

B O S T O N C O L L E G E

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2014

1. PRESENT

Helen Wright (Chair), Orla McMahon and Amanda Mosek.

Also in attendance: Fiona Grady (Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality), Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation) and Vicki Locke (Quality Manager).

Attendance 42.85%

Apologies for absence were received from Jayne Mitchell, Kieran Smith and John Trigg. Iwona Lebedowic did not attend.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Having been duly nominated and seconded Helen Wright was elected as Chair of the committee for the 2014-15 academic year.

3. VICE CHAIR

Due to the low level of attendance it was decided to defer the election to the Vice Chair of the committee until the next meeting.

4. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed the action log presented and noted that Value Added information should be available for the November meeting of the committee.

5. MINUTES

Members reviewed and approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2014. The committee noted that progression data will be available for review at the first meeting after Christmas.

6. A2, AS AND GCSE RESULTS

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality on outcomes. It was noted that A2 results were good but that the College had been disappointed with AS results. The committee was pleased to note that the work through the English Language Lab appeared to have paid off. There was disappointment over a reduction in the GCSE pass rate with GCSE English having poor results.

Helen Wright queried whether the lesson observations had gone well in AS Levels and Vicki Locke advised that they had improved over the year. Orla McMahon reported that in her area the mark scheme had changed and learners had ended at one grade lower than expected generally. The area is following a number of strategies to get learners more engaged.

A discussion also took place about the possible impact of the removal of January modules which was difficult to ascertain. It was difficult to compare the College's data with other institutions since this was not available at this time but colloquially it was understood that others had seen their results drop. A problem with poor AS results was that it impacted on progression rates and viability and the College would be looking at whether alternative offers would be better.

Helen Wright queried the percentage progression from AS to A2 in 2014 and was advised that it was approximately 35 out of 90 learners progressing. The committee noted that a review of A Level provision was being undertaken for presentation to the Corporation in December.

7. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality on Key Performance Indicator information although it was noted that some of this was still being completed.

A particular disappointment was noted to be the retention on long 19+ courses which will not meet the target. Fiona Grady reported that the College had concern about courses which had no fees which tended to have lower success rates. The College was looking further at the co-ordination and tracking of part-time courses to improve success rates.

It was noted that the final Key Performance Indicator data would be available in approximately 3 weeks.

Helen Wright queried the reported unsatisfactory EV reports and a discussion took place about how these were being addressed. All areas are being audited in respect of Internal Verifying by the Quality Team.

Orla McMahon queried whether attendance data collected included whether the students had reported in and it was confirmed that it did not.

Fiona Grady identified that Sport has both good attendance and outcomes and arrangements for disseminating their practices to others were being considered.

The committee noted that the best outcomes were often achieved by areas which had fewer types of students to deal with eg only 16-18 years olds rather than a mix of 16-18, adults and apprenticeships.

A query was raised about 2014 enrolment levels and Fiona Grady reported that there was an increase in full-time ESOL but generally a decrease in Level 3's and an increase in Level 1 students. This carried with it a number of issues including pressure on the Counselling team where there was a reported demand for mental health support and a high number of Safeguarding issues already being raised.

8. COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Members received a report from the Head of Quality who reported that there were no real themes emerging other than the issues identified within the report.

One thing which had been identified was about progression and Amanda Mosek queried whether tutors were making it clear to learners from the outset what they needed to do to progress. Vicki Locke and Fiona Grady reported that they did not feel

that this was consistent but that it was now being emphasised that all learners need to be told what they needed to do and also that the tension between filling classes and giving learners a chance and admitting those who had realistic chances of progression had to be resolved.

It was noted that there were no compliments reported on the document and it was suggested that compliments often went to individual areas of the College. It was agreed that the report should focus on complaints only in the future because of the lack of data on compliments.

9. TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATE

Members received a report from the Head of Quality which identified the summary grade profiles for 2013-14 and the priorities for 2014-15. She explained that at the present time drop-ins were taking place with staff being allowed to choose sessions for these.

A discussion took place about ILT development and the way this was being promoted through work with the Programme areas and increased input into staff induction from the Quality Team. The team would be looking for more evidence of ILT in lesson observations and a bid was being submitted for more staff resource. It was felt that the College was moving forward on hardware provision and already had a new ILT Strategy in place. The committee noted that successful development needed significant investment in both resources and time to be successful.

10. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality on the progress against the 2013-14 Quality Improvement Plan. It was noted that this was a summary at this point in time with some achievements still yet to come through.

Fiona Grady identified that there was a lot more detail supporting the paper presented and she felt that apprenticeships were likely to remain challenging going forward. She advised the committee that English and Maths testing for all teaching staff had been carried out and that there was quite a lot of interest from staff in taking Level 3 English and Maths with Staff Development paying for this. A Maths graduate had also been recruited through the special funding available in this area because the increased requirement for delivery of English and Maths was proving a challenge to resource.

11. END OF YEAR SURVEY

Members received a report from the Head of Quality.

It was noted that the response rate to the surveys was still disappointing. The committee discussed particularly some concerns about careers guidance and next steps advice which had been highlighted in the responses. Orla McMahon advised the committee how AS and A2 students were being encouraged to look at Higher Education and Fiona Grady advised that generally staff should be giving students guidance on careers rather than courses so that learners know what they need to achieve to access their desired career paths. This was noted to be particularly important as people became increasingly conscious of value for money from their investment in education. Amanda Mosek advised the committee that the College was looking at how teams could work together to achieve even better results on the surveys.

Orla McMahon queried whether there were any differences in observation grades between full-time and part-time staff. Vicki Locke advised that there was not a difference between full-time and fractional but there was some difference between full-time and part-time staff grades.

12. COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Members received a report from the Clerk to the Corporation on performance against 2013-14 targets which were noted to have generally been achieved. The one target which was not achieved was the 85% attendance target which was disappointing and the committee considered the reasons behind this.

The committee agreed that its targets proposed for 2014-15 should be:

- 82% attendance
- Focus on Higher Education
- Looking at the tracking and quality of Apprenticeships
- Monitoring adult retention.

13. CORPORATION MEETINGS

Having been advised of an innovation the Finance and General Purposes Committee was making in passing its information to the Corporation, it was agreed that information from the Standards Committee should include presentation of 2 slides, which would identify positive and negative points and issues to be addressed going forward.

14. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on Monday 17 November 2014.