CURRICULUM AND QUALITY COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject: Reports of Learning for Leading visits in session 2019-20 and Management response to points raised	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☐ **For Discussion** ☐ **For Information** ☒
Prepared by: Heather Anderson	**Date:** 04 February 2020

Purpose: To provide the Committee with Management responses to points raised by Board members following visits to their linked areas.

Linked to Strategic Goal 3: Provide a high quality College experience.

Executive Summary: Reports of visits by Board members to Rural Industries and to Sport and Outdoor Activities are attached.

A copy of Management responses to points raised from these and other visits carried out during session 2019-20 is also provided.

Recommendation: To note the content

Previous Committee Approvals:

For publication ☐	**For publication with redactions** ☐	**Not for publication** ☒

BORDERS COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

LEADING AND LEARNING

Board Member: **David Peace**
Programme Area **Sport and Outdoor Activities**
Date of Visit: **28 November 2019**
Summary of activities undertaken during visit: • Met with Curriculum & Learning Manager, Darren Burns, staff and students at Borders College, Tri Fitness, Queens Hall, & Ian Stark Equestrian Centre, ISEC (Darren Burns had arranged a tour of the facilities so that I met staff and students in situ and taking part in their courses). • Enjoyed a wide ranging discussion of issues with both staff and students both separately and collectively.
Positive Impressions: • Good working relationships and communication between staff & students. A team building event was planned for December for sports students to the Ice Rink at Kelso for curling and all students who I spoke to were looking forward to it. • In particular, sports students very complimentary about staff who they said were knowledgeable and good role models • Sports students were running a competition for Primary School children at Queens Centre. Operating in three teams, the students had decided their own roles for the event and were pleased at the opportunity to put theory into action. • Fascinating that downhill biking students had very little prior knowledge or experience of strength & conditioning prior to their course at Borders College and were demonstrably benefitting in a short time span from the S&C that they get as part of their course. • Staff would like higher profile given to achievements of the students, eg competition wins, national squad representation etc, and two downhill biking students had been given the task for using social media for this purpose. • BASE rugby students find it motivating training alongside SRU Borders Academy participants • Horse Care students happy with facilities at ISEC. They do not feel that they are missing out on collective experience with wider student body and feel that the interaction with the general public who use ISEC gives them enough social interaction beyond their group. They enjoy answering queries from public at things like the Riding For Disabled days and believe that the course that they are on is superior to other courses eg at Elmwood College and that the experience of working alongside Ian Stark is a great benefit.

- Great application to the students by Horse Care staff who have redesigned some progress tests to be more visual (ie use of pictures) and less black and white to get round the stress some students had about doing what they perceived to be academic exams.

Areas which should be brought to the attention of the College Management:

- Ongoing general concern of staff that, due to funding model which prioritises “bums on seats”, some students are being enrolled onto courses for which they are not able.

- The current Student President is seen as a great motivator for the wider Student Body to become more active, but the perception is that activities are not yet supported widely enough. There is recognition that there is no quick fix for this but there are opportunities such as the upcoming renegotiation of the use of Tri-Fitness that could incorporate more imaginative solutions (Eg Off peak hours membership for use during office hours; possible student work experience in running Tri-Fitness; better examples being set by staff using membership etc). It is not a good reflection on the Borders College student body that only 30 College students have Tri-Fitness membership as opposed to over 100 Heriot Watt students

- Queens Hall, Gala has recently been an availability issue as they have let half of the main hall (as they are perfectly entitled to do) during College booking times. Staff keen for discussions to allow them to have priority access for whole hall bookings and for use of the classroom at Queens Hall to be investigated to maximise efficient use of time. There is disquiet over the future of Queens Hall as and when the attached Melrose Road properties are sold.

- Some class sizes make it hard to fit into some teaching rooms which detracts from quality of lessons.

- There is a perceived lack of joined up working across some areas, eg promoting good news stories where marketing staff ask lecturing staff to give them the stories but the staff do not have the time to write the stories

- Wifi service at ISEC is unreliable. When all students are on the laptops, the service often cuts out as it gets overloaded. It is recognised that the problem is being addressed, but speedier resolution would be hugely beneficial.

Further information required or requested:

- Melrose Rugby have, as part of the Super 6 franchise, brokered closer working relationship with Edinburgh University. This is a potentially useful route to get greater cooperative links for sports students in particular. Can we investigate?

- Horse Care staff concerned about lack of placements for Level 1 students. Is this a policy decision? The ability for students to see theory in practice in different environments is a hugely beneficial tool that is currently not able to be offered.

- There is potential for combing a basic sports course with Preparation for the Forces course as both have the same core including self discipline, teamwork, health & wellbeing including nutrition. It is recognised that some will be circumspect about anything to do with the forces but having two courses named separately but

following the same core modules would be a more efficient use of resources that should mean fewer low number courses.

- Horse Care would like to hold their Open Day during the revamped Borders Festival of the Horse week in 2020 and would like marketing help on that.

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

LEARNING FOR LEADING

Board Member:
Dr Virginia Grant

Programme Area Rural Industries:
Dr Mary Thomson
Curriculum Learning Manager for Rural Skills

Date of Visit: 17/09/19

The nature and format of the visit had been agreed in advance, via email correspondence, with Mary Thomson. This was a follow up meeting to the one held earlier in the year, soon after Mary Thomson joined Borders College.

It was agreed that the meeting would be held at Riddell Estate which provides facilities for the Rural Skills courses. A further meeting will be held at the St Boswells site in early 2020 when there will be an opportunity to have discussions with staff and students.

Summary of activities undertaken during visit:

- Meeting at Riddell Estate Office

Positive Impressions:
The Rural Skills awards ceremony for year 2018/19 was discussed. This was a successful event held at the close of the previous academic session. A number of ideas for enabling less confident students to participate and engage in the event are being considered.

Mary Thomson provided an update on enrolments and course numbers for the current session. This was mainly positive however, NC and HNC Game keeping numbers continue on a downward trend while MA numbers are encouraging.

The Horticulture and Animal Care schools programmes are progressing well.

Mixed level participation in Horticulture programmes has been managed particularly successfully despite the inherent challenges.

Agriculture numbers are strong.

Staff Reviews have helped to identify and clarify perspectives on important issues and opportunities within the Rural Skills programmes.

The role of the Achievement Coach has proved to be a positive development.

A wide ranging programme of short courses is provided at the St Boswells site.

Staff are making good progress in the transition towards increased use of digital within the curriculum and demonstrate a positive attitude to change.

Areas which should be brought to the attention of the College Management:

Quality of Classroom Accommodation at St Boswells Site

While the on-going accommodation and facilities challenges at St Boswells have

been alleviated in part by the relocation of some courses to other sites there are persistent issues relating to the quality and suitability of the accommodation. The following points are of particular concern: - inadequate class room space leading to students experiencing cramped conditions - insufficient ventilation in class rooms - facilities for housing and caring for animals urgently require improvement **Riddell Estate Facilities** Better use of the classroom facility could be made with improved broadband speed. The Estate will meet with providers to identify actions that will help to improve this aspect of the facility.
No further information required or requested: A further visit will be arranged in early 2019 to provide opportunities to meet with members of staff and students as they progress in their courses.

Actions from Learning for Leading Visits 2019-20

Area	Areas for attention of College Management	Complete/Progressing/ Closed	Management Response
Sport and Outdoor Activities	**Areas which should be brought to the attention of the College Management:**		
	• Ongoing general concern of staff that, due to funding model which prioritises “bums on seats”, some students are being enrolled onto courses for which they are not able.	Closed	Curriculum staff interview the students and no one has ever directed a staff member to accept a student against their will.
	• The current Student President is seen as a great motivator for the wider Student Body to become more active, but the perception is that activities are not yet supported widely enough. There is recognition that there is no quick fix for this but there are opportunities such as the upcoming renegotiation of the use of Tri-Fitness that could incorporate more imaginative solutions (Eg Off peak hours membership for use during office hours; possible student work experience in running Tri-Fitness; better examples being set by staff using membership etc). It is not a good reflection on the Borders College student body that only 30 College students have Tri-Fitness membership as opposed to over 100 Heriot Watt students	Closed	As we broaden our access and see a different type of learner progressing from school we recognise the type of learning, environment and support required needs to change to enable their success. As a regional college it is our responsibility to do this but we recognise that for some staff dealing with different types of students and adapting their teaching approach can be difficult. Staff belong to a wide range of sporting clubs local to where they stay. We also have staff accessing one off classes run by Tri-Fitness this term.
	• Queens Hall, Gala has recently been an availability issue as they have let half of the main hall (as they are perfectly entitled to do) during College booking times. Staff keen for discussions to allow them to have priority access for whole	Closed	We only pay for ½ the hall so cannot expect priority access unless we are will to commit to increased fees.

	hall bookings and for use of the classroom at Queens Hall to be investigated to maximise efficient use of time. There is disquiet over the future of Queens Hall as and when the attached Melrose Road properties are sold.		
	• Some class sizes make it hard to fit into some teaching rooms which detracts from quality of lessons.	Complete	Each CLM has ownership of a range of teaching rooms and timetable rooms accordingly. This can be a challenge early in the academic year until class numbers and timetables settle. The CLMs meet early in the term and review group sizes and resources required.
	• There is a perceived lack of joined up working across some areas, eg promoting good news stories where marketing staff ask lecturing staff to give them the stories but the staff do not have the time to write the stories	Complete	We need staff to engage with marketing to inform them of newsworthy stories. Employing more 'marketers' would divert money from front line services.
	• Wifi service at ISEC is unreliable. When all students are on the laptops, the service often cuts out as it gets overloaded. It is recognised that the problem is being addressed, but speedier resolution would be hugely beneficial.	Resolved	Wifi has been upgraded with positive feedback being received
	Further information required or requested:		
	• Melrose Rugby have, as part of the Super 6 franchise, brokered closer working relationship with Edinburgh University. This is a potentially useful route to get greater cooperative links for sports students in particular. Can we investigate?	Complete	We have had several conversations with Melrose Rugby re partnership working. CLM for Sport engaged.
	• Horse Care staff concerned about lack of placements for Level 1 students. Is this a policy decision? The ability for students to see theory in practice in different environments is a hugely	Closed	Employer's feedback was that it would be beneficial that the students began placement at level 2 as they would be occupationally competent to undertake

	beneficial tool that is currently not able to be offered.		yard work on gaining level 1. Insurance was also proving an issue for some employers being informed cover was unavailable without the students holding a level 1 . In addition, students are learning at Ian Stark Equestrian Centre where they are gaining real work experience.
	• There is potential for combing a basic sports course with Preparation for the Forces course as both have the same core including self discipline, teamwork, health & wellbeing including nutrition. It is recognised that some will be circumspect about anything to do with the forces but having two courses named separately but following the same core modules would be a more efficient use of resources that should mean fewer low number courses.	Progressing	This is being progressed by the CLM through our Programme Review process.
	• Horse Care would like to hold their Open Day during the revamped Borders Festival of the Horse week in 2020 and would like marketing help on that.	Progressing	The CLM for SOA is in dialogue with marketing team regarding the promotion of Horse Care awards
Rural Industries	**Quality of Classroom Accommodation at St Boswells Site** While the on-going accommodation and facilities challenges at St Boswells have been alleviated in part by the relocation of some courses to other sites there are persistent issues relating to the quality and suitability of the accommodation. The following points are of particular concern:	In progress	Planning for major works over the summer – replacement of portacabins Implementing laptop locker system and new laptops.

	- inadequate class room space leading to students experiencing cramped conditions - insufficient ventilation in class rooms - facilities for housing and caring for animals urgently require improvement **Riddell Estate Facilities** Better use of the classroom facility could be made with improved broadband speed. The Estate will meet with providers to identify actions that will help to improve this aspect of the facility.	In progress	Improved WiFI will be in place by end February
Health and Social Care	• There is a concern about how school staff perceive care courses, and the attributes of students that would be most suitable for these courses. • Staff and students recognise the impact of the behavioural issues of some students (possibly skewing staff time and attention towards those students). Online group messaging is used in some year groups but it was not felt by all to be an inclusive online environment. Students spoke of strong friendship groups, but also a desire to better get to know and bond with all class members, which could perhaps be facilitated by the College.	Complete Complete	College staff continue to work with school staff about progression onto college courses at transition meetings. College staff attend school events eg DYW and careers events across the Scottish Borders and the Lothians raising awareness about the skills based learning taking place in college and entry requirements for school pupils. Staff have access to training about managing class behaviours especially when doing small group work. Staff will be reminded to arrange small groups in a range of ways so that students don not end up working in the same group all the time. Staff set class rules around behaviours and the use of social media in and out of the classroom environment. Staff will be reminded to set some agreed ground rules about behaviours at the start of the session and to re visit these on a regular basis.

	• The IT infrastructure is a concern – speed of computers, network connection (e.g. to printers) and the upcoming Windows licence expiry. Some students therefore prefer to use their own equipment (smartphones or tablets), including wi-fi or mobile data (mixed response on the quality of the wi-fi). This has implications e.g. access to printers, but also potentially a disproportionate impact on those students who do not have access to personal mobile devices or data.	In progress	3 year plan is in place with priority to upgrade Windows and move from desktop PCs to laptops. Plan is in place for digital devices in students hands.
	• Financial hardship has a direct effect on student retainment. Small actions can make a big difference e.g. offering redundant ring-binders for students to take for free.	Completed	This is already in place.