

Plumpton College
Minutes of the Academic Committee meeting
Held on Tuesday 27th April 2010

- Present: David James - Governor (Chair)
Denise Stokoe - Governor (Vice Chair)
James Currin - Governor
Christine Howe - Governor
David Evans - Governor
Des Lambert - Principal/Governor
Pat Foster - Governor
Neil Ravenscroft - Governor
Stan Stanier - Governor
- In attendance: David Blackmur - Head of Department
Jenny Brooker - Clerk to the Corporation
Paul Collins - Head of Department
Chris Foss - Head of Department
Geoff Gregory - Deputy Principal (Resources)
Ivor Lewis - Head of Department
Richard Pemble - Quality Development Manager
Maurice Shorten - 14-19 Curriculum Manager
David Stokes - Deputy Principal (Academic & Quality)
Wende Taylor-Garwood - Head of Department
Jenny Watkins - Head of Department
- Apologies: Nigel Ellis - Governor

Meeting commenced 5.10pm

Minute No.		Action by whom	Action by when
AC/10/14	Minutes of last meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2010 were approved.		
AC/10/15	Matters Arising AC/10/07: The safeguarding policy had been approved by the Corporation and child protection statistics had been requested from the Head of Student Services. AC/10/08: A consultant had reviewed the College approach to equality and diversity and naturally occurring mechanisms to embed equality and diversity in the curriculum were being explored and discussed through Landex. Another consultant was scheduled to visit the College to review equality and diversity with regard to policies and procedures.		
AC/10/16	Cross College Report – Additional Learner Support Presenting her report, Ms Taylor Garwood stated that funding allocations for ALS took into consideration the prior year's level of ALS the College provided to its students.		

	<p>ALS spending was currently £315k for 16-18 year olds against an allocated amount of £373k. For 19+ £35,426 of the ALS funding allocation remained and it was expected that this would be used and evidenced as such.</p> <p>The provisional allocation for 16-18 ALS the College would receive next year was currently unconfirmed at £200,000. ALS funding could only be claimed for a student if more than £501 additional support was provided to them. This threshold meant that evidence had to be maintained of additional support provided to each student.</p> <p>[Mr Shorten arrived at the meeting at this point].</p> <p>70-80% of students at entry level and level one required ALS and overall there was a disproportionate increase in the number of students requiring ALS against funding increases. Any ALS needs were generally identified within six weeks of a student starting a course. It was important that learners were enrolled on the right level of course, had an initial assessment to identify any ALS needs early and that ALS was provided quickly.</p>		
AC/10/17	<p>Update on Strategic Workshop/Quality Report</p> <p>The Partner College review of HE provision by the University of Brighton had gone well. The University had confidence in the range of provision at Plumpton, the quality of course delivery and the student experience. The process had helped prepare the College for the IQER process beginning in November.</p> <p>Inspection for re-accreditation for Investors in People was scheduled to take place on 10-12 May. The assessor had identified approximately 30 members of staff she wished to see during her visit and she would also be meeting Mike Atkinson and Judy Llewellyn-Burke.</p> <p>Lantra were continuing to work on qualification reform. There were a range of qualifications being developed but it was not known which of these would gain approval. This impacted upon curriculum planning and posed a risk to the College moving forward. Provision continued to be developed against known Government priorities.</p> <p>A recent readiness check had taken place which had focused on achievement, teaching and learning and leadership and management. Dr Stokes stated that the findings were very concerning and suggested that the College was no longer maintaining pace with the College road map to self assess as outstanding.</p> <p>Governors were particularly concerned that reservations had been identified in areas that had been priorities in the work of the Academic Committee over recent years. These were</p>		

	<p>success rates, the learning processes and leadership and management.</p> <p>Mr Pemble stated that success rates had not improved in line with external benchmarks and if success rates were below benchmark the College was very unlikely to receive a judgement above satisfactory as inspectors would suggest that students were enrolled on the wrong course or were not receiving effective teaching.</p> <p>HoDs expressed concern that the readiness check did not appear to have taken into account the diverse range of learners at the College and the academic, pastoral and support care provided by the College. It was not clear how seriously staff had taken the readiness check in terms of lesson preparation. Mr Lewis stated that staff were increasingly frustrated that they did not have enough time to prepare for lessons due to high workloads. Mr Blackmur stated that he did not see how the grade provided to departments was a fair judgement as was based on a 35 minute discussion and lesson observations. HoDs had found the justification for the grades awarded to be too brief.</p> <p>Governors expressed concern at the main findings of the report. Several issues regarding the readiness check were discussed including whether all staff had taken the mock inspection seriously and if the performance of HoDs was reviewed regularly enough. It was identified that the report suggested there had been some complacency following the positive findings of the last Ofsted inspection.</p> <p>Prior reports provided to the committee had suggested improvements were being made to teaching and learning and the findings of the readiness check were therefore a surprise and very worrying. Mrs Stokoe stated that she did not fully accept the report but it was nonetheless very worrying and the College leadership team needed to quickly identify what the actual position was regarding teaching and learning and rectify issues of concern. Prof Ravenscroft stated that the College should be able to achieve high marks for teaching and unsatisfactory teaching was a management issue.</p> <p>Dr Stokes stated that an intensive support programme would be quickly developed for those departments where there were concerns and a detailed action plan would be produced and monitored closely. He stated that staff would need to be mentored, trained on the criteria behind Ofsted judgements, coached on interacting with inspectors and be clearly advised where improvements had to be made.</p> <p>Mr James thanked members and HoDs for the open and frank discussion. He stated that governors were unanimously agreed that there was a tremendous commitment of staff at Plumpton and the issue going forward was how staff could be helped to put things right. He concluded that the many strengths of the College should not be forgotten but that there</p>		
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	<p>was an urgent need to address the observations that had been made.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The next meeting of the Academic & Quality committee to be brought forward for the discussion of action plans in response to the mock inspection report. b) Governors to be briefed on the action plans at the next meeting of the Academic Committee. <p>[Mrs Taylor-Garwood left the meeting at this point].</p>	DTS JKB	
AC/10/18	<p>Cross College Report – Maurice Shorten</p> <p>Presenting his report, Mr Shorten stated that, as with other Colleges, applications for Increased Flexibility (IF) courses had dropped. He attributed this to the current economical climate, the focus of partnership boards, uncertainty surrounding the changes to the qualifications and curriculum framework and the financial implications of schools (rather than the LSC) now being responsible for funding IF students.</p> <p>The current cohort on the landbased specialised diploma was 30 and the next cohort was likely to be 40-50 learners with potential for further expansion.</p> <p>With regard to meeting strategic targets for 14-16 growth, Mr Shorten stated that the development of common timetabling would enable growth of student numbers but this was not a priority of partnership boards. The political and parental suspicion regarding the specialised diploma also needed to be managed and overcome.</p> <p>Mr Shorten stated that there was scope to provide a greater volume of qualifications to schools and it was vital that the College provided appropriate information, advice and guidance to potential students. The importance of HoDs being provided with 14-16 student recruitment data was also identified.</p> <p>Agreed: Consideration to be given to providing HoDs with regular updates on 14-16 student numbers against targets.</p>	MS/JHi	21.05.10
AC/10/19	<p>Review of Information, Advice & Guidance Policy</p> <p>Mrs Brooker referred to the statutory guidance that had been taken into consideration in the review of the policy.</p> <p>Key changes to the policy included the role of the programme leader in providing IAG, the IAG available to parents, new sections on health & finance, referral, confidentiality and ownership and the extension of IAG service standards.</p> <p>Mrs Brooker stated that the policy had been equality impact</p>		

	assessed. Agreed: The Information, Advice & Guidance Policy be approved.	JKB	
AC/10/20	Review of Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy The review date of the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy had been brought forward due to the need to update the policy to reflect current practice and equality and diversity issues. The format of the policy had also been altered in line with a standard template introduced for all policies. Agreed: The Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy be approved.	JKB	
AC/10/21	Feedback from UoB Partner Review & Action Plan Presenting the UoB partner review report and action plan, Dr Stokes that that the review panel had provided an impressive and substantive list of commendations. Recommendations would be quickly implemented. Agreed: The partner review report and action plan be noted.		
AC/10/22	HoD Reports HoD reports were provided to the committee for information only. Governors welcomed the equality and diversity section which had been added to reports.		
AC/10/23	Minutes of Academic & Quality Sub Committee The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2009 were noted.		
AC/10/24	Any Other Business On behalf of the Corporation, Mr James thanked Mr Currin for the contribution he had made to the College as student governor at this his last meeting. Mr Currin thanked everyone for the opportunity he had been given and said the experience had made him realise how much effort went into the College business.		
AC/10/25	Date of Next Meeting The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 6 July. There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.50pm.		

JKB 07/5/10

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