality were seen as crucial to developing appropriate learning materials. Teaching and learning strategies embracing equality and diversity issues and the explanation of

cultural, moral and social issues were an essential part of the college drive towards excellence, i.e. being a “World Class College”. It was reported that support to embed diversity in teaching and learning was continuing, with staff development and revised lesson observation systems key features of this drive

With regard to future developments it was reported that, sometime in the coming year, there was likely to be a Single Equality Act intended to harmonise the current fragmented equality legislations. The Act would extend Public Duty obligations to those equality strands not presently covered.

An e-learning course in Equality and Diversity for staff and learners was well advanced and on target to be in place for September 2010.

A Social Justice Board had been established to drive forward within the College the core principles and values outlined in the College’s Strategic Plan.

In thanking Mr Plummer for his comprehensive report, the Chair suggested that for the next review it might be helpful to flag up as “Red, Amber, or Green” areas of equality and diversity within the College.