Annual Engagement Visit Report

Glasgow Clyde College

21 February 2023

College Principal	Jon Vincent
Annual Engagement Visit Date	5 December 2022
College Nominee	Eric Brownlie
Lead Inspector	Ian Beach

1.   Background

Annual Engagement Visits (AEV) are planned collaboratively between the college, HM Inspectors, and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

During the AEV, a team of HM Inspectors evaluated progress made by the college towards its improvement priorities and outcomes of previous engagement with HM Inspectors. During the visit, the team met with staff, learners and other stakeholders and explored the following overarching themes linked to the college's enhancement plan and priorities around COVID-19 recovery: learner recruitment; retention; attainment; and progression.

This report summarises the findings from the visit and highlights areas of positive progress, areas for development, and any associated main points for action. The report will be shared with the college principal, college Board of Management, and/or Regional Strategic Body, and SFC. An accompanying short report will be published on Education Scotland's website.

2.   The college and its context

Glasgow Clyde College is an assigned college within the Glasgow Region and one of Scotland's largest further education providers. It is a multi-site college with campuses in Anniesland, Cardonald and Langside, offering a curriculum designed to meet the social and economic needs of its local communities. The college delivers around 129,000 credits of activity each year as part of its Outcome Agreement with the SFC.

Each year, Glasgow Clyde College enrols approximately 16,000 learners on a range of programmes from SCQF level 2 to level 9, providing learners with access to employment and further study. The college also offers Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships along with professional workforce development qualifications.

3. Summary of findings

3.1 Recruitment

Areas of positive progress

Learner progress and outcomes

- College managers have introduced a range of recruitment and enrolment initiatives which are ensuring that for the current academic year, enrolment is on target. These include setting out clearly the content and scope of programmes for learners during the recruitment process; increasing the time that learners have for induction; campus visits; taster sessions; and a streamlined interview and application process.

Curriculum, learning, teaching, and assessment

- The college offers a place on a programme to every applicant, wherever possible, and this is meeting the requirements of learners well. Where learners cannot be offered a place on the programme originally applied for, they receive an alternative offer at a more appropriate level, or in an alternative subject area. Once their programme has begun, learners are able to change programme or level early in the college year. This helps staff to place learners at the right academic level and study in the most suitable curriculum area.

- Curriculum staff identified that some learners entering college have gaps in their knowledge of core skills and this can contribute to lower levels of engagement early in their studies. Staff are using pre-course initiatives and enhanced induction arrangements well to support learners to develop their core skills prior to starting their programme.

- Curriculum teams offer a good range of activities to support learners prior to starting their programme, alongside orientation days and opportunities to meet curriculum staff. This is helping learners to develop a connection with the college and is improving enrolment rates.

Services to support learning

- Support teams engage well with the 'Come to Clyde' recruitment strategy. They collaborate effectively with curriculum teams during the recruitment process and provide practical advice to potential learners, such as how to access college information technology systems. Staff in the e-learning team have developed a range of helpful videos for learners to access prior to enrolment. The arrangements for learners applying to college are now faster, simpler, and clearer.

- The college provides a good range of information during application and enrolment that enable learners to make informed choices about their college programme.

Learner engagement

- Curriculum teams use interviews well to encourage learners to access the range of advice and guidance available from the college prior to starting their programme. This helps learners to make more informed choices about their study options.

- This year, the Early Impression Survey indicates high levels of learner satisfaction with the application process, interviews, and the range of information provided to learners enrolling at college.

- Almost all learners who attend induction are positive about opportunities to meet with student support services staff prior to starting their programme for additional advice and guidance.

Evaluation to facilitate improvement

- College managers use learner feedback well from a range of sources, including questionnaires and focus groups, to inform improvements to the recruitment process.

Areas for development

- Learner feedback through the Early Impression Survey confirmed the need to improve the pre-application funding information provided to learners.

3.2   Retention

Areas of positive progress

Learner progress and outcomes

- Learners have positive and supportive relationships with guidance staff. The college's nurturing campus initiative is helping learners, who would otherwise have withdrawn, to stay at college and continue with their studies. The range of support for learners includes breakfast clubs, warm spaces, awareness-raising of discretionary funding and a new induction format.

- The college offers comprehensive Career Long Professional Learning opportunities for staff. For example, staff are strengthening their confidence in supporting learners through access to professional learning for trauma-informed practice and adverse childhood experiences. These staff are responding sympathetically and professionally to learners who are at risk of leaving their programmes early.

- College managers use an effective range of approaches to help improve early retention and a sense of belonging among learners. These include support for speakers of other languages and timetabled guidance slots for all full-time learners.

Curriculum, learning, teaching, and assessment

- Staff across the college work well with a range of external partners to support learners throughout their programmes. Partnership working with organisations such as Scottish Association for Mental Health and Action for Children is helping learners to remain on their programmes.

- Almost all curriculum areas continue to make effective use of the college Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to provide learners with access to learning materials. This is helping to support learners who may miss classes, or struggle to sustain their learning, and those who wish to revisit more challenging topics.

- Curriculum staff engage well in the 'Swap, Don't Drop' initiative that offers learners an opportunity to study at a more suitable level of study or enter an alternative programme.

Services to support learning

- Learners receive prompt and high-quality support for mental health issues that may affect their learning. The range of support includes access to counselling, a 'Time to Talk' service, Mental Health First Aiders, and 'Support and Report' system.

- Student welfare staff are accessible to learners and available on every campus. Learners facing financial hardship can also exchange clothes and household items on campus.

- The college provides a free breakfast for learners who may be struggling financially. This arrangement, supported by commercial sponsorship, is a valuable additional resource in supporting and retaining learners.

Learner engagement

- Almost all learners receive pastoral support and guidance through an effective referral process. Where practical, guidance tutors also teach learners for whom they have guidance responsibility. This helps teaching staff to form stronger working relationships with learners, and to monitor their progress more thoroughly.

- Arrangements for tracking non-attendance help staff to identify those learners who are not fully engaged with their studies and make suitably targeted interventions.

Evaluation to facilitate improvement

- Curriculum managers meet with teaching staff monthly to discuss retention and learner feedback. This ensures that staff put in place the right support promptly for learners at risk of leaving their programme early.

- Staff use learner feedback well to explore and understand reasons for withdrawal and develop interventions and support to help learners to remain on their programme.

- College managers use data effectively with curriculum teams to identify students at risk of withdrawal and discuss appropriate intervention strategies and support needs.

Areas for development

- In academic session 2020/21, rates of learner withdrawal were high across all modes of attendance.

- Access to social spaces within the college, such as libraries, sports facilities, and refectories, does not always meet the needs of learners.

3.3   Attainment

Areas of positive progress

Learner progress and outcomes

The following data refers to academic year 2020/21.

- The overall attainment rate for full-time FE learners was 64%, four percentage points above national sector performance.

- The overall attainment rate for full-time HE learners was 71%, which is in line with national sector performance.

Curriculum, learning, teaching, and assessment

- Teaching staff have introduced a range of curriculum improvements to help address low levels of attainment. These include changes to course design, sequencing of units and integrated assessment opportunities across subjects.

- Learners are confident in using the VLE and find it helpful to access the resources they need for course work. Learners review their progress and receive feedback from teaching staff through the VLE and complete upskilling modules to enhance their digital skills.

- Almost all learners are satisfied with the learning resources, preparation for assessment and feedback provided by teaching staff to help them attain their learning goals.

Services to support learning

- The college's supportive culture is encouraging learners to achieve. Staff provide learners with prompt individual support, which helps them to complete their learning goals.

Learner engagement

- Teaching staff encourage learners to collaborate with their peers, particularly in the subject areas of numeracy and literacy. These activities help to support success for individual learners.

- College staff create a sense of belonging through opportunities for learners to work together in mixed subject groups and across different levels. Learners share and discuss their learning challenges during collaboration days. These opportunities help learners to improve their study skills through peer interaction.

Evaluation to facilitate improvement

- College managers have recently introduced a new approach to self-evaluation across all curriculum and support areas. Staff value these new arrangements which encourage more open conversation and reduce bureaucracy. Managers now implement improvement actions more quickly as a result.

- A few curriculum areas are making effective use of online peer observation to improve pedagogy and support learner attainment.

- Course teams engage well with professional reflection activities, and this has improved cross-college teamworking. Teaching staff use information from their discussions to understand better how students interact with course materials and to monitor academic attainment.

- Almost all staff value the newly introduced transition week between teaching blocks. They use this time effectively to complete self-evaluation documents, identify learners at risk or in need of support and schedule time for learners to revisit learning or assessment.

Areas for development

The following data refers to academic year 2020/21.

- The overall attainment rate for part-time FE learners was 71%, four percentage points below national sector performance.

- The overall attainment rate for part-time HE learners was 77%, three percentage points below national sector performance.

3.4 Progression

Areas of positive progress

Learner progress and outcomes

- Rates of learner progression to positive destinations are high across all modes of study.

- Several articulation arrangements with universities provide a wide range of options for learners to progress to higher level study.

Curriculum, learning, teaching, and assessment

- The college has in place a curriculum offer that supports learners well to progress to the next level of study or employment.

- Curriculum staff have developed effective community progression routes through programmes such as English for Speakers of Other Languages and Prince's Trust that prepare learners well for full-time college programmes.

- Curriculum teams have partnerships in place with a range of employers and schools across three local authority areas. These support progression opportunities for learners into employment well.

- There are helpful arrangements in place for learners with additional support needs to enhance their opportunities for progression through employability and volunteering programmes. Curriculum teams also offer learners taster visits to help them choose their preferred programme.

Services to support learning

- Support services staff work proactively with curriculum teams to visit classes in the early stages of each programme to raise learner awareness of progression options.

- The college has developed streamlined Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) arrangements. These are proving effective in supporting learners when applying for progression to university.

Learner engagement

- Almost all learners are positive about the information and support provided by curriculum managers about available progression routes, including potential employment opportunities.

Evaluation to facilitate improvement

- None

Areas for development

- None

4. Main Points for Action

- The college should take steps to address high rates of learner withdrawal.

5. What happens next?

We are confident that the college has made satisfactory progress and has the capacity to continue to improve. We will continue to monitor progress through on-going engagement with the college link HM Inspector.

Ian P Beach
HM Inspector