

Board of Management Audit Committee

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 14 November 2018
Paper No.	AC2-E
Agenda Item	9.1
Subject of Paper	Internal Audit Report – Learning Support – Access and Inclusion
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	David Archibald, Henderson Loggie
Date of production	August 2018
Action	For Discussion

1. Recommendations

As agreed at the Audit Committee meeting held on 12 September, this report is resubmitted and will be taken by exception.

Board of Management Audit Committee

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 12 September 2018
Paper No.	AC1-F
Agenda Item	9.1
Subject of Paper	Internal Audit Report – Learning Support – Access and Inclusion
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Henderson Loggie
Date of production	August 2018
Action	For Discussion and Decision

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider and discuss the report and the management responses to the internal audit recommendations.

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this review is to provide management and the Audit Committee with assurance on key controls relating to the curriculum and financial plans in place for City of Glasgow College and their alignment with the regional plan for Glasgow and the college student number targets.

2. Context and Discussion

This internal audit of Learning Support – Access and Inclusion provides an outline of the objectives, scope, findings and graded recommendations as appropriate, together with management responses. This constitutes an action plan for improvement.

The Report includes a number of audit findings which are assessed and graded to denote the overall level of assurance that can be taken from the Report. The gradings are defined as follows:

Good	System meets control objectives.
Satisfactory	System meets control objectives with some weaknesses present.
Requires improvement	System has weaknesses that could prevent it achieving control objectives.
Unacceptable	System cannot meet control objectives.

3. Impact and implications

Refer to internal audit report.

City of Glasgow College

Learning Support

Internal Audit Report No: 2018/07

Draft Issued: 30 July 2018

Final Issued: 04 September 2018

LEVEL OF ASSURANCE

Satisfactory

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Level of Assurance

In addition to the grading of individual recommendations in the action plan, audit findings are assessed and graded on an overall basis to denote the level of assurance that can be taken from the report. Risk and materiality levels are considered in the assessment and grading process as well as the general quality of the procedures in place.

Gradings are defined as follows:

Good	System meets control objectives.
Satisfactory	System meets control objectives with some weaknesses present.
Requires Improvement	System has weaknesses that could prevent it achieving control objectives.
Unacceptable	System cannot meet control objectives.

Action Grades

Priority 1	Issue subjecting the College to material risk and which requires to be brought to the attention of the Audit Committee.
Priority 2	Issue subjecting the College to significant risk and which should be addressed by management.
Priority 3	Matters subjecting the College to minor risk or which, if addressed, will enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

1. Overall Level of Assurance

Satisfactory

System meets control objectives with some weaknesses present.

2. Risk Assessment

This review focused on the controls in place to mitigate the following risks on the City of Glasgow College ('the College') Risk Register:

- Failure to support student success (net risk score: 10);
- Failure of the College's Duty of Care to Students (net risk score: 12); and
- Failure to achieve good student outcome/progression levels (net risk score: 10).

3. Background

As part of the Internal Audit programme at the College for 2017/18 we carried out a review of the College's process for identifying students with support needs and providing appropriate support to them. The Audit Needs Assessment, completed in March 2017, identified this as an area where risk can arise and where Internal Audit can assist in providing assurances to the Board of Management and the Principal that the related control environment is operating effectively, ensuring risk is maintained at an acceptable level.

The College Learning Support team support those students who disclose an additional support need such as a disability, medical condition or general learning support need which may have an impact on their learning.

Assistance provided includes:

- Study support in one-to-one or small group settings;
- Study skills, techniques, and strategies;
- Assessment arrangements;
- Dyslexia screening;
- Training in specialist equipment and software;
- The loan of equipment and ICT hardware;
- Assessment and exam preparation and advice;
- Reader, scribe or support worker in class; and
- Applications for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

4. Scope, Objectives and Overall Findings

This audit reviewed the operations of the Learning Support team, with a focus on how Personal Learning Support Plans (PLSPs) are utilised to identify student needs and ensure that support is successfully delivered.

The table below notes each separate objective for this review and records the results:

Objective		Findings			Action Already Planned
The objective of this audit was to obtain reasonable assurance that:	Assurance	1	2	3	
			No. of Agreed Actions		
1. There are appropriate systems in place to identify and communicate with students who would benefit from Learning Support assistance	Satisfactory	0	0	1	
2. Robust PLSPs are put in place for students requiring assistance, which are based around the students' individual needs	Satisfactory	0	0	1	✓
3. There is an appropriate process to review student progress throughout the academic year and make changes to PLSPs where required	Satisfactory	0	0	1	
4. There is a process in place to monitor student outcomes to determine the success of the support provided	Satisfactory	0	0	2	
Overall Level of Assurance	Satisfactory	0	0	5	
System meets control objectives with some weaknesses present.					

5. Audit Approach

We assessed whether the above objectives were met through discussion with the Director Student Experience, and other relevant managers and staff, and review of documentation.

6. Summary of Main Findings

Strengths

- The College includes questions on whether students have support needs on their online and hard copy application forms;
- Lecturers can refer students to Learning Support, or students can refer themselves, during the academic year;
- A new PLSP form has been developed with input from staff. This is available on the College's online Enquirer system and includes a) all referrals for support (including from online and hard copy applications) b) all PLSPs and c) all tasks requiring to be actioned as a result of completing a PLSP. Each task can be assigned to a staff member and has a status which allows staff to identify the actions assigned to them which are outstanding. The software also includes timetables for Learning Support Lecturers which enables administration staff to book sessions for students with Learning Support Lecturers; and
- Learning Support and Development Advisors have recently been appointed. One of their key roles will be to meet with individuals who have advised they have support needs (including prior to the start of the academic year) in order to discuss and document their needs. This will free up Learning Support Lecturers to provide more direct support for students and staff.

Weaknesses

- There is scope for improving the communication with students who have arranged a PLSP interview;
- We noted that there are a set of procedure notes relating to operation of the PLSP but that these now require updating due to the introduction of the online PLSP. However, we did note that improved reportage mechanisms available via the new PLSP will indicate review dates, so more thorough checks will be in place in future;
- Measurement of the effectiveness of the Learning Support service could be improved in order to help drive continuous improvement; and
- There would be benefit in improving the clarity of communication to academic staff on the role of the Learning Support Lecturer in following up students that were not on track or had not been attending

7. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the College staff for the co-operation and assistance we received during the course of our review.

8. Findings and Action Plan

Objective 1: There are appropriate systems in place to identify and communicate with students who would benefit from Learning Support assistance.

Identification

Students with support needs are identified through questions on the online or hard copy application and enrolment forms or through lecturers referring students (or students self-referring) in term time. These processes were reviewed and considered adequate.

Communication with students:

An Administration Assistant contacts the person with a support need and arranges for them to come to Learning Support for a PLSP interview. Once the person has been contacted they are sent an email containing details on the place, date and time of their meeting.

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response		
<p>We reviewed the standard email format used to confirm PLSP appointment details and consider that this could be enhanced by including more information about the services provided by Learning Support. This could be a link to the Learning Support section of the College website in an email and text.</p> <p>It was also noted there was no reminder text message sent the day before the PLSP interview and staff agreed that this would be useful. This text could also include a request that the individual should contact the college if they cannot not make the arranged interview in order to reschedule an alternative date.</p>	<p>Individuals may not be aware of all the services available through Learning Support or may not turn up to the scheduled PLSP interview leading to loss of valuable staff time.</p>	<p>R1 Enhance the standard email wording sent to individuals confirming their PLSP interview time by including a link to details of the Learning Support services offered and send a reminder text prior to the interview to remind the individual of their interview details and to request that if they cannot attend at the scheduled time they should contact Learning Support to reschedule.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>To be actioned by: D. Gallacher, Head of Student Development</p> <p>No later than: 31 December 2018</p>		
			<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #4F81BD; color: white; padding: 5px;">Grade</td> <td style="background-color: #76B82A; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">3</td> </tr> </table>	Grade	3
Grade	3				

Objective 2: Robust PLSPs are put in place for students requiring assistance, which are based around the students’ individual needs

When an individual arrives for their PLSP interview they are directed to the Learning Support reception, and the person that is allocated to conduct the interview collects the individual; takes them to an interview room; discusses their circumstances and requirements; and completes the online PLSP form (including identifying what type of support is required). If the student does not turn up for their appointment, then the student is contacted directly to arrange another interview.

The PLSP covers all areas of support offered by Learning Support including:

- Equipment loan, which is generally a laptop computer;
- Study skills, which are provided to students on a one to one or group basis by a team of Learning Support Lecturers;
- Educational Psychologist referral for HE students requiring documentation to claim funding for their DSA (Disabled Students Allowance);
- Assistive technology software to assist students in their learning. Training on how to use this is also provided;
- Alternative Assessment Arrangements, such as a scribe, extra time or large print documents to help with assessments;
- Education Support Workers (note taking and prompting), Sign Language Interpreters and Electronic Notetakers (for typing up what lecturers say which is then transmitted onto a screen for the student to see); and
- Completion of DSA applications.

The online PLSP form became operational in late June 2018 and the Learning Support and Development Advisors (two new roles which commenced from late June 2018) began to populate these online forms at the beginning of July 2018.

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response	
We noted that there are a set of procedure notes relating to operation of the PLSP but that these now require updating due to the introduction of the online PLSP.	Staff may not follow the correct procedures, leading to poor service.	R2 Determine the best format to communicate the PLSP procedure notes (such as online or on network drives) and update the PLSP procedure notes to provide definitive guidance for Learning Support staff in filling in PLSP forms and completing PLSP actions.	<p>Agreed</p> <p>To be actioned by: D. Gallacher, Head of Student Development and C. Quinn, Learning Services Co-ordinator.</p> <p>No later than: 30 September 2018</p>	
			Grade	3

Objective 3: There is an appropriate process to review student progress throughout the academic year and make changes to PLSPs where required

A record of support provided is included on the PLSP software. This contains the date of support sessions, brief notes of what was covered in the study skills session, the number of hours of the session, and the Learning Support Lecturer that provided the support. We noted however that it is not straightforward to identify whether the activity covered the needs of the student, although a periodic review of progress would allow Learning Support Lecturers to evaluate with the students whether the support being provided met their needs.

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response			
<p>We were advised that with the introduction of the new PLSP software that there were now plans to have two reviews with the student. However, we noted that there was not a standard format for each review and that no formal mechanisms were planned to ensure that all required reviews had been completed.</p>	<p>Reviews may not be robust or may not be undertaken, leading to support being provided that does not meet students' needs.</p>	<p>R3 Put in place a robust format for periodic PLSP reviews which is focussed around identifying individual student support needs and considering whether the support provided is adequate or requires to be revised. Regular checks should also be undertaken to ensure that all such PLSP reviews have been undertaken on a timely basis.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>To be actioned by: D. Gallacher, Head of Student Development</p> <p>No later than: 30 November 2018</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Grade</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </table>		Grade	3
Grade	3					

Objective 4: There is a process in place to monitor student outcomes to determine the success of the support provided					
Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response		
Measuring the impact of support provided through Learning Support and the PLSP is not currently straightforward. However, a proxy benchmark of Learning Support impact is measured through review of those with a PLSP with full success or partial success.	Insights may not be obtained from information that is available and areas for improvement may not be identified	R4 Consider what further information on learner outcomes should be gathered to provide insights to improve Learning Support services.	<p>Agreed</p> <p>To be actioned by: D. Gallacher, Head of Student Development</p> <p>No later than: 30 April 2019</p>		
			<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Grade</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </table>	Grade	3
Grade	3				

Objective 4: There is a process in place to monitor student outcomes to determine the success of the support provided					
Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response		
We noted the College has a Student Support dashboard that was introduced in early 2018 and that this provides information on which students have a PLSP and whether they are on track to pass. This is reviewed by Learning Support Lecturers who should follow-up any students with absences or who are not on track to pass in order to identify the support required to assist these students. We noted that there is not a formal process for the Learning Support Lecturers to communicate with the academic lecturers to ensure that both parties are aware of the follow-up actions which are being taken with such students.	Students with poor attendance or results may be followed up independently by both academic and Learning Support lecturers or may not be followed up by either.	R5 Ensure that lecturing staff and Learning Support lecturers are aware of their responsibilities regarding follow up of students who are absent and not on track and how the actions being taken by various each party will be communicated to each other	<p>Agreed</p> <p>To be actioned by: D. Gallacher, Head of Student Development</p> <p>No later than: 31 December 2018</p>		
			<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Grade</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </table>	Grade	3
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