

West Lothian College

15 February 2023

Learning and Teaching Committee

Meeting of 23 November 2022

Members Present: Iain McIntosh (Chair and non-executive member)
Alex Linkston (Non-executive member)
Tom Bates (Non-executive member)
Abel Aboh ((Non-executive member) – remote attendance)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal)
Neil Sinclair (Staff member)
Rehela Hussain (Co-opted non-executive member)

In Attendance: Karine Bourdarias (Student President)
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)
Hannah Wilson (Scottish Funding Council)
Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

Presentation: Faculty Directors

The Chair welcomed faculty directors Margaret Forisky, Diane Mitchell, Hazel Brady and Todd Lumsden who gave an informal presentation on a range of thematic areas of responsibility.

The Committee was interested to hear about the actions being taken to address quality issues including a campaign to support students through the winter and retain them on course, and events to engage with employers. The Committee heard about progress on delivering the 2022-23 curriculum plan and how the course portfolio for 2023-24 is being refreshed to include sustainability and new technology options.

The directors described how they are working with the Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources to move self-evaluation to a continuous process.

The Committee was impressed with the level of activity going on across the college, the new projects underway, and the level of external engagement and partnership working. The Student Association agreed that students are kept at the heart of decision making and that there is good progress on continuously improving the student experience.

It was agreed that all future meetings should have time allocated to hear an update from directors.

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1 Committee Administration

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were noted from Elaine Cook (Non-executive member) and Blair Stewart (Student President).

1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

1.3 Minutes of Meeting of 7 September 2022

The minutes of 7 September 2022 meeting were approved as accurate with a note to include Simon Earp as being in attendance.

1.4 Matters Arising

The Committee noted that all actions from the previous meeting have been completed. The action on quality will be covered through the quality update.

2 Student Association Update

2.1 Student Association Report

The Student Association presented the report, highlighting a very positive 38% return in the first week of the Sparkle survey. It was noted this is the first time that all students were surveyed. At the end of the survey, the Principal will engage in a question time event with students to respond to any questions.

The Committee was updated on a number of forthcoming Student Association projects including Fayre on the Square and the Christmas movie. Members were pleased to note the success of the clubs that have been established for students to help integrate them back into on-campus learning.

The Principal congratulated the Student Presidents on taking a different approach to engaging students in recreational and informal activities to support renewed engagement, post-pandemic. The Committee also praised the work of the Student Association.

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3. Matters for Approval**3.1 Outcome Agreement Self Evaluation 2021-22**

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement introduced the Self Evaluation report and welcomed feedback. The Committee agreed that this was a good document, reflecting an excellent review of the year 2021-22, and a very good year for the college.

3.2 Draft Outcome Agreement 2022-23

The Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment introduced the draft Outcome Agreement for 2022-23 and explained that the lateness in the year of this report was due to the later issue of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) guidelines and revised timescales. The draft was approved with the intention of enabling further feedback to be sought at the board meeting on 6 December 2022. The draft will be sent to SFC for their feedback in early spring. Outcome Agreements for 2022-23 cannot be published until a date specified for SFC.

The Committee was content to accept the draft outcome agreement of 2022-23.

3.3 Curriculum Plan 2023-24

The Committee was informed that a detailed reflection on changes will be presented to a future meeting. The Chair reflected that the plan reflects good work on changing the curriculum appropriately and that passing responsibility over to the college, rather than the Committee having to approve all courses first, has been a positive development.

The Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment highlighted the number of articulation routes into university and on-campus delivery of degree courses. It was noted that employers are looking for more part time provision and the Committee discussed lower level courses availability to support people into employment.

The Committee discussed the sustainability of opportunities when there is no Young Person's Guarantee funding in 2023-24. The Principal discussed the importance of using any available funding flexibly to support new courses to fill employability skills gaps.

The Committee was content to approve the curriculum plan for 2023-24.

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4 Matters for Attention**4.1 Student Performance Analysis (2021-22)****4.1 (i) Higher Education Full Time Student Success**

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement discussed the decline in HEFT results. It was noted the biggest contributing factor to the decline was in the 16-19 year old age bracket where students came directly to college from school. The Committee agreed that the pandemic has had an impact on younger people's learning skills which can be reflected in a lack of commitment, resilience, and engagement.

The Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment discussed actions taken to support this student group, highlighting that the college is hoping to introduce the course tutor role which is now in place for FEFT students will be extended to HEFT students.

At this point, withdrawal rates for this year show a reduction. Staff are using the course risk register and predictive analytics to track students and put early support in place. The Committee noted that the actions taken are showing signs of working although it is still early in the year to form conclusions. The Committee also noted that the mental health and wellbeing of students is being well supported.

The Committee felt these trends for younger people, who have been most affected by the pandemic, may have an impact for the next few years and suggested that we speak to relevant stakeholders about conducting research to see what action should be taken at a national level.

If we can get the same level of data at an earlier point next year action can be taken even earlier.

The Committee asked if there was a timeline by which analysis of PI data would be undertaken. The timeline will be shared with the Committee at the next meeting.

Action 1: Vice Principal Performance and Improvement to share the timeline with the Committee on 15 February 2023.

4.2 (ii) School Pupil Success

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The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement discussed the detailed analysis that the college is conducting with pupils to achieve success. Data is again being used effectively to predict success.

The Committee agreed the paper offered very good analysis on student progress and success. It was noted the college is working closely with West Lothian schools to explore trends.

The Committee discussed the paper and results per school, which were noted as good and improving. The Chair noted we should be aiming for continuous improvement.

4.2 In-year Performance (2022-23)

4.2 (i) Credit Target Update

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement introduced the paper which gave an update on the final outcome for 2021-22 which highlighted that the college had yet again exceeded our credit target.

For 2022-23, the stated deficit of 4,000 credits has already reduced to 2,900 credits (this does not include credits yet to be recorded on our system). The college expects to achieve above the credit target for 2022-23. The Principal highlighted that being on course to exceed our credit target when we have reduced FEFT courses to 16 credits and working to a higher target after securing additional credits is a significant achievement.

The Committee was reassured by this discussion and was content with the credit update report.

4.2 (ii) Early Withdrawals

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement reported on the current early withdrawal position and discussed engagement taking place with students and employers to identify reasons for early withdrawal. A survey has been developed for students who have withdrawn to gather feedback on reasons for withdrawal.

The Committee was content to accept the paper.

4.2 (iii) Student Funds Update 2022-23

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services reported on the current position. Demands from students are increasing and the figures reported in this paper will continue to change. It was noted SFC has introduced a cap on the maximum monies that can be paid out to any FEFT student.

The Committee was informed that the Student Funding team will make fortnightly payments to students from December 2022 to help students to budget in difficult financial times.

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services highlighted that discretionary funding faces the biggest demand from students facing hardship.

The Committee noted this report.

4.3 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2021-22

The Committee noted the results from the survey and discussed the positive position for the college which was above sector average. There were two areas of concern – the number of students responding to the survey and the response to the question on students feeling part of the college community.

On the first point, the Committee noted that response rates should improve as students engage more readily with the college's new digital survey tool.

The Committee is content that the second point is not a major issue and agreed the college should keep this under review.

The Committee noted the paper.

4 Continuous Improvement and Student Support

4.4 (i) Quality Enhancement Report

The Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources reported confidence in the progress being made in quality assurance and enhancement this year. Significant progress is being made with self-evaluation where a service design approach is being used to embed a quality culture across the college.

The Committee heard that Education Scotland will be conducting a one-day annual engagement visit in November 2022.

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The Committee was informed that the college is progressing the LGBT Gold Charter Award and Disability Confident Leader Award.

The Committee noted the report.

4.4 (ii) Student Support Services Update

The Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources reported that student safeguarding is a concern, with a rise in students reporting mental health issues and suicidal thoughts.

The Committee heard the new Learning Centre is working well and a plan is being developed to help students to adapt should we experience black outs due to the energy crisis or bad weather conditions over the winter. The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services reported the business continuity team is also looking at how we continue to support students in the event of these situations arising.

The Committee noted the report.

5. Matters for Information

There were no matters for information.

6. Any Other Business (AOB)

The Committee was reminded of the College Development Network Awards Ceremony on 25 November 2022 at which the college had been shortlisted in three categories.

The Committee was informed that £2m has been secured from the Scottish Government to decarbonise one of our faculty buildings to meet net zero ambitions.

7. Review of Committee and Supporting Papers

The Committee agreed papers are detailed, accurate and relevant with little duplication. Some members felt there was a lot of information but there is enough time between meetings to digest this.

The Committee praised the Outcome Agreement 2021-22 Self-Evaluation Report which is an excellent analysis of the college backed up by evidence of action taken.

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The Committee is happy to get an active insight into the work of the college through presentations from managers and discussed how to adjust the agenda to give more time to this during the meeting.

The Principal also suggested inviting Tom Thomson as a staff observer at the Committee.

It was agreed to start future meetings at 10.00 am and include a 45-minute time slot for updates from faculty directors.

Action 2: Board Secretary and Governance Advisor to adjust the meeting agenda to reflect this.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday 15 February 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