

Curriculum and Student Matters Committee

Tue 06 June 2023, 17:00 - 19:00

GW B, Parsons Walk Campus, Wigan



Attendees

Present: Andrea Ferguson (Independent Governor - Chair), Jenny Bullen (Independent Governor), Ann Harrison (Independent Governor), Steven Tomlinson (Independent Governor), Anna Dawe (Principal), Rebecca Turley (Staff Governor), Jennifer Connor (Independent Governor)

In attendance: Joanne Platt (Director of Governance), Anne-Marie Francis (Vice Principal - Curriculum), Alison Rushton (Vice Principal - Employment and Skills), Louise Brown (Vice Principal - Corporate Services), Dave Harrison (Vice Principal - Data and Funding), Ursula Hoyles (Head of HE) for Items 4 and 5, Kathryn O'Neill for Item 5, Susan Snape (Independent Governor) as an observer.

The Director of Governance confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

The Chair welcomed Susan Snape to the meeting.

Meeting minutes

1. Apologies for absence

CSM-23-06-01

Apologies for absence had been received from Harinder Dhaliwal and Millie Gallagher.

2. Declarations of Interest

CSM-23-06-02

There were no declarations of interests.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

CSM-23-06-03

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the meeting held on 28 February 2023 and agreed they were an accurate record of the meeting. There are no outstanding actions.

The Committee discussed the outcome of the survey of Governors in relation to attendance at Link Visits and agreed that as attendance was better in the summer term, no changes would be made.

Resolved: The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2023 for signature by the Chair.



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The Committee considered a report providing an update on delivery of the OfS Access and Participation Plan, noting that the new dashboard became available in late March, and includes the latest student data up to the 2021-22 academic year.

The Committee noted that POLAR4 is no longer used as a measure, and has been replaced by TUNDRA (Tracking Underrepresentation by Area). This is an area based measure that uses tracking of state-funded mainstream school pupils in England to calculate young participation. TUNDRA classifies local areas across England into five equal groups (quintiles), based on the proportion of 16 year old state-funded mainstream school pupils who participate in higher education at ages 18 or 19 years. Quintile one shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation and it was noted that apprenticeships are no longer grouped with full time students and are measured separately.

ABCS (Associations between Characteristics of Students) is now a set of measures that seeks a better understanding of how outcomes vary for groups of students with different sets of characteristics (for example, ethnicity, sex and background). Eligibility of free school meals is also used as a measure and completion measures are now also reported on the APP dashboard.

Some key performance highlights were considered, including the target to maintain or further increase the positive access profile from POLAR4 Q1-Q2, which is on target and significantly higher than the HE sector as a whole. The number of full time HE students with a reported disability are more than 10% higher than the sector generally and it was noted that 96% of students are of white ethnicity.

In terms of age, it was noted that 72% of full time students are under 21, 77.4% of part time students are over 21 and 68.2% of Apprentices are over 21.

The College is on target to reduce the gap by 75% by 2024 - 25 and to eliminate the gap in continuation for full time disabled entrants by 2030 - 31 and it was noted that those with a disability from 2021 - 22 have a higher continuation rate than those without a disability.

Other targets to reduce the gap are on or exceeding target, with the exception of part time students, however it was noted that cohort sizes are small and in comparison to the HE sector, the College is performing better.

Attainment and progression are on target, although it was noted that response rates to Graduate Outcomes surveys, whilst improving, still remain low, making analysis difficult.

It was noted that the OfS has now confirmed its approach to monitoring of APP 2021-22 plans and if a provider is deemed to be making sufficient progress, they will not send a monitoring outcome letter. To date the College has not been contacted.

The Committee noted that the College's own internal dashboard needs to be updated to reflect the new measures and that data available to utilise impact from GMHigher activities is limited, and the College is therefore reliant on its own data.

Increasing the proportion of care leavers who progress to HE is a priority for the College.

Governors discussed an approach to producing a more user friendly report for use on the College website, using infographics, and agreed that this would make the information more accessible.

The Committee noted that the 2024-25 APP will include the new measures and that this will be populated using the College's own internal data, where ABCS data isn't available.

The Committee noted the update.



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5. Curriculum presentation: Institute of Technology

CSM-23-06-05

The Committee considered a presentation on the Institute of Technology (IoT), noting that the social media launch in January and the main launch event in May had been successful and had brought the vision to life.

A range of new and refurbished technical equipment is being installed over the summer and the Committee saw a plan of the IoT classroom layout in the College.

Governors asked if there are any plans on bringing all IoT students together on one site and it was confirmed that longer term this is anticipated and is likely to be located at Salford University.

Recruitment onto programmes is on track to meet target for the start of the 2023-24 academic year.

The Committee thanked the Head of HE and the Head of Marketing and Careers for their work in bringing this exciting project to life.

The Committee noted the content of the presentation.

6. Careers Strategy 2023-26

CSM-23-06-06

The Committee was given an update on the development of the Careers Strategy for 2023-26, noting that the updated strategy will be brought to the next meeting of the Committee for approval.

It was noted that the College continues to maintain 100% for all eight Gatsby Benchmarks and that an Enterprise Advisor and Enterprise Co-ordinator have been appointed, and bring lots of opportunities to students.

The College has termly best practice meetings with the Bridge GM Careers Hub, creating an FE College Community of Practice, and a Careers Conference has been held. The Education Skills Partnership is supporting work placements, curriculum development, a careers programme and resource development and there is continued commitment to establishing stronger and more strategic relationships with new and existing employers for placement opportunities.

In terms of the Apprenticeships Workforce Development Fund, an apprenticeship careers strategy is under development, there is a FAB Futures Team and Apprenticeship team collaboration, development of career pathways within the workplace and to higher education, and training to raise aspirations and careers advice for apprentices.

A revised approach to progression and destination includes Progression Panels, parental communications, employer recruitment events and targeted work with students seeking an apprenticeship or employment.

In terms of the Careers Programme, there has been a 'Be Career / University Ready' week, a wide variety of course specific university visits, 'Meet the Employer' events to showcase apprenticeship opportunities with a wide range of Employer partners, a Festival of Engineering and Construction, which provided opportunities for prospective and current learners to engage with industry leaders, find out more about innovative developments, skills of the future and to take part in industry led competitions at the event.

There was a University Fair in March, timed to start the HE application process in line with progression discussions and it was noted that 24 Universities attended and student and parents were invited to meet with a range of Universities and HE providers including the College's own University Centre offer. 18 sessions were also delivered throughout the day and evening on a wide range of topics from researching your options, student accommodation, student life and Degree and Higher Apprenticeships.

There has also been an Exploring Careers Conference for Foundation Learners, engagement with the GMACS offer during National Apprenticeship Week and National Careers Week as well as a targeted week in March supporting British Science Week.

Engineering students visited the Apprenticeship and University Fair at Old Trafford, parental engagements, included Student Finance England (SfE), delivered by an SfE expert and lead for the north west of England and 'Options beyond Level 3', showcased the key choices available to students completing the Level 3 qualification, supported by a keynote speaker. In addition, a University of Manchester Scholars Event for Refugees / Asylum Seekers has taken place.

In terms of work placements, T-Level placements are underway and the Committee noted that all 2nd year students are in placements and completing the required hours.

In relation to CDF Industry Placements, 107 students are currently out on substantial work placements with 46% of students meeting the 315 hour target. Qualification requirement placements are on track. Currently there are 93%



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placements for FE Qualification requirement placements in progress or completed. Study Programme placements and work related learning are also on track for achievement.

In terms of destinations, it was noted that 65% of students are doing something related to what they studied at the College, 62% of students now in employment are doing something related to their course, 63% of students in an apprenticeship are doing something related to their course and 73% of students in education are doing something related to their course, and feedback on careers support from students was positive.

In terms of next steps, Right Start careers support will target focused support for students within the first weeks of term to support right choices and lower early drop out. The launch of the Greater Manchester Institute of Technology will continue to develop the higher technical offer and bespoke careers support, development of a Wigan Borough HE Fair in partnership with Wigan Council, Winstanley College, St John Rigby College, Deanery Sixth Form and St Marys Sixth Form is underway, and implementation of the apprenticeship careers strategy and programme following the Apprenticeship Workforce Development Fund project will begin shortly.

The Committee discussed the challenges of finding work placements of 315 hours in construction, engineering and digital, noting that many SMEs in the Borough lack digital space for long-term placements.

Governors thanked the Head of Marketing and Careers for a very comprehensive presentation which shows a proactive approach to tackling some challenging issues.

The Committee noted the update.

7. Curriculum Reports and KPI Dashboards

7.1. Study Programmes and Dashboard

CSM-23-06-07

The Committee reviewed the 16-18 Study Programmes KPI dashboard, noting that whilst attendance is below target, action is ongoing to motivate learners to attend. Key to this is that learners enjoy their lessons in college and want to be here. Increased contact with home and parents along with focused study support as part of an achievement drive, is underway.

Retaining students and swift and effective intervention to ensure learners achieve and progress is the key focus at this time of year, and it was noted that retention is currently 91% (higher than the 90% target). Tracking and monitoring of all student activity related to outcomes is showing positive predictions for pass rates, there has been good attendance at both GCSE exams and completion of mandatory work experience to date.

The Committee discussed the increase of young people with mental health issues post pandemic, including those who need specialist support from other services and others who need support with coping strategies to develop resilience. It was noted that the College's Head of Studies team would be a good area for a future Link Visit, to enable Governors to see the scale of activities being undertaken on a daily basis.

The Committee noted that there are a lot of enrichment activities provided to students to build resilience and that the College works with key partners to tackle NEET rates in the Borough, which are amongst the lowest in Greater Manchester.

The Committee noted the report.

7.2. Adult Provision and Dashboard

CSM-23-06-08

The Committee reviewed the Adults KPI dashboard, noting that the number of adult enrolments has risen by more than 40%, largely due to a significant growth in ESOL and non-regulated programmes, although it was noted that many adults are doing more than one programme, so numbers do not reflect unique learner numbers. Attendance is also above target. Partnership working with Wigan Borough Council and Job Centre Plus has resulted in the development of new targeted adult programmes.

There are pockets of poor attendance on Level 2 and 3 Study programmes and discrete adult provision and retention on study programmes and Level 2 adult discrete programmes is below target.

The Committee noted the report.



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7.3. Apprenticeship Provision and Dashboard

CSM-23-06-09

The Committee reviewed the Adults KPI dashboard, noting that attendance remains excellent and in line with KPI targets and that all ESFA accountability measures have been met to date.

It was noted that a successful Apprenticeship workforce development bid will fund a project that aims to improve Careers advice and guidance for apprentices.

It was also noted that achievement of Level 3 16-18 apprentices has been delayed in some construction trade areas.

Governors asked if growth in apprenticeships means growth in the number of employers and it was confirmed that the College is generally bucking the trend in apprenticeships, although not all placements are Wigan based employers, particularly at Level 4 and above. However, health and social care lower level apprenticeships are a challenge and are likely being impacted by the the national media attention on low wages and industrial action being taken by nursing staff and care workers.

The Committee noted the report.

7.4. HE Provision and Dashboard

CSM-23-06-10

The Committee reviewed the HE KPI dashboard, noting that the dashboard has been adapted to reflect the OfS measures and new indicators. The new dashboard is a key factor in the revised Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) judgements and the College used the data supplied to inform its submission and the Committee noted that TEF gradings are expected in summer 2023.

Overall, HE attendance is currently below target, with some areas including Electrical Engineering, Finance & Professional and Early Years above target. Retention is good, with 100% retention in Applied Sciences and Early Years, and above target in Teacher Education and Creative curriculum areas. Retention is lowest in HND International Travel and Tourism and FdA Health and Social Care. However, the Committee noted that due to small group sizes, one student leaving the programme has a significant impact on retention rates.

Close monitoring of applications for HE is taking place to ensure the College is progressing internal students for whom its University Centre is the right choice, as well as attracting external applicants

It was also noted that recruitment of HE students is lower this year and applications for next year remain concerning, although this appears to be common across the sector.

In response to a question from a Governor, it was confirmed that there is no evidence that recruitment and retention in HE is impacted by the cost of living crisis and that it is mainly older students looking at new career pathways that leave their programmes before completion. As with younger students, mental health is an underlying cause in poor attendance and retention, and it was noted that the College's resources are stretched due to the significant increase in the number of students seeking support.

Governors asked if students who leave due to mental health issues come back and it was confirmed that some do, but others don't as there are long waiting lists for external support, which is a national issue.

The Committee noted the report.



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8. Curriculum Plan

CSM-23-06-11

The Committee considered a report and presentation on the College's Curriculum Plan for 2023-24, noting that this has been influenced by the priorities for Wigan borough to increase participation rates and attainment at Level 4 and above, through the expansion of professional qualifications, higher and degree apprenticeships and HTQs.

The Plan aims to engage with employers to develop workforce solutions in key industry sectors in the borough, to further reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment and training, to increase participation rates in intermediate and advanced apprenticeship programmes, to support adults with low or no qualifications to access entry level roles in the workforce and also responds to national curriculum reform.

Planned activity for 2023-24 includes programme development and growth in Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction, Finance and Professional, Education and Health.

The Committee noted that adult enrolment has increased in the current year, largely due to non-regulated community provision and ESOL at Entry and Level 1. This provision is extremely important to the local area and provides progression opportunities and social mobility, which is central to the work of the College. The wider curriculum plan is targeted at engaging more employers in workforce upskilling programmes and opening up vital pathways to advanced and higher level learning for residents.

The College expects 16-18 recruitment to be strong this year with the highest proportion of learners studying at Level 3, although we continue to see growth at Level 2, where numbers have recovered post pandemic. Growth is expected in construction, education, engineering and health and this aligns with current and future skills needs.

Further apprenticeship growth is also planned in 2023-24. In Engineering, work continues to support the food and drink manufacturing sector. Work with progressing students is expected to generate growth in 16-18 apprenticeships in a range of sectors, including construction, engineering, early years, education, finance and professional. A number of new Apprenticeship standards have been introduced including horticulture and sports coaching.

HE numbers will be boosted by the launch of the IoT and the College is evaluating the balance between those learners on traditional fee paying HE main programmes and an increased interest in Higher Apprentices. Of particular note is the development of the new HND in Counselling and applied Psychology and HTQ in Quantity Surveying.

Resolved: The Committee approved the Curriculum Plan for 2023-24.

8.1. Accountability Action Plan (AAP)

CSM-23-06-12

The Committee noted that the Local Skills Improvement Plan had been published and the College's AAP had been submitted in draft form to the DfE and will be finalised by the addition of Part 2 by the DfE by the end of July.

The Committee noted the report.

9. Next Generation Teaching and Learning Strategy

CSM-23-06-13

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the further evolution of the College's Teaching and Learning Strategy following its first year of implementation, noting that an opportunity has been taken to reflect on findings from the Ofsted process to implement further developments and enhancements in teaching and learning practice.

The Committee noted that the pace of curriculum reform and the recruitment challenges in skills sectors mean the training and development of existing and new staff is increasingly important and the Next Generation Teaching and Learning strategy and the Teaching and Learning Academy are an integral part of the College's response to these issues.

In response to a question from a Governor in relation to any investment needed to upskill the workforce to address skills challenges in the sector, it was confirmed that the Teaching and Learning Academy uses industry specialists to teach and coach the College's staff who will then be used as coaches themselves within the College and the sector more generally.

The Committee noted that a further update will be provided at the next meeting.

The Committee noted the report.



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The Committee considered a revised policy for dealing with student disciplinary, suspension and resolution, noting that this is subject to a three-yearly review in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, but has been brought to the Committee again today as there are changes that are needed. Once approved, it will not be reviewed again until March 2026, unless further changes are needed.

The main driver for changing the policy was to focus on resolution of issues, in line with the College's values and hence the policy title has been changed to reflect this. Other changes are relatively minor to clarify procedures in place, provide examples and address changes in job titles of key members of staff.

Resolved: The Committee approved the Student Disciplinary, Suspension and Resolution Procedures for 2023-26.

11. Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Update

The Committee reviewed progress on delivery of the QIP to date, noting that apprenticeship provision is on track to make further improvement this year and to continue to demonstrate above sector average achievement rates, adult retention rates are demonstrating improvement and there is evidence that the achievement gap is narrowing where strategies to address this have been implemented, with OneGrade tracking much improved and helping to target intervention strategies.

The introduction of the Teaching and Learning Academy has facilitated closer observation of teaching and learning and enables targeted staff development to areas identified for improvement, as well as sharing good practice and driving innovation.

The Committee noted that the recording of targets on ProMonitor for adult learners on part-time courses is behind schedule with an average of seven fewer targets set per adult learner when compared to 16-18 learners.

Curriculum Review Surveys that have taken place for adult provision (e.g. Finance and Professional, Adult English and Maths) have identified positive learner voice regarding target setting, which the Committee noted had been confirmed by the Ofsted inspection. Targets set for learners are not however sufficiently recorded electronically onto ProMonitor to increase transparency and this is a particular issue on short courses and part-time adult classes where there is no assigned dedicated tutorial time. Whilst this is standard practice within the sector, a solution is being sought.

It was noted that whilst the staffing issues in Animal Management are much improved, there remains ongoing developmental work with new staff to further improve the learner experience and to improve high grades. First time High Grade pass rates (from BTEC January exams and City & Guilds Technical exams in March) have also been inconsistent across areas and attendance rates have been affected by a myriad of external factors.

The Committee considered the actions in place to address these issues and noted that the outturn position will be used as the starting point for the 2023-24 QIP, which will be brought before the Committee at its next meeting in November.

The Committee noted the update.



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12. Link Visits report

CSM-23-06-16

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of the Summer Term Link Visits which took place on 18 May 2023, noting that six Governors had attended the visits. Visits were made to Science and English and Maths curriculum areas and included a curriculum intent conversation with managers and a discussion on the strengths and areas for improvement in the respective departments. There was also an opportunity to observe teaching and learning and meet with students and to test the impact by having students demonstrate their skills development. There was also an opportunity for a staff focus group discussion and an opportunity to discuss next steps, progression and destination information and outcomes.

Feedback from the visits was very positive and Governors attending were assured that the college is making improvements in teaching and learning and that manager and staff understanding of their curriculum area is consistent and consistently shared.

The Committee reviewed the detailed feedback from each Governor attending and noted that there is no management response required in any of the curriculum areas visited.

It was noted however, that accessing appropriate, high quality work experience opportunities in science related industry is a challenge. Equally, Science remains a hard to recruit to area due to the skill set required to teach the subjects and opportunities for high paid work in alternative STEM industries and in school teaching in STEM. Plans are in place to address the work experience challenges through a range of alternative approaches.

In Maths, student feedback indicates some difference in the teaching styles of different tutors, which suits some learners better than others.

The Committee noted the report.

13. Items to be included in the Committee Chair's Report to the Governing Board, including any KPIs to draw to the attention of the Board as necessary

CSM-23-06-17

Resolved: The Committee agreed the items to be included in the Committee Chair's report to the Governing Board.

14. Any other business

CSM-23-06-18

There were no items of other business.

15. Date and time of next meeting: TBC

CSM-23-06-19

The meeting ended at 7.19pm.

Chair



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