

West Lothian College

14 June 2023

Learning and Teaching Committee

Minute of meeting of 15 February 2023

Present:

Iain McIntosh (Chair and non-executive member)
Alex Linkston (Non-executive member)
Rehela Hussain (Co-opted, non-executive member)
Tom Bates (Depute Chair, non-executive member)
Elaine Cook (Non-executive member)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal)
Blair Stewart (Student Association President)
Neil Sinclair (Teaching Staff Member)

In Attendance:

Hannah Wilson (Scottish Funding Council)
Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement)
Sarah-Jane Linton (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)
Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services)
Beth Brownlee (Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources)
Tom Thomson (Staff Observer)
Todd Lumsden (Director of the Care, Health and Sport Faculty)
Graham Clark (Project Director)
Diane Mitchell (Director of the Workforce Development Faculty and interim Director of the Computing, Engineering and Built Environment Faculty)
Margaret Forisky (Director of the Access, Employability and Schools Faculty)
Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

Faculty Updates

The Chair welcomed faculty directors who provided an update on a range of thematic areas of responsibility. They gave an insight into progress being made on a number of current projects which included the ECOHOUSE Skills Centre for Sustainable Living, the decarbonisation project, the Change, Sustain, Attain unit, partnership working with schools, and progress on our aim to achieve the LGBT+ Gold award.

Directors also discussed areas of challenge in their faculties on curriculum review, staffing and student withdrawal rates. The Committee was pleased to hear that the faculties carry out continuous reviews of courses and subject performance and that early steps are taken to address any areas of concern relating to student retention.

The Committee heard that Learning Champions are supporting staff registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) and embedding the Professional Update Scheme across all curriculum areas, resulting in West Lothian College having the highest uptake of the scheme in the sector. The Committee felt that it

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would be beneficial to have a report on GTCS Professional Update, highlighting the outcomes we are achieving or expect to see.

The Chair commented positively on the college's consistent work to ensure students were being provided with the right courses, the right resources and the right support to succeed.

Action 1: Vice Principal Performance and Improvement to include an update on GTCS Professional Update at a future meeting.

1 Committee Administration

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members introduced themselves at the start of the meeting.

Apologies were noted from Abel Aboh and Karine Bourdarias (Student Association President)

1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

1.3 Minutes of Meeting of 23 November 2022

The minutes of 23 November 2022 meeting were approved as accurate.

1.4 Matters Arising

Action 1: The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement shared with the Committee that initial estimated success would be available in May 2023 and revised in June 2023, at which point we can identify any significant trends.

The Committee was content with the Vice Principal's input.

Action 2: was noted as completed.

2 Faculty Updates

Updates were taken at the start of the meeting.

3 Student Association Update**3.1 Student Association Report**

- (i) The Student Association President provided the Committee with an update on SPARKLE results. The new survey format has proved very successful and has encouraged students to submit improved feedback. Generally, feedback has been very positive with a few negative results received regarding inconsistencies with learning and teaching approaches and assessment load. The Student President confirmed these results are in the minority and have been taken up directly with faculties for resolution.

The Committee queried whether responses given in the first week of survey are likely to be more negative than those received in the fifth week of survey. The Information Systems manager confirmed that we know when people respond and can try to correlate this.

The Committee asked what faculties are doing differently to respond to feedback. The Student President confirmed that improvements put in place are being collated and can be detailed in the June report. The Vice Principal Learning and Attainment confirmed that phase 2 of self-evaluation should identify actions taken as a result of SPARKLE feedback.

The Student President confirmed that the biggest challenges faced by our students continue to be finance and mental health concerns but that students are receiving as much support as possible from the college and partners to deal with these concerns. The Student President highlighted that students continue to have a direct line to speak with the Principal.

The Committee praised the work of the Student Association. The Committee commented that the high quality of Student Association Reports gave reassurance about the level of support being given to students. The Committee also noted their reassurance that inconsistencies in learning and teaching are taken seriously by faculty directors and that staff are not complacent. The Committee also thanked the Information Systems Team for their work on the new student survey tool that is yielding higher response rates.

(ii) College Response to SPARKLE

The Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources confirmed that faculty directors are working on the key themes picked up from SPARKLE. It is anticipated that GTCS registration should drive professionalism in learning and teaching delivery.

Assessment load is noted as an on-going area of concern for students with faculties doing as much as possible to work to address this.

The Committee were informed that work is being progressed through the Change-Sustain-Attain unit and the Trust Project to build resilience in students and to promote self-help approaches. The Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment highlighted the importance of the Course Tutor role and the benefits of this role for students.

In relation to financial challenges, the Principal highlighted that the college has received an additional £500K of funding for student support which will be disseminated in the remainder of the academic year.

The Principal drew the Committee's attention to the positive response rates received from part time learners in this survey.

The Committee noted that the college presents an opportunity for students to improve their mental health just by coming to college and the very good support they receive while here, which would not be available to them otherwise. It was noted that many students have never been outside their own district and attending college is one of the best things they can do.

In relation to mental health, the Principal highlighted the importance of all agencies working together to support students and asked the Scottish Funding Council to note the college's concerns about the removal of funding for counsellors next year.

4. Matters for Attention

4.1 Curriculum Plan Revisions 2023-24

The Committee discussed and noted this paper.

4.2 In Year Performance (2022-23)

(i) Credit Target Update 2022-23

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement discussed this paper and expressed confidence the college will meet, and exceed, the credit target for another year. The Scottish Funding Council commented positively on this.

The Principal raised a concern that potential measures being considered by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for those colleges struggling to deliver their credits could have unintended consequences for colleges like West Lothian, who are meeting their credit targets. She asked that SFC takes account of this.

(ii) Recruitment Update

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement reported a very positive start to recruitment for 2023-24, despite recruitment commencing five weeks later than in the previous year.

The Committee was happy to hear about this positive start and noted the paper.

(iii) Student Funds Update 2022-23

Jennifer McLaren confirmed the college had submitted a bid for additional funding and had received £500K which will be distributed to students in the remainder of the academic year.

The Committee was pleased to know that students would be further supported in difficult times and praised the Student Funding team in securing this funding and for their ongoing support of students.

4.3 Continuous Improvement and Student Support**(i) Quality Enhancement Report**

The Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources reported on progress being made to address quality issues. Internal Audits have seen a marked increase in compliance, reflecting the work done to update and train staff on quality and compliance in general.

The Committee heard that deep dives are ongoing in the curriculum areas of Beauty and Engineering.

The Committee were informed that the Education Scotland visit was very successful with no points for action given. It was noted that Education Scotland will present their findings at the June 2023 meeting.

The Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources reported on the good work done to support equality and widening access and informed the Committee that the Equalities Monitoring Report would be presented to the June 2023 meeting.

The Committee thanked the Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources for a very good report and noted that the college could engage with the West Lothian school which has already achieved LGBT+ Gold Status as we make progress on our own submission.

The Committee noted the Quality Enhancement Report.

(ii) Student Services Update

The Committee heard that much hard work is ongoing to continue to provide support for students. The Committee noted a spike in demand which occurred at the start of the academic year, including increased safeguarding referrals. The Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources confirmed that referrals are levelling out now but that the team continues to have high demand for their services.

The Principal highlighted to the Committee that funding for mental health counsellors ends in July 2023 and that it

may be that colleges will be expected to embed this in their core funding. The Principal stressed it is not reasonable for colleges to do this in a climate of forthcoming cuts and noted that Colleges Scotland is lobbying the Scottish Government for continued funding.

The Principal stressed the college must continue to have mental health and counselling support for students. The Committee noted the need for this service to continue to be supported and the challenge facing the college in the forthcoming budget exercise is how to be able to support this.

The Chair noted this point and reflected that the case should be presented to the full Board of Governors meeting on 28 February 2023.

5. Matters for Information

5.1 College Leavers Destinations 2020-21

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement discussed the paper and noted discrepancies between 2019-20 and 2020-21 results due to Covid deferrals. It was noted there is no difference in outcomes between genders. The Committee noted the paper.

6. Any Other Business (AOB)

The Chair reminded the Committee that 15 February is the Staff Wellbeing Day and the Committee was invited to join staff for lunch after the meeting.

7. Review of Committee and Supporting Papers

The Committee reflected that the input heard from Faculty Directors was positive, brought papers to life and enabled the Committee to better understand work being progressed. This in turn enabled a more informed progression through committee papers

The Committee noted the quality and value of reports presented and requested the same brief format be retained for future meetings.

The Chair reflected on his departure from the Board and his role as Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee. The Chair has thoroughly enjoyed being in the role and working with the college generally over the years of his tenure. He passed on his very best wishes for the future.

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The Chair of the Board of Governors acknowledged the contribution the Chair has made to the college and the Learning and Teaching Committee over his tenure of eight years and, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Chair for his passion for the students and the knowledge and experience he has brought from the Higher Education sector.

The Principal also thanked the Chair on behalf of the Executive Leadership Team and reflected that his ability to balance scrutiny with support has been valued.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday 14 June 2023 at 10.00am.

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

Signed
Chair, Learning and Teaching Committee

Date