

MINUTES

Meeting: Academic Quality Committee

Date: Wednesday 8 June 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: Wendy Brymer, Iain Hawker, Dorothee Leslie, Marianne Philp, Silvia Baduskova

1 Welcome

It was noted that a briefing session on Wellbeing: Supporting Student Success had been held at the start of the meeting. A copy of the presentation is available on Microsoft Teams. John Blakey outlined key activities, support services available and a unique partnership with NHS which offers on-site expertise. The Wellbeing and Guidance Team works with students to remove the stigma regarding mental health, delivers awareness sessions and mindfulness classes. A number of students with symptoms of depression and anxiety are referred to Talking Therapies by their GP, however there are lengthy waiting lists. For this reason, the Wellbeing and Guidance Team offers the students self-help strategies, anxiety reduction techniques and pre-arranged weekly meetings to narrow the gap till the students have access to their referral agent. There are multiple online resources available for the students, such as the Health and Wellbeing Hub on SharePoint, the Student Health App, which is a customised app to Fife College, and TogetherAll, which is a fully moderated online forum to provide peer-to-peer emotional support. During the discussion, Committee members complimented the team's effort to focus on a preventative and early intervention strategy rather than remediation. Mental health and wellbeing have a direct impact on attendance and retention, currently 7% of our students withdraw from their courses due to mental health.

The Chair thanked John Blakey for the presentation and welcomed those present to the meeting. The Chair shared highlighted, as had been detailed in the Colleges Scotland Monitoring Report (Wednesday 8 June), the Parliament had congratulated a Fife College student on being named Apprentice of the Year 2022.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting: 16 February 2022

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.

4 Curriculum Update Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were outlined and noted. Members were advised that the credits realisation was now sitting at 91%, and was projected to meet

the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) target. Currently only Care, Social Science and Education exceeded the target. Credit targets continued to be supported through external delivery, which was scheduled before the summer. SFC funding allocations had been confirmed for next academic year 2022/23, with the core credit target sitting at 131,782, a reduction of 0.5% in comparison to 2021/22.

It was confirmed that further withdrawal figures were 2.3% higher than at this time last year, however this has been due to restrictions and self-isolation. With the easing of restrictions, it is hoped that withdrawals before the end of academic year will decrease and that there will be a positive impact on successful completion rates. In comparison, withdrawal rates for part-time courses have been more stable.

The number of applications for academic year 2022/23 was progressing, with a total of 88% of offers accepted for full-time courses. Members expressed concern as at this time last year this was at 101%, however it was explained that while the numbers were much higher at that time, many students had not actually started the course so the current figures were still expected to grow. Members also agreed that it was important to revise the portfolio and the current strategy to ensure continuous improvement.

5 Fife College Students' Association (FCSA) Update

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

- FCSA had won three awards at the NUS Scotland Award and were shortlisted for two awards at the Herald Higher Education Awards
- Class representatives: numbers, training and meetings
- Student engagement tracker
- Review of FCSA staffing structure, proposing to have Student Representation Coordinator and a Student Engagement and Widening Access Coordinator

During the discussion, it was confirmed that the reduction in the numbers of class representatives was mainly due to students being selected to be class representatives when they do not understand what the role involves. Training had received positive feedback, however FCSA continues to improve the training modules by adding more visual appearance and video content.

Decision: To speak to the Principal at the next monthly FCSA update meeting on how to encourage class representative engagement.

Responsibility: Student President

Deadline: 7 November 2022

6 Performance Update

6.1 Education Scotland Report Action Plan: Progress Update

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. The action plan indicated that satisfactory progress was being made. Members complimented the layout of the action plan which was an easy way to track progress.

6.2 Learner Survey 2

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. There had been a 66% overall response rate, which was still very high considering the challenging conditions from lockdown and blended learning during the survey period. The

satisfaction rate had dropped by 9% from 2019/20 to 2020/21, however it was now increasing as students returned to classrooms. During the discussion, it was confirmed that the feedback from the survey is shared with the Faculties and FCSA. Members suggested that the survey results could be shared with class representatives.

Decision: To discuss with Vice Principal: Quality and Academic Partnerships how survey results could be shared with class representatives.

Responsibility: Student President

Deadline: 7 November 2022

6.3 Performance Indicators Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was confirmed that due to pandemic, Fife College performance indicators showed decline and there has been an increase in withdrawal rates. Various actions have been taken to seek improvement as outlined on the page 35 of the Boardpack. During the discussion, it was agreed to write to the Scottish Funding Council regarding consistency of college performance indicators.

Decision: To draft a letter for the Principal regarding the consistency of college performance indicators.

Responsibility: Vice Principal:
Quality and Academic Partnerships

Deadline: 30 June 2022

7 Inclusion Report

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted, and variations were outlined.

8 Academic Update: New Campus Project

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. It was noted that the next Learning Strategy workshop would be in person on Monday 20 June. At this meeting the individual working groups would discuss work to date in order to maximise synergies and use of shared resources.

9 Scholarship and Alumni Update

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. Following the easing of restrictions, it had been possible to resume face-to-face scholarship events for the award winners, including Russel Trust, Renton Scholarship and Ian Rankin. The latest issue of Scholarship Update Magazine had been distributed to stakeholders and donors and was available on Fife College website. Members commented that it was impressive to see an overview of scholarships and alumni activities covering a wide range of curriculum areas.

10 Review of Remit, Self-Evaluation and Annual Report to the Board

The contents of the paper that had been circulated were noted. Members agreed that no changes were required to the remit and confirmed that the Committee was operating efficiently.

Some suggestions were made for the Annual Report to the Board of Governors, such as updating key priorities to include curriculum for new campus and work on reducing the withdrawals. Members agreed to feed into the Director: Governance and Compliance any points to be included in the Annual Report to the Board.

Decision: To feed into the Director: Governance and Compliance any points to be included in the Annual Report to the Board.

Responsibility: Committee Members

Deadline: 30 June 2022

11 Review of Meeting

No business was transacted.

12 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 7 November 2022 at 3.30pm

The Chair thanked members for working with her as Committee Chair and as a Board member over the past 8 years. She thanked everyone present for their commitment and contributions, and wished them well for the future.

The Principal thanked the Chair for her work over the years and he wished her well for the future.