

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2015

1. PRESENT

Orla McMahon, Amanda Mosek, David Shutts and Kieran Smith and Helen Wright

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 for absence were received from Jayne Mitchell and Chris Pett.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Having been duly nominated and seconded Helen Wright was appointed as Chair of the Committee for the 2015-16 academic year.

Helen Wright in the Chair

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

In the absence of a number of committee members it was agreed to defer the appointment of Vice-Chair until the next meeting.

4. ACTION LOG

Members of the committee reviewed the action log. It was noted that the appointment of student members may not be happening as quickly as had been hoped. The committee is keen to get student members attending the meetings particularly since, as Fiona Grady pointed out, this was the committee which was probably most relevant for learners.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 10 JUNE 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 10 June 2015 were reviewed and approved.

Helen Wright queried arrangements for dealing with staffing issues in Construction. The committee was advised that Louse Griffen was sharing her Partnership Manager role with acting as the Programme Area Manager for Construction and that the latter was currently taking most of her time.

6. A LEVEL AND GCSE RESULTS 2014-15

Fiona Grady presented a paper on the results for 2014-15. The particularly marked increase of the number of GCSE entries was noted as arising from the new condition of funding relating to English and Maths GCSEs. It was noted that A2 performance was good again and that there had been a steady improvement in AS results. The GCSE numbers had more than doubled and the need to increase the A* to C outcomes for the 16-18 year olds was noted. David Shutts asked about the viability of some of the groups being reported and the committee was advised that the issue was that some students did not progress to A2 and a number of them actually only came for AS courses. A discussion also took place about

grade boundaries and how the results influenced decisions on running of individual subjects. The committee discussed the reasoning behind the choice of which A Level courses were being offered by the College.

David Shutts asked about the impact of non-English speaking members of these groups. Fiona Grady advised that the College was strict on admissions scores to ensure reasonable standards of English and that many students who did not have English as their first language performed very well on these courses.

Helen Wright asked about the anticipated impact of the change to linear from modular A-Levels. Fiona advised that the College was still going to be doing AS exams but they would not count towards A-Levels. It is anticipated that A Level success rates will fall as a result of the change.

The committee discussed whether, given the numbers involved in some areas, it was worth the College doing A-Levels and it was noted that this had previously been a subject of discussion. A factor in deciding whether to continue with A-Levels was their importance to the International market of the College. Fiona Grady advised that A-Level staff often teach across other courses as well particularly the access courses. It was noted that enrolments for these courses had not declined this year as in previous years and there was a roughly even split between British and non-British learners.

7. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2014-15

Fiona Grady presented a report on Key Performance Indicators and it was noted that a number of them were still blank since they were dependant on data which would not be available for another month.

The committee was advised that there was likely to be a drop in BTEC high grades due to changes in assessment arrangements. An area that was not meeting its target was Functional Skills which had been affected by the increase in students taking English and Maths and which was also likely to have an impact on benchmarks. A number of steps had been taken to improve performance in 2015-16. A discussion took place about the policy which makes so many learners have to take English and Maths which was having an impact on class sizes and some standards of behaviour. Amanda Mosek advised that she had had a discussion with Nick Boles about this and that an alternative was thought to be under consideration. Fiona felt that a number of students were demotivated by having to take these courses and this might affect their attendance on main courses too.

A discussion took place about applications the College receives and the conversion rate from applications. Fiona advised that this varies from area to area and that the first six weeks after enrolment were critical in ensuring that learners were on the right courses. The College closely monitors learners over this period in respect of withdrawals. David Shutts asked about the proportion of students for whom English was not the first language and was advised that it was approximately 25% of applicants. It was noted that ESOL is a large influence on the part time adult success rates and the committee noted that the predicted success rate is likely to be a little below target. It was noted also that Higher Education numbers were as uncertain as FE numbers until enrolment actually took place.

8. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS SUMMARY 2014-15 – FURTHER EDUCATION

Vicki Locke presented a report on complaints and compliments and explained to the committee how complaints are submitted and how they are classified. It was noted that the number of complaints was generally going down.

9. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS SUMMARY 2014-15 - HIGHER EDUCATION

Vicki Locke presented a report on complaints and compliments and it was noted that there was a very small number of HE complaints, 2 in total, both of which related to applications being refused.

David Shutts asked how the College would deal with anonymous complaints and the committee was advised that these were generally not accepted although student surveys did offer an opportunity for people to make anonymous complaints as did the Buzz the Boss arrangement. Any comments which suggested a particular issue was a problem would be pursued if it appeared through these mechanisms.

10. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN 2014-15

Fiona Grady presented a report on the Quality Improvement Action Plan. She advised the committee that there had been improvement in Catering Apprenticeship outcomes since the report was produced and that the number achieving the framework was now 75%. The committee was advised that Construction and Engineering might not make their targets.

Amanda Mosek asked if the new Quality Improvement Plan would be completely refreshed or if some actions will be carried over and it was advised that there would be some carry forward.

In response to a query from David Shutts, Fiona advised that action plans supported the achievement of the quality improvement targets and gave an example of how this was working in Construction. It was noted that in Construction a key issue had been about the monitoring arrangements and it was felt that the new management arrangements would provide more robust monitoring. It was noted that there had been a review by a consultant in respect of apprenticeships which was being followed up and that a new tracking system had been introduced for apprentices. It was agreed that the committee would find it interesting to see the consultant's report and to receive a paper on this at the next meeting. ●

Helen Wright asked about the availability of Wifi in the College and was advised that it was now available in most areas. Significant progress had been made in this since last year.

11. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

Vicki Locke presented a report on the survey results and it was noted that a decline in positive outcomes had been disappointing. David Shutts queried the low response rate and a discussion took place about how more responses could be encouraged. It was felt that there was a need to ensure that tutors took the surveys seriously. The committee noted that the data being published was not quite so critical because of the format in which it was published for colleges as opposed to that for the larger universities.

12. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The committee reviewed its performance against targets for 2014-15 and agreed to recommend to the Corporation that targets for 2015-16 should be:

- 75% attendance
- Reviewing the tracking and quality of Apprenticeships
- Monitoring the quality of provision in Construction
- Review of a report on progression and destinations.

13. GOVERNOR REVIEWS

It was reported that feedback from the governor reviews had suggested that the committee might focus on continuous improvement and enhancement of existing performance. It was noted that Key Performance Indicators had been amended to address this and it needed to be monitored through quality improvement plans. The committee was supportive of this view of its role.

A discussion took place about the presentation of Value Added data and it was noted that there were a number of different ways of evaluating this. It was suggested that for the time being the College should continue with the method which had been used over recent years to ensure consistency.

14. GOVERNOR CURRICULUM LINKS

It was noted that the intention was to set a timetable for the self-assessment report validation meetings well in advance so that more governors could attend. The committee was advised that governors have also asked for mid-year performance updates from link areas. ●

15. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 25 November 2015.