

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Quality and Equality Advisory Committee,
West Thames College, held on Wednesday 12 October 2016**

Present Mr B Armstrong (Chair)
 Ms T Aust (Principal)
 Mr J Bolt
 Mrs Charanjit Singh

Also present Mr J Allen (Clerk)
 Ms K Lehmann
 Mr G Baker

The meeting commenced at 4.00 p.m.

WELCOME, APOLOGIES, DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

1. Apologies were received from Ms A Patterson. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate. There were no declared interests against any of the agenda items.

MINUTES

2. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING

3. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

4. The Committee received a copy of the '*Performance Monitoring Report*' (Paper 2).

5. It was agreed that as most of the targets in Goal 1 related to success rates that was subject to a separate agenda item, to defer any detailed discussion on success rates to the next agenda item.

6. It was noted that the updates for the remaining Goals remain unchanged to that reported to the June meeting.

7. It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

SUCCESS RATE REPORT

8. The College report '*Initial Review of Success Rates 2015/16*' was received (Paper 2). It was confirmed final success rates for 2015-16 are still work in progress. The report detailed the current position as of 05 October and it was noted there are still a number of results to be processed.

9. The terminology used to report results has recently changed. Success is now achievement, retention remains the same and what was achievement is now reported as pass rate.

10. The key categories for the reporting of results are shown below:
 1. 2 broad categories of results are: Classroom Based Learning (CBL) which includes functional skills and Apprenticeships.
 2. Results will be reported by age and by qualification type.
 3. Results will be reported by timely as well as overall achievement; most significant for Apprenticeship provision because for CBL the focus is overall achievement so we can report on retention and pass rates too.

Interim Classroom Based Learning (CBL) Results

11. Classroom based learning represents the greatest proportion of provision at the College with 7,954 leavers in 2015-16. The inclusion of functional skills and the need for students to gain a grade C or above in GCSE maths and English, has had a significant impact on the balance of provision at levels 1, 2 and 3. In 2015-16, the College had 62% of the provision at level 1 (this includes entry level), 25% of the provision at level 2 and 13% of the provision at level 3.

12. Overall achievement is 79% which is 7% below the overall achievement rate in 2014-15 and is 3% below the National Rate (NR) of 82%.

13. These results show a decline in achievement rates. The results are also lower than what was predicted. In some areas, there is a significant variation between the predicted achievement rates as calculated in May 2016 and the actual achievement rates. A detailed analysis at individual qualification aim will be carried out, alongside a more rigorous process for calculating and validating predicted achievement in 2016-17.

14. Overall retention is 94% which is the same as 2014-15 and is 2% above the NR of 92%.

15. The overall pass rate is currently at 84% which is 6.0% below the final overall pass rate in 2014-15 and is 6% below the NR of 90%.

16-18s

16. For 16-18s, the overall achievement rate is 78% which is a 3% decline from 2014-15 and at the NR of 78%.

17. The key area of concern is achievement at level 1 which shows a declining position from 2014-15 (2,022 leavers). Achievement is currently 76%, which is a 7% decline from 2014-15 but is at the NR.

18. The achievement rates for level 2 have increased slightly by 1.4% since 2014-15. Achievement is currently 74.1% which is 0.6% below NR.

19. The strength for 16-18s is at level 3 which showed an improved position on 2014-15 and is above the NR by 4%. Level 3 has risen by 1% and is currently at 89% (895 leavers).

19+

20. For 19+, the overall achievement rate is 80% which is 9.0% below the 19+ achievement rate in 2014-15 and is 6% below the NR of 86%. However there are still 249 results outstanding and therefore the level 3 achievement rates could potentially increase.

21. The key areas of concern are achievement rates at levels 1 and 2. Achievement rates at level 1 are at 83% having dropped by 9% from the previous year. Achievement rates at level 2 are 69% having dropped by 14% in 2015-16 and are 17% below the NR (722 leavers). These declining rates are at level 2 largely due to the introduction of external examinations to level 2 courses and functional skills.

22. The strength for 19+ is at level 3 where achievement has risen from 76% in 2014-15 to 82% in 2015-16 which is 1% above the NR (365 leavers)

Apprenticeships

23. In 2015-16, the College had 157 overall leavers. The current overall achievement rate as at 5th October 2016 is 61% which is below the overall achievement rate for 2014-15 and below the NR of 71%. However, there are still a high volume of results which have not yet been fully processed and therefore the overall achievement rate is expected to rise further.

24. In 2015-16, the College had 151 timely leavers. The current timely achievement rate as at 5th October 2016 is 22% which is 3% below the timely achievement rate for 2014-15 and is significantly below the NR of 59%. However, there is still a high volume of results which have not yet been fully processed.

25. Following review of the interim data, the following key issues and risks were identified:

1. Failure to make the planned improvements in achievement rates and therefore not meeting the overall achievement rate target of 90%.
2. Key areas of concern for CBL that need to be targeted in 2016-17 are level 1 achievement for all ages including functional skills at level 1. Also level 2 achievement for all ages. Level 2 includes functional skills and the new externally examined level 2 courses.
3. Failure by some curriculum areas to accurately predict results. A revised process needed for predicting and validating predicted achievement rates in 2016-17.
4. Timely Apprenticeship achievement rates are likely to remain an area for improvement even when all of the results are included

26. Following the Committee's concerns, there took place a detailed discussion on the results for English & maths. As reported to the Committee, the inclusion of functional skills and the need for students to gain a grade C or above in GCSE maths and English, has had a significant impact on success rates. It was confirmed this issue has had a major impact on national averages with most Colleges reporting a decline in success rates due to English & maths results. However, regardless of the national picture, the College, staff and governors have a responsibility to improve English and maths outcomes for the students of the College. To this end, Members

sought explanations on what were the problems and what are the actions being taken to ensure a better performance in 2016-17. The following points were noted:

- Changes in assessment methods and shift in qualification types at a national level – were students and staff prepared for these changes?
- College predictions and forecasts were not accurate
- Significant increase in volumes in English & maths due to the funding requirement for students to gain a grade C or above in GCSE maths and English
- Language issues with some ESOL students not understanding what the exam questions were asking of them
- Lack of appropriately qualified and experienced maths teachers
- Curriculum management and staffing issues, particularly in Health & Social Care
- Accountability at curriculum level – Directors need to take responsibility for all aspects of the curriculum, including English & maths
- A separate English & maths panel has been held where staff analysed their results and reported on the actions they were taking. These action plans will inform quality improvement plan for each curriculum area.

27. Governors asked if there were any areas of good practice that other curriculum areas could learn from? It was reported the results at the Skills Centre were significantly above the main College campus. It was noted there was a strong maths practitioner who operated across the curriculum offer at the Skills Centre and who was supported by a strong Manager. Due to the size of the Centre in terms of student numbers, there was in place effective monitoring of student progress. This approach needs to be replicated in all other curriculum areas.

28. It was agreed the SAR validation panel meeting to be held in November was critical. This meeting needs to be used by the Committee to unpick the issues in each of the curriculum areas and to ensure the proposed curriculum quality improvement action plan is fit for purpose to address areas identified for improvement.

29. It was agreed for the SAR meeting that it would be useful to present success and achievement results in two formats, one reporting on results including functional skills and GCSE and the other reporting on results excluding functional skills and GCSE.

30. It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

RISK REGISTER

31. The College report '*Risk Register*' was received (Paper 3), highlighting the areas of focus relevant to the Committee. The Audit Committee had requested that each Committee be asked to review if there are sufficient and robust sources of 'Independent Assurances' against each risk that falls under the terms of reference of the Committee, and if identified 'Governor Oversight' arrangements are adequate and fit for purpose.

32. The Clerk advised that the Committee could also add to the Risk Register if any new risks were identified through discussions during the meeting. The Committee agreed no new risks were identified through discussions.

33. It was noted the Executive have added a new risk to the Risk Register - Risk 7 (Reduction in achievement rates due to a failure to prepare staff and students appropriately for new assessment methodologies of the new qualifications).

34. Risk 9 (Failure to improve success rates) has had its overall score increased to 20.

35. Following review of the issues discussed at this meeting, and in order to focus attention, the Committee requested two new risks be added to the Risk Register:

- A separate risk for English & maths
- Staff turnover and appropriately qualified staff. To inform the Committee if there is any impact on curriculum delivery arising from any of these potential staffing issues.

36. It was **RESOLVED** to note the 'Risk Register'.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

37. There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

38. Wednesday 09 November 2016 @ 14.00: SAR (Validation Meeting)

The meeting closed at 17.40

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chair)

SUMMARY ACTION LIST

Min	Action	Review Date
28	SAR Validation meeting needs to be used by the Committee to unpick the issues in each of the curriculum areas and to ensure the proposed curriculum quality improvement action plan is fit for purpose to address areas identified for improvement.	Next meeting
29	It was agreed for the SAR meeting that it would be useful to present success and achievement results in two formats, one reporting on results including functional skills and GCSE and the other reporting on results excluding functional skills and GCSE.	Next meeting
35	Risk Register:	Next meeting

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A separate risk for English & maths• Staff turnover and appropriately qualified staff. To inform the Committee if there is any impact on curriculum delivery arising from any of these potential staffing issues.	
--	--	--