

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 23 APRIL 2014

1. PRESENT

Helen Wright (Chair), Nathan Ball, Iwona Lebedowicz, Orla McMahon, Amanda Mosek and John Trigg (external member).

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

Attendance 86%

Apologies for absence were received from Kathy Wood (advisor to the Standards Committee).

The Chairman welcomed John Trigg to his first meeting of the committee and introductions were made.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 22 January 2014 were reviewed and approved.

Iwona Lebedowicz raised a query about A-Level staff not knowing about success rate targets. Fiona Grady advised that this was a specific query about AS pass rates where the staff hadn't fully understood the nuances of the College targets against individual courses and the College was looking to make this more transparent.

Iwona asked if the 20 staff reported as being in the J20 programme was a good outcome and also queried whether it was open to staff graded as good only. Vicki Locke advised that since the first meeting almost 40 staff had attended out of a possible 60 which seemed to be a good take up. Discussions had also taken place about opening it up to all staff to recognise their aspirations to become outstanding.

As a result of the review of the action log Helen Wright queried whether a decision had been taken to change entry arrangements for AS programmes. Fiona Grady reported that the AS module results were sufficiently good for no further changes to be proposed at the present time.

It was noted that issues relating to an unsatisfactory EV report reported on the action log would be followed up in the KPI report for this meeting.

3. PERFORMANCE AGAINST QUALITY AND STANDARDS KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on Key Performance Indicators.

One error was noted in that the in-year HE full-time retention rate should be showing as 97% in March and not 92% as shown in the paper.

Fiona Grady reported that the new EV had visited regarding the unsatisfactory report and everything was now sorted. A discussion took place about performance against

key performance indicators. Orla McMahon queried whether any of the learner feedback which had been collected had issues for individual staff to address. Vicki Locke advised that individual areas were looking at their own results. Discussion was also taking place about the content of the questionnaires to help learners understand the questions better particularly bearing in mind that a large number of learners do not have English as a first language.

John Trigg queried whether the College was satisfied with in-year application levels and the committee was advised that the application numbers were higher than at the same time last year.

In response to a query from Iwona Lebedowicz a discussion took place about the decline in retention which naturally takes place over the year. Nathan Ball commented that retention was quite high and the committee discussed whether retention was likely to become an issue after Easter. Fiona Grady advised that post Christmas was generally the most challenging period for retention.

4. IN YEAR RETENTION

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on in year retention and it was noted that retention hadn't dropped significantly since January. John Trigg queried the meaning of the over 5500 support section and the learner responsive long course analysis breakdown by support and it was explained that this related to learners receiving additional support costing in excess of £5500 per annum.

Helen Wright queried a comment in the report about the retention at Boston United Football Club relating to the clarity of the distinction between provision at the Club and at the Peter Paine Centre. Fiona Grady explained that there were differences between the Boston United offer and the Sports Science offer made directly by the College and that for some of the Boston United learners the Sports Science offer would have been more suitable. The concern was that learners might not have been well enough advised of their options at the time of recruitment and steps were being taken to address this. Fiona Grady confirmed that the Boston United provision was subject to full quality performance monitoring by the College.

Queries were raised about the performance of the SkillsLink partnership and self-employed assessors. Amanda Mosek explained that SkillsLink were teaching out their partnership arrangement and that circumstances were currently very challenging for small providers like SkillsLink. The College had not felt that the self-employed assessor model worked well and was not generally to continue.

In response to a query from Helen Wright a discussion took place about the balance of work between Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships.

5. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on progress against the Quality Improvement Plan for 2013-14.

Helen Wright thought that it might be useful to revisit where the College had been at the start of the year so that the progress made could be highlighted. Fiona Grady agreed to circulate to members detailed information on actions which had been taken as part of the plan. John Trigg queried whether the English Lab was providing enough support for learners. Amanda Mosek explained that this was a cost effective offer which had proved very successful and would be further developed next year. The students could self refer to the lab but it had been found that referrals by staff had produced the most successful outcomes.

The committee noted that the lesson observation grade improvements were very positive and that there was generally very positive feedback from learners about staff. One area which had been a focus of concern had been Science which had faced a number of issues including significant staff absence but students were generally on track to achieve now.

6. TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Head of Quality gave a verbal report on progress on teaching and learning. She advised the committee that there were two staff with Grade 4 lesson observations causing continued concern but one of these had now left the employment of the College. Vicki Locke ran through the statistics and advised the committee that a positional statement had been prepared. Key highlights of this statement were that Teaching and Learning was good and improving, the grade profile was improving and the feedback on the Teaching and Learning Hub was good. The positional statement generally feels positive and it was agreed that this should be circulated to members of the committee. ●

Vicki identified that regular checking was the key to maintaining progress. Orla McMahon commented that staff had worked extremely hard with a lot of help to achieve the improvements which were being reported. John Trigg queried what the teaching triangles which were being referred to were and Vicki Locke provided an explanation of these.

7. ON PROGRAMME SURVEY

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on this survey which was focussed on Further Education learners. The key outcomes of the survey were highlighted and it was noted that Science was an example where the issues which had affected the area had been reflected in the dissatisfaction of learners. A discussion took place about the impact of raising learner expectations. A particular focus had been pressure regarding computing services and the College was having a conference in the near future to discuss this.

A discussion took place about feedback from learners in Spalding regarding the absence of a Library in the Red Lion Quarter and also the feedback from learners on their wish for an improved smoking area.

Orla McMahon raised a question about cover arrangements and whether it was possible for there to be special provision for providing cover when staff were absent since she felt that learners became demotivated in the absence of staff. Fiona Grady reported that it was a challenge to build up a supply pool for cover since most of the provision is very specialised. She advised that the sport area used their intern arrangements for this support and that the College has done something similar in the computer area but generally it was challenging to find cover particularly of a high enough calibre.

Nathan Ball queried whether learners fully understand the questions on the survey and made a suggestion that the questions could be reviewed by focus groups to ensure that they were easily understood. ●

Iwona Lebedowicz commented on some particularly good feedback in the survey and raised a question about learners concerns on safety. Members of the committee were advised that this was primarily about the checking of ID badges which was focussed on people coming into the College earlier in the day but was often less consistent later in the day.

8. VALUE ADDED

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on Value Added Scores. John Trigg queried how statistical significance was gauged in looking at these results and Fiona Grady explained that the software worked this out automatically.

Helen Wright queried how the Value Added data should be used. Fiona Grady explained that Ofsted tend to look at this as if success rates are reasonable. High grades are a particular measure and the College needs to be making better than expected progress to achieve good Value Added outcomes. Amanda Mosek pointed out that this was part of the strategy to raise learner aspirations.

9. APPRENTICESHIP MONITORING

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on the monitoring of performance in apprenticeships. The report concluded that actions taken to improve the apprenticeship provision were starting to take effect but that impact on achievement data would not be apparent until 2015. Helen Wright queried the College's plans for growth in apprenticeships and the committee was advised that the government was changing the route for funding of apprenticeships. New standards are being developed for apprenticeships as well. The outcome of this is lots of question marks about the future arrangements and Richard Chambers, Head of Curriculum is involved in leading the College development.

10. HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATE

Members received a report from the Head of Quality.

Vicki Locke advised the committee that a Higher Education quality review would commence on the 12 May and the learner survey for Higher Education students was now closed. A 61% response rate had been achieved and almost all of the responses had a good score. Vicki Locke gave members summary information on what the students were pleased with and where they thought improvements could be made by the College.

Helen Wright questioned whether the committee should see the quality information for Higher Education and it was agreed that it was probably appropriate for the self-evaluation document (SED) to be circulated to the committee together with the SED prepared by students. The outcomes of the quality review will be passed on to the Corporation but the report is not likely to be available until the next academic year.

11. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 11 June 2014.