

Meeting of the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQ1011-2)
held on Tuesday 4 January 2011

Present:

Mary Tighe	Chair	Hollie King	Apologies
Guy Adams	Apologies	John Lockwood	Member
Sue Popplewell	Staff Member	Oliver Price	Apologies
Lucy Yarde	Apologies	Gill Turner	Member
Jo Gill	Member		

In attendance:

Peter Avery	Principal
John Abbott	Director: Curriculum and Quality
Jane Scott	Clerk to the Corporation
Paul Smith	Director: Curriculum and Enrichment
Millie Watts	For item 1 of the main agenda only

The meeting opened at 5.33 pm and was quorate throughout.

PART 1 : MEETING FORMALITIES

1. Apologies for absence

Attendance at the meeting is recorded above.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 4 October 2010 APQ1011-1

The Minutes of the meeting were agreed and signed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

Reference APQ1011-1/II/3 and the recent meeting of the Corporation CORP1011-2, members noted that they wished to record their appreciation of the quality and format of the presentations associated with safeguarding made by the Director: Curriculum and Student Support.

There were no other matters arising which are not dealt with under the agenda for the current meeting.

PART 2: ISSUES FOR THE MEETING

1. Social Networking: the implications for students, staff and the College

Members received a copy of the Code of Practice for Social Networking which had been developed as a result of training for all staff on the use of social networking. The training successfully raised awareness of the dangers associated with the use of a range of social networking sites. All new staff, including support staff, will now receive induction training about how to ensure that they use social networking safely.

In highlighting both the negative and positive potential of using social networking sites, members received anecdotal evidence that some universities are vetting applicants in the same way as some employers by checking candidate's social networking pages.

As well as learning about the inherent dangers of social networking, members were presented with a case study of how social networking had been used in a highly controlled manner to deliver learning resources/information and to promote dialogue within a specific subject area. The exercise has so far proven to be highly positive and successful, although considerable energy has been devoted to the implementation and monitoring of the facility. There is considerable scope for this facility to be extended to different subject areas in the College as long as it is used in a controlled and monitored manner.

The student body will be engaged in a consultation process about the best approach to be used to ensure that all students attending the College understand the positive/negative aspects of use of social networking.

2. Feedback from the Subject Self-Assessment Report Moderation Meeting

In consideration of the Executive Summary on Course Performance and Quality, it was reported that two governors, including a student governor, attended the subject self-assessment report moderation meeting and were able to relay how impressed they had been with the College commitment to the moderation process, examining many points in great depth to ensure that appropriate agreement was reached. Grades awarded to individual courses reflect a genuine moderation process. There is considerable emphasis on ensuring consistency of approach, and ensuring that improvements are maintained and sustained.

Members noted that course quality questionnaires feed into the overall self-assessment process, but that completion rates of questionnaires vary significantly between subject groups. It is essential that completion is maintained in line with a robust target to ensure that accurate feedback is maintained, and that the College is fulfilling compliance and best practice issues. There is an overall College target of 75% completion. A similar quality process is being extended to include all 19+ courses.

3. Development Planning

As a preface to consideration of the draft Development Plan, members noted that there is significant overlap between the different areas and sections.

In consideration of 1.9 '*to seek external ratification and validation for the quality of the College's work*', members noted that whilst the College had not succeeded in gaining a Queen's Anniversary Prize, there are other external accreditations for the quality of the College work, including the Ofsted process. Unconfirmed changes to the current Ofsted process mean that the College must remain alert to the implications of the changes and how the overall process is regarded as a 'kite mark' by the public.

The College must continue to be flexible and creative in the way which it seeks external validation of its quality. Already considerable work is being done with both Hereford and Darlington colleges in order to ensure that there is adequate peer benchmarking, particularly in the lesson observation process. Further work needs to be done in respect of seeking project grants from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) to ensure that the College receives maximum benefit.

In consideration of 1.4 and developing the use of IT and ILT, members noted that ILT has been successfully integrated into teaching and learning, with the lesson observation process verifying this. The College has successfully used an IT champion to promote the use of IT in teaching and learning, but the fast changing pace of

development in technology means that this approach is not necessarily appropriate for the forward planning period. It is now considered appropriate to shift the emphasis in approach to the connectivity and security of the IT network, with the outcome that the student client receives fairer treatment. Many students now have access to their own IT hardware, requiring only a facility to use it wirelessly and safely on the College campus. The consequential positive impact on the IT budget will mean that students not having personal access to such equipment can be provided with superior equipment at the expense of the College, also positively impacting in respect of diversity and equality issues. The College must continue to ensure that it keeps pace with student demand in IT - the students themselves leading demand for new innovation - investigating potential new areas, including development of an RHC *app*.

In respect of 1.10 and deriving benefits from the new leadership and management structure, members learned how the benefits drill down in respect of the needs of individual students. There are already demonstrable benefits in terms of the management:learner ratio, improving from 1:260 to 1:150, giving a greater energy and focus to the individual student experience and allowing much greater flexibility of approach to many issues. The new directors are also able to focus on how the College interacts with the external environment, whilst at the same time overseeing that Curriculum Area Managers effectively manage tutorial and curriculum aspects.

The importance of the role of the directors in engaging with external agencies cannot be underestimated at a time when the College faces cuts of up to 11% by 2012-13. The budget setting process is a significant challenge, and flexibility of strategy will be a principal consideration as the College moves forward.

In discussion, members noted that the front page of the Development Plan should be amended to link appropriately with the areas contained within the body of the Plan, It was also noted that that the College will develop how the range of data which is currently available can enhance management understanding on a range of issues. Rates of retention to College will be of significant focus, and work is being done on the formative assessment of students, ensuring that students are interactive with the assessment process. The College will continue to develop its potential to attract international students, bringing not only financial gain but also significant other benefits to the student cohort generally.

4. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is 21 March 2011.

The meeting closed at 7.31 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....