

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 JUNE 2015

1. PRESENT

Helen Wright (Chair), Jayne Mitchell, Amanda Mosek, Chris Pett and Kieran Smith.

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

Attendance 71%.

Apologies were received from Orla McMahon.

The Chair welcomed Chris Pett to his first meeting of the committee.

2. ACTION LOG

The committee reviewed the action log and a discussion took place about the status of student governors where it was agreed that student governors should be members of the committee in future. It was reported that Steve McCracken had attended a session where there was feedback from the National Union of Students which had some suggestions on how input from student governors could be improved.

Vicki Locke provided feedback from the visit to York College which had been graded as outstanding. Some ideas on attendance and structure had been picked up during the visit and it had been noted that the College had invested a lot of time and effort into developing a learner centred culture and high levels of management accountability. York's teaching and observation processes were very similar to Boston's as was governance but the visit had generally been felt to be very beneficial.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 22 APRIL 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 22 April 2015 were reviewed and approved.

Helen Wright queried whether the Steven Brown visit reviewing apprenticeship provision had been useful. It was confirmed that it had and that he would be coming back to the College in the future.

A discussion took place about media reporting on Maths and English qualifications in colleges. Chris Pett asked what was being done about the lack of achievement of these qualifications in schools and Amanda Mosek reported that this was one of the issues which she would be raising with Nick Boles when he visited the College.

4. QUALITY AND STANDARDS KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality presented a report on the updated Key Performance Indicators and drew attention to key points, particularly relating to attendance

and retention. Areas noted as being of concern were Real Skills for Work, Computing and progress in Hair and Beauty.

Kieran Smith queried an apparent issue with EV reports and Fiona explained that there were some issues with BTEC as well as in Construction. Helen Wright asked whether the Advanced Practitioners had supported the areas with issues and Fiona explained that an issue in Early Years had been something of a surprise but that the manager would be keeping a closer check on this in the future.

Amanda Mosek pointed out the serious issue with retention in Construction. Fiona advised the committee that the Programme Area Manager is stepping down and that the College's Partnership Manager, Louise Griffen would be taking over management of the area. It was felt that Louise's skill profile matched the needs of this area well. A discussion took place about the challenges in providing appropriate staffing for this area particularly in relation to plumbing. Fiona reported that the College had advertised for a high level trainer/assessor but had to date not had any expressions of interest in this. Amanda Mosek advised the committee that a local employer had reported that the salary that the College was able to offer did not compare well with industry. Kieran Smith suggested that targeting ex-service staff might be an option. Chris Pett reported that he had employed a couple of ex-Navy staff and that their salary expectations seemed to be more reasonable. Fiona pointed out that it was a challenge for the College to continue provision in plumbing and that most providers weren't able to achieve good plumbing results. A particular issue for apprentices in Construction was that a number of them had lost their jobs and were unable to continue with apprenticeships.

5. TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Head of Quality presented a paper on Teaching and Learning including the grade profile for the College. Vicki explained that observers were now RAG rating elements of lessons to focus staff on areas for development.

Jayne Mitchell queried how staff could be encouraged to innovate. Vicki responded that she felt that the changing perception of the support process could make people more comfortable with taking risks and she felt that innovation would be developing. Fiona Grady pointed out that a lot of innovation is about technology and that, whilst a lot of plans included this, it takes time for these to be implemented. The ILT team were supporting the development of use of technology.

Amanda Mosek advised that she was pleased that it was clear that quality standards weren't negotiable. Amanda commented that a lot of the focus had come from Ofsted and that aspirations were high. In response to a query from Chris Pett, Vicki explained the grading process and how the grades were arrived at. Amanda pointed out that observations needed to be externally moderated periodically because there was a danger that internal observations could lead to complacency.

Chris Pett queried how the College dealt with those who persistently failed to make the grade and Fiona Grady explained that the expectation was that teaching would be good most of the time. A discussion took place about staff satisfaction and promotion prospects and the committee was advised that a staff survey showed that a large percentage of staff are happy working at the College. A discussion took place about motivation and ways of improving employee satisfaction and the committee noted that most of the areas where there were issues with the quality of performance had been resolved because of the clear processes in place. The committee acknowledged that the grading profile was going in the right direction but Fiona reported that there was likely to be less grading in the future following Ofsted's direction.

6. HIGHER EDUCATION SURVEY 2014-15

The Head of Quality presented a report on the outcomes of the HE survey and advised the committee that there were disappointingly low levels of feedback. Jayne Mitchell queried whether the poor response rate was unusual and Fiona Grady noted that the timing was close to the NSS survey which might have affected the rates of response. Jayne agreed that the two different surveys might cause some confusion for learners.

Amanda Mosek queried how the learners did the survey and it was reported that it was similar to the FE survey. Chris Pett especially queried the rates of response in teacher education and Vicki reported that there had been some identified issues in this area. The committee was advised that the survey was usually open for 3 weeks but had on this occasion been extended for a further week and managers get feedback on the response rates whilst the survey was open. This is an issue which the College will keep working at. Helen Wright particularly queried the issues raised in response to the question about resources and Fiona Grady reported that it could relate to the computers in the Standish room which had now been replaced.

In response to a query from Chris Pett the committee discussed whether the low response rate might skew the results if it included a disproportionate number of students who wanted to raise issues.

7. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2014-15

The Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality presented a progress report on the Quality Improvement Plan.

Fiona advised the committee that a new tracking system was being purchased to monitor learner progress. Helen Wright queried if it would check value added and Fiona advised that it was focussed on tracking learners against their targets. Vicki Locke explained the College's plans for implementation of the software and in response to a query from Jayne Mitchell it was confirmed that the data can be drawn into the dashboard. Chris Pett queried how the use of the software will be encouraged. Vicki felt that it would actually be welcomed by staff and the initial areas to implement the software would be carefully selected. Jayne Mitchell reported that she felt that the students could be the best champions for the use of such tracking systems.

Fiona Grady reported that the College was unlikely to achieve its functional skills targets. Helen Wright queried the adult success rate improvement and how it has been achieved. Fiona advised the committee that she felt that the 24+ loan commitments and other changes could have impacted on Access to HE courses, which is the largest area of fulltime adult provision, and that the College also had some new processes in place.

8. EXTERNAL EVENT

Chris Pett reported on some shows he had attended which had showcased the sort of work that colleges were doing and Fiona gave a report on how the College was involved in Skills shows.