

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 APRIL 2017

1. PRESENT

Stephen Brown (Chair), Rowan Dalton, George Harrison, Helen Mather, Prof Jayne Mitchell, Amanda Mosek, Chris Pett and Ben Webb

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

Attendance 100%

2. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed the Committee's action log and progress made on the items identified.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2017

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2017 were reviewed and approved.

Jayne Mitchell asked about progress on the restructuring process. Fiona Grady advised that interviews would be taking place the following week and it was hoped to have the posts filled soon.

4. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016/17

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality.

Fiona Grady explained the contents of the Quality Improvement Plan and highlighted a number of issues. She identified that most actions are on target but that attendance remains challenging.

Stephen Brown asked about the possible change in requirements for retakes of maths and English. Fiona Grady advised that it was not now changing as had been anticipated for 2017/18.

Jayne Mitchell asked about improvements which had been made in the retention of 16-18 year old apprentices and what lay behind this. Fiona Grady advised that the whole cohort was doing better, not necessarily due to additional support in this instance.

Chris Pett asked about the use of VITAL and its training as there had been an issue identified in his link area. Vicki advised that this was a one off due to the extended absence of the Manager and should now have been resolved. Stephen Brown and Jayne Mitchell reported that in their areas VITAL appeared to be functioning well.

5. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality.

Fiona Grady ran through the significant elements of the Key Performance Indicator report.

Stephen Brown asked about attendance being below target and Fiona Grady advised that it did not seem to be possible to get beyond 88% on attendance. She told the Committee that adult attendance is normally not as good as that of 16-18 year olds.

Stephen Brown commented that learner progress which was reported from VITAL was encouraging. He also asked about the teaching and learning observations. Vicki Locke commented that the observation outcomes were better than in the preceding year.

6. LEARNER SURVEYS

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on a number of learner surveys.

Vicki Locke identified the key statistics and commented that the response rate for some surveys had declined. She also advised Members that the apprenticeship survey showed too much variation between different areas.

Jayne Mitchell asked about response rates and, in particular, the reason for the drop in the response rates for the mid-year survey. Vicki Locke advised that some areas have had unsatisfactory rates of response. Fiona Grady told Members that some Managers do not follow responses through effectively. Jayne Mitchell queried whether this indicated that learners were not engaged but both Fiona Grady and Vicki Locke thought that it was more due to less rigour in the process. It is anticipated that the reduction in the number of Programme Area Managers should help achieve more consistency.

- Start of Year Survey

Stephen Brown queried some responses in the start of year survey about learners feeling less safe than previously. Vicki Locke advised that she was confident that this had been dealt with. Stephen also queried lower satisfaction with Learner Services on the early survey but Vicki felt that this might have been from students who had not actually had experience of learner services.

- Apprentice Survey

Vicki Locke advised that the apprentice survey had the most worrying outcomes. Chris Pett asked about the effect of the Apprentice Manager but Fiona Grady confirmed that she had not yet taken up her position and would not do so until her replacement was in place.

A discussion took place about the impact of the role of management on the outcomes and Stephen Brown asked about areas where previous concerns had been identified. Fiona Grady advised the Committee that Electrical was largely back on track but there remains some employer dissatisfaction in Electrical and Motor Vehicle.

Jayne Mitchell sought clarification about the variation in the apprentice survey in progress being reported and asked how much of the information on these courses was common given the difference in responses. Fiona Grady suggested that in part the differences were due to course content and noted that the areas performing better tended to be the smaller areas. Chris Pett suggested that it might be appropriate to weight responses in areas where low numbers were involved.

Stephen Brown queried the progress in the use of the tracking system and was advised that the move to VITAL was felt to be beneficial. Vicki Locke reported that the new Apprentice Manager has been involved in this.

- Part Time Survey

For the part time survey Vicki Locke advised that the main issue had been about the adult leaflet.

- HE Survey

For the HE survey the Committee considered the issue identified about resources. The Committee was advised that Gill Bush was working with the Library and on the IT through capital bids. Jayne Mitchell suggested that the option to respond neither agree or disagree might be distorting the outcomes in this survey.

A discussion took place about the Students' Union representation of academic interests which Fiona Grady felt might be under-developed. Jayne Mitchell suggested that conversations with learners about what the questions meant and attempts to move them from neutral answers might be helpful. It was noted that the wording of the survey is the same as for the national survey.

Amanda Mosek asked if it was appropriate to replicate the NSS survey. Jayne Mitchell suggested that this be reviewed as different institutions varied in how they approached this. Fiona Grady advised that results from the internal survey were generally better than for the NSS.

- Mid-Year Survey

For the mid-year survey Chris Pett queried work experience for construction learners. Vicki Locke advised that there was work going on in this area and on feedback and consistency through the new structure.

Vicki Locke suggested that timeliness was an issue for reviewing the early survey. Stephen Brown agreed that the timing of reports on surveys could be better and that the single report did not work particularly well. The Committee agreed that in future survey outcomes should be reported to the Committee as and when they were concluded. It was agreed that HE reporting should be annually.

7. COLLEGE PERFORMANCE

Chris Pett asked about the overall picture of performance. George Harrison and Rowan Dalton felt that from the students' perspective this was OK but that stress was rising as exams became nearer. Ben Webb reported that he felt that English and maths was now more positive for both staff and students. Amanda Mosek reported that she felt that the roll-out of VITAL had been helpful in identifying performance across the College.

8. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 14 June 2017 and would pick up as primary topics Teaching and Learning and the Committee's annual targets.