

Huntingdonshire Regional College Further Education Corporation

Minutes of Academic Board Meeting held on Thursday 7 May 2009

Action

Attendees: Anne Phillips, John Bangay, Ken McKerral, Lesley Martin, Malcolm Selley, Richard Pleavin, Steve Rogers, Vic Johnson, Wendy Vigor, Edward Tarpey [student] and Jill Peagram

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Anne Constantine, Geoffrey Stalker, Jill Dickinson and Joanne Lilley.

Joan Karimi attended the meeting on behalf of Jill Dickinson and Joanne Lilley.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings on 13 February 2009

Approved.

3. Matters Arising

ILT Strategy Group Minutes: website access: AP was unable to demonstrate website access for blind users as Room 29 did not have SmartBoard facilities but she confirmed that different font sizes were available and that the space bar could be used instead of the 'tab' key. AP also confirmed that website hits were separated into in-house and external hits, and that external hits were sub-divided into UK and Overseas. Ken McKerral confirmed that WiFi access would be going live during half-term.

Behaviour Management: ID Cards – RP confirmed that a spot-check on ID cards had taken place and that from 2009-10 all students would be issued with their ID card and pen-drive on a lanyard.

Peer Observation – It was noted that, from 2009-10, peer observations will be incorporated into the classroom observation process and tutors will not be notified in advance.

Training Quality Standard [TOS] – AP reported on the results of the recent TOS assessment and confirmed that HRC would not be going forward. There had been some confusion from the trainers as the original feedback had been positive, AP is considering putting in an appeal.

4. Minutes of Committees

Minutes were circulated as follows:

Quality Assurance Group meetings held on 11 February and 11 March 2009. SR confirmed that External Verifier [EV] visits were going well.

Staff Development Committee meeting held on 30 March 2009. SR noted that, as part of the Peer Review Project, HRC had been invited to send 50 academic and support staff to Epping Forest College's staff development day.

HE Committee meetings held on 24 November 2008, 9 March and 2 April 2009.

Course Approvals Board record of courses approved since the last Academic Board Meeting 13 February 2009.

EquaD Group meeting held on 22 April 2009, minutes will be circulated for next Academic Board meeting.

ILT Strategy Group [no meetings have been held since last Academic Board meeting, next scheduled meeting is on Friday 15 May 2009]

5. Skills for Life Strategy

IR briefed Academic Board on the SfL Strategy, highlighting the need to review delivery of the existing College programme for Skills for Life in order to fulfil the government's priority targets: unemployed and on benefits; low-skilled adults in employment; offenders in custody and those supervised in the community; groups at risk of social exclusion.

Along with this focus on World Class Skills the College would also need to consider other curriculum planning changes. Most significantly will be the change for 16-18 year olds currently undertaking Key Skills qualifications to the newly introduced Functional Skills.

The change towards Functional Skills qualifications would also be reflected in changes to the Adult Core Curriculum being introduced in 2009 and the introduction of Level 1 ITQ for Life which links in with literacy and numeracy skills.

Following a national ESOL consultation in 2008 DIUS will be setting out its approach to ESOL in a 'Next Steps' document in 2009 and, when published, this will influence planning decisions in this area for 2010.

The introduction of Foundation Learning Tier [FLT] and the need to provide better course inclusion and progression in curriculum planning will necessitate a requirement for closer co-operation between College curriculum areas and will be important in further consolidating many new developments.

IR confirmed that this would be implemented this year. MS commented that this would be a tight timescale for any training requirements.

6. Equality and Diversity

Following Academic Board on 13 February 2009, SR had investigated low achievement in ethnic minority groups and confirmed that the majority of these had been migrant workers on ESOL courses at Saxongate.

SR reported on the need for disabled and ethnic minority groups to be involved in the formation of policy impact assessments. All policies need to be reviewed and will be put through this process as they are reviewed.

7. Ofsted: New Inspection Arrangements for September 2009

SR reported on new Ofsted inspection arrangements from September 2009 and detailed the future priorities

for inspection, including (i) development of threshold benchmarks for success rates; (ii) a satisfactory success rate will be equivalent to the Minimum Level of Performance; (iii) single success rate measures for qualifications e.g. 'A' levels and the use of quartile/decile thresholds; (iv) greater emphasis on the learner voice and scrutiny of learner involvement strategy; (v) more emphasis on ECM themes in outcomes for learners; (vi) use of data tables at end of report.

SR also highlighted the introduction of limiting judgements which will affect the maximum grade which can be achieved for some aspects: safeguarding; equality and diversity; and capacity to improve. If a College is deemed Inadequate for one of the limiting grades the Overall Effectiveness will be Inadequate; if a College is deemed Satisfactory for one of the limiting grades the Overall Effectiveness will be no better than Good.

8. ProMonitor

SR reported that the College had taken clear actions to ensure greater consistency in the use of individual learning plans across the College and, following a detailed review of options by senior managers, had purchased and introduced a new computer based learner tracking and reporting system. This was currently being piloted within the Faculty of Technology and early indications were that the new system was providing staff with much clearer information on individual learner progress to inform target setting. It had been agreed to purchase the full ProMonitor package at a cost of £22k including training on 23 June for 16 staff, and for the system to be in place for the start of 2009-10.

RP noted that the staff training would include two members of staff from each faculty so that they could act as 'champions' and offer support to other users.

MS queried the time required to do individual assessments. LM suggested asking Compass to arrange meetings / conversations with other colleges using ProMonitor to allay concerns, SR noted here that PRC use ProMonitor.

9. Calendar 2009-10 – Policy for Progression Weeks

Progression Week Policy circulated for discussion. RP noted that research into improvements in success rates had shown a direct correlation between ensuring a student completes all outstanding work prior to starting new assignments than having multiple assignments ongoing. Colleges that had adopted an approach of increasing the number of Progression Weeks and ensuring that a student is up to date with all deadlines could improve their success rates by 10-15%. With tighter lead times and a more rigorous approach to timely completion of coursework the College could greatly improve its performance.

MS queried what would happen if a learner received 5 verbal warnings as a result of failing to complete outstanding work. RP responded that one of the aims of Progression Weeks was to flag up where learners were having difficulties so that these issues could be dealt with, RP also noted that the Disciplinary Code was currently under review.

10. IQER

Report of the Summative Review of the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review [IQER] as discussed by Academic Board. SR confirmed that the Action Plan had been prepared and submitted by the deadline of 6 May 2009. The final report will be published on 10 June and will be put on the website.

11. Dates of Next Year's Meetings

Dates of next year's meetings: 23 November 2009, 4 February and 29 April 2010, all starting at 12.30pm.

12. Any Other Business

Joan Karimi asked if a small fund could be made available for Student Services to supply small value loans to students. RP advised JK that any requests for short-term loans should be made through Finance Dept.

AP reported on £250k funding for long-term unemployed, working with JobCentrePlus, doing short courses which could progress through to Train to Gain. The courses must have job opportunities available locally to make use of the training / qualification.