

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE EDUCATION & STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2022 AT 4 PM

Present: Alan Aston (Chair), David O'Neill, Mary Jones, Francis Tunney, Craig Hodgson
In attendance: Shelley Brown (Director of Curriculum and Performance), Andy Bailey (Head of Compliance and Governance), Jason Lancaster (Director of IoT and Employer Partnerships), Gavin Barker (Assistant Principal Teaching and Learning), Joy Smith (Deputy Clerk)

22.3.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Lesley Rollason.

22.3.2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

22.3.3 2021-22 Performance

Shelley introduced her presentation and advised members that there is no national comparison data currently available for benchmarking purposes, however, we do receive SFCA data which provides a very useful comparison although it was noted that these are inclusive of sixth forms and GFE colleges, therefore, benchmarks are expected to be higher. We anticipate that national averages will be published by the DfE later in the year (for achievements but not value-added).

Shelley was delighted to confirm that this year's results are truly excellent. She took members through the headline overall achievement rates which highlighted our position with 88.5% being the overall figure. Shelley compared this with the 2018-19 results, the last normal year prior to Covid and the TAGs/CAGs, where we stood at 90.5% including subcontracting. Although this year's are very slightly down on that, we are confident that they place us in a strong position across the sector.

Headline achievement rates by department were then considered and members noted that there have been changes within the departmental structures. On the whole these are strong with only a couple of areas requiring further focus. Shelley added that GCSE maths results this year have been disappointing along with pockets in A Level Art and she confirmed that work is already underway to address these.

Members noted our current student profile information relating to gender, ethnicity, prior attainment and average GCSE scores on entry along with the headline A Level results over the 3 years' worth of data against the national average data (which is based on all providers across the country). It was

pleasing to note the improvement in all areas apart from lower A* to B grades at Stafford which are an area of focus going forward.

Shelley advised that following information shared at a recent AoC Forum she had attended, we would wish to focus on our higher grades, however, we are significantly above the college averages in terms of grading with A*-C grades at GFE colleges standing at 79.1% and the same grades at NSCG at 87.5%.

Francis took the opportunity to congratulate the College on this phenomenal set of results, particularly the A*-B grades at 64.5%, which are fantastic and have surpassed all hopes and expectations.

Alan queried the College's retention rates and Shelley advised that compared to national data we are really strong and any issues are dealt with. She advised that we have seen better results with those students who come in with a lower entry score in the large majority of cases at GCSE rather than high, but we will now focus on the high entries too. Members were assured that interventions will be made in areas where we see a requirement, and Shelley added that one interesting point from the data we have is the divide in male/female results in some areas (vocational – females outperforming male; A Levels – males outperforming females).

It was noted that areas feeding in to the IoT will also be an area of focus and Jason advised that we are working on structuring our curriculum to align with progression to the IoT, including progression routes and pathways for students who are not necessarily the highest achievers.

Regarding value added, Gavin advised that this is the first year we have achieved a positive value added score. In 2018-19 we were -0.48, whereas our current score is +0.05 representing a very positive shift. Males outperformed females by 0.2 of a grade and we added more value to students at the bottom end of the score on entry.

In Applied Certificates we have seen further excellent results with A* to B at 72.4% and A* to C at 92.1% and Shelley confirmed that we will also focus on improving high grades in these areas.

Members noted the student profile information relating to the BTEC L3 cohort along with the average GCSE score of 4.5 which is in line with the SFCA comparison. Shelley drew attention to the BTEC L3 summary and the comparisons with the 2019 and 2021 results and advised that 51.5% gained DDD and above, 75% MMM and above and 98.5% achieved a pass. She confirmed that, given this was the first year sitting external exams for the vast majority of these students, this was a really strong set of results.

Members noted the areas of particularly strong performance and Shelley confirmed the areas of focus at each site. Females outperformed males and we are adding more value again at the lower end rather than the higher end in the majority of cases.

Gavin referred to the BTEC L2 graded qualifications compared to the 2019 and 2021 national average. We are considerably above in DD, MM and PP against 2019 and against 2021 (which were TAGs) and members were delighted to note that we outperformed the TAGs in almost all areas. Overall we were 2.8% above the 2021 national average TAG position. Areas of focus were identified and Gavin advised on the work already being undertaken with the teams.

Jason provided context on the apprenticeship situation where we have seen a shift from frameworks to standards. Members noted that we expect to see frameworks tailing out over the next couple of years, however, against the national averages our performance is strong. Jason added that there are some carry forwards who are beyond their planned end date but we are working to address this.

By level Jason confirmed that there are some really strong outcomes, but a few areas where there is work to do. Cutting the data by gender shows no significant difference. LDD learners are slightly behind but we are providing additional support, and we do have a 10% split between white and other ethnicity but this is a tiny proportion.

Members noted the latest GCSE results and it was confirmed that the Maths shows a disappointing drop; considerable resource will be invested to improve that going forward. From further information received we have ascertained that our English progress measure shows positive value added and, although we are disappointed in our maths, it is still slightly better than the national average in terms of value added. (G4 NA Maths = 15% - NSCG 11.1%) (G4 NA English = 25%, NSCG 29%).

Alan felt that the format of the information provided and the level of breakdown was really useful, particularly relating to gender and ethnicity. Shelley advised that the SFCA data is really well presented, showing all the value added etc in an easy to read format. It is always circulated quickly compared to the DfE data for which we usually have to wait until the following March.

In summary, Shelley confirmed that we are very happy with our position and sustaining this performance next year would be a great achievement.

Alan advised on the concern members had previously had with this being the first time some of the students had taken a formal exam and he was delighted that these results have surpassed expectations.

Shelley advised on the process going forward to share the very positive results with staff which will be followed by detailed scrutiny at an individual team level in order to inform any actions required.

Craig reported that he had looked at local provider websites and we are the best performing in A Levels A* to B at NUL. We are on a par with Walton in Stafford (traditionally a high performer) and none of the results from other Stafford A level providers are anywhere near as positive. We will be clearly pointing this out to parents at open evenings this year.

Members noted that Honours Programme students have done particularly well and all apart from one got into their university of first choice. Their EPQs were excellent and a couple of them are being entered for a national award.

Alan thanked Shelley and Gavin for this very detailed presentation and all members once again congratulated the College on this incredibly strong set of results.

22.3.4 Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

22.3.5 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 5 December 2022 at 4.30 pm at NULC