

West Lothian College

15 November 2023

Learning and Teaching Committee

Minute of Meeting of 6 September 2023

Present:

Tom Bates (Chair, Non-executive member)
Alex Linkston (Non-executive member)
Michael Greenhalgh (Non-executive member)
Elaine Cook (Non-executive member)
Gavin Hamilton (Non-executive member)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal)
Blair Stewart (Student Association President)
Laura Murray (Teaching Staff member)

In attendance:

Barbara Nelson (Education Scotland)
Jacqueline McLellan (Education Scotland)
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 (Information Systems Manager)
Todd Lumsden (Director Care, Health and Sport Faculty)
Margaret Forisky (Director Access, Employability and Schools Faculty)
Hazel Brady (Director Business, Creative and Enterprise Faculty)
Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

1 Committee Administration

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new academic year. Laura Murray was welcomed to her first meeting as Teaching Staff Member.

Apologies were noted from Tony Sharkey and Diane Mitchell, Director of the Workforce Development Faculty and interim Director of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment Faculty.

1.1.2 Student Counsellors Update

The committee received an update on student counselling provision from Lorna Jenkins, Student Support Manager and Counsellors Laurence McKernan and Liz Kerr.

Student counsellors gave an insight into how the team deals with counselling support referrals. The committee heard how referrals have become more complex as time has gone on and emphasised the importance of the service the college provides for students.

Both counsellors started two days before lockdown and initially provided an online service during the pandemic. The online service has continued although students now predominantly access face to face support.

Counselling support gives the Student Support team a specialist service to refer first line requests onto. The committee heard that many students present with deep rooted issues that often lead to suicidal thoughts. The team reported that 80% of students who accessed the service, fed back that counselling had helped them to cope and stay on course. The service, along with other college support such as financial and food support, provides a full wrap-around support service.

The committee asked what the capacity of the team is to deal effectively with referrals and what evaluation is being done of counselling support. The service has managed to keep waiting lists for students to two weeks which means students can access help more quickly than if referred externally.

The committee heard that counselling support is not a one-off provision and students may come back to counselling during their course. The team aims to do more analysis of statistics during this year.

Education Scotland recognised our practice as sector leading and emphasised the importance of using statistics to really understand the requirements of the service, who are we supporting and why. It was noted that the service aims to build confidence and resilience rather than dependence.

Action 1: Student Support Manager

The Chair requested an analysis from the team to be brought to a future meeting.

1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest noted.

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1.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of 14 June 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting of 14 June 2023 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

1.4 Matters Arising

Action completed. Faculty tours have been offered to board members on 27 and 28 September 2023.

2 Faculty Directors: Update Report

Workforce Development and Computing, Engineering and Built Environment Faculty

The committee heard the college has successfully secured two new contracts to deliver cyber resilience training, that three engineering lecturers had been trained to deliver CNC courses, and that HND Engineering students had participated in a successful trip to CERN in Switzerland. The ECOHOUSE launch will take place on 19 September.

Business, Creative and Enterprise Faculty

The faculty confirmed a positive finish to 2022-23 with limited impact from ASOS (Action Short of Strike). All students have been resulted.

The committee heard that key performance indicators are improved on the previous year and noted the successful improvement in the beauty area from 63.5% to 79.4%. The faculty is using quality action plans to continue to effect improvements.

Some faculty areas were refurbished over the summer with new salon and art areas. Funds have been very well invested and students will have access to improved accommodation and resources. The Faculty is supporting Net Zero through the green salon collective which collects hair to be used for environmental purposes rather than being binned.

Enrolments are strong in most areas and new lecturers have joined the team along with instructors in hairdressing and a skills coach in professional cookery.

Employer engagement is positive with beauty placements already in place for October. The Terrace Restaurant will open for lunch and evening services from block 2, and students will be returning to Ascot again this year.

Access, Employability and Schools Faculty

The Faculty noted no negative impact from ASOS.

The committee noted the 90% ESOL student pass rate and heard that provision has been extended to meet demand across West Lothian through partnership working with schools and other partners.

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Low recruitment for part time courses were attributed to the lack of ITA (Individual Training Allowance) funding. The faculty is working with the Business, Creative and Enterprise team to support Penny's Pantry, a project to give students and staff access to reduced-price food.

The Faculty is working with Community Learning and Development to support asylum seekers coming into West Lothian.

Care, Health and Sports Faculty

The faculty is working well with the Information Systems team to analyse enrolments. Overall enrolments are strong and meeting target.

Health and Social Care has been impacted by ASOS although the number of students not yet resulted is reducing.

The impact of the recently introduced Active Campus Co-ordinator role was discussed. The key measures of success will be the level of staff and student engagement in physical and mental wellbeing activities.

The committee asked what happens when courses are over target and discussed how we support individuals when this happens. The Principal discussed the challenge to the college to support the over demand we experience year on year.

The committee thanked the Faculty Directors for their positive updates.

Action 2: Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement

The committee requested an analysis of unmet demand to be submitted to the November 2023 meeting for discussion.

3 Student Association Report

The Student Association President gave an update on work with students to date. Inductions have been carried out with individual classes which has resulted in more interest in Ambassador roles.

The committee noted the Freshers Fayre is planned for Wednesday 13 September 2023 and one of the main goals for the Student Association this year is attainment of the LGBT Gold Charter Status.

The Student Association has maintained a referral system for students to access the Larder meals for £2.

The committee noted the fabulous job the Student Association did last year and noted the high level of performance is continuing into this year.

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4 Matters for Committee Attention**4.1 Student Success****(i) SQA Exam Results 2022-3**

With the exception of Maths National 5, SQA exam results were very positive, particularly for ESOL.

The committee queried the national average pass rates noted which are different to those received by schools. The Information Systems Manager will discuss this further with Elaine Cook to clarify school and college positions.

Action 3: Information Systems Manager

Meet with Elaine Cook to clarify resulting.

(ii) School Pupil Success 2022-23

The Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment highlighted improved results for Foundation Apprenticeships.

The committee noted this paper is good evidence of how well school/college partnership working is progressing.

The Principal requested that progress for exceptional entrant students should be included in a future paper.

Elaine Cook commented favourably on the improved collaborative working between schools and the college to inform papers.

Action 4: Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment

Include analysis of exceptional entrant outcomes in the next annual paper to the committee.

(iii) Implications of EIS-FELA Industrial Action

The Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment noted there is now an improved picture from the time this paper was written. However, there are still 21 students with results outstanding to enable them to graduate and progress.

The committee noted that college reputation could suffer among the business community as a result of ASOS. The Principal noted the Committee's concerns but confirmed that a very small number of students were affected compared with overall college results and across the sector generally. She paid tribute to all college staff who had worked to mitigate the impact of industrial action on student progress.

4.2 Continuous Improvement

(i) Quality Improvement Report

The committee heard that Quality Champions have now been recruited to support new staff understanding and implementation of quality assurance procedures.

Learning Technologists have now completed the Change, Sustain, Attain interactive module which is being launched this week.

The committee noted the report.

(ii) Student Support Services Update

In addition to the presentation from student counsellors, the committee heard the Power of Difference Staff Conference was very successful and is amplifying the message of inclusion the college has been promoting. The committee noted the work the college is doing to adapt systems to support gender identification.

The committee heard that Skills Development Scotland are now based on the college campus which is supporting improved partnership working.

(iii) GTCS Professional Update Scheme

The committee noted the college has a 100% uptake of staff eligible to register for GTCS Professional Update.

The committee noted the paper.

4.3 Regular Monitoring

(i) Curriculum Plan Revisions 2023-24:

The Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment discussed the most recent changes to the curriculum plan.

The Principal confirmed an extensive exercise is carried out each year to plan the curriculum. The exercise includes work with employer advisory groups who work with Faculty Directors and staff teams to identify courses that meet current demand.

The committee noted the paper.

(ii) School Leavers Destinations 2021-22

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement gave the committee an overview of the key headlines included in the paper.

The committee noted the college is still the first-choice destination for West Lothian school leavers, attracting 76% of market share.

The committee thanked the Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement for a clear and detailed paper.

(iii) Recruitment Update 2023-24

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement discussed the paper, noting that recruitment is positive overall but that the college is mindful of the potential impact that could come from the return to SQA pre-pandemic grade profiles.

The committee heard that under-recruiting courses are being targeted and student numbers are being carefully monitored.

The committee noted the report and the positive start to the academic year.

(iv) Credit Update 2022-23

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement confirmed the college is projecting approximately 600 credits over target for 2022-23. The FES audit is currently taking place and a final report will be submitted to the next committee meeting.

The committee noted the excellent college position with regard to meeting the continuing excess demand for places. This is a particularly strong position given the college has not employed the flexibilities allowed by the Scottish Funding Council and utilised by other colleges to meet their credit targets.

The committee positively noted this paper.

(v) Student Funds Update

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services updated the committee on the use of funding to support students through the summer period. The committee noted that 250 students had also benefited from the Anti-Poverty Fund made possible by funding from West Lothian Council.

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The committee noted the real impact of the funding for students experiencing hardship.

The Principal noted that parameters are being tightened on what students can claim and asked if the committee could be updated on this.

Action 4: Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services
Funding parameter update to be provided to the committee at the November meeting.

5 Matters for Information

(i) CDN Research

The committee noted the launch of the Change, Sustain, Attain module on 7 September 2023 and that it will be offered to 200 full time and 100 part time students in 2023-24.

The Principal noted the success of the project will be measured through an evaluation of participating student's progress through the year.

6 Any Other Business

The Principal informed the committee that the college has been shortlisted in nine categories in the forthcoming College Development Network College Awards to be held on 30 November 2023. The committee also noted the Estates Team has been shortlisted for the EAUC Green Gown Award in Liverpool for our work on Net Zero.

The committee were pleased to hear that the hard work of staff across the college has been recognised and wished the college success.

7 Review of Committee and Supporting Papers

The committee confirmed papers were comprehensive and clear. No requests for change were made.

8 Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee will take place on Wednesday 15 November 2023.

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Note: There were no matters discussed during the meeting, during which Members declared a 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: