

MINUTES

Meeting: Academic Quality Committee

Date: Wednesday 16 February 2022 at 3.30pm

Location: Microsoft Teams

Present: Shona Cochrane (Chair), Lynn Davis, Pamela Dobson, Hugh Hall, Evelyn McPhail, Zoe Thomson, Emma Wallace

In Attendance: Iain Hawker, Wendy Brymer, Marianne Philp

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

It was noted that a briefing session on Digital Portfolio Update: College Offer and Key Partnerships had been held at the start of the meeting. A copy of the presentation is available on Microsoft Teams. Stewart McDonald outlined changes that had been made to the Computing and Digital portfolio based on economic needs and the competitive landscape. The new portfolio ensured pathways from L4 to L8+. Key partnerships to support this important area of work were also outlined. It was noted that due to the innovative and fast changing nature of the environment, the portfolio would continually be reviewed and adapted to ensure it remained relevant. There was also a discussion about gender balance on this and other courses and the steps being taken to try to address this. Whilst progress was being made, it remained a challenge. Role models and influencers for different categories of learners were also discussed.

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and advised of changes that had been made to the agenda. This was discussed again under item 8 of the agenda. The Chair also drew attention to the links included at the end of the agenda, and drew attention to some highlights. Members were encouraged to read these.

It was confirmed that agenda items could be suggested by members and these should be notified to the Director: Governance and Compliance, as provided for in the Standing Orders. It was also highlighted that items could also be suggested under the Review of Meeting item should issues arise that would be useful to discuss in more detail at a future meeting.

It was also confirmed that the Learning and Teaching Strategy would, as had happened with previous versions, come to the Academic Quality Committee for discussion and approval.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting: 11 November 2021

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

3 Matters Arising / Actions Outstanding

There were no actions outstanding.

4 Curriculum Update Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were outlined and noted. Members were advised that the credits realization was now sitting at 86% due to January Starts activity and this would continue to increase in the next few weeks. A shortfall of around 800 credits was currently predicted, and discussions were taking place with SFC about flexibility that could be given to all colleges affected.

It was confirmed that the increase in the number of withdrawals was due to students believing at the start of the year that they would be able to study in College, however restrictions had prevented this. Others in the sector were experiencing similar. It was anticipated that the withdrawal rate would slow down as restrictions were eased. Members were assured that feedback was gathered and an action plan was in place to address issues experienced. Significant investment had been made in health and wellbeing initiatives and a range of early interventions had been put in place. It was noted that some good practice initiatives had been put in place by some lecturers and this should be shared with others. Reasons for withdrawal were mainly linked to remote study for lower level students on practical courses; mental health issues; and care commitments. The importance of the social aspect of learning was discussed.

Applications for 2022-23 had now opened and portfolios had been reviewed to reflect fluctuations in demand and changes experienced by various industry sectors.

Members noted that the student induction process had been significantly improved and thanked staff involved for the work in making improvements.

5 Fife College Students' Association (FCSA) Update

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. Updates were given on:

- The Fife College Innovation Awards where the FCSA had won two awards
- Class representatives: numbers, training and meetings
- Student engagement tracker, which showed an increase in commendations and a reduction in concerns
- Thank you forms
- FCSA Digital Campus – which had been mentioned in the Education Scotland report and had been commended by SPARQs

Members queried why there was a reduction in the number of class representatives and how this was communicated to students. It was confirmed that employability and volunteering opportunities and benefits were included in information provided to students. It was agreed that it would be useful to receive statistical information on this at the next meeting. The importance of the FCSA leading on this, but with support from the College, was emphasized.

Decision: To provide a paper on class representatives including areas not represented, general balance, opportunities and challenges for discussion at the next meeting.

Responsibility: Student President

Deadline: 8 June 2022

6 Performance Update

6.1 Update on Education Scotland Visit

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that the report indicated that satisfactory progress was being made. Only two grades were possible – satisfactory progress or unsatisfactory progress.

Members were reminded that there were six review themes and, across these, 43 bullets of positive progress were noted, and 7 bullets noted for further progress. These were noted within the paper and it was confirmed that an action plan was in place to address these. A link to the full report was provided within the papers.

Decision: To receive an update at the next meeting on progress on the Education Scotland report action plan.

Responsibility: Assistant Principal

Deadline: 8 June 2022

6.2 Learner Survey 1

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. There had been a 74.6% return rate, an increase of 1.3% on Learner Survey 1 in 2020-21. There had been an increase of 30.7% of students finding the online funding application easy; and a reduction of 20% of students attending an online Welcome to College event. A summary of positive comments made by students and other comments, as detailed on page 18 of the Boardpack, was outlined and noted.

It was confirmed that each area of the College would be undertaking further analysis of responses in order to make further improvements.

Learner Survey 2 was due to be issued over the Easter break.

6.3 Partnerships Impact on Curriculum (Product Design, Delivery)

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was highlighted that over all curriculum areas, academic, industry and other partnerships had been established. The findings and further opportunities as detailed on page 21 of the Boardpack were outlined and noted. Members commented that it was impressive to see everything pulled together and a focus on industry as well as employers and commended the approach taken.

7 Academic Update: New Campus Project

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. Members were advised that now that the enabling works had been put in place, focus would turn to looking at innovative ways for the schools and College to work together. It was noted that this could be extended across Fife. Due to strong School College Partnership arrangements already being in place, there was an opportunity to think outside the box and find new ways of working which would benefit all parties involved. The approach being taken was trailblazing and was already of interest to other institutions. An academic focus would continue to be taken as the project progresses.

8 Review of Meeting

It was agreed that pulling together papers into a Performance Update section had been useful and this would be carried forward to future meetings where it made sense to do so.

The Chair also reminded those present of the CDN CyberSecurity workshop for Board members coming up, which may be relevant to the briefing session held earlier in the meeting.

9 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 8 June 2022 at 3.30pm