

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors held on Monday 28 November 2011 at 5.00pm in the Conference Centre, Paget Rd

PRESENT

Dr M Hardacre (Chair) Mr R Landman
Mrs P Causer Mr I Millard

Ms S Meddings (Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms S Nicholson
Mr J Stretton

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Ms R Anderson, Ms S Brampton and Mrs T Campbell.

19/11 COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Governors considered and noted the Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee.

20/11 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING – 27 JUNE 2011

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 June 2011 be approved as a correct record.

21/11 MATTERS ARISING

Arising on Minute No 13/11 it was reported that the areas of Apprenticeship provision which had fallen below the Minimum Level Performance threshold of 53% and had been flagged as “Red” were now back on track.

22/11 SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FROM SEPTEMBER 2010 TO AUGUST 2011

The Committee received the annual report summarising College complaints and responses made to the complaints received during the 2010/11 academic year.

The following key issues were noted:

- A total of 144 complaints were received between September 2010 and August 2011. This represents a decrease of 20% reduction from the 2010 figure of 180;

- The average time taken to respond to complaints was 23 days, compared to the previous year (19.5). the number resolved within the college target of twenty working days has decreased to 48% from 60%
- Of the 144 complaints 55% related to Teaching and Learning and 45% to Service/Environment/Resources.

It was explained that the decrease in the number of complaints resolved within the college target of 20 days was because an acceptable solution often involved external parties (e.g. exam boards) and therefore resolution of the complaint took longer.

It was suggested that Officers looked at developing a system which would allow for different response targets depending on whether the complaint could be resolved internally or could only be resolved by involving external parties. It was further suggested that Officers explored best practice in the Sector and brought back proposals to the next meeting.

23/11 THE IMPACT OF COLLEGE RETENTION STRATEGIES

The Committee received a report providing a detailed analysis of the College's retention data using data from the 2010/11 student cohort compared to 2009/10 and 2008/09 data to show a three year trend.

The report provided an analysis of the overall percentage of students retained; the pattern of early leaving; analysis by age, gender, ethnicity, postcode, educational level and retention by curriculum area.

The following headline issues were noted:

- In respect of analysis by age split, progress has been made with the 16-18 cohort which has fallen from 12.1% unretained in 2008/09 to 9.2% in 2010/11. However in respect of 19+, 2010/11 saw an increase in unretained 19+ from 8.61% to 10.8% on a reduced size of cohort
- Progress has been made in retaining students at the first critical point, namely October to December post the first half term. In 2008/09 586 students left at this point, in 2010/11 365 students left at this point.
- Progress has been made with the mixed race cohort. 16.67% unretained in 2008/09 against 11.4% for 2010/11.
- Analysis by postcode identifies St Peters ward with low retention three years in a row,
- Analysis by NVQ qualification level has identified Entry level as a clear area of concern
- Analysis by gender identified more females leaving early than males

Points of discussion on the report included:

In respect of St Peters ward, had local community groups been approached? It was agreed that this was a good idea and that the College needed to do more research such as canvassing the students; Were there any national benchmarks to report against? This would be a useful addition to the report.

It was noted that the gender "switch" was against national trends.

What were the processes if a student wanted to leave? It was reported that students usually simply stopped attending. The personal tutor system was being reviewed.

Following discussion the Committee noted and endorsed the following recommended actions arising from the analysis.

- Full use of the capability of ProMonitor
- Full use of data dashboard in particular attendance information
- A review of how Individual Learning Plans are used
- A review of the Entry Level curriculum and the teaching methods that underpin it
- A review of the 19+ cohort re retention
- The effective use of close monitoring and tutor accountability
- Investigation of a joint agency approach to improving the performance of the St Peters ward
- Through targeted focus groups review female, Entry Level and ward level performance
- Change the structure of the tutorial system with a greater emphasis on performance monitoring

It was agreed that the information gleaned from these actions would need to feed back into the College's quality systems.

The Chair concluded the item by agreeing that the Committee would wish to see the use of national benchmarks and contextualised benchmarks i.e. comparisons with similar colleges, which would enhance the report next time.

24/11 UPDATE ON SAFEGUARDING AND WELLBEING

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing an overview of the College's work on supporting safeguarding and the wider aspects of well-being.

It was explained that the report, which summarised the College's approach to integrating safeguarding and well-being into all aspects of its work, was supplementary to the annual statutory report on child protection which was presented to the Resources Committee and to the Board of Governors.

It was reported that, as well as meeting the statutory requirements for safeguarding, the College could demonstrate a wider commitment to supporting well-being.

25/11 LEARNER RESPONSIVE SUCCESS RATE PERFORMANCE 2010/11 AND TARGETS FOR 2011/12

The Committee received an analysis of overall success rate data for 2010/11 and noted the following key issues:

- For long qualifications, success rates have improved by 3% to 72% for 16-18 and by 4% to 73% for 19+
- The overall College success rate for long qualifications in 2010/11 was 73% against a national average of 75% for colleges serving the 25% most deprived, as measured by multiple indices of deprivation

- Retention overall was 85% against a national average of 88% and achievement was 87% against a national average of 89%.

The Principal commented that he would have wished the overall success rate to be closer to the national average. The College had closed the gap compared to the previous year but was still behind. However, actions put in place such as close monitoring of courses and work with individual learners should move the College in the right direction.

In response to a question about whether there was one particular process which had improved the position, it was reported that the key process was tracking of individual students.

The Committee noted an appendix to the report which illustrated courses across the College, by subject sector area, which were flagged as “red” and were subject to an internal “notice to improve” by Senior Managers. The Committee further noted an illustration of the way that notice to improve was carried out and the focus on tracking and monitoring of individual course performance.

It was reported that 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.

Points of discussion included:

- An observation that 65 programmes were flagged as red and that this appeared high. It was reported that the bar was “set higher” for identifying programmes at risk and that courses had been cut in the summer based on results. Senior Managers analysed the data with course leaders and asked for explanations and rationale but also tried to balance support and challenge.
- It was observed that the national benchmark for “outstanding” was 84%. Was the College’s rate of improvement fast enough?
- The tension between student access to courses and success rate outcomes. The College does not exclude students who would negatively impact success rates.
- A recognition of the importance of initial advice and guidance and the College’s recruitment processes.
- Discussion around performance at A/AS/A2 performance for 16-18 year olds which was significantly below that of other colleges who also service the 25% most deprived communities.

The Committee then gave consideration to proposed target success rates for 2011/12 by age cohort and level of qualification. In considering the proposed targets, the Committee discussed whether the targets were aspirational yet realistic enough given that the College was looking for year on year improvement and a solid improvement curve against national targets.

The Principal suggested that it would be helpful to have a two to three year improvement strategy as well as targets for year on year improvement.

Following discussion the Committee agreed that they were satisfied that the proposed target success rates were sufficiently stretching to accelerate progress.

Resolved:

- i) That the success rate outcomes from the 2010/11 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 2011/12:**

16-18 long qualifications	77-80%
19+ long qualifications	76-80%
16-18 short qualifications	80%
19+ short qualifications	89%
16-18 very short qualification	92%
19+ very short qualifications	94%

26/11 REVIEW OF SELF ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) 2010-11

The Committee received a report which

- Presented an overview of the self assessment process, the grade profile awarded to Subject Sector Areas (SSA) and the College as a whole;
- Requested the Committee to endorse the process and the grade profile and recommend approval of the SAR to the Board of Governors on 19 December 2011.

Key issues from the Executive Summary were:

- Long success rates were 73% overall for 2010/11, 2% below the bottom IMD scored average of 75% supporting a grade 3 for overall effectiveness and a grade 2 for capacity to improve.
- Two schools were graded as 2 (good) with the remainder at grade 3 (satisfactory)
- Wide variations in success rates across and within schools required further intensive close monitoring of curriculum and delivery.

In considering the report, the Chair suggested that the Committee firstly assessed the robustness of the self assessment process before focusing on the curriculum SARs and grade profile.

The Vice Principal reported that the process had changed for this year's self assessment with more of a focus on data. A consultant Ofsted Inspector had worked with curriculum areas, undertaken snapshot inspections and provided feedback to the curriculum validation event.

In response to a question from the Chair as to whether the Committee were satisfied with the process, it was noted that the robustness of the process would be tested at Inspection.

In respect of the gradings, it was suggested that the criteria for the “capacity to improve” grading should be looked at again, as it appeared to be more a grade 3 than a grade 2.

It was further suggested that the areas identified as “key strengths emerging from Self Assessment” should be re-evaluated.

In respect of the College Self Assessment Report for 2010/11, the Committee had agreed to “sample” a cross section of the full curriculum SARs to further validate the grades agreed by the validation panel. This was the process followed in the previous four years.

The curriculum SARs selected for “sampling” were:

- School of Engineering and Motor Vehicle (grade 2) – a diverse School which has made good progress in addressing poor performance of some courses.
- School of Civil Engineering and the Built Environment (grade 3) – a significant curriculum area for the College and one which has received considerable investment in infrastructure and resources. There are wide variations in the success rates for the programmes offered by this area, ranging from 88% in some carpentry courses, to 45% for a level 2 two year basic plumbing course.
- School of Preparation for Work and Life (grade3, borderline 2) – a track record of steady performance, and considerable innovation in the delivery models and external links it develops for students within a volatile funding environment.

The Committee then gave detailed consideration to the three curriculum SARs and made a number of comments and suggestions to be incorporated into the final draft.

In concluding the item, the Chair requested that any additional comments on the sample curriculum SARs should be emailed to the Clerk by 2 December to enable timely incorporation of the amendments into the final draft

Resolved:

That the Self-Assessment process and the Self-Assessment Report 2010/11 and associated grade profiles be endorsed and recommended for approval to the Board of Governors at its meeting on 19 December 2011.