

Item: 5

College Management Council Sub-committee: 15 March 2021.

Progress on Evaluation Report and Enhancement Plan.

Report by Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To advise on the progress against targets set for Orkney College in the Evaluation Report and Enhancement Plan following Education Scotland Progress Visit carried out on 19 and 20 February 2020.

2. Recommendations

The Sub-committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, on 2 November 2020, the College Management Sub-committee considered the findings of Education Scotland's Progress Visit inspection, carried out on 19 and 20 February 2020, and obtained assurance that progress with actions in the Enhancement Plan was satisfactory.

2.2.

Further progress with actions in the Enhancement Plan, as detailed in section 4 of this report.

It is recommended:

2.3.

That the Sub-committee scrutinise further progress with actions in the Enhancement Plan, as detailed in section 4 of this report, in order to obtain assurance that progress is satisfactory.

3. Background

3.1.

On 2 November 2020, when considering the outcome of Education Scotland's Progress Visit inspection, the Sub-committee noted:

- That, in 2018, all colleges produced an Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan which was endorsed by the Scottish Funding Council and Education Scotland.

- That, during Progress Visits, colleges demonstrated how well they were delivering on the targets and milestones identified in the Enhancement Plan, as well as outlining any changes to circumstances resulting in revisions to the original objectives.
- That Progress Visits provided reassurance to key stakeholders on the effectiveness of improvement actions undertaken by individual colleges.
- That, whilst undertaking Progress Visits, HM Inspectors of Education took account of the context and individual nature of each college.
- That Orkney College was inspected by Education Scotland in February 2020, with the Report of the Progress Visit attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing, which had subsequently been endorsed by Education Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council.
- That the areas of review considered during the Progress Visit to Orkney College on 19 and 20 February 2020 related to targets and milestones from the Enhancement Plan, which covered:
 - Outcomes and Impact.
 - Delivery of learning and services to support learning.
 - Leadership and quality culture.
- That the areas of review received a satisfactory grading which was also the overall outcome from the Progress Visit for Orkney College.
- That further areas of work and progress were identified for Orkney College, in line with advancing the Enhancement Plan outlined in the original Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan.

3.2.

The Sub-committee scrutinised the inspection findings, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing, and obtained assurance that progress with actions in the Enhancement Plan was satisfactory.

4. Progress Made to Date

The following sections set out the action points from the Inspection findings and outline further progress since the meeting of the Sub-committee on 2 November 2020.

4.1. Outcomes and impact

4.1.1.

The College continues to perform well against national benchmarks. However, there has been a downward trend in outcomes over the past three years for learners on full-time Further Education (FE) programmes. College managers have a clear focus on strategies to improve learner retention and attainment rates for subject areas that have experienced a decline in learner outcomes.

4.1.2.

With an annual enrolment of around 100 learners on FE programmes, minor variations in learner numbers can produce significant variations in College performance indicators. The College is developing a bespoke version of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) performance indicator tool relevant to Orkney College UHI to reduce the influence of comparisons between large and small data sets. A recently appointed management information specialist is working across UHI to take this development forward.

4.1.3.

College managers have improved the engagement of curriculum teams in the analysis of programme performance data. Managers and staff are aware of the reasons for non-completion of each individual learner. National performance indicator data is used for benchmarking and to identify actions to improve college programmes.

4.1.4.

Curriculum teams have engaged well with training opportunities for the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) data hub and are now interrogating programme data better to help inform curriculum planning. College staff attend relevant UHI committees, such as the Quality Forum, and regional meetings to discuss programme performance trends across the UHI partnership.

4.1.5.

The College has progressed well with the alignment of the curriculum to meet the needs of the local economy. For example, sport programmes have been added recently to the curriculum portfolio to meet the increased interest in sport around the upcoming Island Games in 2023. College managers have a clear focus on broadening the FE portfolio, particularly in relation to Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) and the apprenticeship family. The College has well-developed plans to introduce SVQs and Modern Apprenticeships (MA) in hospitality, agriculture, engineering and farm management. The College has doubled the number of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects offered in the past three years.

4.2. Areas of Further Progress and Actions Required

4.2.1.

College managers should continue to roll out plans for performance tools and processes that support curriculum teams to analyse and reflect on programme performance.

- **Action:** The College has continued to work with the Management Information Officer and UHI on identifying and applying new tools and will continue to do so.

4.3. Delivery of Learning and Services to Support Learning

4.3.1. Areas of Positive Progress

4.3.1.1.

The College continues to support the Scottish Government's Youth Employment strategy, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), through strong collaborative working with key partners. These partners include Skills Development Scotland (SDS), local secondary schools, DYW Orkney and local employers. College staff work closely with SDS and DYW colleagues to promote the ambitions of DYW and the apprenticeship routes available to learners. They have developed bespoke promotional material, which includes case studies of Orkney learners and these have been distributed widely to local schools and through social media.

4.3.1.2.

The College is promoting Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) effectively with parents and carers, who are key influencers with young people, to inform them better about the benefits of these qualifications. There has been an increase in the number of senior phase pupils undertaking FAs in the current year, from seven learners on one framework to 23 learners across four different frameworks.

4.3.1.3.

During the delivery of programmes, teaching staff continue to emphasise the importance to learners of developing relevant skills for employment. Staff have a good awareness of local labour market needs and incorporate relevant examples into learning activities. Curriculum teams have undertaken training with SDS on career management skills and the Career Education Standard, with further training planned on the use of My World of Work. The College now has a partnership agreement with SDS which includes fortnightly visits to the College by SDS Careers staff to provide personal careers support for learners.

4.3.1.4.

Curriculum teams have introduced learning activities into all full-time programmes which reflect the realities of the workplace and prepare learners better for employment. Many of these programmes contain a work placement or an opportunity for work experience. In part-time programmes, most learners are in employment and completing awards that support their current work practices.

4.3.1.5.

Most teaching staff participate routinely in activities that reflect on the relevance and currency of the programmes in their curriculum area. There are many examples of where the curriculum or delivery methods have been improved to meet the needs of learners. For example, in hospitality both the curriculum content and delivery model have been revised following a self-reflection exercise. This new approach has improved the recruitment of learners and retention rates. Teaching staff who attended Practice and Pedagogy sessions, held in the last academic year, found these helpful in reflecting more thoroughly on their own teaching practice. The

College has also arranged staff workshops to facilitate reflective practice in line with the General Teaching Council for Scotland professional standards.

4.3.1.6.

At present, the College operates a voluntary peer observation process in which some staff participate. They report that the process is useful in helping them reflect on their teaching practice. The UHI has recently introduced guidance for a peer observation process across the partnership. The College has used this guidance to develop a revised peer observation model which is specific to the context and requirements of Orkney College UHI. This model is now in its final stages of development ahead of approval by the College management team and will be piloted later this academic year.

4.3.1.7.

The College continues to raise learner awareness of the support available to those experiencing mental health issues and is in the process of appointing a College-based Mental Health Counsellor. College staff are aware of the various pathways which they can signpost to learners who may require services to support their mental health. College staff have worked well, in partnership with Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA), to promote these services. A group of staff, including the HISA depute president, have undertaken the Mental Health First Aid training programme. Participants report that they have benefited from the insights gained from this activity, which they value highly. Staff also have access to an online, UHI-wide mental health toolkit. This resource is proving helpful for staff who require practical information about how to identify behaviours that might indicate a potential mental health issue.

4.3.1.8.

The College is incrementally increasing the range and levels of its engineering programmes. The engineering curriculum team has introduced a new National 5 Skills for Work (SfW) programme in engineering based on demand from local employers, which attracted 28 learners. The College has also introduced a National Certificate mechanical engineering programme and appointed a new engineering lecturer. The curriculum team has developed and introduced new, bespoke programmes for the transportation of hydrogen fuel. However, skills-based courses such as SVQs, FAs and MAs have not been added to the engineering portfolio, primarily due to the shortage of work placements for learners.

4.3.2. Areas of Further Progress and Actions Required

4.3.2.1.

Although work placements support learners on many programmes, most teaching staff are not aware of, or using, the Work Placement Standard.

- **Action:** A lead within the College has been identified ensure that policy is adopted and adapted to local requirements for the Work Placement Standards and to support departments dealing with work placements. This will be cross referenced in the Vocational Training & Education Group (VTEG) in the College.

4.3.2.2.

Due to staff absence, no Practice and Pedagogy sessions have been held in the current academic year. The College plans to recommence these sessions when a new postholder is appointed.

- **Action:** The appointment of the new Assistant Principal will facilitate further development of Practice and Pedagogy sessions for staff, though in the current year there has been much work in this area in responding to the need for alternative learning and teaching modes of delivery and assessment.

4.3.2.3.

There are no progression routes available for learners completing the Skills for Work National 5 engineering programme this summer. This should be addressed as a matter of urgency to meet the needs of these learners, and to support the College's commitment to increasing participation in engineering and STEM programmes.

- **Action:** The College worked with HMIE to develop a new National 5 course, which was in place for the new student intake for 2020. Unfortunately, this did not receive sufficient applications for it to be run. The College will review this offer, and either offer it to students again for the 2021 intake or seek to replace it with an alternative offer.

4.3.2.4.

Maritime and Engineering department is working with UHI and SDS to introduce the Foundation Apprenticeship in Mechanical Engineering. Due to a lack of available work placements, this is being devised as a mainly in-house offer with a plan to liaise with local manufacturing and provide a "Problem Solving and Prototyping" service delivered to local industry by the students. Indications are that this will be acceptable to SDS and will commence in August 2021.

- **Action:** This is an ongoing development.

4.4. Leadership and quality culture

4.4.1. Areas of positive progress

4.4.1.1.

College managers are working productively to overcome the challenges faced by young people who require residential accommodation when they begin a programme of study at the College. Finding suitable accommodation for young people under the age of 18 is constrained by legislative obligations, such as safeguarding and child protection regulations. Previously, the College has been unsuccessful in a number of attempts to resolve this issue with schools and local businesses. For College learners over the age of 18, recent conversations with the Student Housing Cooperative have been very productive. The Student Housing Cooperative are keen to discuss solutions with the College, in partnership with UHI and OIC, to help provide appropriate accommodation.

4.4.1.2.

Two HISA student representatives are now voting members of the College Management Council Sub-committee and have received appropriate training to carry out their role. These representatives are contributing effectively to the work and purpose of this committee.

4.4.1.3.

The principal has established a new senior team structure that clarifies roles and responsibilities, including those for Curriculum Leaders. This has improved communication and created a more open culture for sharing information across College functions. The senior team has increased its engagement with the Council, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), third sector organisations and the UHI partnership. However, the unexpected absence of senior management capacity has impeded some organisational developments in recent months.

4.4.1.4.

The new chair of the College Management Council Sub-committee (CMC) has initiated an independent review of management and governance in the College. Recent improvements to the role of the CMC in College effectiveness and scrutiny are beginning to have an impact. For example, proposals for new developments are now based on the submission of a business case to the CMC, providing a more robust, documented and systematic approach to development planning.

4.4.1.5.

The principal and principal designate have organised appropriate activities to support senior staff and College managers during the handover of roles. The new Quality Manager is working effectively with the principal and senior team to relieve the principal of these temporary duties. A new Students Record Manager and Business and Finance Manager have recently been appointed.

4.4.2. Areas of further progress and actions required

The Inspection Report indicated, that at this time there were no further actions that needed to be completed and all current ones as detailed above had been completed.

5. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and scrutiny and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

6. Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications arising from this noting report.

7. Legal Aspects

The Council should comply with all legal recommendations made and subject to that, there are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. Contact Officers

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