

**Minutes of the Students, Curriculum & Quality Assurance
Committee
held on Wednesday 6th October 2010
at 4.30 pm in the Boardroom, Hagley Road**

Present:

Lynette Cutting (Principal)
Ian Hart (Chair)
Jenni Ord (Vice Chair)
Nellie Sayer
Tim Sunter

In attendance:

Louise Jones (Vice-Principal)
Kevin Stevens (Assistant Principal)
Jeremy Mobberley (Acting Interim Clerk)

1 Apologies for Absence:

An apology was received from David Beasley for whom Jeremy Mobberley deputised.

2 Declaration of Interests:

Ian Hart declared an interest in Item 7 – Staff Development Annual Report.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting:

As this was the inaugural meeting of the Committee there were no previous minutes.

4 Committee Terms of Reference & Annual Programme of Work:

It was reported that the Terms of Reference were currently being finalised and, when completed, would be circulated to committee members prior to submission to Corporation.

The Annual Programme of Work was examined; Ian Hart pointed out that, according to the Plan the Equality & Diversity Strategy and Action Plan was scheduled to be discussed at this meeting but did not appear on the agenda. Louise Jones explained that, due to the complexity of the subject we had engaged a consultant to prepare the report which would be presented to a later meeting of this Committee.

Lynette Cutting stressed that there needed to be a clear understanding by each Committee of those items that were purely for information and discussion and those that were required to be approved by Corporation, thus avoiding discussion of the former being duplicated at Committee and Corporation. Tim Sunter asked if there was a point of contact where governors could raise any queries on items for information only; this would normally be by email to the Clerk at least 24 hours prior to the meeting, but Louise Jones agreed that she would also be available to answer any relevant queries if necessary.

5 Preparation for Inspection:

Kevin Stevens, who had been nominated by the College to lead on preparing for a potential inspection, gave a presentation entitled 'Inspection Matters'. Initially he explained his vision for the college:

- Always 'inspection ready' through day-to-day good practice;
- Learner centred;
- Robust, self-critical self-assessment;
- Continuous quality improvement;
- Quality to be everyone's responsibility, every day.

In relation to our current situation he reported that:

- A Quality Improvement group was in place;
- A robust Action Plan had been developed, with assigned authors;
- Focus was on the learner;
- A bottom-up approach had been adopted to the writing of a critical self-assessment report;
- Comprehensive staff development had been planned.

Finally he said that, in his opinion, any inspection should be looked upon as a great opportunity to impress, rather than an imposition.

Lynette Cutting thanked him for the presentation and for the extensive work that was being carried out in preparation for an inspection, reiterating the massive 'spin-offs' and benefits from an 'Outstanding' branding.

Tim Sunter suggested that governors would have an important role to play, partly through the Link Governor scheme, where their role needed to be challenging as well as supportive; Lynette Cutting felt that this should be considered when developing a governor training programme. Jenni Ord added, however, that the capacity of individual governors, taking account of their day-to-day commitments, must not be overlooked.

Ian Hart asked if Ofsted had got stricter and Lynette Cutting confirmed that it appeared to be the case, highlighted by the fact that there were now no 'Outstanding' colleges in the West Midlands. Inspections were very much evidence-based and it was felt that, although information at Stourbridge was robust, it was nevertheless agreed that it was imperative to ensure that there was evidence to support such information. Lynette Cutting added that in future it was important that we bring into Committee agendas evidence that we have carried out what we intended.

6 Student Survey Annual Report:

The report is to inform governors of students' perception of their experience at college and to identify the underlying causes of any areas of concern in order that these may be addressed in the Faculty Action Plans. The survey is conducted at entry and at mid-year.

From a total of 2,570 enrolled full-time and work-based-learning students 2,086 (81%) had responded compared to 65% last year. Students in Vocational & Professional and in Construction & Motor Vehicles were generally less satisfied than the College average however, while Vocational & Professional students' satisfaction continues to decline, construction & Motor Vehicles students' satisfaction is improving; students in Creative Industries & 'A' Levels and ACE faculties are the most satisfied in College.

Reasons for dissatisfaction included poor teaching and disorganisation, classroom resources, accommodation and timetabling. Conversely high levels of satisfaction were mainly due to good teaching and learning and many students praised the teaching and valued their experience of College as a means to gaining employment.

The overall percentage satisfied for 2009/2010 was 87%; this compared to 87% for the previous year and 90% for 2007/2008.

Governors were a little concerned with this decline in satisfaction and it was agreed that further analysis was needed to ascertain whether the deterioration was due to specific areas or cross-College.

Ian Hart stressed the importance of carefully managing the survey process and Jenni Ord added that this included preparing students for completing the survey; it would also be useful to form post-survey groups to examine the outcomes and to link these outcomes to other information. The views of employers and parents should also be sought and Louise Jones added that employers' surveys had been conducted but agreed the need for the results of all surveys to be correlated.

Kevin Stevens added that the comments of the students were extremely important and, in his opinion, were very accurate.

Lynette Cutting concluded that the discussion had raised a number of issues which needed to be discussed further and that these should be raised at the next meeting under 'Matters Arising' and Jenni Ord suggested that it may be useful to compare ourselves with our 'sister' colleges.

The Committee resolved;

To note the report for information.

7 Staff Development Annual Report:

The report gives a final overview of Professional Development and Teacher Education for 2009/2010. A designated unit was set up in September 2009 to drive the College towards an 'Outstanding' status and to support staff with their development; the unit had a budget for 2009/2010 of £138k (including £65k for Pacific Institute training) and £69k for 2010/2011.

The report detailed internal and external teacher education, assessor awards, Institute for Learning, internal staff development, internal training, staff inductions, curriculum facilities training, support staff training, Pacific Institute training and use of the Professional Development unit. Governors were impressed with the quality of the report and it was agreed that Luke Adams be invited to attend a future meeting of the committee to give a presentation on specific areas of development.

Jenni Ord asked if it could be made compulsory for those staff falling below a certain grade to attend improvement sessions and Louise Jones agreed to look into the matter. The Staff Development Plan prepared for the coming year stipulated a minimum of 30 development hours to be undertaken by all staff during the year.

Jenni Ord asked if in future we could be presented with information demonstrating the outcomes of development, such as number of promotions, and again Louise Jones agreed to look into this.

Finally Lynette Cutting said that a programme of development for governors needed to be devised and that Louise Jones was currently examining the various ways that this could be implemented.

The Committee resolved:

To note the report for information.

8 Any Other Business:

No other business was raised for discussion at the meeting.

9 Dates of Future Meetings:

Wednesday 17th November 2010

Wednesday 16th March 2011

Wednesday 11th May 2011

Wednesday 29th June 2011 [*post-meeting note: changed to Wednesday 22nd June 2011*]

The Meeting closed at 6.10 pm