

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2013

1. PRESENT

Mrs H Wright (Chair), Mr N Ball, Ms O McMahon, Mrs A Mosek and Mr C Simpson.

Also in attendance: Mrs J Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Ms K Wood (Advisor to the Corporation), Mrs F Grady (Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality) and Mrs V Locke (Quality Manager).

Apologies for absence were received from Ms I Lebedowicz.

Since this was the first meeting attended by the new student and staff governors introductions were carried out.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 18 September 2013 were reviewed and approved.

Having elected the Chair of the Committee at the September meeting a discussion took place about the recommendation that committees should consider appointing Vice-Chairs. It was agreed that a Vice-Chair should be appointed at the next meeting. ●

The action log from the September meeting was reviewed. Fiona Grady reported that the inclusion of a response rate for full-time learner surveys had been looked at but had not currently been included since this was more a matter of compliance than of quality. The committee was asked to consider whether it wished to continue with this measure, Helen Wright commented that the response rates had been disappointing in the past and that this was why it had been proposed. It was agreed that the response rate target should be included in the KPI target list. ●

It was noted that Adult Short Course success rates would be added to the KPI list once available and that a target for 2013-14 would be suggested.

The committee was happy with progress reported against items on the action log.

3. QUALIFICATION SUCCESS RATES

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on success rates for 2012-13. Fiona Grady explained to the committee exactly what was being shown on the tables presented and what the various measures meant for the benefit of new members of the committee. She advised that it was important to look at trends and as an example quoted the 16+ overall success rate which had gone over 3 years from 74% to 82%. Comparisons with national averages were included where possible and a particular review was undertaken with regards to the Functional Skills work where it was noted that the overall Functional Skills performance was pulled down by partnership delivery.

Fiona Grady advised the committee that an issue which had to be addressed in presenting this data was the number of different data sets which were available for comparison purposes. The data presented had shown comparisons against the

averages of similar providers. In this context it was noted that long level 2 and 3 provision for adults was showing success rates well above the national average but level 1 provision for this age group was below national average.

Helen Wright queried what level H and X on the reports were and an explanation was given by Fiona Grady.

Particular attention was paid to the table which showed higher grade rates. A focus for the College had been to improve the Boston United achievement rate and also the national diploma retention rate. The latter had seen some restructuring taking place and better tracking and initial advice and guidance had also helped. Helen Wright queried what had been done about the Boston United provision and Fiona Grady explained that monitoring had been tightened up. The College was emphasising to Boston United the importance of retention and the Club had reacted positively to this. The Sports section are monitoring this data carefully.

It was noted that Level 2 Functional Skills is a problem and more work remains to be done there.

For adults a lot of work had been done on retention for Access programmes including the expansion of taster programmes. It was felt that this had paid off in better retention and achievement and that Access results were now better than the national average but lower than Level 3 provision generally. An aspect of the adult Level 3 performance which is very good was that provided by the National Design Academy. This provision had helped with success rates but had created a gender and ethnicity gap. It was noted that there had been some problems with sub-contracted provision and also with the IT Centre provision where demand had fallen away. A significant amount of adult ESOL was also noted to need more improvement in success rates.

Chaz Simpson raised an issue where a learner had left an Access course for the third time despite support being offered and queried whether numbers of enrolments from an individual should be limited. Orla McMahon advised that students generally cannot reapply immediately and a discussion took place whether this might be better than capping the number of enrolments. Helen Wright advised that the College acknowledged issues with retention on Access courses and Nathan Ball asked why this differed from other courses. Fiona Grady explained that this was a feature of the learners returning to education and that it was hoped next year entry conditions and pre-entry requirements might make a difference to this.

Kathy Wood asked what arrangements the College had in place for partnership provision and was advised that partnerships which had been subject to change, such as one where the business had been sold, were subject to particularly close monitoring.

Fiona Grady advised the committee that comparison with Mides data was looking better than previously.

The committee was told that apprenticeships had not gone well in 2012-13. In Catering the closure of Sage had impacted on the number of apprentices continuing and a number of variations in performance were highlighted. It was noted that some partners had differing levels of performance for apprenticeships and non-apprenticeships and that some of the partners for whom a problem was identified had ceased working with the College. Helen Wright queried the arrangements for new partners and whether there were any for 2013-14, Amanda Mosek confirmed that there were and that they were all being carefully checked. Within the partnership data Kathy Wood queried the ratio of electrical provision within the Motor Vehicle and Engineering results. It was noted that one partners provision which had not yet produced achievements would do so but not in a timely manner.

Non-apprenticeship provision was noted to be generally quite good.

In Higher Education it was noted that there was a high drop out from Year 1 onto Year 2. Helen Wright queried why this would be the case, Fiona Grady felt that there were some issues with entry criteria and learners not producing the required work. The College had looked at the design of programmes to try to address this. Nathan Ball asked whether this drop out was possibly due to the jump in work levels. Fiona Grady explained that some areas seem to have more success in preparing learners for this progression than others. Sport and Computing are particularly good at this although Computing learners without a programming background struggle more with Higher Education so additional preparation has been put in place.

Helen Wright queried the tutoring arrangements in Higher Education. Fiona Grady commented on the arrangements which were in place and noted that the Social Care provision had seen a lot of personal problems affecting performance. In response to a question from Kathy Wood, Fiona advised that approximately 45 of 65 learners had progressed, some of those who had not progressed had taken an HNC and some had transferred elsewhere, with an achievement rate of approximately 70%. Looking at the information on Equality and Diversity performance statistics it was noted that the adult ethnicity gap largely related to ESOL performance and to the work of the sub-contractor previously discussed, the National Design Academy, as did the gender gap.

Looking at the table presented on performance across the programme areas Helen Wright asked if the College had been able to identify what had changed in the areas where significant improvements were identified. Fiona Grady advised that the College had felt that some management changes had assisted in the Construction area and this was also the case in Sport. Care still had some courses which needed close monitoring but Foundation and Teacher Training were amongst the College's stronger areas. Helen Wright pointed out that there was a need to acknowledge the areas which had done well and to identify what can be learnt from them.

Amanda Mosek commented that the College needed to work on its consistency and the sharing of good practice. Members were advised that this had been a consideration in the recent restructuring of College Management where areas had been grouped to try to bring about improvement.

4. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on progress against targets from the plans.

Most of the targets related to Teaching and Learning and the committee was advised that the College had had a disappointing 3 weeks of lesson observations which showed that there was still much to be done. Approximately 50 observations had been carried out and there was a need to make more progress, particularly on consistency, although the better areas had not yet been observed.

Kathy Wood commented that it was a disappointing outcome after a significant amount of support had been put in, including support to governance, and hopefully that this would help to improve the grades.

Helen Wright queried whether any of the governance induction feedback had been good and a discussion took place about the feedback and about the information which was on the College website about governors. Amanda Mosek is to look again at what is included on the website.

A query was raised by Orla McMahon about the inclusion of a reference to IGCSE

English Language against the AS pass rates. Fiona Grady explained that this was about the English Language support for AS students who needed this.

Helen Wright queried how activities within lessons were differentiated and Fiona Grady explained how within lessons the teaching is varied to meet the needs of learners with differing levels of ability. Nathan Ball queried how this happens and Amanda Mosek explained the differences in lesson planning which were required. A discussion took place about the positive impact of differentiation compared with the impact of a lack of differentiation in lessons.

Orla McMahon queried why within the measures shown there was a reference to national average and not to benchmarks and it was explained that Ofsted did not like the use of the term benchmark because in some cases the national averages were low.

5. QUALITY AND STANDARDS KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality showing the Key Performance Indicator targets for 2013-14. It was noted that this included a new progress target being proposed on tracking and that there was a change in the employer satisfaction measure and the way it was rated. Helen Wright queried how performance indicator targets were set and Fiona Grady explained that it was the result of a review of outcomes, quality improvement plans, previous performance against performance indicators, national benchmarks and averages and local priorities.

A discussion took place about whether destinations should be included within the performance measures. It was noted that data on actual destinations was only available very late in the day and that initially intended destinations were collected for verification after completion. There was not a consensus of opinion about whether destinations should be included in key performance indicators but it was felt that they should be recorded somewhere and it was agreed that Amanda Mosek, Fiona Grady and Vicki Locke would discuss this matter further.

Looking at the employer response data some changes were being introduced because of issues with electronic collection of employer views. It was proposed that this should now be carried out through employer liaison activities. Having reviewed the proposed targets there was little improvement being proposed although it was accepted that targets had to be set in context and realistic.

The committee had previously requested information about complaints and this was circulated for viewing within the meeting. A discussion took place about how complaints were dealt with and it was noted that whilst complaints could be helpful there were always a number which were spurious.

The committee agreed the content and the levels of the key performance targets for 2013-14.

6. INDUCTION SURVEY 2013

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on the induction survey and she guided the committee through the data presented. Amanda Mosek queried how the poor responses in the Construction area were being addressed and Vicki Locke explained to the meeting how these were being followed up. It was noted that better outcomes were being achieved from the new survey from the ESOL learners.

It was noted that due to some issues about response rates it was proposed that the survey in future apply to all full time learners with the questions being differentiated.

Helen Wright queried how some colleges manage to achieve better response rates and Amanda Mosek commented that it had been a problem in some areas that second year students did not fill in the survey despite being expected to and this was why a change was being made to the data collection.

A discussion took place about how completion of the surveys could be promoted and the possibility of using learner representatives to increase the response rates. It was noted that it was important not to lose sight of this need to increase the data collection rate but it was not currently a top priority.

7. TEACHING LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

The Head of Quality reported that 46 graded observations had recently been carried out in 7 areas of the College with 52% being graded good or better, 35% at Grade 3 and 13% at Grade 4, although some of these were still unmoderated grades.

A number of themes had been identified from the Grade 3 and 4 lesson observations these being differentiation, assessment strategy within lessons, some non-consolidation of learning, some group management and some starts of lessons not being structured enough. After the observations each lesson graded 3 or 4 had findings reported back to the teacher and an action plan plus advance practitioner support was put in place. Some drop in observations are being carried out by Programme Area Managers and other support being provided was the creation of an expectations guide and work being done with the Programme Area Managers about accelerating the pace of improvement.

Fiona Grady explained to the committee that the observations had focussed on areas requiring improvement but the outcomes were nevertheless disappointing. It was felt that this confirmed that grading had previously been over generous and Helen Grove had advised that the grading was now correct. A discussion took place about whether there was any correlation between the grades and the length of service and about how staff were reacting to feedback about lessons graded less than good. Vicki Locke pointed out that there were links with the capability policy and Amanda Mosek commented that the large number of lessons being graded 3 or 4 could make this very challenging.

Amanda Mosek asked whether teaching and learning was being discussed in team meetings and Orla McMahon confirmed that it was definitely being discussed in A Level meetings. Fiona Grady was discussing expectations with the Programme Areas and the Quality Team had produced a lot of information about how to facilitate learning. A discussion took place about whether some lunch time development sessions could be put on and how such activities could form part of action plans.

Helen Wright asked how the information on lesson observation findings was shared with others and it was confirmed that it would be shared through programme area management structures. Orla McMahon asked how the College would be able to get staff engaged with the necessary improvements and it was noted that everyone was working together for the good of the learners. Kathy Wood queried how the findings linked in with the appraisals process and it was confirmed that the outcomes of lesson observations fed through into appraisals.

8. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 22 January 2014.