

BOSTON COLLEGE

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

1. PRESENT

Mrs H Wright (Chair), Ms I Lebedowicz and Mrs A Mosek.

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).

It was noted that pending elections of staff governors and student governors there were a number of vacancies on the committee.

2. CHAIR

Having been duly nominated Helen Wright was elected as Chair of the Committee for 2013-14 academic year.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 11 June 2013 were reviewed and approved.

A draft action log was reviewed by the committee. It was agreed that in future this should be used and committee decisions should particularly identify responsibility and timescales for recording on the log. It was agreed that action points need to be clearly identified within the minutes.

Helen Wright asked how the Work Based Learning electrical provision is now faring. It was explained that this was a long and particularly demanding course so there tended to be issues with retention. The College was taking a stronger position on admissions to the course including initial assessment but this can be difficult to deal with with some employers who have very clear ideas on the courses they wish their staff to follow.

Amanda Mosek asked for feedback on some of the partnership challenges which had been experienced. It was noted that one partner, Allenby, had been particularly affected by the commercial failures of employers which resulted in a number of learners leaving early and a lack of achievement on courses. This partner was no longer providing apprenticeships. With regard to the partner where learners had had to transfer to LearnDirect, all of these transfers had happened successfully.

A discussion took place about the Teaching and Learning Conference and it was noted that 87% of staff attended the conference. The main group of staff not attending were hourly paid staff with other commitments and leavers although disciplinary action was taken in the case of one member of staff who deliberately absented themselves from the staff development.

Helen Wright asked whether the lesson observation grades 3 and 4 had been re-observed. It was confirmed that all of these had been done and that all had

either improved or related to members of staff no longer with the College.

A discussion took place about full time applications which were noted to be healthy and about the collection of destinations for leavers. The committee was advised that it was too early to have actual destinations and that the survey work would be carried out by a company over a 2-week period. The committee noted that the collection of actual destinations as opposed to intended destinations had become more important in recent years.

A discussion took place about learner surveys and the improvement of response rates to surveys. It was agreed that the College needed to be clear what percentage response rates it was looking for and how it proposed to get higher responses. The full time response rate target was 90% but it was more difficult to get responses from part time learners. It was agreed that the response rate for full time learners on programme surveys should be added to the KPI target list and that the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality should ensure that this appears before the end of September 2013.

Amanda Mosek queried whether the Standards Committee should be looking at Value Added scores by Curriculum area and it was agreed that it should do so. A report is to be brought to the January meeting of the Standards Committee.

Helen Wright noted that the Quality Improvement Plan identified 1 year Level 3 and Level 2 Functional Skills provision as having an issue with success rates. The committee were advised that success rates had not yet been finalised but had gone up by approximately 2%. Changes had been made to the way in which functional skills were delivered but it was noted that for learners there was a big jump from Level 1 to Level 2. The College has in place a strategy for improving English and Maths and embedding it more through other lessons.

Iwona Lebedowicz asked about the arrangements for lesson observations and it was confirmed that although the College had a schedule of how and when observations were to take place the Ofsted notice period of 2-day notification for staff would be followed.

4. A-LEVEL AND GCSE RESULTS

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on results for 2012-13. Members were advised that the College had taken a number of steps to address the Curriculum issues in ensuring success in these courses specifically in increasing the entry criteria and implementing a management restructure which had split A-Levels from Science allowing more clarity to be given to responsibilities in this area. Whilst the data was still not excellent there had been some movement on high grades with the better outcomes including a couple of A*s.

Helen Wright queried whether the College had done enough at this stage to improve performance. It was noted that there was still a need to improve but that the arrangements in place for this year should help. The World Development course had been dropped and the College was able to use data from the exam board to identify individual areas of performance which needed attention. A discussion took place about whether the entry grades for AS/A2 courses were high enough particularly with the planned change to linear A-Levels which would be more challenging for learners. The College was using entry scores to guide learners' options on their courses.

Iwona Lebedowicz asked how the College assessed learners internally. The committee was advised that the College maintained a close watch on learner performance and that its stance on entry requirements had arisen from experience in the past which suggested that allowing exceptional entry criteria was a mistake. It was not possible for learners to be re-assessed long after their enrolment because it would be too late for them to transfer to something else during the teaching year. The important thing was to get advice and guidance right at the outset. It was noted that for 2014-15 entry arrangements would need to be set now and it was agreed that the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality should have a look at proposals for entry qualifications and that the Senior Leadership Team should be asked to make a decision on these before the next phase of recruitment for 2014-15.

Helen Wright raised a query about the individual course performance data and the committee agreed that it was better presented with year on year comparisons and should be presented in this way next time. It was agreed that this data should be sent to members now in respect of the current outcomes.

5. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on key performance indicator data. It was noted that in relation to success rates the College was still waiting for apprenticeship rates to be finalised since a large number of achievements were outstanding. A number of key features of the results data were noted including the improvement to the adult long course data which had been helped by the changing of ESOL courses to short course provision although these courses still had an issue with retention. It was agreed that, because of this change, adult short courses should be added to the monitoring data as the numbers were significantly increased and that the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality should ensure that this was done by the end of September 2013.

A discussion took place about other elements of the data in particular about student retention and how the College was addressing retention issues through delivery patterns which were intended to decrease pressure on learners. It was noted that for 2013-14 the College would be putting Grade 1 and 2 lesson observations together in its reporting.

6. COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2012-13

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on compliments and complaints received. It was noted that a number of complaints had related to Science provision which was shown within the Humanities data and that the revised management arrangements were intended to address this.

Helen Wright and Iwona Lebedowicz asked about the nature of complaints received and the steps the College had taken to reduce complaints. A discussion took place about this and it was agreed that in future more information on the breakdown on the type of complaints received should be provided to the committee.

7. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on Teaching, Learning and Assessment and including detailed information on programme areas. It was noted that there was some disparity between learner feedback and grades within programme areas which would continue to be reviewed by the College.

Members reviewed the programme area analysis against the common inspection framework requirements and the grades given to the various elements. It was noted that some of these might change following SAR validation.

Helen Wright asked how the College proposed to progress areas which were identified as good to being outstanding and how best practice was shared. The committee was advised of the processes being followed and how individual areas would look at required improvements. A lot of work had been done over the Summer with focussed staff development and the management restructure should address this too.

The committee was advised that Helen Groves was also coming back into the College on 7 occasions during the Autumn term 2013 looking at issues of lesson observations.

8. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on the performance against the Quality Improvement Plan and Post Inspection Action Plan. The committee noted that the colour coding being used was useful and looked specifically at the areas in need of improvement. It was noted that a Teaching and Learning Hub had been set up over the summer although it was too early to judge its impact at the present time.

Helen Wright queried whether the College had done enough on Equality and Diversity. The committee was advised that the College was working to develop and improve staff understanding of Equality and Diversity issues. An English Language Lab to support English development had been set up and the College was also putting on functional skills training for staff. College Managers felt that they were approaching this in the right way.

9. COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Members reviewed the performance of the committee against the 2012-13 performance targets where it was noted that the committee had achieved 83% attendance against an 80% target and had throughout the year addressed its other targets which were a focus on teaching and learning, a review of AS A2 and GCSE performance and the focus on Adult success rates.

The committee considered the targets it wished to propose to the Corporation for 2013-14 and agreed that these should be:

- 85% attendance
- Apprenticeships – to look at the quality of tracking and reporting as well as the outcomes

- Teaching and Learning – to review at every meeting of the committee and particularly to identify emerging themes
- To review the quality of AS/A2 provision

It was agreed that in future the committee's targets should be noted on the bottom of agendas so that these were kept to the fore in considerations.

10. IMPACT OF SURVEY OUTCOMES ON COLLEGE ACTIONS

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on the College's response to issues identified in learner surveys. Helen Wright queried how this was communicated to learners. Members were advised that this took place within individual areas and through the Learner Representative Forums. A particular focus was on the ICT issues which had been raised and it was noted that the College was hopeful that there would be less complaints now that there were new computers in the Library.

11. COMMITTEE PROFILE

The committee noted that the gender balance of the membership should be addressed with the new appointments.

12. OFSTED

It was noted that the next meeting with the Ofsted Inspectors would take place imminently, 25 September 2013 with a new inspector, Sheila Willis.

13. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 18 November 2013.