

Plumpton College
Minutes of the Academic Committee meeting
Held on Tuesday 10th November 2009

- Present: David James - Governor (Chairman)
Christine Howe - Governor
Nigel Ellis - Governor
Pat Foster - Governor
Neil Ravenscroft - Governor
Stan Stanier - Governor
Denise Stokoe - Governor
- In attendance: Petra Billings - Head of Higher Education
David Blackmur - Head of Department
Jenny Brooker - Clerk to the Corporation
Paul Collins - Head of Department
Emma Cook - Head of Department
Don Cranfield - Head of Business Training
Chris Foss - Head of Department
Wende Taylor Garwood - Head of Learner Support
Mike Gurney - Head of Department
Julia Hadden - Head of MIS
David Lamb - Head of Department
Ivor Lewis - Head of Department
Richard Pemble - Quality Development Manager
Maurice Shorten - 14-19 Curriculum Manager
David Stokes - Deputy Principal (Academic & Quality)
Becky Taylor - Research Development
Jenny Watkins - Head of Department
- Apologies: James Currin - Governor
David Evans - Governor
Des Lambert - Principal/Governor
Maurice Shorten - 14-19 Curriculum Manager

Meeting commenced 5.10pm

Minute No.		Action by whom	Action by when
AC/09/36	Minutes of last meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 7 th July 2009 were approved.		
AC/09/37	Welcome to HE Student Governor Elect The Chairman welcomed Mr David Rafferty who had been elected by HE Students to become HE Student Governor. The Corporation would be asked to formally appoint Mr Rafferty at its next meeting. Mr Rafferty would be a member of the F&GP Committee rather than the Academic		

	Committee, but had attended the meeting due to his interest in the meeting agenda.		
AC/09/38	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>The Chairman stated that it was with great sadness that he had heard the news of the tragic death of Mr Simon Bishop. He asked that the enormous admiration and appreciation of his work be placed on record and that the condolences of Governors be passed to Simon's family and colleagues.</p> <p>Dr Stokes advised that Mr Bishop had worked at the College for many years, had always championed the learner and had done an enormous amount for students. He stated that Mr Bishop had been truly dedicated to his role and would be enormously missed as a colleague and friend.</p>		
AC/09/39	<p>Headline Report on Academic & Quality Issues</p> <p>Dr Stokes went through his report. He advised that the SAR was being produced and was scheduled for consideration by the Corporation on 15 December. SARs for academic departments were scheduled to be externally validated in the week commencing 17th Nov 09 and relative progress in 2008/09 would be judged against 2007/08 performance as well as against national averages.</p> <p>The LSC was continuing to change the methodology for judging national average success rates and this compromised the ability of the College to benchmark itself. It did appear that College success rates were slightly above the newly calculated national averages.</p> <p>Various reviews of the College's HE provision were scheduled to take place. The Partner College Review would take place in February and an Integrated Quality Enhancement Review (IQER), which was equivalent to an Ofsted inspection for HE provision, would take place in Autumn 2010 with an IQER summative review in Autumn 2011.</p> <p>There were a number of forthcoming assessments and inspections including the Total Quality Standards, Investors in Careers and Investors in People. Preparing for the plethora of available accreditations took up a great deal of staff time.</p> <p>Dr Stokes advised that a tutorial audit had shown some slippage in the recording of tutorials. An action plan had been developed to address this.</p> <p>The Committee considered draft criteria Dr Stokes had developed to define what constituted outstanding in HE. Dr Billings identified that equality and diversity objectives would need to be added to the criteria. Dr Stokes advised that the</p>		

	<p>criteria would be given further consideration before being submitted to the Corporation.</p> <p>Agreed: Members provide Dr Stokes with their comments by the end of November on the draft 'Defining outstanding in HE' criteria.</p>	All	30.11.09
AC/09/40	<p>Key Points of the New Ofsted Framework</p> <p>Dr Stokes advised that the Ofsted framework for inspecting FE provision had changed with limiting grades introduced in the areas and equality & diversity and safeguarding. Training in these two areas was being arranged for staff and equality & diversity training was also being arranged for Governors and was likely to be delivered at the end of a Corporation meeting. Mr Pemble was commencing training to become an Ofsted inspector and advised on the importance of equality and diversity being rolled out across the curriculum.</p> <p>Mrs Brooker advised that the F&GP Committee had established a residential services working group to consider aspects of residential services and catering provision and the group would be considering safeguarding issues arising from these areas. Dr Stanier was Chair of the working group and had agreed to be the designated governor for safeguarding/child protection issues.</p>		
AC/09/41	<p>Annual HE Health Report</p> <p>Presenting the annual report on HE provision, Dr Billings advised that the document had been approved by the Plumpton HE Board but was subject to scrutiny and possible amendment by various committees at the University of Brighton including the Academic Partnership Committee.</p> <p>The Chairman identified that the student survey feedback in the report reflected the good standard of HE provision at the College. Dr Billings advised that the College had been very pleased with the feedback of HE Students and overall the College appeared to be in good HE academic health.</p> <p>Initial feedback in this year's induction survey suggested that issues raised by students last year regarding study space and IT access had been partially resolved. Dr Billings advised that pastoral support was the responsibility of all course leaders and additional learning support was also provided by the UoB.</p> <p>Mr Rafferty advised from a personal perspective that the support he had received whilst being on his course had been fantastic. The Committee welcomed this feedback and the findings of the report.</p>		

<p>AC/09/42</p>	<p>Plumpton HE Strategy 2009-14</p> <p>The Plumpton HE Strategy had been developed by a strategy group comprising Governors, UoB and College staff. The document had been circulated to committee members over the Summer and had been amended in response to committee member feedback and HEFCE requirements.</p> <p>The document did not require the approval of the UoB but in the spirit of openness and transparency the document had been circulated to members of the Plumpton HE Board and considered at its last meeting. The Board had expressed some concern that the student growth targets contained within the strategy were over optimistic. Mr James advised that the Corporation appreciated that the targets were optimistic but there would be opportunities to review the strategy.</p> <p>Prof Ravenscroft identified that where the growth of student numbers was restricted, the College should continue to look at raising the quality of its entrants to HE courses and increasing value added. DTS reported that the LSC funded some level 4 HE provision and that the college might be able to expand HE provision through this funding stream.</p> <p>Subject to grammatical alterations to 3.4a and 3.4c and an alteration of 3.4e to state applications rather than recruitment, it was</p> <p>Agreed: The HE Strategy be submitted to the Corporation for approval.</p>	<p>JKB</p> <p>JKB</p>	<p>15.12.09</p>
<p>AC/09/43</p>	<p>Research Report</p> <p>The Committee received the College Strategy for Scholarly Activity and Research Development for 2009-13. Part one of the document was focused on the College's research strategy and part two provided details of current research projects. Miss Taylor advised that the two main areas of research which would be given focus had been identified as 'outdoor health and education' and 'sustainable agriculture and wine science'.</p> <p>Details of the current research and scholarly activity taking place at the College were noted. Miss Taylor advised that the South Downs Water Recreation Plan was complete and had been passed to the South Downs Joint Committee, several articles were due for journal publication and Prof Ravenscroft and Miss Taylor had written a chapter for the book 'What is Land for'. The publication of the book was being launched by the Chief Scientist of Defra and the high profile of the book was likely to raise the research profile of the College.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the proposed strategy and</p>		

	<p>recognised the efforts of Miss Taylor, Prof Maillardet and Prof Ravescroft in taking forward the College research programme.</p> <p>Agreed: The Research Strategy be submitted to the Corporation for approval.</p>	JKB	15.11.09
AC/09/44	<p>2008- 09 Self Assessment Report</p> <p>The Committee considered the provisional and indicative grades put forward by HoDs for 2008-09 against estimated external validation grades put forward by Dr Stokes. The Chairman congratulated HoDs for the way in which departments had moved forward as the overall unvalidated grade profile showed a drop in the number of 3 and 4 grades to the 2007-08 self assessment report.</p> <p>The Heads of Departments highlighted the key issues of the previous academic year and the areas they would be focusing on for improvement in 2009-10.</p> <p>a) Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been a slight drop in achievement and standards from 93% to 87%. The low retention of 19+ students on BTCV provision had impacted on 19+ achievement. • The key priority for the forthcoming year was teaching and learning and improving teaching methods and delivery. • HE grades for agriculture were to be added to the grade profile. <p>b) Equine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing had been consolidated, WBL was being closely monitored to ensure continuing improvement and students were only recruited where there was confidence in their ability to achieve the qualification. • 16-18 success rates had increased but there would be a focus on continuing this trend. The introduction of equine experience days were helping to ensure learners were recruited to the right level of course. <p>c) Forestry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing issues had impacted on the 16-18 provision grade but these had now been resolved. • There had been a significant increase in staffing within the department to cope with increased student numbers. • The key priority for the forthcoming year was on continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning and tutorial support. <p>[Ms Watkins arrived at the meeting at this point].</p>		

	<p>d) Horticulture/Floristry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grade summaries had not highlighted some of the improvements made on last year. Dr Stokes agreed to update the grade summary tables with this information. • Exam results from externally moderated tests had impacted on 16-18 and 19+ achievements. The focus this year was on providing students with exam technique, ensuring students were fully aware of the demands of courses as part of the recruitment procedure and ensuring the level of teaching and learning remained high. <p>e) Rural Machinery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus of the year was on consolidation, settling into the new workshops and developing a vision to become a centre of excellence. • The skills of teachers were being developed as were student recruitment processes to ensure learners were on the most appropriate course. • Managing the student journey and ensuring students had appropriate support was another focus of the year. • Work had been carried out to maximise resources and training materials and the department was also in dialogue with the UoB regarding possible research projects. <p>f) Sport (Outdoor Education)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Lewis was pleased to report that the Department had maintained an overall grade of 1 despite several staffing changes. • The downturn in the economic climate had impacted on employer engagement but actions were being taken to address this. • Priorities for the forthcoming year were improving tutorial documentation, employer engagement, health and safety management, equality and diversity and safeguarding within teaching and learning. • Forthcoming risks included the new diploma in sport and active leisure as there was a concern its content would be heavily focused on sport rather than outdoor education. <p>g) Animal Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The achievement of level 3 learners had reduced the 16-18 success rates and the achievement grade did not reflect the high standards achieved for teaching and learning, student support, tutorial provision and large value added. • Focus this year was on recruitment to ensure all students enrolled had appropriate entry qualifications, were strongly motivated to complete and fully 	DTS	13.11.09
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	<p>understood the course requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam technique coaching had been introduced. • Improvements in the quality of provision and leadership & management needed to be maintained. <p>h) Wine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main area for improvement was 19+ which had seen a drop in student numbers. • The focus this year was on Leadership & Management, Research and Employer Engagement. It was hoped a wine skills programme would help interaction with the wine industry. <p>i) Business Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The non-completion of teacher training courses had impacted on 19+ FE achievement. Action was being taken to address this and ensure retention increased. • A drop in the grade for the leadership & management of WBL was attributed to a staffing issue which had been resolved. • T2G was due to be audited in four weeks time. • Mr Cranfield agreed to give consideration to the reporting of the achievement of Concordia students. <p>j) Learner Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Taylor Garwood had submitted substantial additional evidence to that in the draft SAR and hoped that the proposed grades would be validated. • Improvements identified over the previous year included key skills and basic skills. • Priorities for 2009-10 included understanding and developing functional skills. <p>Prof Ravenscroft identified that research activity taking place within FE was not captured within the research strategy document and it was not clear what criteria HoDs were grading their departments research activity against and therefore what constituted a grade of outstanding or good.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <p>(a) Dr Stokes to give consideration to the criteria that research activity is graded against in the Self Assessment Process.</p> <p>(b) Miss Taylor to update the research strategy with details of FE research activity taking place.</p> <p>Dr Stokes advised that the focus of 2008-09 had been on 16-18 success and although 16-18 success rates had increased, 19+ success had dropped. The generic focus for 2009-10 was identified as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving teaching and learning 2. Improving the rigour of student management 3. Continuing the robust lesson observation programme 4. Improving the recording of tutorials 	<p>DC</p> <p>DTS</p> <p>BT</p>	<p>17.11.09</p> <p>01.12.09</p>
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	<p>5. Continuing to refine the recruitment process to ensure that learners were recruited to the right course.</p> <p>Mrs Hadden advised that all student transfers from courses needed to be done as early as possible and at the latest February 2010. Any transfers after that date would need to be justified and the College would be audited on this.</p>		
AC/09/44	<p>Recommendations for Discussion at Strategic Workshop</p> <p>The Committee considered if there were any topics it wished Governors to consider at their strategic workshop in January 2010.</p> <p>Topics identified were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to keep the forward momentum of research activity and how it is benchmarked. • Consideration of the draft indicators of what constitutes outstanding in HE. • Prioritisation of the plethora of available accreditations. <p>Agreed: The Chairman of the Corporation be advised of the proposed topics identified by the committee for discussion at the strategic workshop.</p>	JKB	01.01.10
AC/09/44	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Compliments & Complaints Mrs Brooker advised that a report on compliments & complaints would be provided to the committee annually rather than a report being provided at each meeting.</p> <p>Dr Billings The Chairman advised that it was Dr Billings last meeting of the Academic Committee. On behalf of the committee, the Chairman wished Dr Billings well in her new position and thanked her for her huge contribution to HE at the College in terms of both the expansion and quality of the provision. He advised that Dr Billings would continue to work for the College one day a week until the Partner Review in February 2010.</p>		
AC/09/44	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 9th February 2010 at 5pm. There being no further business the meeting ended at 7pm.</p>		

JKB 11/11/09

Signed.....(Chairman) Dated.....