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Regional Board Report

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

Subject: Learning for Leading (L4L) - reports for 22/23, and discussion about the Scheme	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☐ **For Discussion** ☒ **For Information** ☐
Prepared by: Anne-Marie Sturrock, Vice-Principal Student Experience	**Date of Committee:** 22 June 2023

Purpose: To share the results of the L4L visits for 2022/23 and to agree on the format of the scheme in the future.

Executive Summary:

The Learning for Leading scheme was introduced some years ago to enable Board Members to establish a link and a relationship with both teaching and support departments across the College.

The aim of the Scheme is for Board Members to become more directly familiar with the work of the College.

Attached are the current guidelines for L4L visits and the reports received for 2022/23.

New members will be allocated an area before the start of the next academic year.

Discussion would be welcome as to how the Scheme works for both Members and staff involved and whether there are improvements which could be made.

Linked to Strategic Ambition(s):

Proactively engage with our community and stakeholders to ensure our practice reflects their needs

Create high quality learning and training opportunities which are relevant, enabling and flexible

Performance Measures:

Engaged & empowered staff and student body

Engaged & empowered staff and student body

Linked to Strategic Risk Register:

4b - Governance
4a - Staffing

Recommendation:

Board agree any changes or amendments to the Scheme and note the reports submitted.

Previous Committee Approvals: Reports were noted at CQSE 1 June 2023	
For publication ☐	**Not for publication** ☒ **If not, why not?** Information on financial arrangements with a sister college noted however could be redacted?

Broadening Board Engagement with Staff and Students

Learning for Leading (L4L) Scheme

The Learning for Leading scheme was introduced some years ago to enable Board Members to establish a link and a relationship with both teaching and support departments across the College. The aim of the scheme is for Board Members to become more directly familiar with the work of the College. You should remember that you have a role within the College of Governance. Management is a responsibility delegated to the executive of the College. Therefore, your visit is not a management review, more an opportunity to learn and understand the context in which strategic decisions are made.
Board Members are requested to engage with their identified area to learn about the business, make meaningful contact with staff and students and improve the link between the Board and the college operations.
The Board Secretary will collate the returned reports annually and provide a summary to the Executive team of key highlights for consideration and response. This will be shared with Board.

Guidance for Board Members

- L4L allocated areas are reviewed annually. Some Board Members will wish to stay with their previous areas in order to see some of the planned changes or activity through while others may wish to move onto another area. You will have opportunity to engage with more than one area during your tenure as a Board Member.

- Your contact details will be shared with the leader of that area. They will contact you to arrange a general discussion about what the priorities and challenges are for that area and the types of activities that you may want to observe or join.

- You may want to speak to staff, a group of students, attend a class (either online or in person), have a tour of the facilities or attend an event. The content of a visit can vary and will be mutually agreed.

- Dependant on Board Members time commitment, you may want to engage in various activities on a single visit or do this over two or three events.

- Some questions may arise after any engagement visit so it is always useful to have a quick catch up with the leader of the area before writing a summary report.

- Using the template provided, you should complete a short summary report. This should be forwarded to the Board Secretary who will then circulate it to the Exec Team to allow feedback to be given. The reports are circulated to the Curriculum and Quality Committee at the next available meeting along with the Executive response if any is required.

- If, at any time, you are unclear as to the purpose of the scheme or are concerned about anything you have heard or seen, please do not hesitate to contact the Board Secretary for further guidance.

Guidance for Leaders of Linked Areas

- You should, in consultation with your linked Board Member, arrange engagements with your area in each academic year as detailed above.

- You may be asked to discuss your area's ambition, priorities and challenges. Board Members are keen to understand your area better to help inform Boards strategic decision making, so they will not intervene in resolving issues but it is helpful to understand what they are.

- Board Members may want to speak to staff, and/or group of students, attend a class (either online or in person), have a tour of the facilities or attend an event. The content of a visit can vary and will be mutually agreed.

- Following a visit, the Board Member will be asked to compile a short report a copy of which will be sent to the Board Secretary, the Principal and copied to yourself.

- You should remember that Board Members have a responsibility for Governance within the College however management is a delegated responsibility, therefore this visit is not a management review, simply an opportunity for you to help them better understand the work of the college.

- If, at any time, you are unclear as to the nature of the link, please do not hesitate to contact the Principal or the Board Secretary for further guidance.

Review
Following the visits and receipt of the completed reports, an annual summary and Executive response will be reviewed by the full Board. This will form part of the Board's submission towards the annual quality report. It will also enable Board Members to share in the experiences of their colleagues and to identify common issues and themes.

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

LEARNING FOR LEADING

Board Member: Bernie Quinn
Linked Area: **Student Services (support)**
Date of Visit: **15 February 2023**
Summary of activities undertaken during visit: • Meeting with Claire to discuss challenges, strategies and daily operational delivery of student support across the college
Positive Impressions: • Claire comes across as an outstanding individual who is clearly passionate about the provision of student support via many diverse means. The interventions that Claire overseas and drives are hugely valuable, relevant and I believe timely in their planning. The transition of students from sometimes challenging backgrounds, schools or even simply between study levels is recognised across FE and HE as the potential crucial difference between success or failure for many students. Claire clearly recognises this and has planned accordingly to deliver such added value support.
Areas which should be brought to the attention of the College Management: • The Robertson trust obviously provides valuable funding for the mentoring programme but when this money runs out, it would be concerning if there was no longer the finance available to support this and other types of support programmes.
Further information required or requested: • It was hugely beneficial for me to hear more first-hand about the challenges facing many of our students. From poverty issues to mental health and anxiety challenges to the identification of students potentially at risk and the many layers of support that have been developed, I was heartened by the proactive way that Claire and her team go about the daily business. The new digital transformation system should also streamline many different information streams into one easier to access student record and information portal. • I would like to remain as the Board member link to this department.

Bernie Quinn

16 February 2023

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

LEARNING FOR LEADING

Board Member: Jess McBeath
Linked Area Management Information Systems and IT
Date of Meeting: Scott Moncrieff 09.12.22 Joanne George 08.02.23
Summary of activities undertaken during visit: Online Teams meeting, phone call and email correspondence. This report written Feb 2023.
Positive Impressions: When I met Scott in December, he explained that the new online service desk had been launched for staff and students who need IT and facilities support. It's an online portal which allows a user to log and manage their service requests, and there are knowledge-based articles which may answer a question without needing a staff response. This approach also ensures that all information is captured once, reducing back-and-forth interactions to get further clarity. Going forward, there is potential to expand the service desk to include other services such as student funding and queries for the student association. It has not yet been decided whether to open a physical one-stop-shop. I met Joanne in February and learned about a key shared services project with Newbattle Abbey College. Newbattle has around 80 students who are credit fundable across 4 courses, and they have been using a paper-based system. Joanne and her team have implemented a new agreement to share access to part the MIS system with Newbattle to enable processing of Newbattle student applications. A potential student applies via the Newbattle website and is seamlessly directed to complete their application through Borders College MIS system. Newbattle staff have limited access to the system to manage these applications. There is a data processing agreement between the colleges. Newbattle paid for the development work, and there is a small (roughly £5k per annum) income for operating the service for them. There are 3 phases in the project: phase 1 is now complete and further services will be added through the summer. Although the income is small, the project represents the potential to provide more shared services for Newbattle and other clients in the longer term. Joanne's team also took over eLearning following a restructure last summer, and Moodle (the virtual learning environment) was replaced with Canvas. The team now includes three eLearning technologists who spend time with staff, ensuring their courses are at a good standard on the system.

Areas which should be brought to the attention of the College Management:

Regarding cyber security, Scott's team are looking into the annual renewal of Cyber Essentials Plus. However, there are pressures in terms of team resources but also the requirements for accreditation have changed. Previously, Cyber Essentials focused primarily on the security of devices and infrastructure on campus. This has now been expanded to include remote working using mobile devices (both personal and college devices). To achieve accreditation, the College requires a mobile device management solution, which the College currently has for tablets but not smartphones. The team are investigating options. There is also a desire to ensure users have sufficient knowledge and skills in relation to cyber security. At the moment, users must complete a compliance module every couple of years and the team would like to enhance learning with more workshop-driven scenarios. Scott mentioned there are financial and human resource pressures relating to the need to update Windows on a range of staff laptops. Scott is also looking to improve the telephony system, moving away from desk phones towards using Teams for calls i.e. cloud based. We discussed how resilient this approach is.

Joanne and I talked about resourcing with regard to digital transformation projects. There is some learning regarding the expectations of technology replacing human resourcing. For example, with the implementation of the new MIS system, a timetabling role was removed and the expectation placed on staff to do their own timetabling – but this results in errors in the system, which Joanne's team spend time resolving. Similarly, the MIS system requires processes and automation to be set up, continually maintained and further developed, but there was no plan to shift existing admin resources to support these processes into Joanne's team when the new system was brought in. The learning here is around future expectations for human resources when planning digital transformation projects.

Further information required or requested:

- None at this time.

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

LEARNING FOR LEADING

Board Member:

Dave Roberts

Linked Area:

Land Based

Date of Visit:

Wednesday 9th November

Summary of activities undertaken during visit:

- Discussions about facilities, student experience and curriculum
- Tour of St Boswells site including rented land

Positive Impressions:

- Commitment of staff to deliver courses in what is now a very small campus for number of students.
- Links with local businesses e.g. John Deere for engineering
- Willingness to develop curriculum including short courses.
- Student support staff now at St Boswells campus at least one day a week.

Areas which should be brought to the attention of the College Management:

I am sure everyone already knows about these, and I appreciate that funding is an issue.

- Lack of space, whilst teaching areas have been adapted, I was concerned about lack of small, confidential space e.g. for discussions with students who may have concerns or just need for a quiet space. I firmly believe that we should be able to offer all students a similar (not identical) experience at all campuses.
- Long term planning on campus for land-based should (must) include access to land. There are examples in Scotland of land-based colleges who have moved to premises without land, this led to dramatic drop in student numbers.
- Horticulture is a potential area for expansion but careful planning about what sector of horticulture is required in Borders region.

Further information required or requested:

- Nothing at present

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

LEARNING FOR LEADING REPORT

Board Member: Carol Gillie

Linked Area: Creative Industries

Date of Visit: 22nd February 2023

Summary of activities undertaken during visit:

Met Veronica Blackwood, Curriculum and Learning Manager for Creative Industries, and toured the various departments within her portfolio at the Galashiels Campus. During the visit I was able to meet and chat informally to both students and staff. The areas I visited were

- Hairdressing
- Beauty
- Art and Design (including Graphics)
- Hospitality
- English Speaking as a Foreign Language (ESOL)

Positive Impressions:

- The facilities at the Galashiels campus are of a high standard
- The students engaged with the task they were undertaking and the interaction between students and staff was very positive
- The staff are very enthusiastic about their subjects and keen to share their knowledge and experience with students to give them the best possible outcome at Borders College and their future career path
- Staff know their students as individuals and adapt learning to meet the needs of the students (person centred learning)
- Staff using flexible learning over academic years to support students to gain qualifications
- The Curriculum manager has a good relationship with her direct reports
- Teaching staff and achievement coach working well together
- New process involving Senior Managers to finalise curriculum on offer for the new academic has been well received
- ESOL has worked well with Ukrainians in the local area
- Catering student have recently had the opportunity to meet some key individuals in their field (eg Tom Kitchin)

Areas which should be brought to the attention of the College Management:

- A rising number of young people come to the college with ever increasing needs and complexities in their lives – mental health issues, personal circumstances etc
- Student expectations often very high
- Partial completion of qualifications is not always recognized outside the college
- Although flexible learning available even more flexibility would be helpful
- Students (at a student focus grou) are requesting that all students who have gained a qualification and are leaving the college should be given the opportunity to graduate – this is particularly at SQA Level 6. This is supported by staff. This is a key motivation for young people and the withdrawal of this opportunity has not landed well.

Further information required or requested:

- The Board should consider reinstating the opportunity for all students leaving the college to graduate especially those who have completed SQA Level 6 or equivalent
- Staff are keen to know who Board members are, interact with them and share with them more detail about the work they do

REGIONAL BOARD
LEARNING FOR LEADING REPORT

Board Member: Liz Parkes
Linked Area: STEM
Date of Visit: 8th December 2022
Summary of activities undertaken during visit: I met Jimmy Louth at Galashiels for a catch up over coffee and discussion of the exciting developments and challenges within the STEM curriculum. We discussed the qualifications on offer, demand and post qualification destinations. There was particular interest in automotive and electrical engineering. Apprenticeships and the roles of the *Scottish Motor Trade Association* and *Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust were noted, as was the HNC in Electrical Engineering and NC Engineering Systems with Renewable Energy.* Informed by a student focus group and demand, I*MI* light vehicle maintenance students would hopefully soon be able to progress to a level three qualification on completion of level two. With the exception of *Plexus* in Kelso, there were few engineering jobs in the Borders, so those willing to travel tended to take up technician roles in Edinburgh, others joined the forces, and some went on to Napier University. Participation in the *Equal Engineers* programme, working in partnership with *Housing, Construction & Infrastructure (HCI)* and big industry names like *McLaren*, offers mentoring opportunities and work placements for prospective engineers. Exchange placements are also available for engineering students next year under the Turing scheme An 18 week introduction to engineering course will be launched in January. This is aimed at December school leavers who haven't attained National 4/5 qualifications. However, there has been interest from other prospective students. It covers skills for work, numeracy and renewables, and is practical and hands-on. Students will be inspired by wind-turbine models, experience with heat pumps, and the links between plumbing and electrical engineering. For the course to be viable, there need to be 10/12 students. To date, there have been eight applications, and four offers made. It was noted that there was some internal competition for the estimated 140 December school leavers in the region with *Find your vibe* and computing courses also planned for this cohort. The course was being promoted through career fairs, such as one at Newbattle the previous evening. There is a focus on dealing with the aftermath of Covid-19 and the problems which students are experiencing psychologically and with attainment. A softer approach is being taken. The *Global Citizenship* 4 Rs, respect, responsibility, recognition and resilience, are useful in encouraging desired behaviours. Numeracy needs were being addressed through lunchtime study groups and one to ones.
Areas which should be brought to the attention of the College Management: A great range of initiatives to spark the imaginations of future engineers, and provide learning opportunities at all levels. These should continue to be promoted to attract students, especially the introductory engineering course.
Further information required or requested N/A

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD
LEARNING FOR LEADING

Board Member: Ugonna Mbaezue

Linked Area: Marketing Department

Date of Visit: 14/09/2022

Summary of activities undertaken during visit:

- Conversations around the different methods of advertisement employed in the recruitment drive for new students.
- Discussions on the process for harvesting data to determine the efficacy of each advertisement method. E.g. number of clicks on internet advertisements, age group of visitors on internet sites, number of students enrolled for each advertised course etc.
- Discussions on source of funding for the department (General allocation in yearly budget or funded by individual departments who need to use the services of the marketing team).
- Development of operational strategies to continuously improve and adapt to the changing landscape.
- Discussions around support from the Board in driving the Marketing team's aims and objectives.
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing with other marketing teams via the College Development Network (CDN)

Positive Impressions:

- Cameron's vast knowledge on marketing and the use of different channels for advertisement. E.g. Google Ads, LinkedIn, Facebook, print media etc.
- The team's knowledge on characteristics/behaviours of target audience which determines the media for advertisements. For example, adult students are targeted via print media e.g. newspapers etc.
- The team's capability in harvesting important data to determine the efficacy of each advertisement channel.
- Genuine interest and investment in the role
- Genuine interest in the well being and welfare of both prospective and returning students.
- Desire to continuously improve and adapt to new ways of student recruitment (expressed via the strategy developed by the team).

Areas which should be brought to the attention of the College Management:

- The shrinking population of potential students in the Borders region has meant that the team has resorted to going further afield for recruitment
- Student satisfaction levels must be improved as it makes repeat marketing easier especially via word of mouth
- Additional staff resource to support advertisement channels such as TikTok, which require people of a certain age to create content targeted at people of a certain demographic.

Further information required or requested: None