

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 JUNE 2013

1. PRESENT

Mrs H Wright (Chair), Miss C French, Mrs L Ladds, Mr N Percy, Mrs A Mosek and Mr R Stanley.

Also in attendance: Mrs J Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation) and Mrs S Richards (observer).

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Fulbrook and Mr B Wright.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 24 April 2013 were reviewed and approved.

The committee discussed a number of specific points:

- a) It was suggested that an action log should be introduced to ensure that actions identified at meetings were not missed.
- b) It was noted that Work Based Learning electrical provision was still causing concern but that the course had now been changed so should be more appropriate from next year.
- c) It was noted that one Construction partnership group had all been made redundant which affected the performance reported in that area and that this had left significant challenges for other outcomes in that curriculum area to ensure that performance was above the baseline.
- d) Members were advised that one partner had gone into administration and their business had been taken over by LearnDirect. This situation was being managed by the College.
- e) In response to a query members were advised that the MIDES data shows retention against other colleges which submit their data to this review.

3. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2012-13

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on Key Performance Indicators. It was noted that there would be a further update on these at the Corporation meeting. A number of key points were noted:

- a) Retention on FE long courses had dropped a further point but was currently on target.
- b) Grade 4 lesson observations have all been re-observed where the staff were still continuing. It was noted that those who had not worked recently would be re-inspected if they returned. The importance of staff attending the Teaching and Learning conference was noted and this would be stressed to staff.

A question was raised about how the College knows if lesson observations are working. Members were advised that a new observation team was now in place and almost all of the members had now completed training with Helen Groves, External Consultant and trained Ofsted Inspector. Helen had also moderated a cross section of

six records from which she had agreed 4, re-graded 1 and concluded that 1 could not be assessed. A booking had been made for Helen Groves to deliver a further 2 three-day sessions and another round of training was also being undertaken. The priority is to make sure that the notes of lesson observations and their grades are consistent and the moderation exercise is being used as a learning opportunity for the team. Members were advised that all grades 3 and 4 would be re-observed by the end of the year.

A discussion took place about how governors might be involved in lesson observations and visits. It was noted that this had come up as a topic for discussion at a conference attended by the Chair in the preceding week. Members queried whether learners also evaluated the observed lessons but were advised that Ofsted had doubts about the value of this. The committee debated this point and felt that it could be useful to ask learners about how they felt about lessons to see if this could help to improve lessons when they were delivered again. This did currently happen. A general discussion took place about the value of feedback and evaluation.

The committee was also advised that:

- a) Full time applications for 2013-14 now stood at 2020
- b) The leaver's survey had been carried out at the end of May and was now being followed up. Actual destinations will be collected in the Autumn.
- c) HE is going quite well. Moderation is complete and retention is reasonable. There is disappointment that some learners are leaving the HNCs rather than continuing which reduces 2nd year numbers. A discussion took place about the impact of higher numbers of applications on HEFCE funding. There is strong demand but the College is limited in what it can offer.

4. LEARNER SURVEYS

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

A main challenge in relation to the surveys is getting appropriate levels of response. It was noted that the on-programme and the leavers survey had seen the percentage of responses increase but the College still wished to see these higher.

The survey reports identified areas where satisfaction had declined or increased. In response to a query about whether learners understood the implications of completing the survey, it was noted that this could possibly be emphasised more to learners so that they appreciated the impact which survey outcomes had.

A supplementary paper was presented on low learner response rates. This included information on response rates by programme area. It was noted that there was a large variation in how the surveys were being carried out within the areas and the committee focused on the areas where the response rates were particularly low. Members were advised that the College was not able to access benchmark data easily now that it was not using an external survey and that generally distance travelled measures were used. The College anticipated that one of the results of the change in structure should ensure greater accountability for the surveys since the data suggested that the staff were not prioritising the surveys enough and that there was a management issue to be addressed. A discussion took place about whether the methods of collection affected the response rates. The committee asked to receive a further report about the impact of the survey outcomes on College actions. It was also agreed that managers should be asked for feedback on the comments made within the surveys. A discussion took place about some actions which were already underway to address the survey issues.

5. TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY 2013-15

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on the Teaching and Learning Strategy which included the Key Performance Indicators for 2014-15 in this area. Members noted that it was imperative that the College was able to demonstrate an improvement in Value Added scores and that performance generally was improving. It was noted that value added can be difficult to deal with in some areas since the process worked best in A-Levels but is not so well suited to BTecs. This is an area of focus at the performance monitoring meetings with managers and it was noted that the College needs to get better at achieving higher grades for learners. A discussion took place about the possibility of using incentives to help meet the challenge of raising performance. It was felt that the issue was to raise the general level of performance rather than just focusing on individual areas.

6. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality updating performance against these plans. Areas which were proving challenging were identified including one year Level 3 programmes and ICT Level 2 Functional Skills. A discussion took place about AS/A Level withdrawals and the impact of these on success rates. It was noted that future observations would be carried out on the same basis as Ofsted inspections with 2 day notification of the formal observations.

7. CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

Helen Wright gave the committee feedback on the Governors' Conference which she had recently attended looking at the Governors role in relation to Teaching and Learning in an Ofsted inspection. The conference had identified a number of key imperatives for governors:

- a) The need to be actively involved including talking to learners and staff.
- b) The need to ask challenging questions.
- c) Being visible within the College.
- d) Getting involved in Self Assessment.
- e) Keeping information simple.
- f) Identifying strong performance, under performance and trends.

In the context of these imperatives it was agreed that it would be useful if a briefing could be provided to governors prior to their curriculum visits and that they should also be provided with the programme area SARs.

A key question which members needed to be satisfied with is whether learners understand why they are doing things, where they are going, whether this fits in with employers needs and, as noted earlier in the meeting, whether learners understand the importance of the surveys they complete. It was agreed that an agenda item should be included in the July Corporation meeting for feedback from this conference.

8. LEARNER GOVERNOR

It was noted that it was the last meeting the committee for Chloe French and she was thanked for her input to the committee.