

Minutes of a meeting of the Quality Working Group held on Thursday, 23rd March 2017 at 4.15pm in FO27 of the College

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Tanya Crofts; Helen Johnson; Phil Jardine; Robing Talbot (from Min No)

Also present: Daniel Braithwaite (Assistant Principal); Mark Brischel (Quality Manager); Jane Murray (Clerk)

04/17 Minutes

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

It was noted by the Chairman that the external audit had not raised any issues in respect of English and maths, however, the more recent Inspector's letter continued to voice some concern. The Committee was reassured that there continued to be a focus on English, and on maths in particular.

05/17 Declarations of Interest

None received.

06/17 Apprenticeships

In response to comments made in the letter from the Inspector, the Quality Working Group had asked to consider apprenticeships in more detail.

The Assistant Principal noted that there had been a decline in in-house apprenticeship achievement rates. Some areas were high performers and some areas the college struggles with, primarily owing to local demand, which makes staff recruitment difficult to those areas. Where it is working well, there is a good model of lead assessors and dedicated assessors.

Asked about apprenticeship performance of other local providers, it was noted that Lakes College tended to have a much greater diversity of student and employer, and therefore an entirely different set of circumstances. To give one example, working with smaller employers increased the risk of an apprentice losing their job.

Turing to the process, there was a 42 days cooling off period akin to the 6-week rule for full-time students. This required an intensive period working with apprentice and employer, providing IAG, to ensure that the outcome was likely to be successful. Otherwise, there was an increased risk of the apprentice failing.

Robin Talbot joined the meeting

Apprentices start at any time of the year. At the start of their course, they are allocated an expected end year and this becomes the year against which they are measured for timely achievement. If they have not achieved by the expected end date, there is a further 90 days in which to complete (which is known as an unfunded learner).

As apprentices start and end throughout the year, data is monitored throughout the year. However, there is an annual data set which captures previous year end data and includes learners who are within their expected end year and those who have gone past their expected year end. This is known as a hybrid year end.

The main change recently in the apprenticeship achievement calculations centres around breaks in learning. This is when an apprentice has a quite valid reason for taking break, pregnancy for example, or an illness.

This is now counted as a temporary withdrawal for that year's data if they do not have a restart record for the same academic year or if they do not have have a restart record for the following two academic years.

This process is now being applied retrospectively to the past two year's data, which means that this could impact on historical data which had been previously presented at a higher rate. There is a lack of clarity when historic National Achievement rates will be shared. However, it is predicted that rates will reduce and will be the same for all colleges.

However, when apprentices do return, they are re-instated and if they pass, then it is as if they have never left and this will again impact on the historical data. In other words, apprenticeship data is now always moving and the imperative is to manage those breaks in learning.

Asked how you keep those apprentices in scope, assurance was given that there is regular contact with the learners and progress meetings. It was also true to say that there were regular progress meetings with all apprentices and closer monitoring meetings with under-performing apprentices, apprenticeship areas and staff involved in the delivery.

The best case scenario for achievements for this year is looking at 77% overall (including in-house and sub-contracted provision). Asked what the current achievement rate is currently, it is standing at 65.5%. As the national average last year was 67%, there was confidence that this year's results would exceed the national average (even if it didn't reach the best case scenario) noting that by this time in the year, the % of red and amber students were considerably greater (the anticipated end date of their apprenticeship being 31 July 2017).

It was noted that there were only a few apprentices left with sub-contractors whose programmes were being run down.

While accepting that there had been a downward trend, which looked likely to be addressed in this academic year, it was felt that there was some work to be done in the sector to facilitate understanding of the the changes and their impact on the sector and data, which also included Ofsted.

07/17

Value-added

In light of the lengthy discussion on apprenticeships and the Board meeting scheduled to follow, it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 1720h.