

LEARNER INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

*(Approved by the Curriculum & Quality Enhancement Committee on 3
December 2007)*

LEARNER INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

1. Vision statement

The College is committed to 'Putting Learners first' and creating a happy and successful working atmosphere where learners can reach their full potential.

We believe in the potential of all our learners. We will strive to provide the breadth of opportunity and excellent teaching and support that leads to success. We will also strive to build self-esteem and confidence within a socially and environmentally responsible community. It is our belief that this supportive environment will motivate individuals to be, engaged and challenged developing them both personally and intellectually beyond their aspirations.

2. Guiding Principles

The Learner Involvement strategy sets out the steps we will take to maintain, enhance and build learner involvement in order to improve the effectiveness of our organisation and provision.

We believe that development of a Learner Involvement Strategy is an opportunity to embed real citizenship, raise standards and improve learning by:

- modelling the behaviour & attitudes we claim to value
- helping to develop articulate, informed, reflective people, able to discuss and critically evaluate their learning experience.

It is important to recognise that the Learner Involvement Strategy encompasses every college service. It is not simply about student representative structures, it seeks to involve learners in every sphere of the College. The College will endeavour to build on current learner involvement where the learner voice has impacted on such issues as the catering facilities, to learner involvement in the quality and delivery of teaching and learning.

The College will also develop strategies to involve all learners from those on 14-16 programmes, part-time and HE programmes.

3. This Strategy

This Learner Involvement Strategy aims to foster and promote a culture of learner involvement. It sets out how the College will support and further develop the 'Learner Voice'. It will encourage and facilitate learner scrutiny of existing involvement arrangements and enlist the active involvement of learners in developing new mechanisms. We will work closely with learners in reviewing the progress of the implementation of this strategy and seek their views shaping future involvement priorities.

We are committed to:

- give learners more opportunities to get involved in all aspects of College life
- help learners develop the skills they need to get involved
- give learners the support and confidence they need to get involved
- motivate learners to get involved
- identify and meet the needs of groups of learners who are currently less involved
- ensure staff and managers have the skills, support and confidence they need to involve learners and fully understand the concepts involved in assessment. This will enable them to discuss assessment and learning and really use assessments themselves to improve how well learners learn.

Strategies to ensure the above are as follows:

4. Developing learner involvement – participation and representation

The College sees an active, well supported **Student Union** as an important partner in promoting and delivering increased learner involvement. Through their union, learners can have direct and formal representation on college committees and forums.

5. Involving learners in formal representation

5.1 Student Representatives

The Pastoral Tutor will hold a focus group meeting with each tutor group. Each tutor group nominates a minimum of one representative to voice the views of the group at the site Student forum meeting. As representative bodies, these forums form a part of the Students' Union Constitution and feed into the cross college Student Union meetings. The timetable for these meetings can be found on the student intranet and form part of the tutorial schedule.

5.2 Student Union

All students will become members on enrolment unless they wish to opt out. A directly elected President leads the Union. The President will continue to be supported in his/her role by a **Student Liaison Officer (A progression Mentor who is a member of staff)**. It is planned that Student Site Officers will be provided with a private space (with telephone, internet, email access) to conduct their work.

There is a yearly elected membership in-line with the Student Union Constitution. This Student parliament will meet at least six times each year, with the first meeting being in October. Members of the College Senior Management Team will attend the meetings.

Site Meetings in the form of Forum Meetings will be held each term as stated above. These meetings will be chaired by a union site representative and attended by the site Lead Tutor.

5.3 Student Governors

The three students elected as Student union site representatives are nominated as student Governors to sit on the Board of Governors of the College. These representatives are elected annually in-line with the Student Union Constitution.

5.4 Student Voice Conference

Towards the end of each academic year it is planned that the College and Students' Union will jointly run a learner voice conference that consists of all the elected student union members and course representatives. The event will reward course representatives for their activity over the previous year, debriefing them to gather information into the quality improvement process.

5.5 Support for students at meetings

The Students Union and the College support students to participate fully in meetings. This includes providing enablers for those who have a difficulty participating in meetings due to a disability. We are also committed to paying childcare and travel costs. Students will not lose any EMA payments if they are elected to attend meetings.

5.6 The Student Union and the College will work together to:

- develop the role of learner representatives and student ambassadors;
- increase the level of learner participation in union elections and surveys of opinion;
- develop the use, accessibility and profile of the Student Union section of the website;
- actively involve learners in the College's self assessment process and the judgements that underpin it;
- introduce a termly 'learner question time' as an opportunity for learners to have a direct dialogue with the Principal and other college managers.

6. Involving learners in surveys, focus groups, consultation events

The College currently uses a combination of on-line and paper survey questionnaires, focus groups and consultation events to gather views directly from learners. These contributions are used to evaluate existing provision. Learner views also emerge through the complaints and grievance procedure and through informal conversations with tutors.

We have developed a 'you said this..... we did this' strategy, the College wishes to further develop this by Posters in prominent locations on each site asking for feedback, with the headings 'What do we do well?', 'Where do we need to

improve?’ and ‘What would you be interested in us doing in the future?’ Passers-by will be provided with Post-it notes and pens to log their ideas. ‘You said – we did’ feedback will then be posted in to let people know how the feedback has been used. These responses will also be posted on the student intranet.

The College aims to develop with the Student Union:

- A ‘student voice’ publication once a term in hard copy and electronically on the student intranet through ‘Moodle’.
- The introduction and support of an annual student conference with a learner led agenda.
- Each Directorship will invite the learner representatives to their meetings once each term (6 terms).
- Review activities for gathering views, to ensure that the models and mechanisms do not exclude ‘hard to reach’ groups or those with learning/physical disabilities. Learners with disabilities are invited to act as mystery shoppers to test and give feedback on the Equality and Diversity Policy and procedures.
- Pilot a scheme where senior managers spend a day shadowing a learner as a way of sampling the learner experience.
- Pilot an initiative where learners views are sought when appointing new members of staff by learners reviewing ‘micro-lessons’ taught by applicants.
- Ensure we develop the opportunities for school links and part-time learners to feed into the student forums.
- Further development of satisfaction questionnaires for school links with a clear structure for feedback on actions and outcomes.

7. Developing learner involvement – Teaching and Learning

7.1 Involving learners in assessment for learning

Personalising learning, making learners co-creators of their learning, requires an ongoing and constructive dialogue with learners. For this to be achieved learners need to develop the confidence and the skills to understand and manage their own learning needs. Learners who understand how they learn best will be able to take a more active role in managing their learning.

Learning style inventories can be used to identify preferred ways of working; structured feedback on this can give learners the confidence needed to engage in discussion about how they learn. At the same time as helping them recognize the support they will need to learn in a range of different ways. It is important to ensure that teachers shape and structure their learning programme in a way that facilitates these learning needs and ensure

that learners utilise the support needed in order to be effective in that learning environment.

Learner induction is an important opportunity to share this information. Additionally, the information needs of parents/guardians need to be considered so they are better able to support the learning process. Further development of our parents' evenings will support this.

All learners currently have an ILP which sets out their long-term learning aim. Regular reviews focus on shorter-term actions, and targets designed to facilitate successful achievement of those aims. Actions and targets are not always negotiated or SMART, and the reviews have not always been well planned or executed in the past. However, with the introduction of a new Pastoral Tutorial System for 07/08 it is envisaged that this process will be greatly improved.

The College and learners will work together to:

- develop a shared understanding of the learning process. To explore collectively what is considered to be a good lesson and why and share/discuss this with our learners. This would include the importance of regular feedback, participation and active learning.
- develop and practise the skills needed to question and scrutinize the learning experience in a way that leads to fruitful dialogue rather than conflict.
- develop an on-line ILP accessible to learners.
- seek learner views about the usefulness of the ILP and its impact on their learning.

7.2 Involving learners in pastoral support & enrichment

Pastoral support plays a crucial role in developing the confidence, independence and motivation of learners.

The College and learners will work together to:

- seek learner involvement in creating, reviewing and delivering the Tutor Programme;
- in conjunction with Aim Higher to develop models of peer mentoring. This can be a powerful way of cementing new learning skills and passing them on to other learners, as well as providing a satisfying and rewarding experience for the learners themselves.

- seek learner involvement in creating, reviewing and delivering the Enrichment Programme.

7.3 Involving learners in quality improvement

College led learner feedback on teaching and learning is currently sought through questionnaires and some focus groups. In addition, the College tutorial system provides a formal opportunity, three times a year and at the exit tutorial, for learners to feedback to teachers about their experience.

Evidence from learners suggests they feel their views ‘disappear.’ The information about teaching and learning gleaned from this process will be shared with staff so that learners see actions resulting from their comments. With the introduction of Pastoral Tutors these comments will be fed through to the relevant Director of Curriculum & Quality or the Senior Management Team and the resulting actions will be fed back to the learner. Learners’ involvement in the observation of teaching and learning requires further development. Outcomes of course reviews will be shared with the learners.

The College and learners will work together to:

- develop a ‘you said this..... we did this’ protocol in respect of questionnaires and surveys, to ensure the results are communicated to the learners and any resultant actions are discussed with learner representatives;
- strengthen the course review process, supporting monitoring arrangements and ensure compliance with the above protocol;
- require all course teams to maintain evidence of the use of learner feedback to improve performance;
- develop the direct involvement of learner representatives in the annual course review by inviting course representatives to the meeting where the course review is developed.
- develop, with learners and staff representatives, a protocol for the active involvement of learners in observations of teaching and learning. The Observers will ask for the views of Learners.
- promote the opportunity for the active involvement of learners in the appointment of teaching staff and managers;
- involve learners in the writing of course reviews, corroborate or challenge the strengths or weaknesses identified and add comments representative of the student cohort;

- involve learners in ‘testing’ judgements in the College’s draft SAR, by inviting them to corroborate or challenge the strengths or weaknesses identified in a draft SAR prepared by the review team, and actions required are minuted and fed back to the respective curriculum manager, with feedback covering things that are good as well as things that need to be changed. When the SAR is presented in its final form in November, it is expected that minuted actions will have been addressed;
- consider how we could embed learner involvement in our business planning.

8. Developing learner involvement – creating the culture

It is vital that learner involvement is recognised as a key element of college strategy. The direct oversight of the learner involvement strategy lies with the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality. A report on the Implementation of the Learner Involvement Strategy will go via SMT to the Governors Curriculum & Quality Enhancement Committee once a year or as required.

The Director of Student Support will work with the Student Liaison Officer and the President of the Student Union, to ensure that learner involvement engages with processes across the College.

In creating this culture, we recognise that relationships between teachers and students will alter as we move towards more genuine partnership. Staff, and learners, will require support and training to facilitate this shift, and ensure that it improves the overall learning experience and outcomes for learners. We will consider too the impact of these changes on parents/guardians and their role in the learning process.

The College and learners will work together to:

- make learner involvement an explicit standing item on College meeting agendas;
- make learners (and their parents/guardians) aware of this involvement strategy and how they can contribute to its success;
- provide appropriate training for staff in encouraging and responding to increased learner involvement.

9. Developing learner involvement – measuring and reporting on the impact

This learner involvement strategy is a living document and will be reviewed and amended annually as part of the college’s self assessment processes. The

responsiveness strand of the **Framework for Excellence** and the **CIF** will provide key points of reference.

In assessing the impact of this strategy, the College will take account of outcome measures such as recruitment, learner satisfaction and success rates. In addition, process measures such as learner participation and involvement rates will be used. Examples of outcomes, against which this strategy will be assessed, are as follows:

- evidence that learner views are taken seriously, and have triggered improvements;
- learner representatives report high satisfaction with the impact their roles are having;
- self assessment content and performance improvement actions can be linked directly to documented learner views;
- learner involvement activities lead to clear and well publicised lists of actions that are then implemented;
- the College can demonstrate how learner feedback is used to identify and spread good practice;
- learner surveys consistently give high levels of overall learner satisfaction;
- active learner involvement in teaching and learning is evidenced through lesson observations;
- Learners will be involved in the self-assessment of this strategy.

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