

West Lothian College

6 March 2024

Learning and Teaching Committee

Minute of Meeting of 15 November 2023

Present:

Alex Linkston (Chair of the Board of Governors and Non-executive member)

Jackie Galbraith (Principal)

Blair Stewart (Student Association President)

Laura Murray (Teaching Staff member)

In attendance:

Tony Sharkey (Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors and Non-executive member)

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)

Tracy Dalling (Learning and Skills Manager, Business, Creative and Enterprise Faculty)

Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

1 Committee Administration

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The meeting was Chaired by Alex Linkston, Chair of the Board of Governors. Members were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were noted from Tom Bates, Chair of the Learning and Teaching committee and Gavin Hamilton, Vice-Chair of the Learning and Teaching committee. Michael Greenhalgh and Elaine Cook were not in attendance.

1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest noted.

1.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of 6 September 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting of 6 September 2023 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

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1.4 Matters Arising

The committee noted the report on Student Counselling Support will be presented to a future meeting.

All other actions were noted as completed or in-progress. The committee was content with progress on matters arising.

2 Faculty Directors Update

Workforce Development and Computing, Engineering and Built Environment Faculty Update

The committee was updated on recent curriculum plan changes following on from the curriculum review consultation event held on 25 October 2023.

The committee noted the faculty has made the decision to move courses to the national qualification framework. This change to curriculum planning was made in response to feedback from employers, to reduce duplication in course delivery and to give students more flexible study options.

The faculty has introduced a new SVQ in Insulation Building Treatments with the first cohort currently in progress.

HN Civil Engineering and HN Construction Management are being removed from the curriculum plan. This is based on employer and university partner feedback and low demand for these courses.

The faculty is working closely with Access, Employability and Schools and school partners to develop additional course offerings for school pupils. This will include a Foundation Apprenticeship in Engineering and further Cybersecurity delivery.

Business, Creative and Enterprise Faculty Update

The committee was informed the faculty is working towards introducing a wider range of employer options within courses. Course design is being adjusted to include employability opportunities wherever possible and employer partnerships are being extended wherever possible.

The student voice has been an important part of curriculum planning and the committee noted that students are reporting positively on the skills and knowledge they have developed through employer options.

The faculty is exploring the inclusion of spa work in the beauty portfolio for 2024-25 and is exploring a gap in the curriculum offering for accounting courses. An employer road show is being planned for 13 December 2023.

It was noted that part time course recruitment is challenging in the current financial climate and the team is working on ways to recover this area of work.

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Net Zero aims continue to be progressed with a potential refurbishment of professional cookery under consideration. Best practice in the industry is being researched as is the feasibility of a move from gas to induction cooking.

Work is progressing with school partners to include an NPA in Employability and Enterprise and the faculty is working with Edinburgh Napier University to further develop degree options for on-campus delivery.

The committee heard that Mark Comyns, who graduated with his HND in Business, received Personal Asset Funding which has allowed him to continue to study. He is now studying for his Degree in Business Management through our on-campus delivery option.

The committee agreed the Board of Governors would benefit from a presentation by Mark on his learning journey.

Action 1: Vice-Principal, Learning and Attainment

Arrange a presentation to the Board of Governors meeting of 5 December 2023.

Access, Employability and Schools Faculty Update

The Faculty Director confirmed the school team has worked closely with cross-college colleagues to ensure we have a cohesive offering for schools.

The committee heard about the Shaping Your Future project where pupils not attending school will be supported with their development. The committee also heard the faculty is working closely with West Lothian Community Learning and Development to work in partnership on courses that are not well attended.

ESOL work continues positively and will continue to expand.

Compass Point is being well utilised across the faculties as well as by Skills Development Scotland. The new Peer Navigator appointment is working well with the Larder.

The committee noted the premier of The Scheme film being shown in November and available to students across the college.

Care, Health and Sports Faculty Update

The Faculty Director confirmed the Active Campus Coordinator will give an update on new interventions for staff and students at a future meeting.

The committee heard that curriculum plan changes in this faculty are mainly around reducing the number of cohorts per course rather than removing or introducing new courses.

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The committee noted that early withdrawal rates are positive at this stage and showing a downward trend.

The faculty is working with the school team to offer courses that schools don't currently have, including Refereeing and Women into Sport. The faculty is engaging with Scottish Rugby Union to further develop the sports offering.

The committee heard that child care class sizes are over recruited and the faculty is exploring the best approach to ensuring the best experience for students.

The Childhood Practice partnership project saw German colleagues visiting the college for 4 days to share our practice. Feedback from German colleagues suggested our HN students are more advanced presentation wise but that German students are more advanced in practical skills.

It is hoped that the two bespoke cohorts for NQ Social Science will result in improved internal progression to HNC next year and there will be less reliance on external applicants to take up places.

The committee commented positively on the faculty updates and noted how beneficial these inputs are to aiding board member understanding around the aims of the college.

Faculty directors were thanked for their interesting and informative inputs.

3 Student Association Report

The Student Association President confirmed that executive officers have been elected and a positive number of applications have been received for ambassador roles.

The committee heard that SPARKLE survey feedback has been positive to date and were given a light-hearted insight into some of the survey comments by the Student President.

Any negative feedback has been around student cards and laptop availability which the committee noted has been resolved.

The Principal asked if the Student Association has started planning for succession to the student association president vacancies in 2024-25. The committee was informed that executive officers and ambassadors are being encouraged to think about running for election and students generally are being encouraged to engage in thinking about the role.

The Chair asked about the relationship with the Larder and how students are supported by this partnership. The Student Association President informed the committee that students can access six weeks of free food and meals at a reduced cost thereafter. The referral process is up and running and enables

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fast access to meals for home delivery. The committee asked if the number of referrals could be made available for information.

Action 2: Student Association President

To bring updated number of referrals to the meeting of 6 March 2024.

The committee heard that Pennies Pantry will be established in the college. Food will arrive next week and will provide low cost dry foods for staff and students.

The Principal emphasised the importance of the partnership between the student association and college managers to enable fast resolution of problems for students and noted how successful this relationship has been over the last five years.

4 Matters for Approval

4.1 Outcome Agreement Self-Evaluation 2022-23

The Vice-Principal, Performance and Improvement highlighted the good news story detailed in the paper and invited the committee to approve the report.

The committee noted this is a great success story for the college and reflects the excellent work that has been done to achieve such positive results.

The Principal agreed it was a positive year but also a very challenging year and acknowledged the work that curriculum staff have done to deliver flexible and supportive learning and teaching experiences.

The committee approved the report.

4.2 Draft Outcome Agreement 2023-24

The Vice-Principal, Learning and Attainment highlighted the points in the Outcome Agreement and invited comment from the committee.

The committee enquired about the role of quality champions which has been introduced this year. The committee heard this role focuses on supporting new staff compliance with quality processes and on maintaining quality standards across all staff. The aim is the role will build on the successful impact of learning champions and will support continuous improvement.

The committee was content to approve the Outcome Agreement for 2023-24.

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4.3 Curriculum Plan Update 2023-24

The committee was invited to approve the curriculum plan update. The committee noted the faculty updates supported understanding of decisions taken on changes to the curriculum plan.

The Principal noted the plan reflects employer feedback which can inform decisions from government funders and highlighted the importance of maintaining funding to continuously upgrade resources. The area of professional cookery was highlighted as requiring funding to upgrade kitchens.

The committee was content to approve the Curriculum Plan 2023-24.

5 Matters for Attention

5.1 In-Year Performance (2023-24)

(i) Credit Target Update

The Vice-Principal, Performance and Improvement highlighted the clean audit and credits delivered to date. The committee noted the predicted over delivery of approximately 1,000 credits in this year.

The committee was content to note the credit target update.

(ii) Analysis of unmet demand for courses

The committee noted the college has always been under-funded and asked the Scottish Funding Council to consider if students in West Lothian receive the same equality of opportunity as students in other areas of the country given the college is unable to support the demand for places.

The Committee discussed the efficiency of our delivery at 16 credits per student as opposed to 18 or 21 credits delivered in other colleges.

The committee noted that this paper clearly reflects the level of unmet demand and asked the Scottish Funding Council to reflect on this.

The Principal noted that it may be useful for colleges to share this level of information and that the Scottish Funding Council or Colleges Scotland should consider carrying out research on this issue.

The committee noted this paper.

(iii) Early Withdrawals

The Vice-Principal, Performance and Improvement highlighted some positive improvements in early withdrawal rates.

The committee discussed the importance of understanding underlying reasons for withdrawal.

The committee noted the paper.

(iv) Research on Student Withdrawals 2020-23

The Vice-Principal, Learning and Attainment spoke to the Research Paper and requested the committee's approval for the college to share the paper with Borders and Dumfries and Galloway Colleges.

The committee commented positively on the research report and approved data sharing with other colleges on this subject.

There was a further discussion on which papers from the committee would be useful if shared with staff.

Action 3: Vice-Principal, Learning and Attainment

To identify and agree papers from the Learning and Teaching Committee which would be beneficial if shared with staff.

(v) Student Funds Update

The Vice-Principal, Finance and Corporate Services highlighted the Scottish Funding Council cap of £5,000 per full time further education student.

The committee noted the reduction in HE discretionary funding and £3,000 cap for higher education students which may push students to increase their loans rather than be supported by the college. It was noted this has been raised with the Minister for Further and Higher Education in a letter from Colleges Scotland.

The committee noted the Student Funds update presented by the Vice-Principal, Finance and Corporate Services.

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

The committee noted the Quality team name has been changed to Student Experience and Improvement to reflect the move of

Student Support to the Access, Employability and Schools faculty.

The committee noted the introduction of Quality Champions and the Education Scotland reviews that will take place in 2024.

The committee heard there will be a Moodle upgrade to reflect work needed to support staff to use and work with Artificial Intelligence to support workload pressures. The Principal requested more information on how Artificial Intelligence will be used to impact positively on staff workload.

Action 4: Head of Student Experience and Improvement

To report on how Artificial Intelligence will be used to impact positively on staff workload.

The committee noted the Principal is leading on Equalities and has set up a new Empowering Difference Steering Group to progress this area of work. It was noted we are confident we will achieve LGBT Gold Charter in partnership with the student association.

The committee noted the Quality Enhancement Report.

(ii) Student Support Services Update

The Faculty Director for Access, Employability and Schools reported on ongoing work in student support.

Attendance monitoring is now shared between student support and faculty administrators. There has been a significant decrease in required attendance monitoring due to the positive impact of course tutors picking up on attendance issues at an early stage.

The committee noted the Student Support Services update.

6 Review of Committee and Supporting Papers

The committee noted the high quality of committee papers and thanked staff for their inputs.

The committee reiterated recognition of the positive impacts resulting from the hard work done through the year.

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9 Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Learning and Teaching committee will take place on Wednesday 6 March 2024.

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: