

The College of West Anglia
Minutes of Performance Review and Quality Committee
26 May 2010 – 10.00 am Board Room

Present	Kate Atherton	Chair
	Paul Cotton	
	David Pomfret	Principal
Attending	Andrew England	Head of Organisational Development and Quality
	Arlene Clark	Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning
	Richard Bradley	Head of Faculty – Business, Humanities, Science and Computing (part)
	Hilary Fisher	Manager, University Centre King's Lynn (part)
	Glen Singleton	Director of Resources (part)
	Hilary Reid	Clerk to the Corporation

1 Apologies

Spencer Cranmer.

2 Minutes of the previous Meeting – 3 March 2010

The Minutes of the meeting of 3 March 2010 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3 Matters Arising

None.

4 Curriculum Area Review – Faculty of Business, Humanities, Science and Computing

The Head of Faculty, Richard Bradley, made a presentation to the Committee, supported by Powerpoint. The presentation addressed strong performance within the Faculty and outlined the actions being taken to mitigate identified weaknesses.

(i) Business, Management and Admin

This area had been graded 2, but was considered to be moving towards 1. Success rates were above national benchmark and there was good progression between levels 1, 2 and 3.

Weaknesses had been identified in the AAT technician courses and were no longer provided, and courses with low level numbers had been withdrawn. An improvement in integrated IT resources to embed e-business was being addressed for the King's Lynn campus.

(ii) Computing

Computing was graded 2, with success rates below benchmark in IT at Work (Level 1) and First Diploma (Level 2). Staff sickness absence at these levels and difficulty in recruiting staff had impacted on outcomes. Management interventions included lesson observations; action to ensure students were taken on to the appropriate level of course; provision of additional learning support at level 1; and increased teamwork between Course Directors. As a result of the actions taken to address weaknesses, there was confidence that the area would achieve a strong grade 2 for the current year.

(iii) Humanities

Within this area there was a significant difference in grade between English and History (graded 2) and Social Sciences (graded 4). English success rates at GCSE grade A-C were strong, and above benchmark. In Social Sciences there was very poor performance in Psychology at AS and A2 level. Actions taken to address the issues included regular monitoring of students and participation by the Programme Manager in coaching sessions. Identified as being key to the poor performance in this area was students' poor understanding of the demands of the course. Added to this there had been long term sickness absence, resignations and capability and disciplinary issues. Consideration was being given as to whether the offer should be reduced in the short term.

(iv) Maths and Science

Maths was graded 1 and success rates were good and well above benchmark. There was good use of ILT. Performance in Science, graded 2, was more mixed. Access to Medicine and Human Biology success rates were good. Areas for improvement were identified on Access to Science and AS Science subjects and entry criteria had been reviewed for the 2010/11 cohort. Adult learners had more complex issues to deal with and retention rates were poor.

Actions taken to address weaknesses included a change in Course Director, the introduction of study skills sessions and tutorials, the introduction of more applied courses, strong support for new staff and sharing of good practice between Maths and Science teams.

The Chair acknowledged the challenges faced by the Faculty and commended the successes.

Richard Bradley left the meeting at 10.35 am

5 College Charter

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality presented the revised College Charter. He drew attention to a key change - the re-introduction of the requirement for students to wear lanyards (with ID attached) whilst on campus, except in workshop situations for health and safety reasons.

Governors commented, and it was agreed that:

- The word "practical" be inserted before "workshop situations..."
- The Safeguarding statement should be placed higher in the Charter because of its importance.

Subject to the amendments above, the Committee approved the College Charter for 2010/11.

Action: AE

6 Hearing the Student Voice – Interim Report

The interim report on “Hearing the Student Voice” was presented by the Head of Organisational Development and Quality. The report informed the committee of the new approach being trialled in 2010 led by a consultant, Trish Bailey, and set out the Terms of Reference for the work. The study involved meetings with different student groups, one Higher Education Student representative meeting and paper surveys undertaken across all campuses with mostly 16-19 year old students.

He highlighted the main findings, as follows:

- Computers, refectory provision and ineffective course representative meetings were consistently raised as areas of main concern across all campuses
- Positive experiences consistently expressed were:
 - Tutors were supportive
 - Teaching staff respected students
 - Enjoyment of practical activities, trips and work experience
 - Students made good friends
 - Course specific equipment was good and up-to-date

Following each focus group, the consultant fed back the findings to the Head of Faculty, who will be required to use the data in the SAR.

A full review of the pilot would be undertaken and a decision taken as to its merits compared with the QDP survey later in the year.

The Chair welcomed the report but was concerned that the Committee was hearing the same things being repeatedly reported from previous surveys, questionnaires and complaints records, namely, administration of courses, refectory issues, computer access. It was disappointing that there was no reference to these in the College’s priority objectives. She added that if this exercise was to be taken seriously it was important that it be given some prominence in other papers which come to the Committee. Further, that feedback to students was extremely important, stating that the Committee did not want the students to be reporting the same things in 12 months’ time.

The Principal assured the Committee that action was taking place in relation to car parking issues, cover for the student areas and IT reliability. He underlined the importance of action and feedback to students as a result of the findings. Work on the refectory was planned for the summer but was conscious that the extent of the work was inadequate, restricted by the amount of other summer work and the budget available. Concerns regarding the refectory contract were shared by management and would be addressed at the appropriate time. He acknowledged there was a need for more corporate focus on course organisation and administration.

The report and management actions were noted.

7 Interim Report on Teaching and Learning Observations in 2009-2010

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality presented the interim report on teaching and learning observations in 2009-2010. He advised that since writing the report further observations had been undertaken and a number still had to be done.

He referred governors to the tables comparing the observation grades reported in the 2008-09 SAR with the accumulated observation data for 2009-10. The percentage of grades 1 and 2 had improved from 77.75% to 83.7% against a sector average of 72.1%.

In response to the Principal's query as to how the results were moderated, the Head of Organisational Development and Quality described the processes in place. These included staff training, peer review and independent consultancy review.

The newly formed Teaching and Learning Development Unit (The Learning Practice) seeks to improve quality and was working with staff. The feedback had been positive and it was believed to be having an impact.

The report was noted.

Hilary Fisher joined the meeting at 11.05 am.

8 IQER Report

The Manager of the University Centre, King's Lynn, presented the report on the IQER Summative Review visit which took place on 21 and 22 April 2010. She explained that three core themes had been considered – Academic Standards; Quality of Learning Opportunities; and Public Information. The grading process was also explained and in particular how it differed from Ofsted.

The provisional judgement, advised by letter on 5 May 2010, was that there was "Confidence" in the academic standards; "Confidence" in the quality of learning opportunities; and that "Reliance can" be placed on the accuracy and completeness of Public information that the College is responsible for. A further three areas of provisional good practice were identified together with three desirable recommendations.

A more detailed Summative Review report, due at the end of May, would set out the findings in more detail, an action plan would be developed and submitted, and a final judgement would be made at the end of June. The report was due to be published on the QAA web site at the beginning of August 2010.

The Chair commended the outcome of the review and thanked the Manager for the provisional feedback.

The report was noted.

Glen Singleton joined the meeting at 11.15 am.

9 ILT Performance Report

The Director of Resources introduced the ILT Performance Report by acknowledging the support provided by IT Services to meet the needs and demands of the College's IT requirements. His report identified the range of work undertaken by that Department over recent months and examples of performance data that had now become available.

He highlighted the following activities:

- The ability to report on the number of hours or the percentage of time that the College's VLE was available. The Head of IT services now provided information about downtime on applications by time rather than by systems.
- Migration of the service contract for the whole telephone system.
- Planning and design of the Isle telephone system replacement. Annual calls costs would be reduced as a result of this work.
- Work with ARU on digital resource access enhancements.
- Future planned projects, in particular, those related to the migration of the network away from Novell to a Microsoft environment. Staff would be able to access files from any campus and computer access speed will be improved.
- The integration into mainstream media curriculum of the internet TV Project, named Springboard TV.
- The College's lead regional Exemplar role within the Technology Exemplar Network, the successful residential event and open day, both of which were planned to be repeated throughout June 2010.

The Chair queried whether there was a vehicle through which students could receive feedback and/or information about the work being done.

The Director of Resources responded that learner views events had been held across all campuses, the most recent of which did include IT. Information from those sessions had been shared with the Head of Organisational Development and Quality.

10 Performance against Priority Objectives 2009/10

The Principal referred members to the 2009/10 Priority Objectives presented to the Board in May 2010 and reported on those items which had been behind target at that point. He reported verbally on progress to date, as follows:

1.3 – Participation now exceeds 400 and was on track. One of the issues had been over-performance on adult learner targets.

2.2.3 – Development of NEET provision, principally for young offenders (off-site) in partnership with the Discovery Centre, King's Lynn. Confidence now on track.

2.4 – Foundation Degree in Outdoor Education – position remained unchanged. Places had been capped and dialogue with Anglia Ruskin University was positive.

3.2.2 – SAR grades were historical based on last year's outcomes. Work to review SAR for 2009/10 had begun.

3.5.3 – Participation in Beacon Awards events had been restricted because LSIS had withdrawn funding. A number of areas had been identified in which the college could add value to the sector.

4.2 – Academic Staff – working with Heads of Faculty around budget process with focus on curriculum planning.

4.2.5 – Scholarly activity guidelines would be produced when higher priorities had been addressed. No further progress.

4.4 – Communication – additional progress had been made. Communications group continued to meet; e-mail policy to be issued to staff. Reflecting on how we communicate with staff generally and considering monthly bulletins. Staff meetings being held.

4.5.1 – Appraisals – the message had been communicated to managers that compliance must be 100%.

5.3 – Further progress had been made in developing service level agreements.

5.8 – An Equality and Diversity person had been appointed in the Teaching and Quality unit who was working to embed safeguarding and equality within the curriculum.

5.14.10 – The ILT Strategy Group had met and a set of performance measures had been drawn up.

5.15 – On target to have embedded student and funding data management systems for 2010/11 curriculum.

6.3.2 – Contribution based accounting in place.

7.1.1 – Accommodation – Progress reported to Board and sub-committees re HSE, maintenance, fire audits and summer works programme. On-going issues around affordability and scale.

7.3.2 – Review of the Property Services team by SMT imminent.

7.3.4 – There was a commitment in the summer works programme to introduce metering of use of utilities for individual buildings. £70k had been committed for Isle boiler house and a new electricity supply to Plaxtole House in the summer works programme.

The Principal concluded that significant progress had been made and the overall picture was very positive.

The Chair suggested that feedback from the students should be incorporated in the priority objectives.

The progress report was noted.

11 Self Assessment Framework

Governors were advised by the Head of Organisational Development and Quality that the framework for the Self Assessment Report (SAR) would reflect major changes in the Common Inspection Framework and had been significantly restructured. He noted the key changes and advised that first drafts would be brought to the Committee in the Autumn term.

The revised SAR Framework was noted.

David Pomfret left the meeting at 11.50 am.

(The meeting was no longer quorate and members were advised by the Clerk.

Members opted to continue and agreed to seek ratification at the next meeting of items from this point forward.)

12 ISO (9001) Annual Review

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality presented the annual review of the ISO 9001 (2000) Quality Management System.

Governors felt that, as the meeting was no longer quorate, approval of the Quality Policy should be referred to the Corporation. **Action: AE**

From the report, the Head of Organisational Development and Quality highlighted, in particular, that the number of complaints had increased. He felt this could be attributed in part to encouraging complaints through a wider range of opportunities.

The Chair commented that many colleges differentiated between “complaints” and “issues” and perhaps more could be dealt with outside the process. The Head of Organisational Development and Quality agreed to discuss the point with the Principal.

Action: AE

13 Complaints received from February 2010 to May 2010

The Head of Organisational Development and Quality presented a record of the complaints received during the period February to May 2010 and an analysis of the trends over previous periods.

The report was noted.

14 Any Other Business

- The Chair, in acknowledging the Clerk would be leaving the College at the end of June, thanked her for her work and support.

15 Chair’s items for briefing to Corporation

- Presentation by Head of Faculty
- Priority objectives – full update
- Quality statement approval by the Board

16 Date and time of next Meeting

Wednesday, 29 September 2010 at 10.00 am.

The meeting closed at 12.10 pm