

# **JOHN WHEATLEY COLLEGE**

## **BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

### **LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY**

**2011/12**

#### **1. Introduction**

John Wheatley College strives to provide learning which is inclusive, respects learners, is engaging, stimulating and fun, meets national standards and is up-to-date.

This Learning and Teaching Strategy has been developed as an enabling framework that encourages the development of the innovative and creative approaches to learning and teaching that will ensure that all learners and potential learners are enabled to achieve their potential and to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.

The Learning and Teaching Strategy seeks to support learner engagement and high quality learning experiences. It seeks to enable the College's teachers and course teams to respond to key enhancement themes, including retention, achievement and employability, as well as to the annual enhancement agenda identified through the College's Evaluation of the Learning Experience process.

#### **2. The Context for the Learning and Teaching Strategy**

##### **2.1 Local Context**

John Wheatley College is committed to providing inclusive learning of the highest quality to meet the needs of the individuals and communities that it serves.

The College's ethos (which is reviewed annually, and is attached as Appendix 1) derives from its commitment to:

- de-centralised provision and outreach;
- the priority of the needs of the client;
- quality enhancement and innovative learning and teaching methods;
- ethical principles of curriculum design;
- improving access and equality of opportunity;
- customer care;
- staff involvement;
- collaborative working; and
- transparent governance.

The College has an Inclusive Learning Policy (attached as Appendix 2) which expresses its commitment to offer equality of opportunity to engage in lifelong learning to its learners, staff and members of the public through the provision of a range of support – including guidance, special programmes, adult literacies support, learning support, and extended learning support (including access to assistive technologies). The full range of College policies, schemes and action plans supporting the equalities agenda are available on the College Intranet.

The College maintains Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for all learners to take account of their individual goals, preferred learning styles, and support needs. These ILPs are now maintained online and are accessible to learners and staff through the College's website. Staff in local schools are also able to gain access to these for their pupils who attend college programmes.

The College recognises, as consequence of its inclusive ethos and approach to learning, the increased potential for challenging behaviour to arise. Accordingly, it provides guidance to staff on dealing with challenging behaviour (attached as Appendix 3) and has established a Code of Learner Behaviour (attached as Appendix 4).

The Learning and Teaching Strategy attempts to respond to the College's ethos and circumstances by providing a framework which encourages the development of the innovative and creative approaches to learning and teaching that will ensure that all learners and potential learners are enabled to achieve their potential.

## **2.2 Evaluation of the Learning Experience**

John Wheatley College has an established process for the Evaluation of the Learning Experience. Evaluation of the Learning Experience is undertaken for the College by an external consultant who observes learning and teaching throughout the College and provides an annual report on strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement.

Since 2007/08 the Evaluation of the Learning Experience Report has posed a series of challenge questions for the College which are designed to support the enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching. The current set of challenge questions are:

- *do our learning strategies and support arrangements strike the right balance between a flexible approach to attendance and improving student retention?*
- *to what extent are our courses really making a difference to students' future educational and employment opportunities?*
- *do we encourage students to reflect on the learning, and do we know what they really think about how they learn and how we teach them?*
- *are we sufficiently self-critical, individually and as curriculum teams, about how we teach and how our students learn?*
- *how can we make better use of the college's ICT facilities to improve the learning experience for students? What kind of staff development and training would help staff use ICT more effectively?*
- *how do we ensure that staff maintain enthusiasm and commitment and have opportunities to develop new skills (e.g. online/blended learning, attendance and retention issues, diverse learning needs, challenging behaviour)?*

- *do we accept a poor standard of spoken communication from students simply because it is the norm, particularly for younger students?*
- *what can we do to give learners a wider college experience and broaden their horizons?*
- *how can we get the best out of ICT?*
- *where are the “lost” learners?*

The Learning and Teaching Strategy seeks to provide mechanisms and opportunities for the College, its course and curriculum teams, and individual staff and learners to respond to these challenge questions. Curriculum teams will be expected to reflect on these questions/challenges when undertaking team meetings, writing their self-evaluation reports, setting targets for improvement and designing enhancement activities. At a College level: Continuous Professional Development will have a primary focus on maintaining staff enthusiasm through the development of new skills and encouraging staff to use ICT more effectively; further development of learner engagement in quality processes and wider college life will be a priority in the development of the College’s response to the Scottish Funding Council’s current arrangements for quality; the College will continue to develop its on-line learning resources; and a major initiative in improving the development of learners’ core skills through more integrated working between vocational and core skills staff will continue.

### **2.3 National / Policy Context**

The College takes the view that the principles underpinning *A Curriculum for Excellence* which seeks to enable all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors, provides an appropriate framework for learning for all ages and within which other key national policy objectives (including the *Economic Strategy* and the *Skills Strategy*) and priority target groups (including school pupils and young people in need of More Choices and More Chances) can be supported.

As a community college, serving the East Glasgow Community Planning areas, John Wheatley College requires to respond to the opportunities for action learning that are in, or contribute to, local regeneration strategies. It seeks to provide, within these communities, lifelong learning which promotes enterprise, citizenship, sustainable development and equality of opportunity. The College’s mission is therefore entirely consistent with *Learning for All* - the Scottish Funding Council’s (SFC) strategy for inclusion.

The College also endorses *Learning to Work* – the SFC’s strategy for employability and enterprise. It takes the view that the learning experience can, and should, be designed to help learners enhance their employability and enterprise skills – both through experiential learning, inside and outside the curriculum, and through supported career education and planning. It particularly believes that learner-centred approaches to learning, which help learners develop their self-confidence and motivation and which encourage learners to take responsibility for their own personal and professional development, go a long way towards enhancing employability.

The College seeks at all times to enhance the quality of its provision. Its Evaluation of Learning and Teaching process and its engagement of learners with quality processes reflect its commitment to enhancing the learner experience.

All of the strategy documents referred to above are available in the College's libraries.

## **2.4 HMle reflection on effective Learning and Teaching**

Recent reflection on effective learning and teaching in further education by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMle) identified a series of key themes which appear to underpin effective learning in colleges. The report (Student Learning in Scottish Further Education Colleges, 2004) stresses that the list is not exhaustive, and that individual themes are not independent of one another. It suggests rather that they will often be present in different combinations within effective learning contexts.

- A** A greater emphasis on learning processes and outcomes will ensure that the learner is at the heart of the process and can derive maximum benefit.
- B** Learning should be delivered in ways that empower people to be independent and active learners, and to be reflective, questioning and insightful in their approach to learning.
- C** All learners need to build on their own strengths to effect personal growth and development. They can be helped to develop their self-confidence in learning by provision that enhances their core skills and vocational competence and supports self expression.
- D** The quality of human relationships and communication impact on the quality of learning. Learning with and through others is both personally rewarding and functionally effective.
- E** Learners need specific preparation for employment, citizenship and their contribution to the wider social and economic environment. They may also need to re-engage with education and training at various points in their lives.
- F** The teacher in FE should continue to have a key role as a guide, enabler, supporter and a source of information and knowledge.
- G** New technologies offer learners a range of opportunities to learn more flexibly and effectively. In order to maximise the potential of these facilities, learners need to develop a range of skills and raise their awareness of their particular needs.

John Wheatley College recognises these key themes in the approaches it takes to learning. Examples of how each of these themes are addressed by College policies, strategies and initiatives are detailed in the table included as Appendix 5.

### **3. Learning and Teaching Strategy**

John Wheatley College endorses the aims of the national curriculum review “*A Curriculum for Excellence*”. It seeks to enable all learners to become: successful learners; confident individuals; responsible citizens; and effective contributors.

To support these aims, the College seeks to provide its learners with a blended learning experience which combines classroom based activity, directed study, group and individual tasks, and the use of online activities and more traditional approaches and resources in a way which is appropriate to the needs of each individual learner.

The College believes that such a blended approach to learning facilitates sufficient individualisation to enable learners to progress at the pace they can best manage and to accommodate their preferred learning styles. At the same time it provides the re-assurance of both tutor and peer support and the opportunity for the group based activities and sharing of experience which develop learners as contributors and citizens.

The College continues to increase its use of online activities in order to help to embed ICT skills as well as to provide learners with up-to-date, accessible and engaging resources. To encourage the natural development, adoption and embedding of e-activities within the curriculum the College makes no distinction between online activities and other learning approaches in terms of planning and quality assurance processes.

Within this approach, the College also sees assessment as an integral part of the learning experience and process – providing learners with feedback on the knowledge, skills and attributes they have developed and promoting self-confidence through a sense of achievement.

A blended learning approach also enables the College to address the key themes identified by HMIE. For example: individual learning planning ensures that the learner is at the heart of the process; individualised tasks, research based activities and resource based learning (including the use of relevant e-activities) empower learners to be independent and active participants; group and tutor-led activities improve human relationships and strengthen communication; the use of e-activities enable learners to learn flexibly and effectively; and individual reflection on achievement helps to build motivation and self-confidence. A blended learning approach also enables staff to respond appropriately to the challenge of improving retention while taking a flexible approach to attendance.

Individual Learning Plans, used with all learners, enable learners and staff to set, review and reflect on targets that relate to the development of confidence, and skills for citizenship, enterprise and employability as well as certificated units of learning.

The College also embeds aspects of the Curriculum for Excellence across its full range of programmes and learning processes. In particular, learners are encouraged to be motivated and enthusiastic, to reflect on their learning and to identify their preferred learning styles, to work and learn both independently and as part of a group, to develop their core skills and to use technology for learning. They are

encouraged to apply their learning to new situations, to be self-aware and independent but to relate to and have respect for others, to be creative and to make informed choices. The College has adopted Skills for Work programmes, specifically designed within the curriculum for excellence framework, for a significant part of its school-link activities. The College's Programme Planning processes specifically ensure that the aims of the national review are embedded in all new programmes approved by the college. In addition, through its Programme Review process, the College evaluates the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence within programme delivery.

Quality enhancement is a fundamental focus of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The College encourages its curriculum teams, individual staff and learners to respond to the challenge questions set through the Evaluation of the Learning Experience process. The engagement of learners in the College's quality enhancement processes is seen as key to informing self-evaluation and planning processes. These in turn are expected to respond to the College's primary enhancement themes – retention, achievement and employability. The adoption of blended learning approaches, individual learning planning and the encouragement to be creative and to share effective and best practice are key strands of the Learning and Teaching Strategy which support the College's approach to quality enhancement.

## **4. Supporting the Strategy**

### **A Staff and Professional Development and Support**

#### **4.1 Professional Development**

The College supports a range of opportunities for professional development. These include induction to learning and teaching for new staff, the Advanced Diploma Teaching in Further Education (an introduction) and TQ(FE) programmes, a Career Development Review process, regular Quality days and a budget (available to all staff) to support personal and professional development.

#### **4.2 Evaluation of Learning and Teaching**

The College operates a well-established Evaluation of Learning and Teaching programme which provides feedback at both individual staff and college level on strengths, areas for development, good practice and innovation in learning and teaching. The annual report on the Evaluation of Learning and Teaching is considered by the College Board of Management and its Academic and General Purposes Committee as well as by a range of operational groups.

#### **4.3 Learner Engagement**

Learner engagement is central to the College's quality enhancement processes and encompasses a range of approaches. It includes student membership of the College's Board of Management and of a range of committees. All programme teams are encouraged to elect a class representative who is invited to attend course team meetings. Learner representatives are supported through SPARQS/College devised training. Senior Management meets each term with the office bearers of the Students' Association. Learners' views on their College and learning experiences are gathered through end-of-unit surveys, mid-year reviews, thematic focus groups and end-of-year surveys and within the Evaluation of Learning and Teaching process.

#### **4.4 Library Services**

The development of the new library and flexible learning services at the Bridge provides a specific example of the College's commitment to working collaboratively. The College provides flexible learning support for all users (students and public) of the shared facility while "buying back" library services (both at the Bridge and for other College sites) from Glasgow Life. Glasgow Life also provide the co-located public library service at the Bridge and support both learner and public access to the College's East End Campus Library. This approach provides College learners and staff with a uniquely integrated library service. It aims to ensure that service users most easily obtain the widest range of quality services while at the same time ensuring best value for public expenditure.

#### **4.5 The ICT environment**

John Wheatley College provides a rich ICT environment to support learning and teaching. This includes high speed internet access in all teaching areas, a well-developed intranet and well used communication tools, and the development of the

community-based Glasgow East Learning Network. In addition interactive whiteboard technology is now available throughout its campus based teaching areas.

The College's ICT Strategy which describes the College's ICT environment in greater detail is available on the College Intranet.

#### **4.6 Individual Learning Plans**

Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) represent a key strand in the College's approach to individualising learning targets and learner support. They also provide some measure of learner attainment and wider achievement (or "distance travelled"). ILPs are maintained for all learners and an on-line version has now been developed.

#### **4.7 Curriculum Review and Self Evaluation**

Annual review and self-evaluation processes have a key role to play in the highlighting (and sharing) of best practice and in setting targets for quality improvement or enhancement.

#### **4.8 Dissemination of Best Practice**

The College makes a clear commitment to quality enhancement – responding to national enhancement themes as well as recognising extensive good practice within the College itself. It is however well aware that best practice will only spread with active encouragement.

It therefore takes a comprehensive approach to the identification and sharing of such practice. This includes its internal Curriculum Review and Self Evaluation processes, Quality Day events and newsletter articles as well as the submission of College projects for external awards. It also includes staff attendance at external Good Practice events and dissemination to curriculum teams of good practice examples from HMIE review reports.

#### **4.9 Academic Freedom**

The College upholds the notion of "academic freedom" for its teaching staff and those who manages its teaching services. Its guidance for staff on academic freedom has been approved by the Board of Management and is attached as Appendix 6.

### **B Learning and Teaching - from Planning to Review**

#### **4.10 Planning Process**

The academic context within which the College operates is monitored through the Board of Management's Academic Board. The College has in place a comprehensive planning process which takes full account of labour market intelligence, the current policy context and the local community context. This planning process involves staff at all stages, as well as taking full account of the views and priorities of external partners, and leads to the annual production of the College's Strategic Plan, its Academic School Plans and its Project Team Plans. Curriculum planning and approval processes are supported by the annually published College Planning Cycles and Quality Calendar. The College's Curriculum

Design Guidelines, which provide the framework within which programmes are designed, are attached as Appendix 7; the *Curriculum for Excellence* framework is attached as Appendix 8). This approach ensures that due account is taken of key educational themes such as confidence building, citizenship, enterprise skills, sustainable development and equalities issues alongside market demand, the balance between core and vocational skills development and the value of nationally recognised qualifications.

#### **4.11 Role of the Programme Team**

Programme Teams develop the learning and teaching approaches and materials for all college programmes. They have an input to the planning of new programmes, a major role in identifying and developing materials for the new units and programmes for approval, and responsibility for the review, improvement and enhancement of learning and teaching approaches and materials. This includes responsibility to identify and respond to opportunities to integrate key College themes within learning activities (e.g. promotion of the Board's Equality Agenda, sustainable development, and core skills development). This approach seeks to ensure that due account is taken of key educational themes such as confidence building, citizenship, enterprise skills, sustainable development and equalities issues alongside market demand, the balance between core and vocational skills development and the value of nationally recognised qualifications.

#### **4.12 Authorisation Processes**

New programmes are planned within the College's planning cycle before being taken through the College Approval Process by an appropriate programme team. This process is co-ordinated by the Senior Curriculum Manager (Quality).

All new programmes undergo scrutiny by an Approval Panel which reports to the College's Programme Planning Group and Academic Board. This scrutiny process also ensures that programmes take account of the College's Curriculum Design Guidelines.

The College's Quality Procedures are available to all staff through the College Intranet.

#### **4.13 Curriculum Delivery**

Element A5 of the previous SFC/HMIE Quality Framework (Appendix 9), continues to describe well the College's expectation that, within an appropriately planned context, lecturers:

- motivate and engage learners;
- contextualise learning;
- provide access to and encourage learners to use appropriate resources;
- help learners reflect on what they have learned;
- promote independence in learning;
- involve learners in the evaluation of their learning experience; and
- promote achievement.

Programme Team meetings provide opportunity for teaching staff to reflect on progress made with particular learners/groups and to identify/develop good practice in learning and teaching.

#### **4.14 Assessment & Internal Moderation**

The College recognises the various roles for assessment within learning and teaching.

Diagnostic assessment is used to identify starting points for learners (particularly in relation to core skills) or to identify potential barriers to progress.

Formative assessment is used to confirm that progress is being made within a topic, unit or programme of learning.

Summative assessment, against national standards and confirmed through internal moderation, formally recognises the achievements of learners and provides evidence for certification.

Procedures for assessment and internal moderation are contained within the Quality Procedures – available to staff through the College Intranet. All assessment activities are based on the requirements set out by the appropriate awarding body.

#### **4.15 Curriculum review**

Annual, review and self-evaluation processes have a key role to play in the highlighting (and sharing) of best practice and in setting targets for quality improvement or enhancement.

It is expected that each team reviews all of its programmes over a three year period.

### **C Learner experience – pre-entry to post-exit**

All learners and potential learners have access to a range of support and guidance services– pre-entry through to post-exit.

#### **4.16 Pre-entry**

The College provides access to impartial and objective information on programmes of study (including entry requirements and progression opportunities) as well as on access to information on finance and funding. Core skills diagnostic testing is routinely used at this stage to assist learners develop their Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and any additional support needs are also considered.

#### **4.17 Induction**

Induction is provided, by programme tutors and subject teachers, at the start of all programmes. This includes information on health and safety, acceptable use of ICT, and equality policies as well as information on programme structure and the support and other services available to learners.

#### 4.18 On-going

Throughout their programme of study, learners have access to a range of support services, including:

- Library and learning resource services
- Flexible learning
- Learning support
- Extended learning support
- Assistive technologies
- Careers advice
- Guidance
- specialist student services.

On-going guidance and regular reviews of progress are provided by class tutors (and recorded on ILPs).

The College does **NOT** provide counselling (it recognises that such services are specialist and therefore beyond the skills of its staff). It does however refer learners on to a range of specialist support services. These are detailed in the Directory of Caring Agencies which is available on the College Intranet. In addition, in collaboration with East Glasgow Community Health Partnership, it offers learners access to mental health and suicide prevention services.

The College's guidance on Dealing with Challenging Behaviour (Appendix 3) makes reference to Child Protection and Child Abuse. The College has provided guidance to staff in relation to the safeguarding of children and young people (and of vulnerable adults). This is attached as Appendix 10.

Learners are also involved in the quality enhancement process throughout their time in College – through end-of-unit questionnaires, involvement in focus groups and the election of class representatives (to programme teams). The President of the Students' Association is a member of the College's Board of Management and of its Academic and General Purposes Committee. The remit of the Academic and General Purposes Committee includes review of the College's self-evaluation processes.

#### 4.19 Pre-exit

Prior to the end of a programme of study, learners will be able to review their progress and plan their next steps with the Programme Tutor, the Guidance Team or external agencies (such as other education establishments or employers). Progression goals are recorded on the ILP. A comprehensive progression guidance programme is available to learners. This includes external speakers and outside visits, and assistance with careers advice, CVs and applications. The College enhances this support by working with partners to provide specific sessions on self-employment opportunities and more specialist employability skills.

#### **4.20 Post-exit**

The College continues to involve and support learners post-exit through destination surveys and offers of post-course assistance.

Learners who have progressed to other FE or higher Education (HE) institutions are able to continue to access the library, FLU and networks of community based learning centres.

## **5. Related information**

This strategy makes reference to a range of related College policies, strategies and plans, guidance to staff and other information. These documents are attached as appendices to the Learning and Teaching Strategy as follows:

Appendix 1	College Ethos
Appendix 2	Inclusive Learning Policy
Appendix 3	Dealing with Challenging Behaviour
Appendix 4	Code of Learner Behaviour
Appendix 5	Effective Student Learning Themes
Appendix 6	Academic Freedom
Appendix 7	Curriculum Design Guidelines
Appendix 8	A Curriculum for Excellence
Appendix 9	Quality Framework - Element A5
Appendix 10	Child Protection Policy and Procedures

## **6. Further Information**

Further information on any aspect of the Learning and Teaching Strategy can be obtained from Alan Inglis, Vice Principal, or from the Principal.