

Annual engagement: main findings

Name of college: Glasgow Kelvin College

Date of visit: 2nd June 2016

Contextual information

Glasgow Kelvin College have had a number of challenges in the year with financial and industrial relation pressures adding to a year which already had a significant development agenda. The planned curriculum transfers have been challenging but overall are going to plan at this stage. There have been strong and well led activities to develop further a culture of quality improvement, and to encourage staff to take more direct ownership for improving the learning experience. Important initiatives such as the work of class tutors have progressed well and have impacted positively. Improving working arrangements with schools and the local authority are leading to enhanced provision for school-aged learners consistent with DYW priorities.

Update on previous Education Scotland evaluative activities

The college was subject to external review with the report published in March 2015. There were four main points for action.

- The college should improve successful completion rates for full-time learners, particularly those on HE programmes.**
- The college should ensure that curriculum teams develop and use targets for improving retention and attainment systematically.**
- Senior managers should provide staff with support and direction in order to implement fully the aims of the learning, teaching, and assessment strategy.**
- Senior managers should provide effective leadership for quality enhancement**

Following the external review the college developed a detailed action plan to bring about improvement. The college has been successful in making good progress on all these areas and is now operating as an effective college.

Learner Progress and Outcomes

Trends in student success

The tables below show the proportion of learners who completed their FE or HE programme successfully, over the last three sessions. **The PIs discount those programmes not leading to a recognised qualification.**

Full-time FE

	College			
	Early withdrawal	Further withdrawal	Partial Success	Completed successfully
2012-13	11%	15%	10%	65%
2013-14	9%	14%	12%	65%
2014-15	12%	16%	9%	64%
National sector performance				
	Early withdrawal	Further withdrawal	Partial Success	Completed successfully
2012-13	8%	15%	11%	65%
2013-14	8%	15%	11%	66%
2014-15	9%	17%	11%	64%

In full-time FE provision, the success rate at the college has fallen slightly in 2014-15 to 64%. This success rate is in line with the national sector performance. The proportion of learners completing with partial success has also fallen in 2014-15, with 9% of learners having this outcome.

The early and further withdrawal rates have both increased over the last three years. The further withdrawal rate of 16% is one percentage point below the national average, while the early withdrawal rate of 12% is three percentage points above the national average.

Full-time HE

	College			
	Early withdrawal	Further withdrawal	Partial Success	Completed successfully
2012-13	6%	12%	10%	72%
2013-14	5%	8%	23%	64%
2014-15	5%	14%	11%	70%
	National sector performance			
	Early withdrawal	Further withdrawal	Partial Success	Completed successfully
2012-13	6%	12%	12%	70%
2013-14	4%	11%	13%	71%
2014-15	4%	13%	11%	71%

In full-time HE provision, the success rate in 2014-15 was lower than in 2012-13, but a considerable increase from 2013-14. In 2014-15 70% of learners completed their programme successfully, one percentage point below the national sector performance. A further 11% of learners completed with partial success, matching the national average.

The further withdrawal rate at the college was higher than in the previous two years being at 14%, one percentage point above the national sector performance. The early withdrawal rate of 5% was also one percentage point above the national sector performance.

Part-time FE

	College			
	Early withdrawal	Further withdrawal	Partial Success	Completed successfully
2012-13	5%	8%	9%	78%
2013-14	5%	6%	10%	79%
2014-15	4%	7%	7%	83%
	National sector performance			
	Early withdrawal	Further withdrawal	Partial Success	Completed successfully
2012-13	4%	7%	13%	76%
2013-14	3%	6%	13%	78%
2014-15	2%	6%	16%	76%

The college's part-time FE provision success rate has improved over the last three years. The 2014-15 success rate of 83% is seven percentage points above the national sector performance level. A further seven percent of learners completed their programme with partial success.

The further withdrawal rate in 2014-15 was one percentage point above the national performance level. The early withdrawal rate of four percent was one percentage point lower than in the previous two years, but was still two percentage points above the national sector performance level.

Part-time HE

	College			
	Early withdrawal	Further withdrawal	Partial Success	Completed successfully
2012-13	7%	6%	12%	75%
2013-14	3%	4%	18%	74%
2014-15	4%	9%	14%	73%
National sector performance				
	Early withdrawal	Further withdrawal	Partial Success	Completed successfully
2012-13	4%	6%	14%	76%
2013-14	2%	6%	14%	78%
2014-15	3%	5%	14%	78%

Part time HE represents 6% of the college provision. The success rate in part-time HE has fallen by one percentage point each year since 2012-13, reaching 73% in 2014-15. This success rate is five percentage points below the 2014-15 national sector performance. A further 14% of learners completed their programme with partial success, matching the national average.

The further withdrawal rate of 9% is higher than in the previous two years and is also four percentage points above the national sector performance. The early withdrawal rate of 4% is one percentage point above the national sector performance.

High quality learning

PIs trends at college level

For academic year 2014/15, full time FE and part time HE both declined a little, whilst full time HE and part time FE improved. This was a year when the college was addressing a number of merger issues, and was the same year the college was subject to external review. Therefore, the benefits of a more settled environment and actions following the review have yet to be realised. However, even in that year, the full -time success rates are still comparable with the national sector performance levels, and part-time FE is 7% above and part time HE 5% below national sector performance. Part-time HE is a small part of college provision, representing about 5% of activity, and poorer performance relates to a few identifiable programmes.

Discussions with teaching teams in both higher performing and poorer performing subject areas highlight improvements being put in place. The business studies team have reflected on and improved a range of key processes. Recruitment processes have changed to ensure a better match with learner interest and academic abilities. A 'risk register' was introduced to highlight learners that may benefit from additional support, and the curriculum content is now more focussed and relevant for learners.

Successful completions in this area for 2015-16 are likely to be amongst the highest in the sector.

Sport and leisure staff have evaluated provision and looked quite specifically at recruitment practices, and the process of matching learners with the most appropriate programmes. There is a two stage recruitment process, involving a practical test as well as a general discussion. Hospitality staff examined the levels of programme on offer to learners, and identified the importance of improving level 5 outcomes. Performing arts staff had a greater focus on thorough quality improvement action plans for all programmes. Each programme had specific issues that were appropriately identified and addressed. Sound engineering staff reflected well on poorer PIs, and adjusted the content and use made of technology. They are currently developing a more useful diagnostic process to support application arrangements.

College wide, there is a greater commitment by staff to improve. Quality review arrangements have led to improvements across the college. The implementation of a clearer and more supportive tutor system has also been very helpful through identifying and supporting learners at risk. In all teaching areas under it is anticipated that the withdrawal rates are reducing, and success rates at the end of the current year will show notable improvements.

Developing learning in STEM subjects

Glasgow Kelvin College, along with the other Glasgow Colleges, worked with New Engineering Foundation (NEF) to develop STEM strategies and to seek STEM Assured status on both a regional and individual college basis. NEF is a well-established organisation who seek to improve vocational education through research, professional development, partnership and organisational transformation. It has developed criteria to assess organisations performance in six key areas including strategy and planning, engagement, design and delivery, innovation, standards and impact. NEF confirmed *STEM Assured* status for the College in November 2015. Using the external mechanism and well established criteria helped the college to more effectively evaluate progress and reflect on the quality of its provision in this area.

Effective school links have been fostered, with 60 S2/S3 pupils attending theme day tasters designed to explain and expand the role of the engineer, and provide motivation and engagement with young people. There have been a number of initiatives aimed at improving retention rates as a result of this work, such as closer collaboration between construction and jewellery staff, and the residential Survey Camp for Civil Engineers, the latter having come out of a successful *Empowered to Take Action* bid.

The college is clear on its STEM priorities to develop the STEM curriculum around five clusters (Engineering and Automation Systems, Logistics and Intelligent Transport, Health and Applied Science, Design and Performance Technologies and Built Environment and Emerging Technologies) all of which include transferable skill-sets and which embed innovation, entrepreneurship and enterprise. The college is

making good progress and working well with partners to embrace and develop this area of work in way that will encourage greater uptake and engagement.

Learner Engagement

The overall approach in learner engagement

All learners value the support they receive from lecturers and support staff. All feel that staff are easily accessible and are prepared to 'go the extra mile' to assist learners achieve their goals.

All learners found the college provided helpful information and support which assisted them to make informed choices. Those learners who had progressed from prior studies at the college felt well prepared and supported through the transition to the next stage in their learning.

All learners valued the regular opportunities to reflect on their progress and set goals for the next steps in their learning, and value the *Stop and Check* meetings with their class tutor. For most learners this includes the use of formal Individual Learning Plans to set both personal and learning goals. Some Health and Social Care learners made use of reflective log books to consider their practice and plan further learning. Many learners valued the opportunity within one-to-one meetings with their class tutor to discuss and plan for additional support where appropriate.

Almost all learners feel their views are valued and changes are made to programmes as a result of their feedback. Feedback is collected through the use of learner surveys and completed *Stop and Check Feedback Forms*. Class feedback forms are also used to inform discussions held during *Programme Review Meetings*. Changes made include rescheduling of units within programmes and amendments to assessment timings to balance learner workloads. Learners in a few programmes were actively involved in discussions held with their lecturers on how to structure their learning, for example, in planning the balance of theory and practical activities. Many learners felt well informed with regards to how their views had been considered, for example, through the use of *You Said – We Did* feedback provided at programme level discussions. At college level, *You Said – We Did* feedback is also provided through the Students' Association to class representatives. Learners valued this feedback which also had a positive impact overall on learner engagement and motivation.

Learners valued the opportunities provided by their programmes to develop broader skills for employment and prepare them for the world of work. These opportunities include: voluntary work, including opportunity for certification through College devised Community Achievement Awards; work experience; participation in 'master classes'; competitions; and real world 'briefs', for example in photography and fashion. In addition to preparing learners for employment, these activities also developed and enhanced learners' confidence.

Almost all classes have appointed class representatives in place. Class representatives are well supported to enable them to undertake their role effectively.

Class representatives value the discussions that take place during class representative meetings. They also make use of the class representative area on the college Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) through which they can view minutes of meetings and contribute to discussions on college-related issues. This facility is valued by class representatives if they have been unable to attend a scheduled meeting. The Students' Association officers continue to work to raise the profile of the Students' Association. Learners are aware of routine communication received from the Students' Association through use of emails. However, many learners do not read these and as a result are not fully aware of the activities and opportunities offered by their Association.

The role of the class tutor and guidance and support services

The guidance role of the class tutor is one which has been better defined in the current year, and has been helpful in improving success rates overall. The college provided clear expectations of the role, and provided some structured time for staff to discharge their duties. Tutors routinely have a teaching relationship with their allocated class group combined with a pastoral care role. This arrangement helps progress monitoring and identifying issues of concern. There are clear expectations of staff undertaking the guidance tutor role. These staff have a level of flexibility, which is used well to ensure their time and effort is appropriately focussed. The role involves promoting learner engagement principles, and ensuring work is completed on learners' ILPs and approaches adopted support learner progression. The mechanisms of *Stop and Check* activities and three individual progress reviews for each learner help to underpin strong personal support arrangements.

The more careful monitoring of individual progress made allows staff to follow up absences or concerns promptly and appropriately. It is resulting in more learners being referred promptly to central support services. As a result the college recognises the need for increased levels of learner support.. Staff and learners speak positively about the tutor support system, which ensures learners are better supported whilst studying at college.

Quality culture

The learning teaching and assessment strategy and evaluation of learning and teaching

Managers have worked productively and collaboratively to promote and explain the learning teaching and assessment strategy to staff. They have been effective in improving understanding and promotion of this key college policy. This is evident in the range of improved activities now taking place around learning and teaching approaches.

Staff in a number of areas have adopted the use of live project activities to motivate and engage learners. These projects help provide a useful understanding of work requirements and ensure learners see their college activities as practical and helpful experiences. Live projects have included different areas of the college working together. For example, an event held in Paisley Abbey engaged a number of learners across a range of subject disciplines. Learners benefited from these

practical experiences which enhanced and improved their employability skills. Established international links with India, Germany and Russia have had a real impact on learners in subject areas such as fashion and engineering.

Overall, there has been a high degree of training and support provided to staff around learning and teaching methods. Good use has been made of the links with the Gazelle College group who provided staff to help support and facilitate the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching approaches. Learning technologies have featured highly in a number of areas, and there is increased use of helpful online resources. A college programme of activity, *Empowered to Take Action*, has been recently established to encourage innovation and develop new approaches in learning and teaching. This initiative allows teams to bid for extra support to try new and innovative teaching approaches for their groups of learners. Although currently in the early stage of development, this approach is likely to have a positive influence on teaching teams directly and across the college more widely.

Overall evaluation of learning and teaching has seen some improvement through a more rigorous self-evaluation arrangement. Learner feedback is gathered more systematically and is influential in changing teaching approaches. However, there is further work to do to develop a clearer view of the quality and impact of learning and teaching, and the college will continue to progress its work in this area. Future plans include an element of lesson observation within this wider evidence base which is seen as being useful and constructive and will help the college be clearer about progress in this area.

The updated quality processes and working arrangements within teams

The college has implemented new quality enhancement arrangements which involve all teaching staff and give priority to analysis of performance indicators, reflection on learning and teaching and target setting for improvement. Managers and staff are confident in describing these systems and their impact. Both groups agreed there was now a real ownership of the Glasgow Kelvin quality system as opposed to any legacy arrangements. All staff now recognise the change of culture and have an understanding of the positive quality ethos which is owned by all. Staff are comfortable raising issues regarding PI concerns with managers and engage in a purposeful professional dialogue.

All programmes are systematically reviewed but *the Quality Improvement Action Plans (QIAP)* proved a more focussed and supported approach for programmes where attainment is low. This measure was not merely triggered by a low PI but was also initiated by staff who wished to develop a structured approach to improvement. The enhancement of the class tutor role is now well understood and is praised by all as a very effective approach to improving retention and attainment. All staff are clear where this role is positioned within the quality enhancement framework. Relevant CPD is delivered to all staff to ensure understanding and effectiveness of these new quality arrangements.

Work in the senior phase

Collaborative arrangements in Glasgow give the college a clear focus and responsibility for the North East section of the city. The college has reflected on and improved its senior phase offer. The main changes reflect a much clearer focus on progression options, and a wider range of levels of programme being made available. There is now an emphasis on guaranteed interviews, and all programmes have a progression path that is made clear to participants. Offers for places to pupils have been made earlier this year.

The college is active in their work with local secondary schools, with the coordinator visiting all schools and engaging where practical in parents' evenings and career - related events. This is working particularly well in some subject areas such as construction, where pupils' knowledge and experience is likely to be limited. Helpful information and progression support is influencing improved retention and success outcomes for school-aged learners. The college has worked diligently to coordinate improved provision and has established more purposeful relationships with local schools.

The college is also leading on a Glasgow-wide project to offer new Foundation Apprenticeships. This involves the coordination of work between the three colleges within the Glasgow region as well as collaborative working with the local authority and secondary schools. There have been challenges recently with the late publication of the details of the awards, and therefore delayed promotion of these learning opportunities.

PREVENT, Corporate Parenting and arrangements for Tier 4 learners

The college is well advanced in this work and aware of its responsibilities in the developing areas of PREVENT, Corporate Parenting and responsibility for Tier 4 international learners. College staff are involved in strategic groups within the region to support and progress this work, and work well with the local authority and other key partners. There are well established partnerships in place around Corporate Parenting.

The responsibilities relating to the PREVENT agenda have been shared with the Board and senior managers. Key staff have undertaken WRAP training and there are plans in place in the summer and autumn period to extend appropriate training.

The college has three tier 4 international learners, and appropriate arrangements are in place for their supervision, support and progress. They are well integrated into college life, and making appropriate levels of progress.

Examples of excellence

There were several examples of excellence proposed or identified by the team. These examples are being considered for publication as examples of excellence

- *Excellence in using the course tutor role to improve success*
- *Excellence in improving learner success in FE Business programmes*
- *Excellence in Collaborative Project Based Learning – major event in Paisley Abbey*

Of these, the example of the project based work stands out as exceptional.

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Date 2nd June 2016