

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Report to Human Resources Committee

26th August 2020

The purpose of this report is to update the Human Resources Committee on relevant staffing matters and on ongoing key areas of importance regarding staffing and Health and Safety during the COVID 19 pandemic.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Workforce Planning;
- 1.2 Employee Wellness, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion;
- 1.3 Learning and Development;
- 1.4 National Bargaining;
- 1.5 Staffing changes and current vacancies;
- 1.6 Review of relevant policies;
- 1.7 Health and Safety.

2. Detail of Summary

2.1 Workforce Planning

The outbreak of COVID-19 has created resourcing and staffing challenges across the sector, and it is vital that the College maintains a focus on the future planning of staffing but also on current resourcing requirements whilst operating remotely and offering a blended return to staff and delivery model to students.

The support staff began returning to the College on a phased, rotational basis in July 2020. The HR Team developed Management Guidance to support managers in the discussion with those staff returning to the college building during the core summer holiday period, Appendix A. All remaining staff began returning on the 12th August 2020.

The HR team also developed staff FAQs to help address any staff concerns, Appendix B.

2.1.1. Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

The College continued to engage with the staff on furlough and they have been encouraged to attend CPD, participate in volunteering opportunities and utilise all staff benefits. All 44 staff have now returned from furlough.

2.1.2 Alternative Funding

The College was delighted to be awarded the Rural Academy project which will run from July 2020 to 31st March 2021.

2.2 Employee Wellness, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The College understands the impact both physically and mentally of operating in this unprecedented time and has been actively developing strategies to address how all staff can stay physically well and psychologically resilient.

The first meeting of the Equality Group for this academic year is taking place on Wednesday 26th August at 3pm.

The outbreak of the pandemic is likely to limit the extent of involvement and participation in the equality initiatives that is possible in the short and medium term within the College. However, a focus will remain on progressing equality and the agreed Equality Outcomes. The Equality Group will discuss progress and priority actions for the forthcoming academic session prioritising action to tackle the most significant inequalities in the College sector. An update will subsequently be provided to the Board of Management.

2.2.1 Employee Wellness, Equality and Safety Initiatives

Staff Wellbeing Survey

The wellbeing of all staff within the College is paramount at all times, and the Covid-19 pandemic creates new challenges for us all. The College therefore conducted a Staff Wellbeing survey in May 2020 to help us understand how staff are coping with the current situation and to inform what we are doing as an organisation to support all our staff.

The survey was available online with an alternative format offered if preferred and 179 staff responded. If anyone had immediate, specific concerns they were encouraged to contact the HR Team.

An overview of the results of the survey was provided to the Board of Management in July 2020.

Equality Monitoring Information Video

We are currently working with an animator, to create a video animation explaining why the College collects equality monitoring information and what we do with it.

The animation will be of the correct media, style and content to ensure the message is applicable to both students and staff.

Seasonal Flu Vaccinations/Staff

In line with the College's commitment to employee wellbeing, seasonal flu vaccinations will be offered to staff onsite, over one and a half days on Wednesday 31st September and Thursday 1st October. The vaccinations will be administered by Bupa.

Last year 108 staff received vaccinations. This year we have increased the provision to 158 to ensure that as many staff as possible have the opportunity.

Equality Project Assistant (Inclusion Scotland Disability Equality Internship)

Interviews are taking place on Wednesday 2nd and Thursday 3rd September for the role of Equality Project Assistant Internship.

This is an excellent opportunity for a disabled person to gain valuable experience and develop their skills in a supportive environment.

The intern will work within the Human Resources team on an Advance HE, progressing staff equality research project, aiming to increase the recruitment of disabled staff.

Inclusion Scotland are supporting the internship and are funded by the Scottish Government to create internship opportunities for disabled people in Scotland.

Scotblood - Blood Donation Session

The NHS have decided to cancel the donation session scheduled for the College on Tuesday 6th October. It was recognised that whilst the College may have capacity to facilitate the session in line with social distancing rules, 45 volunteer donors are required for a session to go ahead. As we had 47 volunteers with the College at full capacity in 2019 the NHS felt that the reduced number in the building at any one time this year meant that 45 volunteers may not be achievable.

There are appointments in community venues which will be promoted to staff and students.

The NHS thanked the College for their continued support and will be in touch with a new date for 2021.

Health & Wellbeing Event

Plans are in place for the annual Health & Wellbeing Event to take place over four days, predominantly in a virtual format. The event will begin on Tuesday 27th October and end with Pink Friday on the 30th October.

Staff Benefits and Fitness Activities

The College is continuing to provide staff benefits and are currently offering yoga, mindfulness and circuits classes virtually via Teams and Zoom. Sessions are recorded and uploaded to the SLC VLE for staff who are unable to commit to the scheduled times and dates due to teaching commitments and caring responsibilities.

All staff have been included in a SLC Wellbeing Activities Microsoft Teams page which gives them direct access to the sessions and further information. There continues to be high levels of engagement and discussion on the platform and the initiative has been welcomed by staff.

Carers Week

Recognising that coronavirus had for many added additional responsibilities and challenges we decided to use Carers Week to remind staff and student carers of the support available within the College and signposted to external organisations.

We also hosted our first Carers Virtual Café on Teams during staff development day on 19th June when we encouraged staff with caring responsibilities to join us for a chat and a virtual cuppa. Lanarkshire Carers Centre joined us to share information about the services they provide.

2.2.2 Mental Health Working Group Meeting

The College is aware of the impact of the current health emergency due to COVID-19 on the mental health of staff and students. We know that the levels of anxiety, fear, isolation, social distancing and restrictions, uncertainty and emotional distress experienced have become widespread. With the support of the College Leadership Team (CLT) the College and the Mental Health Working Group will maintain a strong focus on mental health throughout the 2020/2021 academic session.

The first group meeting for this academic year is taking place in September 2020 and plans are underway to support World Mental Health Day on the 10th October to raise awareness in the college community about mental health.

World Mental Health Day

The World Health Organisation recognises World Mental Health Day on 10 October every year. This year's theme set by the World Federation for Mental Health is Mental Health for All. It focuses on Greater Investment – Greater Access for everyone. The Mental Health Working Group are currently planning the event and how this can be supported and promoted in a blended capacity.

Mental Health Awareness Week

The College supported Mental Health Awareness week 18th – 24^h May 2020. Kindness was the theme for the week in response to coronavirus outbreak and is a moment for us all to focus on mental health and how important kindness is.

We wanted to get everyone talking about kindness and mental health and we had a great response to our social media campaign asking students, staff and followers to tell us if they had experienced any random acts of kindness recently and would be happy for us to share on social media.

We also reminded students and staff of support available both in college and externally.

Mental Health Awareness Training

The Mental Health Awareness Course continues to be delivered to staff virtually with additional self-study resources.

The Big White Wall

Our partners at Big White Wall have relaunched as TogetherAll! The service name is changing but the commitment to providing safe and accessible mental health support remains consistent. The service is free to all of our students and staff and provides a safe online community to support mental health, 24/7.

2.2.3 Absence Management

The absence report detailing the levels of absence over the second quarter period 1st April to 30th June 2020 is provided in Appendix C. Appendix D provides the full quarterly report.

The HR department has maintained a focus on absence management and implemented reporting mechanisms to ensure that all COVID-19 related absences were recorded and managed appropriately. There are currently no members of staff absent with COVID-19 related symptoms.

Although the HR department have been working closely with line managers and all staff to support staff throughout the pandemic a self assessment tool has been developed and issued to all staff in July. Information from the survey has enabled the HR team to plan for additional steps we may need to take to protect staff and Occupational Health advice was sought where appropriate.

It is anticipated that trigger point meetings with the Principal or Depute Principal and HR staff also take place as appropriate over the coming months.

Professional occupational health and counselling services are used to support staff attendance.

2.4 Learning and Development

The College is committed to ensuring the continuation of staff development during the Covid-19 pandemic and continues to be committed to delivering a diverse range of activities.

We aim to encourage all staff to be empowered to develop their own professional learning and to further embed innovation in the teaching and support areas of the College. This is particularly relevant during the current pandemic to keep staff engaged and motivated and the College has been actively developing strategies within this area.

2.4.1 Professional Qualifications

The College was delighted that all 8 lecturers who undertook the TQFE in the 2019/2020 cohort successfully achieved their TQFE qualification.

Our main provider in the delivery of the TQFE, Dundee University decided not to recruit a 20/21 TQFE cohort due to the coronavirus outbreak. However, a further 9 staff will undertake the TQFE through Aberdeen University in 2020/21. There is an equal split of three staff per faculty.

As in 2019/2020 under the provisions of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) the College will also ensure that all lecturers undertaking a recognised lecturing qualification for 2019/2020 receive remission on the basis of 150 hours reduction in class contact time over an academic year. Line managers are requested to ensure that lecturers have one full day with no class contact for the duration of the course.

The College is currently reviewing plans to support staff through the PDA and Assessor and Verifier qualifications in 2020/2021 and a further update will be provided to the HR Committee in November 2020.

2.4.2 Professional Learning Opportunities

Our first virtual Staff Development day was delivered on the 23rd June and offered a range of activities to encourage all staff to get involved, Appendix E. The programme focused on wellbeing and enhancing digital skills for effective use of Office365 within teams and the classroom. There was a strong focus on wellbeing and equality. Feedback overall was very positive, Appendix F.

The HR department analysed this feedback to ensure that it was incorporated into the planning for August 2020 CPD. There were common themes throughout the comments section of the evaluations. There was an excellent link between the digital skills training and the classroom environment as courses were delivered by an external experienced education professional. However, staff also seemed to be at different digital skill levels and suggested that interactive sessions may be more beneficial. Therefore, a broader range of digital skills practical sessions were scheduled for August 2020 to meet all needs.

Overall, 73% of staff saying the virtual experience fully met their expectations.

The Staff Development programme which commenced on the 12th of August 2020 is attached in Appendix G. The theme was “Get Ready – 2020/2021” and we were delighted to enable to the Chair of the Board and the Principal to address the staff virtually and live to start the session. We also hosted a live Q&A with members of the College Leadership Team in the afternoon which was a productive session. We plan to share the video links with the Board. There was a focus on digital skills for effective remote working and focused CPD on delivering a blended learning and teaching model to students.

The College has had a focus on wellbeing throughout remote working and sessions delivered to staff were valued. Good practical advice was given with lots of opportunities for staff participation.

2.5 National Bargaining

2.5.1 Support Staff

UNISON have also now submitted their pay claim which is presented as a *Package for the 'New Normal'*. The claim will require to be fully costed across the sector before any response can be provided. A further update is expected in September 2020. The UNISON pay claim is for a flat rate rise of £1,100 on all pay points plus changes to terms and conditions.

2.5.2 Lecturing Staff

The EIS pay claim remains a flat rate of £1,950 on all pay points, which equates to between 4.7% and 5.8% on April 2019 pay points.

2.6 Staffing Changes

Details of leavers, new staff and current vacancies are attached in Appendix H.

The recruitment process for the Depute Principal role has now commenced. The vacancy closed on the 9th August 2020 and it is anticipated that the that interviews will take place at the end of August 2020.

2.7 Policy Update

The following policy are included for review and approval:

Appendix I – The Social Network and Media Policy

2.8 Health and Safety

The College has maintained a strong focus on Health and Safety throughout the Coronavirus pandemic and this has informed all decision making relating to staff and the safe opening operation and opening of the building.

The Health and Safety Committee have met on a frequent basis during the pandemic. The minutes are provided in Appendix J – M.

The College developed a Covid-19 Risk assessment which may be accessed through the college portal, Appendix N. All faculties also have individual risk assessments for both their faculties and rooms/workshops. We have also developed a Health and Safety Re-induction video that all staff were able to view on the staff development section of the VLE. We also developed Health and Safety Guidance which was agreed by the Health and Safety Committee and distributed to all staff, Appendix O. The Guidance outlines the measures put in place by the College but also the expected behaviours of staff, students and other users. This will be subject to change in line with Scottish Government Guidance.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Human Resources Committee:

- 3.1.1** Note the Workforce Planning update;
- 3.1.2** Note the Employee Wellness, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion;
- 3.1.3** Note the Learning and Development update;
- 3.1.4** Note the National Bargaining update;
- 3.1.5** Note the staffing changes and current vacancies;
- 3.1.6** Note the update of the relevant policies;
- 3.1.7** Note the Health and Safety update.