

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors held on Monday 31 January 2011 at 5.00pm in the Conference Centre, Paget Rd

PRESENT

Dr M Hardacre (Chair) Mr G Peebles
Mrs R Babber Cllr J Rowley
Mr I Millard Mr N Spencer

Ms S Meddings (Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms S Nicholson
Ms S Prince
Mr J Stretton
Mr D Finch (for the pre-meeting presentation)

The meeting was preceded by a Briefing on the outcomes and findings from the Student Focus Group meetings presented by Mr David Finch, College Quality Manager.

Key findings were presented in the areas of “course organisation”, “financial information provided to students” and “enrolment”.

The Briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Points of discussion included:

- How the feedback from the Focus Groups was taken forward, what action was taken and how this was fed back to students, including students not in Focus Groups. (It was suggested that the Quality Team should work with the Students Union to test what was said in the Focus Groups.)
- The challenges of enrolment.
- How recommendations for action were followed up.
- Clarification on the role and number of Learner Representatives in the College

Mr D Finch left the meeting.

In commencing the formal meeting, the Chair reported that Cllr John Rowley was attending his last Standards Committee meeting as he was stepping down from the Governing Body in March. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Cllr Rowley for his considerable and valued contribution to the work of the Standards Committee.

The Chair further congratulated Mrs Raj Babber (nee Bansal) on her recent marriage.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Crockett.

01/11 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING – 22 NOVEMBER 2010

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 November be approved as a correct record.

02/11 SUCCESS RATE PERFORMANCE 2009/10 AND TARGETS FOR 2010/11

The Committee considered a report presenting an analysis of success rate data for 2009/10 together with proposed success rate targets for performance in 2010/11.

The success rate review for 2009/10 included data broken down by age cohort (i.e. 6-18 and 19+) and level (i.e. levels 1, 2 and 3), subject sector area, School, Gender, Ethnicity, Ward (postcode analysis), ALS (Additional Learning Support) and Employer Responsive performance.

The following were of note:

Overall long success rates showed a 3% decline across both 16-18 and 19+ cohorts for Learner Responsive funding streams. Retention has largely remained stable or improved but achievement rates have declined by 4% for 16-18 and 7% for 19+.

By subject sector analysis, areas of weaker performance for 16-18 included:

- Engineering and Manufacturing (3% decline, now 9 points below national average)
- Retail and Commercial (5% decline, now 8 points below national average)
- Languages, Literature and Culture (2% decline, now 12 points below national average)

For 19+ performance, particular concern included:

- Health, Public Services and Care (2% decline, now 9 points below national average)
- Agriculture and Horticulture (9% decline, now 9 points below national average)
- Retail and Commercial (7% decline, now 13 points below national average)
- Leisure, Travel and Tourism (11% decline, now 16 points below national average)

Analysis of performance by School showed less marked fluctuations in success rates. Of note, however was weaker performance for 19+ in

Business, Management and computing
Access and Education
Hospitality and Catering
Skills for Life

and for 16-18 in:

Early Years
Humanities and Communication Studies
Health and Social Care

Analysis of long success rate by gender showed that:

- Overall success rates for 16-18 females declined more sharply than for males, linked to a 6% drop in achievement rates. Retention improved by 1%.
- Overall success rates for 19+ females showed a similar pattern, with improved retention but a decline of 9% in achievement.
- A 5% decline in achievement for 19+ males was off-set by a 5% improvement in retention, giving a stable success rate of 71%.

Success rates reviewed by ethnicity showed overall decline for all ethnic groups across both age groups. Of particular note was:

- Black 19+ showing a 6% below college average performance
- An increased cohort of mixed race students across both age groups, all with below college average performance
- White 19+ performed at the college average of 70%, but white 16-18 declined 3% to 2% below average.

Analysis of success rates by Ward showed variable performance. Success rates for both age groups in Fallings Park and Graiseley, for example, largely matched last years, whereas 19+ in Spring Vale and St Peter's both showed 2% improvement and Wednesfield North and South showed a decline for 16-18 year olds. Bilston East and North both showed a marked decline for 16-18 and 19+, despite a marked improvement in recruitment in these areas.

Additional Learning Support continued to make a significant contribution to success rates on long courses. For both age groups, students receiving ALS showed better retention, achievement and success rates than those not. A similar pattern was apparent for short and very short for 16-18 year olds, but was not replicated for 19+.

It was reported that the three percent decline in Learner responsive performance across both age groups was a cause for serious concern. It was noted that performance has been deflated for several reasons including changes to the achievement methodology whereby partial achievement can no longer be claimed and by the removal of widening participation national averages which demonstrates a decline in performance over recent years rather than performance at the previous widening participation national averages.

The Principal reported that the College had commissioned an independent review to look at the College's data management policy in the context of the change to the achievement methodology.

The Committee noted a number of headline actions being undertaken to support improvement in the College's success rates. These included:

- Close monitoring by Senior Managers of individual courses across the college by school which are flagged as "red". The Committee noted an illustration of courses flagged as red together with an illustration of the way close monitoring is carried out. It was reported that staff within faculty offices would play a much greater role in ensuring that all data is entered on to the ILR as soon as possible and that missing data is followed up at course, tutor and curriculum level.

- Heads of schools are required to work with curriculum teams to ensure that on course assessments are scheduled appropriately and that they are not 'end loaded' onto the end of the academic year. Individual students who are deemed 'at risk' are monitored weekly and support targeted to those students in greatest need. As part of the close monitoring system, tutors are required to produce estimated grades for each student and overall 'out turn' success rates for each course. These are monitored monthly by CELT.
- ProMonitor, an on line tutorial tracking system, was introduced during the autumn term. It is monitored centrally and is used by course, personal and subject tutors to track students' progress through the modules of their course and what they need to do to improve their grades. It also includes attendance data, which is a key indicator of where students may be at risk of withdrawing or failing to achieve, thereby providing a useful overview of individual students' progress.
- The resources allocated to supporting quality improvement have been enhanced with the creation of Quality/Resource Managers in each of the faculties, providing a team of people for the central quality function to liaise with, directly at curriculum and tutor level. Their roles include ensuring that ProMonitor is used effectively, auditing course review and tracking systems and monitoring retention and in year achievement with ProAchieve.

The Committee then gave consideration to proposed target success rates for 2010/11 by age cohort and level of qualification. In considering the proposed targets, the Committee agreed that they were satisfied that the proposed target success rates were sufficiently stretching.

Resolved:

- i) That the success rate outcomes from the 2009/10 academic year be noted.
- ii) **That the Standards Committee recommends to the Board of Governors the approval of the following success rate improvement targets for 2010/11:**

16-18 long qualifications	75-77%
19+ long qualifications	73-75%
16-18 short qualifications	77-78%
19+ short qualifications	85-87%
16-18 very short qualification	87-89%
19+ very short qualifications	94-95%

03/11 TEACHING AND LEARNING SERVICE – PROGRESS REVIEW

Ms S Prince presented a progress review on the work of the College's Teaching and Learning Service (T & L Service) towards improving teaching, learning and the learner experience.

Central to the progress review was the comprehensive and detailed Teaching and Learning Service Impact Report 2009/10 wherein the impact of the service is reviewed and reported on annually and is used to inform the direction of delivery for the following year.

Ms Prince drew attention to the following as being of particular note:

- Strong links continue between the College and the Institute for Learning. It was reported on 28 January 2011 that 1.76% of the total membership of IfL has gained QTLS/ATLS. The College position is that 98 teachers (25%) have gained QTLS status. A celebration event is planned for 27 April 2011.
- The acquisition of a dedicated facility – the Professional Development Centre at the Wellington Road Campus has enabled the T & L Service to showcase a range of innovative equipment and approaches available for staff to use in their teaching.
- During the 2010/11 academic year, links were developed with both Academies. Earlier engagement with the South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy facilitated the development of a series of workshops for Academy teaching staff. Work was currently underway to develop a similar approach for the North Wolverhampton Academy. A joint centre, Sharing Excellence in Learning and Teaching (SELT), had been established as the team to take this forward across the three organisations.

04/11 LEARNER PROGRESSION

The Committee received the annual report on Learner progression and noted the following key issues from the Executive Summary.

- The subject sector SAR process highlighted excellent progression in a range of areas. For example in subject sector areas 1 (Health, Public Services and Care) and 4 (Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies), good numbers on counselling courses and welding courses obtain employment as a result of College programmes
- In subject sector area 2 (Science and Mathematics) 63% of BTEC Applied Science students progressed to Higher Education in a subject which has national priority
- Progression work in tutorials and during progression week is well supported by staff and students with an increased number completing the student intention questionnaire “What Next?”.
- Progression to employment is marked in Engineering, Health and Social Care, Hospitality and Travel and Tourism
- The successful University applications have held strong in a difficult climate. Against a trend of pressure on University places, the College destination data shows that the ability to ensure that a high number of applicants to University from the College gain a place has been maintained. Currently this stands at 75% of applicants.
- The overall “retained in College” progression figures for both 16-18 and 19+ have seen a reduction from last year. For 16-18 year olds the progression figure had declined by 5% from 61% to 56%. The main area of concern is Level 1 and Entry Level. In 2009/10 Level 1 had a 65% progression rate, in 2010/11 the figure was 53%. Entry level declined by

12% over the same period of time. At 19+ the overall progression rate has declined from 49% to 43%.

The Committee discussed the reasons for the decline in internal progression rates and noted that the change to the funding methodology meant that 19+ students had been faced with increasing fees and the withdrawal of funding from many programmes. In respect of 16-18 students, the reasons for the reduction were outlined in the student intention questionnaires, i.e. more students want employment or work related learning.

In respect of how the College manages internal progression, it was noted that there was more work to do in this area with more in depth analysis of the guidance, information and advice to students.

The Principal reported that the Sector was at a crossroads in policy terms. From September, the withdrawal of EMA may have a big impact on in year retention. Changes to entitlement funding may also impact.

The Chair suggested that these potential major threats should be flagged up to the Board of Governors.

05/11 DRAFT QUALITY STRATEGY AND QUALITY REVIEW

The Committee gave consideration to the College's revised draft Quality Strategy together with the Implementation Plan for 2010/11 which underpins the Quality Strategy.

It was explained that the changing requirements of the Common Inspection Framework and the renewed focus on success rates and students' achievements has resulted in the College revising its Quality Strategy and its approach to Quality and programme reviews. This has included a revision to course reviews and would result in some changes to the Self Assessment process for 2010/11

It was noted that the revised Quality Strategy and Implementation Plan underpin the College's commitment to supporting the learner journey through the College and to establishing standards of service and support to students from every area of the College. Clear expectations of standards provide a framework for all staff to work within and allow managers to intervene directly if performance is not of satisfactory standard. The work of the Student Focus Group team was critical to informing where remedial action was needed and provides far more bespoke feedback than the use of paper questionnaires.

During consideration of the report, the Chair stated that he welcomed the work undertaken but requested that national averages and benchmarks should be more explicitly referenced throughout the Implementation Plan.

In noting that it was the Standards Committee's responsibility to consider and monitor the College's Quality Strategy but that the Board of Governors' was responsible for the approval of the Strategy, the Committee

Resolved:

That the Standards Committee recommends approval of the revised Quality Strategy to the Board of Governors.

Cllr J Rowley left the meeting.

06/11 CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE CLERK

The Committee noted a confidential report from the Clerk to the Board on the outcome of an investigation into matters raised under the College's Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy.