

AQUINAS COLLEGE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Date: 24 January 2023  
Time: 4.00pm  
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Dr P Beatty, Mr P Horton, Mr G Hynes, Mrs C Knights, Cllr T McGee, Mrs J Miller, Dr A Smith and Mr M Taylor.

Mr P Horton in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr D Pearson                      Principal                                      Mr A Bailey                                      Vice Principal

1.     OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION

The meeting began with a prayer led by Mr Horton.

2.     APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence were received and accepted from Mr L Byrne.

3.     DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors and Staff were asked to declare any interest, which they may have in any of the items on the Agenda for this meeting. No interests were declared.

4.     MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 copies of which had been circulated previously be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

5.     MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising that were not covered by the agenda for the meeting.

6.     ADMISSIONS 2023/2024

Mr Pearson updated Governors on the latest position regarding admissions for 2023/2024.

There had been 1126 Category 1 applications and they had been interviewed over the telephone before the end of November 2022. The interview is to give students advice about entry requirements and courses available at the college. The number of applications was similar to last year.

The closing date for Category 2 applications was 30 November 2022 and 1592 applications had been received which was the highest number ever received and was up by 250 from last year, which was a low year. Prior to the interviews the student's applications are classified as

i) excellent, ii) good or iii) requires improvement. The interviews should be completed soon and offers will be made by the February half term. Those students classed as excellent would not be interviewed.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that between 16 – 20 staff had been involved in the interview process. This had meant that each member had undertaken 8 hours over 6 sessions.

The college purposefully under recruited in September 2022 and on the census date there were 2395 students, whilst the college had been funded for 2415 students. The college usually aims to grow by between 20-40 students. The aim for next academic year will be to have 2474 students on roll in September 2023 to achieve a figure of 2425 by the census date in October 2023. An additional 30 students gives the college an additional £150,000 in income. The college is significantly above its built capacity, the original building was for 1850 students to be on site at any time but we have made the most of the timetabling flexibilities.

The predicted number for U6 in September 2023 is 1100 students which is lower than the usual number due to the low recruitment in September 2022. The target that the college can comfortably cope with is 2400 students. Therefore, the aim is to have a L6 of 1344 for September 2023. This would give a total of around 2425 students by census date in October. The college have been considering a number of strategies to deal with the increasing student numbers. These include efficiencies in college but that would increase class sizes, therefore the possibility of a new build is being actively pursued.

For September 2023 offers will be made to students based on a conversion rate over the last five years of 65% for Category 1 students and 60% for Category 2 students. The conversion rates for 2022 dropped in both category 1 and category 2. The college had gone back to face to face open events this year because it was felt that when the students came in they liked the feel of the college. All of this should give the college a total of 1344 students to start in September 2023. The interviews should be completed soon and appropriate offers will be made by the February half term.

Mr Hynes asked if the college ever received complaints from students who had not been offered a place at the college. Mr Pearson replied that the college do receive complaints from some students but the college has limited capacity. He added that it is impossible to give individual feedback but the college are as sensitive as possible. A waiting list is kept for students with mitigating circumstances.

Mr Taylor asked is there any evidence that shows how well those students who are refused a place initially and subsequently get a place. Mr Pearson replied that this is not routinely looked at. Mr Taylor also asked is the application process right. Mr Pearson replied that the admissions process had developed over a long period of time and is reviewed regularly. He pointed out that those students who are classed as excellent on the application have not interviewed this year. It was acknowledged that some students make multiple applications to colleges, particularly to Loreto, Xaverian, Cheadle and Marple, Ashton and Stockport College. Students are given curriculum advice during their interview. Mr Horton asked are there some students who only apply to the college. Mr Pearson confirmed that is the case. Mr Pearson advised Governors that last year both Loreto and Xaverian grew by significant number of students to 3400 and 2800 respectively. He added that growth helps the college to stand still in financial terms as inflationary cost are not accounted for in funding. If the number of students fall it could lead to redundancies. For 2023/2024 the funding rate for a student would increase by £100.

An update on the admission numbers will be given at the Governing Body meeting on 21 March 2023.

Mrs Miller joined the meeting whilst this item was being discussed.

## 8. STUDENT DESTINATIONS

Mr Pearson introduced a paper that had been circulated to Governors which showed the destination of students who had left the college at the end of the 2021/2022 academic year.

Governors' attention was drawn to the Executive Summary in the report which showed the following:

a) 1076 students left the college in 2022. Additionally, 8 students also completed their studies who were on level 2 courses.

b) The Final UCAS reports students completing level 3 qualification and accepting a place at university was 674.

- Female acceptances – 356 (52.8%)
- Male acceptances – 313 (46.4%)
- Prefer not to say – 5 (0.8%)
- 58 Students deferred entry to university for 2023
- Number of students who gained entry to their first choice – 592 and increase from last year (510).

c) 202 students accepted places at Russell Group Universities which was 30.0% of total number of acceptances to universities. This is an increase from last year 166 students (26.2%) of total acceptances.

d) Oxford and Cambridge places – 7 students.

e) Universities in northern cities continue to be the most popular with Aquinas students. Once again Manchester Metropolitan University is again the most popular university with 97 students progressing onto a higher education degree course. There was a large increase in students going to Sheffield University with 41 students compared to 18 in the previous year. University of Sheffield (41), Sheffield Hallam (44) and University of Liverpool (34) and University of Salford (67) University of Manchester (25) were also popular.

f) Students from the college went onto 88 institutions compared to 86 in the previous year.

g) 126 students out of a total of 167 who identified as anything other than White British (74.4% of cohort) progressed onto higher education. This compares to last year, with 135 students out of 188 (71.8%).

h) 129 students out of a total of 195 who identify as from a “widening participation background” (66% of their cohort) progressed onto higher education. This compares to last year, with 67 students out of 121 (55%).

i) Governors noted that 59 students started apprenticeship compared with 62 in the previous year. 143 students went in to full time employment, 11 students continued on a FE Course and 61 took a GAP year with 58 deferring an HE course.

j) 51% of students who left are based in the North West.

k) Aspire students who participated during the first cohort (2020/2021), 60 out of 99 completed their studies in Summer 2022. 75% of those students progressed to either university (55%) or employment (20%).

l) There were 127 other, students who do not fit in one of the other categories and there were 1 unknown, students who the college have not be able to contact.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that most student were staying in the North West due to the financial pressures that families are facing. He added that the number of students attending the Russell Group of universities had increased. The opportunities for apprenticeship have

reduced. Mr Hynes felt that the number of IT vacancies shown in table 12 of the report was interesting when comparing the local position with the both regional and national picture.

Mr Horton and Mr Taylor referred to the number of students who had taken up employment with companies who were offering a university level education through an employer. Mr Taylor also referred to the fact that 14 students had gone to University Academy 92 (UA92). Mr Bailey replied that when students had visited a first team player from Manchester United was present. He added that he was not aware that any Aquinas students had gone to UCFB.

RESOLVED: That the Student Destination Overview for 2022 be noted.

9. PUBLICITY

Mr Pearson circulated a selection of items that had been given to students of the class of 22, these included a copy of the booklet prepared for the Certificate Evening, along with an Aquinas pin badge and a postcard as a memento of their time at the college.

Mr Horton expressed the view that the quality of information provided by the college is always impressive.

Reference was made to the excellent speech given by the Student President at the Certificate Evening.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no any other business.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is 4 July 2023 at 4.30pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

Date \_\_\_\_\_

AQUINAS COLLEGE  
EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

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5.     EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

a) Mr Pearson advised Governors that Mrs Susan Tracey, Senior Tutor and Head of Media had left at the end of the Autumn Term 2022 after over 20 years at the college. Mrs Tracey had been thanked for her dedicated service to the college.

b) Staff Absences

i) Mr Pearson advised Governors that a teacher had been on long term sickness and the college had tried to get the teacher to return to work. However, this has not been possible and the college has been unable to resolve matters. The college had reluctantly concluded that the only course of action was to terminate the teacher's employment due to a breakdown in the employment relationship. The whole issue became very complicated and the college's legal advisers have been involved in trying to resolve matters.

ii) There had been more absences this year and it has been difficult to obtain supply cover. Teachers had been absent due to MS/Chronic Fatigue, maternity, injuries and bereavement. In addition, four support staff have been absent, the reasons for absence include broken arms, hernia and long Covid.

iii) The college were also having difficulty in recruiting a maternity cover for accountancy and has had to contact an employment agency. This is the first time that the college has had difficulty in recruiting staff. Teachers have been helpful in agreeing to timetable changes.

Cllr McGee advised Governors that there was a real difficulty in recruiting staff in the South East of the country. Some subject areas are difficult fill and “Golden Hellos” are being offered. Dr Beatty added that there were more long-Covid cases than had been expected. Mr Pearson added that the college offers a PGCE course but is having difficulty in recruiting people on the course and may need to look at the viability of continuing with the course.

The Governors recorded their appreciation of the hard work and dedication of staff at the college.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

4 July 2023 at 4.30pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

Date \_\_\_\_\_