

St Helens College

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at the Town Centre Campus, St Helens

Thursday 3 March 2022 at 9.00am

Present:	David Balsamo (Chair)	External Governor
	Zulakha Desai	External Governor
	John Heritage	External Governor
In attendance:	Mark Doyle	Deputy Principal - Curriculum and Quality
	Jen Hayes	Director of Adult and HE
	Julia Callaghan	Director of Customer Services, Marketing and Managing Director of Waterside Training
	Sue Dickinson	HE Quality Manager
	Gillian Hayhurst	Governance Director (minutes)

The meeting started at 9.04am. The meeting was not quorate for the first two items.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Nick Shore and Benjamin Bennett-Stanley.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

John Heritage joined the meeting during the next item and the meeting was quorate.

3 Matters arising and action tracker

The action tracker and updates were presented for comment.

Action HE1 - an update was provided on the students who had expressed an interest in attending the committee. Most attend operational committees as student representatives and will be supported by the Governance Director and HE Quality Manager prior to participation.

RESOLVED: The committee noted the action tracker update.

4 Safeguarding and Prevent Update

RESOLVED: The committee noted that there had been no Safeguarding or Prevent cases in Higher Education to report.

5 Higher Education provision report

The report presented the Higher Education enrolment and retention data for consideration.

The College is looking to expand its course provision from September 2022 while continuing to focus on delivering quality teaching. Senior leaders are forecasting an upward trend in both retention and achievement rates for this year.

The committee queried the low rates of predicted retention for the Early Years Foundation Degree. This is due to the withdrawal levels in previous years that will be carried through to 2021/22. The reasons for individual withdrawals are analysed by College, however it is difficult to extrapolate trends when considering small cohorts. This particular course is run in the evening to accommodate students who work full time. The cohort is mainly females with families who are struggling to balance their studies with family commitments and returning to work post-pandemic. The College identifies at-risk students to identify where additional support can be provided. The College is expecting retention to stabilise in future years based on the year one retention data for 2021/22.

With regard to benchmarking, the committee noted that published data cannot be used to compare against competitors. Some of the courses are internally validated and available data is not published at a granular level, making it difficult to draw conclusions. The College does compare itself using graduate outcomes data but achievements are not separated by course. The committee discussed the Teaching Excellence Framework, which is currently under consultation. It is hoped that there will be the ability to compare providers at both quality of teaching and outcomes levels once this is re-established.

The committee considered the predicted shortfall against planned income due to withdrawal factors. Retention figures for this term can impact on the final payments, however the current figure of £35,445 has reduced from the £100k previous predicted and is included in the financial forecast reported to the Governing Board.

RESOLVED: The committee noted the Higher Education provision report.

6 Higher Education Quality Improvement Plan update

The report presented an update on the progress made on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) up to February 2022 half term. Targets were set as part of the Self-assessment process 2020/21.

The committee noted that the College is forecasting to meet the targets set out in the self-assessment report. The main mechanism for achieving these has been the use of Performance and Enhancement Tracker (PET) meetings to address individual student challenges. The Student Opportunities fund has been extended this year to provide targeted support. Previously support had only been provided to students who applied directly.

In respect of under-represented groups, it was noted that the overall numbers are too low to provide broad statistical assurance, however senior managers monitor this at an individual student level. In addition to monitoring those who fall into at-risk categories, staff also consider barriers to stepping up to the next achievement level.

The committee queried the decline in achievement level for Higher National Certificate awards (non-engineering). This was due to the awarding body not implementing teacher assessed grades for its Higher National qualifications, or applying any adjustments to assessment criteria. Higher National achievement rates are expected to improve again post-pandemic as students are allowed back in the classroom. The College has a comprehensive extensions and extenuating circumstances procedure in place that is being extended through to level 7 programmes.

RESOLVED: The committee noted the Higher Education Quality Improvement Plan update.

Julia Callaghan joined the meeting during the next item.

7 Access and Participation Plan (APP)

The committee was provided with progress made towards the targets in the Access and Participation Plan 2020/21-2024/25.

It was noted that the Office for Students dashboards had not been published for 2020/21 therefore comparisons had been made against the College's Individualised Learner Records.

The committee queried what actions had been taken to increase the proportion of mature students. This can mostly be attributed to how the courses are designed to take in the College's demographic. Examples include delivering

courses in the evenings to accommodate individuals with full-time jobs and ensuring courses meet criteria to allow students to apply for additional funding. The committee was informed that the original targets were set for 2019/20 and are likely to be varied once the Office for Students has provided clear guidance on monitoring.

In response to a query on the number of black, Asian and minority ethnic students referred to in the report, the committee was informed that this equates to 21 individuals. Data does not suggest trends toward a particular academic area and numbers have increased due to progression from level 3 courses.

RESOLVED: The committee noted the Access and Participation Plan update

8 Higher Education Compliance report

The report provided the committee with a summary of compliance activity against the Office for Students ongoing conditions of registration since the last report in December 2021.

The College's response rate for the National Student Survey was 46% at 2 March 2022, compared to 47% at the same point last year. The College is monitoring this weekly and encouraging participation from students through a variety of marketing activities. As this will be one of the main sources of data for the new Teaching Excellence Framework metrics the College is keen to ensure high completion rates to report true satisfaction figures.

The College submitted its Completion of Procedures data return within the deadline and there were no changes to the information within the report.

RESOLVED: The committee noted the compliance report.

9 Graduate outcomes survey

The committee was provided with the Higher Education graduate outcomes data for 2018/19 and key findings from the analysis.

The committee congratulated those involved for their hard work. The key achievements noted was the percentage of College graduates entering employment at the end of the course (73%) and graduates in work or undertaking additional study after graduation (89%), particularly when compared to the overall rate for both England and the Liverpool City Region.

The committee queried whether the College responds to requests from the Office for Students to participate in consultation. The College responds to all requests

as staff are keen to ensure that the perspective of smaller providers is considered.

RESOLVED: The committee noted the graduate outcomes survey data for 2018/19.

10 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 December 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record subject to the following amendments.

- Mrs J Hayes in attendance
- Apologies from Mr J Hays

In response to a query on progress on the decolonisation of the curriculum, the committee was advised that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group had agreed a statement that is being used by Heads of Schools when examining curriculum content for next year.

11 Any other business

There were no items of any other business.

Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Higher Education Committee will be held on Thursday 5 May 2022 at 9.00am.

The meeting closed at 9.49am