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Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee

1 February 2024

Student Welfare and Guidance Report January 2024

1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER
For discussion

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the committee with an update on activity within the Student Support Services team between October 2023 and January 2024.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 The college's Student Support Services is comprised of two key elements;

- Welfare
- Learning Support

2.2 There has been a 22% increase in the delivery of learning support in the current academic year.

2.3 As we move through a period of change, there has been focus on upskilling colleagues and utilising the student voice to inform service development.

2.4 We continue to experience challenges in retaining care-experienced students and have identified a range of actions to address this:

- Re-focussing the Borders Youth Talent Mentor role
- Identifying good practice across the sector
- Developing trauma-informed practice
- Partnerships

3.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)/ACTION(S) REQUIRED

3.1 I recommend that the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee agree that the college is making good progress in developing the range of pastoral support available to improve retention and student success.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Based in the Advice Centre at Borders College Galashiels campus, the Student Support Services team provide a range of pastoral support on matters relating to course information, funding, progression and articulation, welfare, health and wellbeing, funding and benefits, and learning support.

5.0 Student Welfare and Guidance Report

5.1 Learning Support

In 2023-24, **285** students have received a learning support intervention. Including those who have withdrawn, a total of **326** students have been supported, which is an increase of **22%** on 2022-23.

A total of **29** Higher Education students are at various stages of applying for and receiving Disabled Student Allowance (DSA), which is funded through SAAS.

Learning support have been working in partnership with Borders College Students' Association to ascertain feedback from students on the quality of learning support delivery. The majority of respondents expressed interest in the creation of study groups for their curriculum area.

In response to the feedback, the Learning Support team are expanding their delivery of group study sessions which are currently being delivered in Rural Skills and STEM.

5.2 Welfare Support

To date, **31** self-referrals for support have been received. **24** of these referrals are in relation to mental health.

34 Care Experienced students are being supported by a Border Young Talent Mentor. Following a re-focus on this role, we have expanded this support to an additional **20** students this year.

The following infographic show a breakdown of the support logs created within ProMonitor by the welfare team:

The 3 main areas for support/contact are:

Academic issues (attendance, engagement) – **318** logs created
General advice and guidance – **198** logs created
Emotional/personal wellbeing – **150** logs created

5.3 Progress in 2023-24

We continue to upskill the Student Support team who have participated in Trauma-informed training, Gender-Based Violence awareness, safeguarding and a series of bitesize sessions with local agencies.

We have introduced external supervision and wellbeing sessions for pastoral teams.

A Student Wellbeing Coordinator is in post, providing a dedicated support for delivering wellbeing interventions and triaging to appropriate mental health support.

We are now delivering counselling support for students via two external partnerships. This support is delivered across campuses, offering parity of support.

External supervision has been introduced as a supportive measure for pastoral staff.

We have extended opening hours within the student advice centre.

5.4 Future Development

Work is planned with MIS to enhance the accessibility of reports utilised by pastoral teams to monitor attendance and engagement.

The Student Services team will introduce a new 'Wellbeing Zone', which is being co-created by students. In additional to the counselling room and Quiet Room this will provide a dedicated space for supportive conversations and wellbeing interventions.

We are launching a short life working group to further align student support and the curriculum.

Plans are in place to develop the 'next generation of student services'. This project focusses on gathering feedback from students, and working with members of pastoral and curriculum teams to inform future developments.

We continue to work with Scottish Borders Council and local partners to enhance transitions into college for young people coming directly from school, and for those returning to education.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

The Scottish Government's 'Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Fund' is supporting our mental health partnerships and the delivery of a student counselling service.

We are exploring opportunities to access additional funding through Robertson's Trust to provide enhanced support Care-Experienced young people.

6.2 Learner Implications

Re-focussing the BYT role will support better outcomes for care-experienced students

The creation of dedicated a wellbeing space will enhance the delivery of an inclusive student support service.

By consulting with students, we will gain a better understanding of what students would like from their student services team.

6.3 Staff Implications

Training and development opportunities will support a more confident and informed pastoral team that are better equipped to identify support interventions for students.

Supervision and wellbeing support for pastoral staff will provide an important source of support and reflective practice.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment

Supported by the transitional fund, partnerships are now in place to provide counselling support for students

Changes within the team have addressed some of the concerns around parity of support across campuses.

6.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications

There are no direct implications in relation to sustainability and environment from the contents of this report.

7.0 RISK COMMENTARY

This report provides assurance to the Committee that the college is working to develop the range and quality of pastoral support offered to students, therefore mitigating the risk that students will not be successful on their course.

8.0 CONCLUSION

This paper aims to provide the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee with an overview of the activity within the student support services team, as well as plans to develop the service over the coming year.

Amy Brydon

Director of Student Support Services

19/01/2024

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