

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF LEARNER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

Held on Tuesday, 10th November 2009 at 4:30pm in the Boardroom, Lakes College

Present: Jill Killen; Susie Shepherd; Dan Carter; Cath Richardson

Apologies: Michael Doyle

Also present: Chris Nattress, Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality; Pippa de Gara, Higher Education Manager; Clare Walker, Student Service Liaison Officer

07/09 Election of Chair

The Committee being currently without a formal Chair, there was a need to elect a Chair for at least this meeting.

Resolved: That Jill Killin chair the meeting.

08/09 Minutes

Resolved- that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2009 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

09/09 Declarations of Interest

None received.

10/09 Higher Education

The HE Manager provided an introduction to higher education at the College during which the following points were made:

- The college has been providing Higher (or University) Education for over forty years through its HNC/HND engineering courses. University Education means to a standard of Level 4 and above, which includes HNC/HNDs; BA/Bsc (ordinary and honours); Masters degrees and PHDs.
- More recently, this has included Foundation degrees, vocationally linked degrees leading to a level 4/5 qualification, which can be mostly topped up to a full honours degrees at a partner university.
- Current provision at the College includes:

HNC/HND and BEng in Engineering
Foundation degree in Nuclear Decommissioning
HNC/HND and Foundation Degree in Chemistry

Foundation Degree in Computing
Foundation Degree in Business Management
Foundation Degree in Salon Management
Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care
Foundation Degree in Teaching and Learning Support
Foundation Degree in Physical Activity and Health
Foundation Degree in the Integrated Education and care of
children and young people
Certificate/PGCE in Education, PTLLS and CTTLS

- The college's specialises in linking learning to employment suiting the needs of employers; employees and job seekers. This includes flexible ways of working and access to courses, such as e-learning and video conferencing.
- The courses are provided in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire (mainly education provision); Lancaster University (engineering provision); Edexcel (Engineering provision) and University of Cumbria, which is a growth area for partnership working.
- Work is also undertaken to encourage access to the courses, such as specialist programmes for adults returning to education who don't possess the necessary qualifications, and encouraging students to adopt different study methods in preparation for higher education, through a 'Headstart' programme. The College is also active, in line with local regeneration objectives, in raising local aspirations, participating in 'Aim Higher' initiatives in schools.
- Fees are competitive and there are bursaries available for all students (means tested) with additional bursaries available for STEM subjects via the NDA and Energy coast (primary science and engineering).
- The Higher Education (HE) students themselves have asked for their own 'culture' to be developed. There is a new HE study area situated in the LRC and student services are working to identify HE Student representatives.
- All students have their own Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) and are expected to complete a Professional Development Profile, which will hopefully increase their employment opportunities or progression in Higher Education.

It was suggested, as there was a shortage of Maths and Science teachers in the area, that there might be scope for a PGCE course in Maths and Science (which engineers could access).

Assurance was sought and received that the College's participation in Aim Higher events also included much younger pupils than sixth formers.

In response to questioning, it was also established that there was a close working relationship with many employers who were involved in validation meetings and panels. Some were not so open to the change from the HNC/HND format to the Foundation Degree.

It was also noted that the Institute of Mechanical Engineers also had a 'Headstart' programme, and two such programmes might have the potential for confusion. UoC have named the programme, but to avoid confusion market it mainly as a study skills/bridging module.

11/09 Quality Improvement

The Deputy Principal, Curriculum & Quality, noted that while there had been a slight drop in student satisfaction for full-time students, the picture was favourable overall, with many positive comments made.

The results were used as a data source for the Quality Improvement Committee, particularly for self-assessment, and to progress development plans. It was acknowledged that the survey was open to some bias but that account was taken of that.

Perhaps most note-worthy was the fact that 74.8% of part-time students and 82.4% of full-time students would recommend their course to family or friends.

Having attended, he was comfortable that the students forum was operating well and that students were able to influence college activity.

Preliminary analysis of Retention, Achievement and Success rates for 2008/09 would indicate that results have improved putting the college in the upper 10% nationally. While the changes to the way in which rates are measured have affected all colleges by 1-2%, indicative rates for long qualifications, excluding key skills, were: Success 81%; Retention 87% and Achievement 93%.

That the rates were 4% above the national benchmark when over 50 per cent of students entering college were assessed as level 1 or below (hardest to reach group), was a remarkable achievement, and one of which the college could be proud.

Long courses were over 24 weeks; short courses under 24 weeks and very short courses under 5 weeks. The rates were measured for both ages 16-18 and 19+, in addition to being aggregated. The preliminary results are appended to this minute.

Courses which were below target by more than 5% were put into special measures by the College. It would mean that the department was monitored very closely and action taken to address the problems. If a course fails to respond, the consideration is given to de-listing that course, or redesigning the curriculum.

It could be that there were recruitment issues or that the wrong people, were on the wrong course at the wrong level.

It was suggested by a member of the committee that sometimes level 2 qualifications are a crude measure and that a more accurate picture would be gained by looking at the English and maths results to ensure that the student was at the right level. The committee were advised that it was intended to return to individual interviews for students next year.

12/09 Learner Voice

The Student Services Liaison Officer has taken a different approach this year, which had proved successful as all courses were represented on the student forum. It was pleasing that it was both a vocal and willing group, and .

A 'you said we did' approach is being adopted this year to ensure that feedback is being widely disseminated. Some of the issues raised might have been predicted, such as smoking and food, but others such as ensuring a consistent approach to educational maintenance and student behaviour were coming through.

Staff were canvassing opinion through the forum, for example the sports' zone had sought input into lunchtime activities.

The intention was to introduce a more formalised structure through the adoption of a constitution based on the National Union of Students model.

It was remarked how pleasing it was to see students themselves raising the issue of student behaviour, and how positive that was.

13/09 Safeguarding

The Student Services Manager reported the steps that were taken to keep children safe in the college. The Ofsted inspection framework would focus on three main strands:

- how well schools (and colleges) promote equality of opportunity, and how effectively they tackle discrimination;
- checking procedures for safeguarding – keeping children and young people from harm

- evaluating the achievement and wider well-being of pupils as a whole and of different groups of pupils, and assessing the extent to which schools (and colleges) ensure that all pupils, including those most at risk, succeed.

A strong stance is taken on bullying, including cyber bullying. Bullying is covered in the compulsory induction for students, encouragement is given to report bullying and incidents are logged and followed up. This has resulted so far in a few successes in changing behaviour and in two students being excluded.

Encouragement is given to stop smoking, healthy living is promoted and the College works with other agencies to provide information on alcohol abuse. A sexual health clinic is run once a week.

All staff have undertaken safeguarding training, and the expectation is that this must be updated every three years. Everyone who comes into contact with students is CRB checked.

A risk assessment is carried out on all learners who declare criminal convictions. Interviews may be carried out, and if need be, references are sought.

Children in the looked-after system are monitored and regular meetings with children's services are held.

The number of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) increases each year and this year there are 6 discrete classes – 2 more than in previous years. Health care assistants are employed to ensure their welfare during break times.

Another area, which is being developed this year, is to monitor the progress and achievements of those learners who are on probation.

Agreed –

- 1) That all governors should undertake level 1 online training (which was an Ofsted expectation);
- 2) That it should be considered whether the child protection governor be trained to level 2 standard.
- 3) That refresher training for staff should be targeted.
- 4) That monitoring takes place of ex-offenders and those in the looked-after system to identify if a gap exists between their achievements and the college as a whole (in order to put in strategies to decrease any gaps).
- 5) That training is available to all staff so that they understand what to do if they come across incidents of bullying.

The meeting closed at 6.00 pm