

Quality & Performance Committee

Tue 06 June 2023, 17:30 - 19:00

At the College

Attendees

Board members

Dave Vasse, Alastair Owens, Barbara Nearchou, Natalie Firth

Absent: Sara Whittaker, Stephen Jones, Anastasia Dufie, Nazia Shah

Meeting minutes

1. Welcome, Apologies, and Quoracy

Apologies received from Sara Whittaker and Stephen Jones. The meeting was declared quorate.

Information

Alastair Owens

2. Declarations of Interest

None

Information

Alastair Owens

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting 21 March 2023

To approve the minutes as a true and accurate record

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record

 Minutes_Quality & Performance Committee_210323.pdf

Decision

Alastair Owens

3.1. Matters Arising

The Action under item nine, Vocational Results, had been circulated to members as required.

4. Board Level Risks

To identify and consider board level risks arising out of the Development Plan, item 5.

The updated Development Plan will go to the Corporation meeting for approval.

Discussion

Alastair Owens

5. College Development Plan Updates

To consider the Development Plan Report

DV noted a typo in the first line where the 83% should have referred to achievements, and not retention.

There are still concerns about returning to pre-pandemic levels of achievement on vocational programmes, though the current qualifications have a more rigorous framework than that which was in place pre-pandemic. Equally, current A levels are now a 2 year course rather than 2 x 1 year courses. However, rate of recovery is still a concern, with oracy, attendance, and learning. Drop out rate at first year of university is higher than it should be.

There is good work being done by staff and students, though curriculum strategy is vital to the future of the college.

NF thanked DV for the context, and asked about additional support for post-pandemic catch-up.

DV confirmed that the number of paid hours had been increased from 540 to 580, (after the 100 hours of entitlement funding had been stripped out some years ago) originally intended solely for English and Maths, but now applicable to mentoring, coaching, etc.

The Skills Strategy with Guidance Counsellors to be introduced next year will assist with improving skills, and there is a greater emphasis on career-specific work experience.

The crucial aspect, as shown in all the data is attendance, so that improvements of learning preparedness can be implemented.

AO asked what strategies are not working as hoped.

DV Decline in attendance has been arrested, but only after enormous effort for a small gain. A more onerous attendance contract of 85% will be introduced next year, with a telephone call to parents in case of absence, rather than just a text, to explain that any additional absence in that half term will result in a drop below 85%.

Discussion

Dave Vasse

BN confirmed an urgent need for students to show up, complying with dress code, presenting with the right mindset, and properly prepared for a day of study.

NF asked about the response to sharing the new 85% minimum attendance requirement with students.

DV has shared the data with students about how much performance improves with good attendance, both at college and in future university performance. The message may need to be repeated regularly.

AO asked how about the basis for the 85%.

DV noted that A Level students should be no less than 90%, but the average benchmark across the sector suggests 85% is the tipping point, below which outcomes are significantly affected.

NF asked about attendance improving in the second half of the year, and if anything can be learnt from this.

DV noted that attendance increases when students are aware their college place is at risk. The concept of first year Graduation was rolled forward to December, with a second letter in January to students with poor attendance. It appears those with marginal progression on attendance need to be continually reminded of the 85% minimum.

AO asked about other strategies that have an impact.

BN noted the need for improvement in teacher accuracy with the Current Working Grade, as opposed to the Forecast Grade, which tends to be too optimistic. Data is being analysed across all courses, though this is contingent upon accurate assessments. These need to be sufficiently rigorous to differentiate between those on track to achieve.

Forecast grades do not motivate students as intended, and students tend to imagine they will improve by next year.

AO noted that GCSE English had improved significantly but Maths was not improving as well.

DV noted that performance is not up to Sixth Form sector average, but better than general FE, which given the higher rate of vocation students should be seen in that context. The college should aim to be at least mid way between the two.

AO asked to what extent staff training and CPD would have an impact?

DV confirmed that literacy challenges showed a lack of ability to fully read, process, and understand questions, in order to provide good answers. Teacher training has had a clear impact, and shows the need to continue with staff CPD.

There is a noticeable issue with students around oracy. BN noted that students are often too quiet in lessons, and not problem solving. This is being addressed with Oracy Champions, and with the introduction of live, instructional coaching for teachers to pinpoint where students are not responding as expected within lesson. This follows lessons learned from the Boston visit, and uses techniques developed in the USA, though by a UK-based provider.

This will be rolled out for Curriculum Assistant Principals and Pathway Leaders.

The increase in Russell Group applications was welcomed, though the overall number of university applications is slightly down and that Oxbridge offers are still too low.

T Levels in Digital, Science, and Health and Social Care are still on course for next year, with curriculum training for staff, and employers invited in to look at assignment briefs on 7th July. Staff are due to visit Leeds Notre Dame to see T Levels being delivered. The funding received is welcome.

The Committee received the Development Plan updates.

 Development Plan 2022_23 Updated May 2023.pdf

6. Review of the Committee Terms of Reference

Discussion

Are the Terms of Reference fit for purpose.

Alastair Owens

It was noted that these Terms of Reference were drawn up before the introduction of the External Affairs Committee, which is where the oversight of student enrolments and admissions should sit.

There was considerable discussion about Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, which was recognised as being embedded across the whole college, especially given the immense variation in the student cohort.

Leaner Voice strategy is currently under development, and its oversight is relevant not only to this committee.

NF noted that many employers are moving away from single, snapshot surveys to a more dynamic picture, so the college is in line with current trends in the private sector.

It was agreed that the final decision on this should be deferred until the new committee chair takes office, and might include a series of strategy documents which would all form part of the Strategic Plan.

This matter was deferred to the meeting in September

 Q & P ToR.pdf

7. Agenda Planning 2023-24

To consider and decide on committee agenda for next academic year.

The committee considered various topics to be considered in next year's meetings, including:

Learner Voice Strategy,

Aspects of Curriculum Strategy,

Teacher coaching and development,

Attendance,

Literacy strategy,

General Behaviour Strategy, On Board and Ready,

Teacher Feedback and Assessment Policy,

HE data for September starters (usually available May)

Discussion

Alastair Owens

8. Any Other Business

Alastair Owens

DV Proposed a vote of thanks to Alastair for his sterling performance in chairing this committee, not least in returning to in-person meetings. It has always been a pleasure to have Alastair's guidance and insight.

AO thanked everyone for their hard work, and the stimulating ideas which have carried through to other areas of work.

9. Date and Time of Meetings 2023-24

Information

To note future meetings

Tuesday 26 September 5030pm to be confirmed

Tuesday 14 November 5.30pm

Tuesday 19 March 5.30pm

Tuesday 11 June 5.30pm

Alastair Owens