

Minutes of the Self-Assessment Validation Meeting of the Quality & Equality Advisory Group held on 08 November 2017

Present Mr B Armstrong (Chair)
 Mr J Bolt
 Ms T Aust
 Ms A Patterson
 Ms C Singh

Also present Mrs B Calvert (Clerk for the meeting)
 Ms K Lehman
 Mr G Baker

The meeting commenced at 14.00.

APOLOGIES, DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

26. Apologies were received from Mr J Allen and Mrs B Calvert was in attendance to clerk the meeting. There were no declared interests against any of the agenda items. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

SELF-ASSESSMENT VALIDATION - PROCESS

27. The self-assessment validation process involves the following key stages:

- Curriculum areas begin the drafting of their Self Assessment Report (SAR) in July. The draft SAR was subject to an initial review from a Panel. Membership of the Panel included an external moderator (current HMI) who has been involved in the process throughout to ensure continuity of approach.
- The draft SAR was subject to further updating in August/September after a review of year-end achievement rates. Following this update the external moderator conducted a desktop analysis of each curriculum SAR to ensure continuity in approach and interpretation of achievement data.
- Curriculum Managers attended a second Panel meeting where they presented their SAR, including key strengths and areas for development and proposed grade profiles.
- The validation process is concluded with the same presentation being made to the Quality & Equality Advisory Group whose task is to validate the proposed self-assessment grade profiles.

28. Each curriculum area made available a Position Statement for the Group to review, to challenge, and to seek assurances that the Position Statement was an accurate reflection of the key strengths and areas for improvement. The Position Statement followed the following structure:

- Proposed overall grade
- Key data covering achievement, retention, attendance and student numbers
- Key strengths, current position, and impact
- Areas for improvement
- Progress since the last inspection
- What needs to improve further - the top three to four top actions from the curriculum QIP
- Employer/Partner statement or endorsement

- Executive response

29. The Manager of the curriculum area was in attendance to present the Position Statement. Following the presentation of each curriculum SAR, the Group were invited to question the evidence on which the overall effectiveness grades was based.

30. The outcomes of the exercise will either:

- Proposed grade confirmed
- Proposed grade amended
- Further evidence required in order for a decision to be made

31. It was confirmed that the Corporation would be asked to approve the final version of the College's Self Assessment Report at the Corporation meeting scheduled to take place on 13 December 2017.

32. During discussions on the various Position Statements and the presentations made from Curriculum Managers, several theses were identified.

33. Where areas of excellence and progress existed, there tended to be a theme of consistent good teaching, led by teachers who were progressive, forward looking and committed. There were instances of teachers having been provided with support to achieve even higher standards and this demonstrated that the self development programmes have proven successful. Some teachers made the decision to leave the College if they were reluctant, or unable, to achieve the appropriate standard. Whilst this did cause some disruption to progress in some areas, there was a general belief that good teaching staff was one of the main ways to ensure curriculum success. Overall, it was agreed that students are given a sound curriculum offer from which to make informed choices.

34. Students are provided with opportunities to ensure their voice is heard and the feedback received from Curriculum Managers is that students feel safe, are able to express their views and opinions through a wide range of portals and that they feel their views are taken into consideration and valued. Student governors are also present on the Governing Body and this enables a further empowering of the student voice. Within the area of Supported Learning in particular, student enrichment programmes have produced very good results and students are given the chance to undertake work experience. The enhanced focus on independent living has seen an increase in employment opportunities.

35. With their increase in confidence, students have been prepared to take seats on committees in organisations within the London Borough of Hounslow. There is also a positive and robust interaction with the LB Hounslow Prevent Team and this, along with other activities and partnership arrangements, has ensured the student voice extends across all West London. The Curriculum Managers do everything they can to develop and build on external relationships with organisations and companies as this is seen as extending the "growing" and learning experience of all students.

36. However, one consistent concern centres on the areas of attendance and punctuality where it can be seen that remedial action continues to be taken. Staff members maintain efforts to implement strategies to address poor attendance and punctuality. It is acknowledged that many students have to deal with a broad spectrum of social and mental

health issues and that this impacts heavily on their attendance and punctuality. The College ensures there are measures in place to reach these particular students who, without such interventions, would not be able to complete their courses or achieve their aspirations. Teachers maintain constant communication with students, guardians and parents as a means of taking prompt action when students do not attend their courses or who are rarely punctual. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of ESOL where the good grades demonstrate continuing success.

37. It was noted that attendance and punctuality proved more problematic in the area of Functional Skills albeit this is not an issue specific to West Thames College. There are similar underlying reasons within all colleges with regard the reluctance of students to attend functional skills. Ensuring the teaching of functional skills courses remains a high quality provision has been the constant focus of the college. There is an on-going effort to put teachers in place who are sufficiently skilled to teach Functional Skills, English and Maths. However, it also requires staff to be able to motivate, encourage and understand individual student needs if success is to be achieved in this challenging area. The College takes the approach that, by using imaginative methods, it is possible to interweave FS into many aspects of college life thereby demonstrating to students how English and maths encompasses many aspects of everyday life.

38. Governors commented that, whilst it is important to have the ‘facts and figures’ that make up the respective grades, it was also necessary to hear the ‘stories’ that lay behind the grades. There was a general consensus of opinion that, although very understandable, the production of reports was centred upon fulfilling the needs of Ofsted who need to see precise data, facts, figures and outcomes. However, the efforts to ensure that students are provided with sufficient scope to meet their aspirations can sometimes be lost due to an over emphasis on producing numbers.

39. The Curriculum Managers were asked to ensure the “good news” stories formed part of the position statements and this was viewed as a means of demonstrating full acknowledgement to teachers that their hard work and contribution was recognised and valued. Governors saw the inclusion of additional narrative as a necessary measure to ensure that staff morale was not affected by the constant drive to produce data and that the nature of their quality teaching was also evident. Over and above the interventions put in place by the College, teachers have been identifying “at risk” students and staff members monitor a specific number of students.

40. The aim is to heighten vigilance with regard potential problems and intervene if attendance/punctuality becomes an issue. As mentioned earlier, one such successful direct intervention involves maintaining direct contact with parents and guardians.

41. Notwithstanding the challenges; funding cuts and the potential for reduced enrolment numbers, the College continues to take strident steps to address these. Employer endorsement statements were included with two position statements and the feedback clearly shows how external agencies are working closely with the College. Employers, too, support the College’s aims and aspirations by raising the profile of attendance and punctuality, employability and personal and social skills.

42. The College maintains a robust apprenticeship programme and the main thrust centres on ensuring that relationships with external agencies are strong and relevant. The drive in this area has seen an increase in the number of links with organisations, large and small, whereby students are in a position to access employment opportunities if they do not wish to proceed with further education.

43. Governors stated that, even given the problems and challenges, teachers strive to keep the student at the heart of College life. Further, governors asked that all the additional effort to promote good practice and strategic interventions are recognised and applauded and that one good place for this to be seen is within the position statement.

SELF ASSESSMENT VALIDATION – GRADES

44. Following the presentations made by each Director and after detailed questioning from the Group, it was **RESOLVED** to validate the Self Assessment Grades for Overall Effectiveness as follows:

SSA	SSA Area	Proposed Grade	Grade Validated by the Group
01	Health & Care	3	3
02	Science	2-	2-
04	Engineering	1	1
05	Construction & Catering	3+	3+
06	Information & Communication Technology	1-	1-
07	Hair, Beauty & Specialist Makeup	2	2
08	Travel, Tourism, Sport & Public Services	2-	2-
09	Visual & Performing Arts & Media	2	2
14	ESOL	1	1
14	Supported Learning	1-	1-
14	English & maths - Core Skills	3	3
15	Business	2	2-

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

45. There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

46. Wednesday 07 February 2018 @ 1800.

The meeting closed at 19.05

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chair)