

ABERDEEN COLLEGE

RETENTION, ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTAINMENT STRATEGY

Revision Date: 23 January 2012

RETENTION, ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTAINMENT STRATEGY

1.0 Introduction

Aberdeen College is committed to delivering programmes that meet the needs of stakeholders – the learner, Government, local communities, employers and others - using methods that promote accessibility and flexibility.

2.0 Programme Design

The College will ensure that the following actions are taken to develop and design programmes in ways which meet the requirements of awarding bodies, national educational policy objectives and the College's aims and objectives:

2.1 Approval and Review of Programme Offering

2.1.1 The Curriculum Advisory Panel (CAP) will approve all new programmes and changes to programmes. This will be supported by the internal approval arrangements managed by the Qualifications and Quality Co-ordinator.

2.1.2 The approval process will ensure that the following have been taken into account in the design of programmes:

- Aims of and justification for the programme, including appropriate market research
- Work experience opportunities, where appropriate
- Flexible modes of delivery
- Skills development – essential skills for learning, life and work, and personal vocational, employability, citizenship skills and the four capacities underpinning Curriculum for Excellence
- Target groups
- Progression and articulation opportunities, including flexible credit transfer arrangements, to support transfer across the SCQF framework and to enable learners to remain in education or training
- Equal opportunities including access to programmes and social and cultural diversity
- Appropriateness and accessibility of learning and teaching materials and assessment approaches
- Essential and Soft Skills delivery
- The suitability of the learning environment
- Availability of appropriate resources to support learning
- The costs and revenues associated with the introduction of new or revised programmes.

2.1.3 In each area the curriculum will be reviewed annually to ensure that there is:

- A range of access modes, locations and times that meet the needs of learners
- A range of programmes from introductory level to more advanced studies where appropriate
- Clear progression and articulation routes to further study and/or employment
- A need for the range of programmes offered to be supported by market research
- Evidence of learner success, particularly retention, attainment, and progression
- Evidence of programmes embedding the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

2.2 Programme promotion

- Publicity and promotional material will be attractive, informative and inclusive
- Marketing material will use inclusive language and images
- Marketing strategies will target under-represented groups using a range of approaches.

2.3 Programme planning

- Programmes of Study will be established for each programme to ensure an effective delivery pattern regarding workload for the learners and integration of subject materials
- The Programme of Study will be supported by the preparation of courses overviews, lesson plans and assessment schedules
- Arrangements for support to individuals with additional learning needs will be planned and reviewed regularly.

3.0 Teaching Approaches

The College is committed to providing all learners, irrespective of mode of attendance or level of prior attainment, with high quality learning and teaching experiences.

Teaching staff will use a variety of learning and teaching methods to motivate learners and encourage their success. By creating an appropriate learning and teaching environment and by fostering positive learner/lecturer/instructor relationships, learners will be supported to learn and achieve.

The teaching methods and approaches used will be varied and will take account of the individual's preferred learning style, prior knowledge and skills and any reasonable adjustments required to meet learner needs.

The approaches adopted by teaching staff will take account of the preferred learning styles of school leavers, people still at school and attending college on a part-time basis and of adults returning to education and training. Learning and teaching methods will be appropriately adapted to meet the requirements of all learners, whether full-time, part-time, distance learning, community-based or work-based.

Learners will be encouraged to participate in local and national competitions to develop their citizenship and employability skills and to enhance their overall level of achievement.

The following arrangements will support these approaches:

3.1 The learning process

- Learners will be motivated using high quality, varied, accessible and stimulating learning and teaching approaches and resources including access in all teaching rooms to technology to support learning
- Teaching staff will provide learners with sufficient opportunities for reflection and independent learning
- Teachers will help learners develop independent learning skills.

3.2 The teaching process

- Teaching staff will hold relevant academic and vocational qualifications and will maintain up to date skills and knowledge in their vocational area
- Good practice in learning and teaching will be disseminated across the College
- A learner-centred approach will be taken to learning and teaching, with learners encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning
- Teaching staff will focus on developing the capacity of learners to learn and to want to learn
- Teaching staff will raise the aspirations of learners
- Teaching methods and approaches will be varied and adapted to take individual learning styles into account
- The Virtual Learning Environment will be used appropriately to enrich the learning and teaching processes
- Core Skills and serviced units will be contextualised for each vocational area
- Teaching staff will give learners systematic and regular feedback and will promote achievement in learning and progression
- Learner achievement will be celebrated on individual, class and College-wide levels.

3.3 Context and planning for learning and teaching

- Teaching staff/learner relationships will be established which are conducive to effective learning and teaching. Each learner will have a Guidance Tutor who will be the first point of contact for support
- Programme Delivery Guidelines, which are implemented consistently by all staff, will be in place for each course
- Courses overviews will be in place for all programmes and will take account of core skills development and different learning styles
- Staff and learners will set personal learning goals to ensure high levels of attainment and achievement. These will be recorded in Individual Learning Plans and progress monitored regularly

- The College's physical environment will reflect the professional approach that it takes to all aspects of its services to learners and employers and will be conducive to learner motivation.

4.0 Guidance and Support

- The College is committed to providing all learners with the maximum possible support during their time at the College. Learners will be encouraged to attain their academic goals and to develop essential life skills, employability and citizenship skills that will be of benefit to them in the future
- Each learner who is enrolled on a full-time or substantial part-time course, will have access to a Guidance Tutor as required
- Learner Services are provided for learners and include advice on funding issues, careers, accommodation and welfare. The dedicated staff in this area can also refer learners, as appropriate, to skilled specialist counsellors outwith the College
- The Learning Development Centre will provide advice and support to learners on a range of issues, including essay and report writing skills and assistance with essential and core skills
- Guidance will be available to learners at the pre-entry, on-entry, on -course and pre-entry stages as appropriate. Introductory level courses and bridging courses may be available
- All learners will be placed on the most appropriate programme, following matching to programmes, interview and/or recognition of prior attainment
- Additional support needs will be identified at an early stage and support provided as required
- A planned and full Induction programme will be implemented for all learners.

5.0 Attendance and Retention Management

Good attendance and punctuality foster high levels of motivation and achievement among learners. Good levels of attendance and punctuality drive high levels of retention, attainment and achievement.

5.1. Staff expectations

- Lecturers and instructors will expect learners to arrive in class punctually and attend regularly. This will help to prepare learners for employment and to develop essential skills for life and work, such as working with others. They will set an example through their own punctual attendance
- All learners will be expected to arrive on time for classes to avoid disrupting lessons when people arrive late. While there will occasionally be unforeseen circumstances in which people arrive late or have to leave early, teaching staff will always challenge latecomers to engender more responsible behaviour
- Attendance and punctuality are seen as key elements in gaining and securing employment and for that reason, failure to comply with basic timekeeping will always be challenged by teaching staff.

5.2 Strategies for managing and promoting attendance and retention

The following features will help to foster behaviours conducive to good attendance and punctuality:

- Effective recruitment
- Effective induction to incorporate planning for learning and development
- A start of course focus on building teams and relationships in order that learners feel secure and at ease in the class group
- Opportunities for learners to experience early success in order that learner confidence is raised in the early part of the course
- Use of formative assessment at the start of programmes in order that learners experience a sense of achievement
- Effective on-going academic guidance
- Effective learning support
- Early identification of "at risk" learners
- Well-managed assessments and careful assessment scheduling
- Imaginative curriculum design
- Interesting and effective teaching
- Learning and teaching approaches adapted to meet individual learner needs
- Teaching teams with a consistent approach to managing low levels of attendance and punctuality.

5.3 Specific actions to address poor punctuality or attendance will be:

- Learners who are late will be challenged

- Non-attendance will be followed-up promptly and strenuously and action taken in the case of sustained or repeated absence
- Where an individual's attendance improves over time, this will be acknowledged
- At risk learners, including continuing learners with poor attendance and punctuality levels will be given additional support, as appropriate.

6.0 Essential Skills and Distance Travelled

Learners will be supported to set personal learning goals and recognise progress towards them so that they achieve appropriate outcomes. These will include self-esteem, self-confidence and citizenship skills and will be included in individual learning plans or their equivalent.

7.0 Staff Development

The College's Staff Development programme will include sessions on key topics designed to improve retention, achievement and attainment. These will include:

- learning and teaching approaches
- the inclusive classroom
- equality and diversity
- behaviour management
- assistive and enabling technologies.

Teaching practice will also be enhanced through attendance at accredited professional training such as Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE), PDA Advanced Diploma-Teaching in Further Education, New to FE and Assessment and Verification training.

Good Practice Dissemination Events will be held regularly with staff at all levels to monitor the extent to which sector leading and innovative practice is embedded across the curriculum.

8.0 Monitoring and Review

The College is committed to a process of critical self-evaluation and monitoring of performance, including the quality of learning and teaching, to identify weaknesses and areas for improvement through the systematic and rigorous use of performance indicators. This process of self-evaluation and monitoring is a key component of the Colleges approach to quality assurance and quality improvement.

The College will monitor the effectiveness of actions taken to improve retention, achievement and attainment through:

8.1 PI data collection

The College will identify trends and areas for improvement by collecting and presenting data covering the following:

- Early Student Retention
- Student Retention
- Student Outcome.

The College will also collect information on the following to identify areas for improvement:

- Subject and programme satisfaction data
- Induction satisfaction data
- End of year student satisfaction data
- Focus groups
- Employer satisfaction data
- Lesson observations
- Audits
- External verification reports
- Complaints.

The College will consider data on achievement, attainment and retention at curriculum team level at Quality Meetings.

Targets will be set covering: achievement, attainment and retention targets at team, programme and individual staff level.

8.2 Monitoring and feedback

- The Senior Management Team will regularly review PI data through Dashboard at its Strategy and Planning Meetings to monitor progress in achieving targets
- Quality Meetings will be held at which Sector and Department Managers and members of the Senior Management Team will discuss the range of quality improvement activities and will monitor their impact on the learner experience
- The College will implement an annual programme of lesson observations including permanent and temporary staff to assess the quality of the learning and teaching process
- The College will implement an annual programme of quality audits carried out by the Quality Team to assess programme teams against Education Scotland quality indicators and identify recommendations and actions for improvement
- The College will implement an annual programme of thematic audits carried out by the Quality Team e.g. checking teaching materials for social and cultural diversity
- Course Committees will be held regularly and will provide an opportunity for learners, employers and support staff to contribute to the planning and evaluation of programme delivery
- The College's Performance Management process will be used to review teaching staff performance and achievement against target and to identify staff development needed to address performance issues.

8.3 Self-evaluation

Annual self-evaluations will be carried out at Board, Senior Management, /Department, Subject, Programme and Support Team levels. The self-evaluation process will involve staff, learners and other appropriate stakeholders. The self-evaluation will be carried out using the appropriate Education Scotland quality indicators.

The process will ensure a systematic analysis of PI data and PI trends and benchmarks to:

- Identify areas of weakness
- Agree actions, which state the target or objective to be achieved, the person responsible and the timescale for achievement.

The Quality Assurance Sub-committee of the Academic Board will monitor the effectiveness and rigour of the self-evaluation process.

9.0 Responsibilities

- 9.1 The *Director (Curriculum and Learning)* has overall responsibility for the implementation of this Strategy.
- 9.2 The *Curriculum Advisory Panel (CAP)* will be responsible for approving new and amended programmes.
- 9.3 The *Qualifications and Quality Co-ordinator* will manage internal approval arrangements.
- 9.4 *Teaching staff* will be responsible for using appropriate learning and teaching approaches which motivate learners and encourage positive outcomes.
- 9.5 *Curriculum Leaders*, supported by *Guidance Tutors*, will support learners to set personal learning goals and monitor progress towards them.
- 9.6 The *HR Manager (People Development)* will ensure the College's Staff Development Programme provides staff with relevant training in relation the retention, achievement and attainment of learners.
- 9.7 The *Associate Principal (Student Support Services)* will ensure that appropriate guidance and support is available to all learners.
- 9.8 The *Director (Curriculum and Learning)* is responsible for the setting of monitoring of targets in relation to retention, achievement and attainment.
- 9.9 *Sector and Department Managers* are responsible for the achievement of set targets in relation to retention, achievement and attainment.
- 9.10 The *Senior Management Team* will monitor the effectiveness of actions taken to improve retention, achievement and attainment.

- 10.0** This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the College's Learning and Teaching, and Assessment Strategies.