

MINUTES

Meeting: Academic Quality Committee

Date: Monday 30 May 2023 at 4.00pm

Location: Microsoft Teams

Present: Zoe Thomson (Chair), Pamela Dobson, Stacey Fleming, Evelyn McPhail, Jim Metcalfe, Lorraine Wilkinson

Apologies: Emma Wallace

In Attendance: Wendy Brymer, Iain Hawker, Dorothee Leslie, Marianne Philp

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting. It was noted that Peter Connelly had sent apologies for the meeting. The Chair thanked Emma Wallace for her contribution to the work of the Committee over her term as Student President.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting: 13 February 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

3 Matters Arising / Actions Outstanding

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that a sample of action plans, as had been requested at the last meeting, had been appended to the report for information.

4 Fife College Students' Association (FCSA) Update

Jennifer Ritchie (FCSA) joined the meeting for this item and outlined the contents of the paper that had been circulated. Updates were given on:

- Recent and forthcoming awards
- President elections 2023-25
- Class representatives
- Student engagement tracker
- FCSA staff changes

Committee members congratulated the FCSA for winning and being shortlisted for recent awards and thanked the FCSA for the comprehensive update report.

There was a discussion about class reps. It was noted that the number had increased since the last meeting. Various approaches to engaging class reps through training and improved communications would be put in place for 2023-24. It was confirmed that the FCSA had volunteer awards for students and that class rep activity counted towards this.

5 Draft Learning Strategy

Members were advised that a decision had been taken to pause the approval of the draft Strategies to allow these to be nuanced with some of the discussion from the Board Strategy Day.

Members commented that the layout of objectives had improved the presentation of the latest draft document.

Decision: To submit any further feedback on the draft Learning Strategy to the Director: Governance and Compliance.

Responsibility: All Committee Members

Deadline: 30 June 2023

6 Curriculum Update Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were outlined and noted. Strategic highlights included:

- The College's 2022-23 credits realisation was at 95% of the overall target and it was anticipated that the final position would be within the 2% tolerance level
- The curriculum plan had been revised to account for the 10% reduction on our activity target
- Withdrawal figures were noted, and it was agreed to discuss this in detail under the specific agenda item later in the meeting
- Recruitment for 2023-24 was progressing well for full-time activity and as expected for part-time activity

There was a discussion about variations within Faculties and curriculum areas. It was noted that the impact of Covid meant that students were not prepared for the level of learning required which had had an impact on retention. Mental health issues and care responsibilities as well as the current financial environment were all having an impact.

Members commented on feedback they had received from staff and students on a recent campus tour. It was confirmed that steps were being taken to improve communication to staff and students to ensure a more open and engaging approach to decision-making. The difficulties associated with late notification of our drop in funding levels on this occasion was also noted as a factor.

Members also noted the additional curriculum updates as noted within the paper.

6.1 Academic Update: New Campus Board

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that the recent topping-out ceremony had been held by Fife Council.

It was confirmed that a detailed action plan would be drafted to ensure that the College and Schools were planning jointly and taking forward shared areas of interest. This would require to be realistic in terms of what could be resourced.

7 Performance Update

7.1 Learner Survey 2

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. An overall response rate of 74.3% (an 8.3% increase) was noted. The highlights of the survey results, as documented within the paper, were briefly outlined.

It was confirmed that course level information was being reviewed by Faculties and action plans would be drafted.

It was noted that the trend for Distance Learners and it was highlighted that the College and FCSA were working together to explore whether Distance Learners see themselves as part of the College and how they wish to be treated.

Sectoral data would be received in due course which would allow a comparison with Fife College's response rate and results.

7.2 External Review Update: Education Scotland

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted, with the action plan having now been fully completed. It was highlighted that the Educational Scotland visit would take place on 31 May 2023. Once the report was available (in approximately 6-8 weeks), Peter Connelly could be invited to an Academic Quality Committee or Board meeting to present this to members.

Decision: To receive a copy of the Education Scotland report in due course.

Responsibility: Vice Principal

Deadline: 6 November 2023

7.3 Performance Data Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that the sectoral data had been delayed and was now expected on 31 May 2023. A full analysis against the sector data would be presented at the next meeting.

The key observations as detailed within the paper were outlined and discussed.

Decision: To provide a sector analysis of Performance Data at the next meeting.

Responsibility: Vice Principal

Deadline: 6 November 2023

8 Student Withdrawals 2022-23 at Fife College and Analysis of Data

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that pre-Covid, KPIs had been moving in an upwards level. The impact of Covid had caused a significant drop in KPIs and they had not returned to previous levels quickly enough. The College's aim was to be better than sector average across all student PIs. A full analysis of the data was being undertaken with practical steps being put in place to intervene quickly if students were not engaging and/or attending. Attention was drawn to the Withdrawals by Campus on pages 51 and 52 of the Boardpack and it was suggested that Workbased Learning may be the reason for lower withdrawals at Rosyth and Glenrothes campuses.

It was confirmed that some budget would be made available to support retention initiatives for 2023-24 despite the overall financial difficulties.

It was confirmed that for care experience students, bursary payments were linked to attendance and achievement and were only stopped with explicit confirmation from the relevant named staff member. Funding to cover rent, childcare and travel would not be stopped. There was a discussion about how this is monitored and the importance of dealing with any issues as early as possible. This meant that lecturers were best placed to identify and deal with any potential issues.

There was a discussion about students withdrawing for positive reasons such as finding a job being seen as a negative in terms of PI monitoring and a change of reporting would be beneficial. It was also confirmed that students may leave to get a job which was temporary and not linked to their course, and flexibility was needed to allow people to return to their

course in these circumstances. This was likely to continue due to the current cost of living challenges.

Decision: To continue to monitor withdrawals and the impact of early interventions and report this to future meetings.

Responsibility: Vice Principal

Deadline: 6 November 2023

9 Scholarship and Alumni Update

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. As this had been covered at the recent Board Strategy Day there was no discussion on the item. Committee members commented on the positive impact made on learners through these initiatives.

10 Self-Evaluation 2022-23

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that the format of self-evaluation had been altered slightly to try to increase feedback from all Committee members. Other attendees would also be asked to contribute to this to give a more rounded view of the Committee's performance. It was also noted that this was an opportunity to review the remit of the Committee and recommend any changes that may be required to the Board of Governors for approval.

Decisions:

- To issue the self-evaluation template by email to members and attendees.

Responsibility: Director: Governance and Compliance **Deadline:** 31 May 2023

- To complete and return the self-evaluation template.

Responsibility: All Committee members and attendees. **Deadline:** 30 June 2023

11 Review of Meeting

A comment was made about the number of acronyms used in papers. It was suggested that these should always be written in full the first time used in a paper for clarity. Members were advised that the list of acronyms issued to members at induction was available on the general section of the Board of Governors Microsoft Teams page.

Decision: To update the list of acronyms and include links to it on all future agendas.

Responsibility: Director: Governance and Compliance

Deadline: 1 August 2023

12 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 6 November 2023 at 3.30pm