Written response to the recommendations from Stevenson College

Please find below Stevenson College Edinburgh’s response to your letter dated 13 September 2007 asking for our general view of the Committee’s Report – “Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities”

Our general view is that we are broadly in agreement with the Recommendations of the Committee and also with the Formal Responses made so far by the Scottish Government.

With regard to how we intend to implement (or indeed have already implemented) any recommendations that are particularly relevant to us as a College, please find below our response to this question. I have not responded to every Recommendation, but have highlighted ones which are of most relevance to the College.

Access to Further and Higher Education

Lifelong Learning Strategy

The College’s Strategic Plan and our Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan refers specifically to our commitment to the principles of equal opportunities with regard to our Learners. The College committee structure includes an Equality and Inclusiveness Committee and we engage with students, stakeholders and external organisations to ensure we continue to meet the needs of learners with disabilities.

Scottish Executive – More Choices, More Chances

The College works closely with external partners including schools, CLAN, Princes Trust, Community and voluntary sectors to provide innovative and supportive learning for vulnerable young people.

Mainstreaming equality in the further and higher education sector – monitoring and evaluation

Equality of opportunity forms a cornerstone of the College’s strategic plan and we monitor and evaluate it through our various committee structures and we engage with stakeholders through these too. We utilised the toolkit developed by the Scottish Funding Council, but have gone beyond that now by devising our Disability Equality Scheme, and have just published our first Disability Annual Progress Report (although it is in fact our fourth Annual Equality Report). We have disabled student representation on our Equality and Inclusiveness Committee and sub groups of that Committee which allows the College to take stock of the information we provide to ensure it is appropriate and meets the needs of disabled students.
Courses “pretendy” courses

Within Stevenson College Edinburgh, we have worked very hard to ensure we do not have “pretendy” courses. All students with learning difficulties have thorough needs assessments to establish the most appropriate programmes of study. They have regular reviews with tutors involving outside support staff where appropriate. The students with the most complex needs take classes within the “Link In” programme. This programme provides core skills classes (ICT, numeracy and communication) in a task centred approach as well as offering practical options across the vocational areas of the college. Students are entered for units in core skills from Access 1 level where appropriate.

While acknowledging that some students do attend college for a number of years, most of these students now have some form of work placement/experience built into their week arranged by their support agency and we see college provision as consolidating and extending literacies as well as introducing students to new skills and social challenges. Some of our other Learning Difficulties provision is more clearly vocational and builds in contact with supported employment agencies. We have clear progression routes through the programmes, hopefully moving students into some form of “work”.

Teachability Project

Stevenson College Edinburgh project managed the QELTM project within the FE Sector. This project had some similar aspirations and goals as the “Teachability Project”. Within the College, dissemination workshops have been taking place this year with academic staff to raise awareness of the QELTM guidelines for ensuring equality and diversity in learning and teaching materials and ensure these are followed when preparing new materials and also auditing existing materials.

Finally I would just like to reinforce our commitment as a College to removing barriers and creating learning opportunities for all learners. This College has a national profile in terms of its inclusion of disabled people. We have strong links with external agencies, have recently taken out membership with “Skill”, we host the national BRITE Centre and one of only three Access Centres in Scotland is located in the College. Our mechanisms for supporting students with disabilities and additional needs are well developed.

I do hope the above is useful to your further deliberations before taking formal evidence from the relevant ministers.

Gillian Russell
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7 December 2007