

## West Lothian College

5 September 2018

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### Learning & Teaching Committee

Minute of the Meeting of the **Learning and Teaching Committee** of the Board of Governors held on **Wednesday 6 June** at 9.15am in Barbour Room, Pavilion B of the College.

**Present:** Sue Cook (Chair)  
Iain McIntosh  
Alan Morton  
Tom Bates  
Lorna Reid

**In attendance:** Moira Niven (Observer) until 18.27  
George Hotchkiss (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning) until 18.28  
Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise) until 18.28  
Jenny Stalker (Quality Manager) until 18.28  
Karine McNair (Secretary to the Board)

### Campus Visit – Student Support

The Committee were taken on a tour of the Student Support area of the College by Lorna Jenkins, Matt Farnham and Helen Wilson. The tour was followed with a question and answer session.

The Committee were shown the areas available for students both on a booked and a 'drop in' basis. Committee members spoke to staff from Student Support and discussed the challenges experienced by both staff and students.

Lorna Jenkins tabled a short paper which explained the composition of the Student Support Team and their remit for helping students in many areas. The paper also addressed the issues which can arise and the Committee commented on the range of matters being handled by Student Support.

Of particular note, the Committee heard how Student Support are trying to engage with more external agencies to obtain the right support for students and about the work in the College to train more teaching staff in supportive teaching styles.

Special mention was made of the Bursary Officer who has an excellent track record of supporting students in dire financial positions and responding flexibly to help students manage their finances.

## West Lothian College

5 September 2018

---

The Committee acknowledged the good work undertaken in Student Support and appreciated that a number of the issues they are dealing with are external social problems.

### **18.17 Welcome & Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular, Moira Niven (Board Member), who was attending as an observer.

Apologies were received from Mhairi Harrington.

### **18.18 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **18.19 Minutes of Meeting of 13 March 2018**

The minutes of the meeting of 13 March 2018 were approved as a true record.

### **18.20 Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 13 March 2018**

Members noted the paper detailing actions following the last meeting.

In respect of Action 2, Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning stated that printing facilities were now available in all rooms where printing was necessary and a review was underway to establish the printing requirements for exams and assessments.

In respect of Action 3, Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning noted that some other Colleges did have a more lenient approach to releasing students' funds where there were absences and the West Lothian College approach will be reviewed over the summer. The impact of the imminent introduction of Universal Credit was mentioned as it was expected that this could have an impact on student poverty.

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise, noted that the UCAS and Higher Education Applications information which should have been available at the end of April has not yet been released and he will endeavour to have this for the next Committee meeting.

#### **Action 1 – Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise**

**18.21 ROA Update 2017-18**

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning noted that there had not been any significant changes to the ROA since the last meeting with the College expected to attain its credit target and probably exceed the target by 500.

Further Education Full Time students are still a concern with a withdrawal rate of 24% and Student Support are engaging with at risk or fragile students to help support them through their studies.

Flexible Workforce programmes are looking very positive with the possibility of extending the number of eligible businesses able to pay into the Apprenticeship levy. The increase in eligible businesses should have a good impact on the Flexible Workforce programme but it also encourages further employer engagement which benefits the College in other ways, e.g. speakers, placements etc.

The Committee queried the source of the £4,000 for innovation funding which was allocated to the College and Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise confirmed that this was a 'one-off' payment from the Scottish Funding Council in partial recognition for the considerable business development costs of running the new Flexible Work programme. A report would be sent to the Scottish Funding Council by December to account for the activity on the £4,000.

The Committee noted the paper.

**18.22 Applications & Recruitment Update**

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise presented paper 4 alongside a tabled supplementary paper which had an update of the key statistics at 5 June 2018.

It was noted that the Full Time programme opened for applications 4 weeks later than last year, which could explain the decrease in applications, however the offers made were at a similar point as in 2017-18.

Schools activity was very positive and the Committee were asked to note that the curriculum has changed in a few centres so again the figures could not be considered a direct comparison

Given the dynamic nature of the data, reports are currently being created on a weekly basis to track progress and marketing are meeting with Centre Heads to discuss anything that can be done to drive applications.

## West Lothian College

5 September 2018

---

The Applications Committee are currently producing a detailed report into the interview process which will result in an action plan with ideas for reducing the wait time for interviews, improving attainment and reducing withdrawal rates.

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise, stated that the schools induction programme had been moved forward to align with the school year ending. The first of these induction events had been held the previous evening and although every school in West Lothian was represented, approximately only 50% of those expected to attend the event actually attended. The reasons behind the poor turnout are being investigated.

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise, has met individually with all secondary head teachers in West Lothian to discuss their engagement with the College and improvements that could be made. Through these discussions, the transport links to the College were mentioned on more than one occasion as a barrier for students travelling to the College.

The Committee noted that there is a designated person at each secondary school tasked with College liaison, usually a deputy head. In addition, West Lothian Council have a College Link Officer to aid partnership with the College however it has been found that lately more the liaison emphasis has rested with the College with less Council support.

The Committee commented that perhaps some of the reluctance on the part of the schools is that they also have attainment targets and that by sending students to College, they have less control over the students' attainment thus jeopardising the school's own targets. It was acknowledged that there needed to be a better 2 way information flow between the schools and College so that both institutions were able to best serve their learners and each had comfort that the student's attainment was at the heart of their offering.

The Committee queried the 14.1% decrease in applications and wondered which courses were of most concern at this stage of the application process. Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning, noted that there were more entry level jobs available locally as we were now post-recession and potential students were choosing employment over studying. In addition, there is competition for the College from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Forth Valley Colleges as transport links for some parts of West Lothian are better to those colleges.

On a positive note, Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise, reported that approximately 40% of the students interviewed had been recommended by a friend and over 80% of those students interviewed had West Lothian College as their first or only choice.

## West Lothian College

5 September 2018

---

The Committee discussed the shape of the College in the future and it was recognised that there would need to be flexibility in the curriculum to meet demand and react to recruitment needs.

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Enterprise, noted that the next major project in the applications process would come after the Higher Results were issued and the College would be prepared to reconcile the effect of these results either by some students now being able to take up university places or by offering a positive choice to others.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

### **18.23 ROA Update 2018-21**

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning, presented paper 5 noting that the final credit count for 2018-19 now reflects a 2% increase. The Scottish Funding Council have not committed to an ongoing increase, however following helpful discussions with the Scottish Funding Council the College were hopeful that credits would increase as an acknowledgement of the growth of the College.

The ROA had been redrafted in light of comments raised at the previous Committee and the targets are considered to be stretch targets but still achievable.

The Committee were concerned by the statement on page 11 of the report that SDS had removed funding for the Employability programme. Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning, confirmed that the SDS had been requested to provide reasons for this withdrawal of funding but feedback had not been forthcoming. It was felt that SDS should be held accountable for their funding and the Committee requested that the matter be pursued for a reasonable answer.

#### **Action 2: Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning**

The Committee noted that the credit targets on Table 6 remained the same from 2018-19 to 2020-21 which was not in line with the College's plans for growth. The Committee requested that the request for further credits to reflect the growth anticipated for West Lothian College be included in the covering letter accompanying the ROA to the Scottish Funding Council to emphasise the importance of the College's commitment to growth.

#### **Action 3: Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning**

The Committee remarked that again the credits on page 21 remained the same except there was a need to address the gender imbalance on some

courses. It was discussed that if the top level of credits remained static, any movement in one gender would logically mean it was at the expense of the other gender since an overall growth is not anticipated. The Committee queried whether this was the intention of the Scottish Funding Council and again requested that their concerns were fed back to the Scottish Funding Council.

**Action 4: Vice Principal Curriculum & Planning**

The Committee commended the hard work in getting the ROA in a final position and appreciated the more achievable targets now shown in the document.

The Committee recommended the ROA to the Board for approval.

**Action 5: Board Secretary**

**18.24 Equalities Update**

Head of Quality & Learner Services presented paper 6 highlighting that the Equalities Committee had consulted with external stakeholders in respect of Outcome 4.

After participating in the Equate Conference 'question time' format, Head of Quality & Learner Services commented that it was nice to hear that some of the West Lothian College initiatives were leading the way in many aspects for the College sector.

In respect of the Gender Action Plan, it had been proven that having staff as gender role models was very successful in encouraging under represented genders to enrol in courses. The Equalities Committee were hoping to encourage the recruitment of gender role model staff.

The Committee thanked the Head of Quality & Learner Services for a very comprehensive report.

**18.25 Quality Assurance & Enhancement Report**

Head of Quality & Learner Services presented paper 7 noting that the aim of the group was to find the best measure of curriculum offering for students.

One improvement which has been implemented is that the registers for all classes starting next academic year are available now and all timetables will be available on the website from next week so that everyone can start the new academic year with the information needed.

It had been reported that students felt that they were given too much information at once on induction and this has now been changed to a 4 week process whereby priority information is delivered on day one and all other information can be obtained by booking into workshops.

Almost half of all students access student support services and the demand for these services is being reviewed in light of the resources available.

The Student Association will be judging the STAR awards and winners of the 'No Waste Campaign'.

It is hoped that there will be a more people centred approach next year now that all the systems have been endorsed and the focus will be on supporting people to engage with the systems.

The Committee noted the report.

## **18.26 Student Association Report**

Student Association Vice President presented paper 8 highlighting the changes to the Sparkle process and also the change to the Student Association Constitution.

The Committee commented that 9.2 of the Student Association Constitution should change from *requiring* all committee members to be in attendance for a quorum. The Committee suggested that a quorum should be the all the committee members *who are in attendance*, one of whom must be the Student President.

The Committee approved the Student Association Constitution subject to the change noted above.

The Committee also queried whether the work of the office bearers of the Student Association could contribute to course work or a qualification and Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning undertook to discuss this with relevant Centre Heads.

### **Action 6: Vice Principal, Curriculum & Planning**

The Committee thanked the Student Association Vice Principal for a very thorough report and commended the Student Association for the good work that they undertake.

Since this was the final Committee meeting for the Student Association Vice President, the Chair formally thanked her for her valuable contribution to the Board and the Committee and wished her well for the future.

**18.27 College Key Performance Indicators 2017-18**

Vice Principal, Curriculum and Planning presented paper 9 commenting that where the withdrawal rates are higher, the emphasis would now be on retaining students and successful completion.

The Committee noted the report.

**18.28 Learner Attainment Sub Group Minutes**

The Committee noted the Minutes of the Learner Attainment Sub Group.

**18.29 Committee Remit Review**

The Board Secretary presented the Committee Remit for annual review noting a small change to include the Learner Attainment Sub Group minutes review within the Committee Remit.

The Committee recommended the revised remit for approval to the Board.

**Action 7: Board Secretary**

**18.30 Self-Evaluation of Committee**

Board Secretary presented paper 12 and the Committee discussed the annual Committee self-evaluation questions. The main findings will be compiled into a Self-Evaluation Report to be presented to the Board in June.

**Action 8: Board Secretary**

**18.31 Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

**18.32 Review of Meeting, Supporting Papers and Development Plan**

## West Lothian College

5 September 2018

---

The Committee discussed the new Committee Development Plan for 2019 and requested that at the next meeting, the Committee undertook a “deep dive” into the recruitment and applications process with an examination of the 5 year trend and a projection of where this continuing trend could take the College compared with where the Management and Committee think the College should be.

The Board Secretary undertook to draft a request for the senior management team to ensure that the “deep dive” focussed on the issues the Committee wanted to examine. The draft would be circulated by email to Committee members for their input before sending to the senior management team to prepare for the meeting.

### **Action 9: Board Secretary**

#### **18.33 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 5 September 2018 at 9.15am.

**Note:** There were no matters discussed during the meeting, during which Members declared any conflict of interest, or the Secretary to the Board was aware from the Register of Interests that discussion could give rise to such a conflict.

Signed .....  
Chair, Learning and Teaching Committee

Date .....