



Minutes of the meeting of the Learner Experience Committee held on Tuesday, 23 February 2010 at 4.30pm in the Boardroom of the College.

Present: Jill Killen; Cath Richardson; Dan Carter

Apologies: Susie Shepherd; Michael Doyle

Also present: Robin Talbot (new Governor); Jane Murray (Clerk to Governors); Maggie Szuster (Student Services Manager); Clare Walker (Student Services Officer); Final Item: Judith Dakers (14-19 Manager); Daniel Braithwaite (Head of Faculty, CIS) .

### 01/10 Chair

Being the only independent Governor and member of the committee present, Jill Killin assumed the Chair.

### 02/10 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

### 03/10 Declarations of Interest

None received.

### 04/10 Quality & Curriculum Report

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality reminded the Committee that there were three levels of intervention in the quality improvement process. Courses in special measures were subject to intensive care, something not right had been identified in courses under review and close monitoring took place of courses where there were early signals that something might be amiss, such as a failure to meet some of the threshold targets. The Autumn 2009 audit of agreed actions were as follows:

Faculty	Number of Quals in Special Measures	Number of Quals addressed in Quality reviews	Number of Quals in Under Reviews	Number of Quals addressed in Under Reviews
CSI	5	4	9	3
ECBT	6	1	6	4
<b>College</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

With respect to attendance and retention rates, the Deputy Principal presented the latest picture, which was showing more grounds for optimism than at the time the agenda papers were issued.

Retention was now showing at 94.5%, this was looking like ½ - 1% below the previous year, and worse had been anticipated. The college had an attendance target of 87%. The college average since the floods stood at 80%.

The Committee were told of the efforts the college had made in easing the transport difficulties for students, such as shuttle buses from the station; shifting timetables; blended learning (some taking place) at home. It was also pointed out that some students were hit as school closures meant that they did not have access to childcare to attend college.

The Committee confirmed with those present that the impact of a decline in the attendance and retention rates would have a financial impact on the college later down the line and were pleased to note that there were increasing grounds for optimism.

The Committee concurred that the teaching and learning observations were impressive and complimented the strengths and weakness analysis presented. They noted that staff with a consistently high grading over three years were not subject to the unannounced checks. They noted the comparative data as follows:

Grade Descriptor	2008/09 (%)	2009/10 (%)
Outstanding	33	26
Good	46	54
Satisfactory	19	20
Inadequate	3	1

With respect to Higher Education, it was noted by the Committee that the Deputy Principal had some concerns over the drop-out rate and that recruitment targets had not been met (not to the extent that it would affect the funding for this year).

**Agreed** – that a report on Higher Education be brought back to the next Committee.

#### **05/10 Revised Success Rates**

The Deputy Principal reminded Governors that in presenting the success rates to the Board in December, he had informed Governors that the Learning and Skills Council had only that day made changes to the data for colleges, which at that time had been unspecified.

It had now been established that changes to the way in which students were counted had been made which, in the College's case, had affected 197 learners. Success rates in long courses was now showing at 80% rather than the 81% previously indicated.

However this was still above the national average and in the top 10% of colleges nationally.

		06/07	07/08	08/09	National
All	Starts	2,364	2,344	2,264	1,504,741
Long	Success rates	74%	78%	80%	76%

**Agreed** – that although the rates had been changed, nevertheless, it was an impressive achievement.

#### **06/10 Learner Voice**

The Committee were reminded that there were now two student forums. The Further Education forum has been well attended. The Higher Education forum is in its infancy and more participation is expected in March.

Focus groups have been held on behaviour and discipline, which have shown that students feel safe in college and that most remember what to do in the event of bullying and are aware of the disciplinary procedures. They did raise some comment about inconsistency in dealing with problem behaviour.

It was noted and welcomed that six students were willing to become involved in the staff recruitment process.

Governors were particularly keen to learn of the technology being rolled out to gain student feedback, noting the text facility now on offer, but also proposals for having an online feedback system.

#### **07/10 Complaints' Monitoring**

Governors received and noted a summary of the complaints to date. Complaints were encouraged in the College as a tool for improvement. While all had been resolved, some had not been resolved within the timeframe which was a cause for disappointment and further follow-up action.

Assurance was sought and given that there was a zero tolerance approach to bullying in the college. Any allegation of bullying was investigated both swiftly and robustly, but it was also pointed out that students sometimes found it difficult to differentiate between a tough line on behaviour and bullying.

## **08/10 Admissions Policy**

Admissions had been subject to extensive review within the Senior Management Team to re-enforce the philosophy of 'right course: right level: right support'.

This had led to the reintroduction for 2010/11 of the personal interview and conditional or unconditional offers for particular courses and levels of study. The process would also include provision for follow up action and options if conditional requirements were not met.

**Resolved** – that the revisions to the policy be noted.

## **09/10 Student Discipline**

The Committee was advised that there had been two cases of student expulsions and it was confirmed that were these to be appealed, that Governors would be involved in the appeals' process.

## **10/10 Introduction & Overview to 14-19 Provision**

The Head of Faculty and the 14-19 Manager reported on the faster session they had just facilitated. Governors were pleased to note that eighty parents had attended and that there had been a lot of good feedback.

The policy objectives of the 14-19 agenda, the biggest educational reform since 1902, were outlined to the Committee:

- To raise the minimum age at which young people leave education or training to 17 by 2013 and to 18 by 2015
- To introduce a new suite of qualifications, Diplomas in 17 subject areas at three levels by 2013
- To reforming A levels with a reduction in assessment while ensuring that every candidate is stretched and challenged
- To introduce a new extended project qualification for Advanced Diploma and A level students
- Creating new functional skills standards and qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT
- Reviewing and updating GCSEs
- Expanding Apprenticeship opportunities

- Supporting learners below level 2 and level 1 through the **foundation learning tier**
- Placing responsibility for education and training of all young people to 18 with local authorities so LAs can take a more holistic view of services for under 19s
- Increased emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math

With respect to the College, there are 247 learners aged 14-16 coming in one or half a day every week to work on a vocational qualification. These qualifications are offered across a broad range of subjects and include motor vehicle, hair, beauty, retail, construction, childcare, art, public services and sport. There are also land-based qualifications in partnership with the University of Cumbria and horticulture qualifications. There are wider benefits than simply the qualifications – schools frequently report that behaviour and confidence improve as a result of the college activities.

Young Apprentices are learners aged 14 – 16 who are enrolled on a course in an area which appeals to them, learning vocational skills and expertise. These are available in sport and active leisure; engineering and performing arts. We have currently 88 young apprentices working towards a qualification. There is a tradition of award-winning apprentices at the College.

There are two Advanced level Diplomas currently, in Engineering and in Creative Media, the college is now tasked with driving forward further development of Diplomas, with Business Administration & Finance; Manufacturing and Product Design and Sport and Leisure under development.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm.

