

Learning and Teaching Committee

Minute of Meeting of 5 June 2024

Present:

Tom Bates (Chair of Learning and Teaching Committee and Non-executive member)

Gavin Hamilton (Vice-Chair of Learning and Teaching Committee and Non-executive member)

Elaine Cook (Non-executive member)

Michael Greenhalgh (Non-executive member)

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

Jackie Galbraith (Principal)

Blair Stewart (Student Association President)

In attendance:

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

Hannah Wilson (Scottish Funding Council)

Simon Earp (Vice Principal, People, Performance and Improvement)

Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance and Estates)

Hazel Brady (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)

Beth Brownlee (Head of Student Experience and Improvement)

Tom Thomson (Information Systems Manager)

Todd Lumsden (Director Care, Health and Sport Faculty)

Margaret Forisky (Director Access, Employability and Schools Faculty)

Steven Morrison (Director Computing, Engineering and Built Environment Faculty)

Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

1 Committee Administration

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The committee welcomed Hazel Brady in her new role as Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment and Steven Morrison who will be taking over as Director of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment Faculty. The Chair also noted this was the last meeting for Student President, Blair Stewart. The committee thanked Blair for his contributions over the last two years and wished him well as he commences his University studies.

Apologies were noted from Jackie McClellan, Education Scotland

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 March 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting of 6 March 2024 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

1.4 Matters Arising

The committee noted that action 1 was complete and action 2 would be taken as an agenda item.

2 Faculty Directors Update

The committee heard updates from each of the faculty directors.

Care, Health and Sports

The faculty had recently participated in an Education Scotland thematic review of Care. The formal report has still to be received but feedback at the time was very positive with a number of cases of highly effective practice recognised.

Changes to curriculum planning were discussed including the introduction of Pathway Courses to support improved internal student progression.

Sports students were awarded an additional Level 4 qualification for their work with community inclusion groups.

The committee was interested to know more about positive destinations for sports students. The Faculty Director confirmed that tracking can be provided and that most HNC students progress to HND level or go on to University.

Active campus work has been successful this year and there are plans to work with students during induction and Freshers week to introduce team working skills at an early stage.

Business, Creative and Enterprise

The committee's attention was drawn to student videos developed through the collaboration with the BBC. These can be accessed through BBC: The Social website.

Professional Cookery hosted an event for home economics teachers across 20 different schools to demonstrate professional cookery at level 4 through to HNC. Lecturers showcased some key skills enabling teachers to learn new techniques. It has been a busy and successful period with competitions, with one level 4 student winning an opportunity to compete in the Young Risotto Chef competition at the Tottenham Hotspur stadium and one level 6 student winning a competition held in Italy.

Hair, barbering and beauty students won the best performing college (Scotland) at the Association for Hairdressers and Therapists' recent competition.

The NC Art Exhibition will be held at Howden Park Centre over the summer and HNC Art Exhibition will take place in the college in June.

The committee noted the work that has been done to secure work placements for Accounting and Business students and the positive impact of these.

The committee noted how motivational all of these these events are for students and congratulated lecturers for the hard work that has gone into organising projects, placements and competitions.

Computing, Engineering and Built Environment

The Faculty Director confirmed that additional Maths support is being put in place to continue to support students progressing to next year.

A key change in the construction area is the move away from the traditional modular approach to learning to project based learning. It was noted that students are really engaging with this approach.

Students worked with Stoneyburn and Bents community group to build a memorial to mine workers. This project involved three different teams and enabled students to develop a variety of skills while leaving a lasting legacy for the village.

The faculty successfully hosted the regional heat for SECTT electrical apprenticeships. Our students got to the final and the college was able to showcase facilities and network with employers. SECTT has asked the college to host their national event going forward.

Mitsubishi has opened a new training centre for heat pump production and is supporting the college with free training in green skills and VR software.

The Construction School Project will be continuing and will upskill school teachers. This translates into students with higher level skills who are better able to integrate into college study.

Access, Employability and Schools Faculty

The Director of Faculty discussed the anxieties students in this faculty face at this time of year related to progression. The faculty has had positive feedback about the student learning experience from students' carers and families and the high quality of support provided for students. The Director of Faculty emphasised the importance of team working that takes place with staff on a cross college basis.

Pennies Pantry has been established and the college is working with Local Authority Financial Inclusion to provide low priced food choices. £100 has been made for student funds and £100 is going back to support Pennies Pantry. The committee noted this is early days for this initiative and it is anticipated the project will gather momentum from August.

The Faculty Director noted that 60 ESOL students took the level 5 exam and discussed the challenges around supporting the exam experience for students from other cultures. This has been difficult to manage but it is hoped the results will be good.

Work continues with the local authority to put collaborations in place for students that enable positive progression in 2024-25.

The committee noted that this area is now much more focused on getting students a qualification and work placements to enable young people to become employable.

The committee noted the high levels of innovation evidenced across all faculties.

Student Association Report

The committee noted that Student Elections have taken place and CJ Airlie and Joanna Trybura have been elected as incoming Student Presidents for 2024-26.

The Student President noted that 640 students have actively engaged with the Student Association this year which represents a 20% increase on the previous year.

Shortlisting is taking place for the SPARKLE awards which will be announced on 19 June.

The committee noted the Student Association won an award for tackling student poverty and was shortlisted for staff member of the year at the National Union of Students Awards in Stirling.

The committee enquired about the more casual approach that is being taken with regard to student clubs. The Student President explained this means facilities have been made available on a flexible basis rather than through dedicated clubs on formally scheduled dates to improve opportunities for students to participate.

The Committee noted the Student Association strategic plan is very positive.

The Chair noted the huge contribution that Blair Stewart has made to the committee and thanked him for his hard work. The committee congratulated Blair on securing his university place.

3 Matters for Approval

3.1 Curriculum Plan Revisions 2024-25

The committee discussed the removal of courses in areas and asked if the college benchmarks curriculum planning changes with other colleges.

It was noted that benchmarking with other colleges on curriculum offer does not take place, however the college collaborate with industry and takes account of industry trends. The committee noted that courses have been removed due to low demand and were assured that students are referred to other colleges where there is no course option available to them.

The committee noted that improved employer links will further influence career paths and the future course offering. The college is also working closely with universities to continuously improve progression from HN courses and continues to work to provide flexible, local options for students.

The committee approved the curriculum plan changes for 2024-25.

3.2 Approval of Committee Remit: 2024-25

The committee approved the revised remit with an amendment to clarify the Principal's membership.

Action 1: Board Secretary and Governance Advisor

To amend the remit to record the Principal as a voting member of the committee.

4 Matters for Attention

4.1 Student Experience and Improvement and Student Support

(i) Student Experience and Improvement Report

The committee noted it has been a very positive year in terms of quality improvement. New quality champions have been successfully introduced which has enhanced the work of the quality team. The committee noted that all external verification events which have taken place to date have been successful.

Education Scotland carried out a Care Thematic Review as well as the college's Annual Engagement visit. The Annual Engagement visit was very positive with many areas of good practice noted.

Equalities work is progressing well. Multi Factor Authentication for students has been successfully introduced and has been supported by the Learning Support and Information Systems teams.

The committee discussed student attendance and what the college is doing to support the challenges around attendance.

The committee heard that the process for addressing attendance has changed to proactively address issues as early as possible. This, along with the many other initiatives that have been put in place to support students to attend and study well, has achieved good results.

The committee recognised the positive work being done to develop the quality culture and noted the report.

(ii) Student Support Services Update

The Director of Faculty discussed the variety of requests for student support detailed in the paper.

The committee noted that the number of students securing a university place has been positive and the team continues to work closely with university colleagues to promote progression.

The committee noted the counselling service has been in high demand all year and that safeguarding referrals have doubled since last year. It was noted the type of issues students are presenting with are very challenging for the team.

The committee noted the paper.

(iii) Student Counselling Service: Impact of Activity

The Faculty Director presented the paper, providing the committee with some insight into the impact of the student counselling service on retention and withdrawal rates.

The committee noted initial data findings indicate that counselling support has reduced the number of student withdrawals in those accessing the service. It was also noted that students accessing counselling support are more likely to be female, bisexual, transgender, care experienced, have caring responsibilities or have a disability. This emphasises a continuing need for a dedicated counselling service.

The committee noted the positive work done through the college's trauma informed approach and by the Student Support Team.

The committee noted the paper.

(iv) Student Behaviour – Respect Campaign

The Faculty Director introduced the report. The Respect Campaign was introduced to address increasingly challenging student behaviours and staff concerns about personal and student safety.

The committee discussed attendance problems in schools which are related to actions taken during the pandemic.

The committee noted that three meetings have taken place and an action plan is in place with regular monitoring. Student training is planned for August 2024 entrants to embed positive behaviours.

The committee noted the paper.

4.2 In-Year Performance 2023-24

(i) Credit Target Update 2023-24

The Committee noted the credit target has been achieved without using any permitted flexibilities.

The Committee noted that a paper will be brought to the next committee meeting showing a comparison of credit target achievement across the sector.

The committee noted that, of the 15 regional colleges, just three (including West Lothian College) achieved the credit target.

Action 2: Vice Principal, People, Performance and Improvement

To bring a comparison paper to the 4 September committee meeting.

(ii) Recruitment Update 2024-25

Recruitment is progressing well with offers exceeding target. The committee noted there is always uncertainty as to actual numbers in September but we are meeting targets to date.

The Committee discussed the degree of unmet demand. The Principal noted the points made and commented that the college has a big input at level 4 for young people and is trying to address this problem within the funding constraints. The Principal noted the Scottish Funding Council has given the college additional credits over the last 2 years and that a request will be made again for 2025-26.

The committee noted that we have enhanced links with Skills Development Scotland now that they are located on the college campus.

The committee noted the paper.

(iii) Student Funds Update 2023-24

The Vice Principal, Finance and Estates noted that all full time FE students will receive an additional £300 payment and full time HN students a £100 payment and all returning students will receive £500 to support them over the summer period.

The committee noted the process of applying for funding has been improved to enable applications through mobile technology.

Positive feedback on the college's use of funding from the Scottish Funding Council was noted.

The committee noted the good work done to secure additional funding for the next academic year and noted the paper.

(iv) College Sector Performance Indicators 2022-23 – Reflections and Projections 2023-24

The paper circulated showed overall student success and comparisons against other regional colleges.

The committee noted the college position in the sector is very positive overall with very strong performance in most areas. This gives assurance that the initiatives put in place to support students are having a positive result.

The committee discussed results in various categories and noted improvements in student withdrawals in all categories. The Principal noted that HE full time success still requires work and that a course tutor role for HNC courses has been introduced in 2023-24.

The committee noted the massive team effort that takes place during the year to get students across the finish line. Predicted outcomes for 2024-25 are not available at this point but the outlook is very positive based on current data.

4.3 Industrial Action

The committee heard that a small proportion of lecturers are taking part in industrial action. Negotiations are continuing on a 4-year offer.

The committee heard that UNISON have accepted the pay offer and payments will be processed for support staff as soon as possible.

The committee noted the update.

5 Any Other Business

The committee thanked Blair Stewart for his contribution over the last two years and wished him well for the future.

The committee also thanked Alex Linkston, Chair of the Board, for his invaluable contributions to the committee over the years and his support to committee members. The Principal noted the Chair has proactively and positively challenged the college and this, along with his support, has helped the college to progress.

6 Review of Committee and Supporting Papers

The committee was content with the quality and sufficiency of the papers presented.

7 Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Learning and Teaching committee will take place on Wednesday 4 September 2024.

8 Committee Self-Assessment Review 2023-24

8.1 Learning and Teaching Committee Self-Assessment Review for 2023-24

The committee participated in a review of committee performance over the last year. Areas of strength and development points were discussed and recorded. Development points will be taken forward through the Board Development Plan 2023-2025.

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: