

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2014

1. PRESENT

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

Also in attendance: Mr P Cropley, Mr S McCracken, Mr D White, Mick Gallagher, Bob Walder (Corporation members), Mrs J Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Mrs F Grady (Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality) and Mrs V Locke (Quality Manager).

Attendance 57%

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Ndhlovu and Mr C Simpson.

2. VICE-CHAIR

Having been duly nominated and seconded Iwona Lebedowicz was elected as Vice-Chair of the committee for the 2013-14 academic year.

3. MINUTES

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

Helen Wright raised a query about the arrangements for setting entry qualification levels for 2014-15 which was identified in the minutes and the action log. The committee was advised that the due date for this was in March and a decision would be informed by the outcomes from the mock examinations in the A/AS area.

4. SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on the Self – Assessment Report (SAR) for 2012-13.

Fiona Grady reported to the meeting that the monitoring inspector had just advised that the SAR should be re-written to reflect improvements which had been made since the 2012-13 year end. The existing report which had been provided to the committee was as at July 2013 and now needed to be updated to reflect progress which had been made. The new report would need to demonstrate how far the College has travelled since the last inspection and will focus on the grades. Fiona advised the committee that outcomes were unlikely to move in grade terms but that teaching and learning and leadership and management could improve. The emphasis would be to demonstrate what the College is doing to bring about improvement and the revised self-assessment report would be completed within the next couple of weeks.

Steve McCracken raised a query about whether the self-assessment format was prescriptive. Fiona Grady advised that generally it followed the common inspection framework but was not prescriptive. Shorter self-assessments were preferred. The monitoring inspector did not wish to see the descriptive element and wanted to see a

punchier self-assessment report. The focus would be on impact and demonstrating impact to the inspectorate.

Steve McCracken asked for an explanation on outcomes and if the College was able to demonstrate that more students are being retained in 2013-14 that would demonstrate improvement. Fiona Grady advised that tracking of learners was important and could demonstrate in-year progress. The College was also hoping to be able to find more positive data on destinations but for the most part the data from 2012-13 would stand as it was. Bob Walder asked if it was the case that the College needed to promote its own position. Fiona Grady confirmed that the inspector was very positive but that the promotion needed to be evidence based. Peter Copley advised that he felt that improvements had started by the time of inspection but couldn't be evidenced at that point.

Helen Wright raised a query about whether it was a new inspector or one seen previously. The committee was advised that the monitoring inspector was on her third visit and that her input had been very helpful to the College. Amanda Mosek advised that she wouldn't be visiting again and that there was a general feeling that inspection is imminent.

Steve McCracken queried whether the monitoring inspector would be critical if she felt the need to be and it was agreed that she would and was particularly astute. Amanda Mosek advised the committee that the role of the monitoring inspector was to say when the College was ready for re-inspection.

Helen Wright pointed out that the need to write the SAR didn't affect the validity of the meeting looking at the data and the quality improvement plan. In response to a query about grades which are likely to improve Fiona Grady identified that there were a number of possibilities including Hair and Beauty, Catering and Hospitality and Computing which all may improve to become grade 2s and AS/A2 GCSE which may become a grade 3. She did not feel that any of the other grades were likely to change. In response to a query from Helen Wright, Fiona Grady advised that the focus of Ofsted had shifted to an emphasis on learning and that she was now confident that the College had a better grasp of where it is on teaching and learning.

Kathy Wood joined the meeting at this point.

In response to a query from Peter Copley about the quality of teaching and learning, the committee was advised that the good or better lessons now formed 66% of the total.

Orla McMahon queried whether staff were fully aware of the position in their own areas and identified a concern that her own subject was listed as a cause for concern but she hadn't been made aware of that. She advised that had she known that her action plan might have been different. The focus of staff had been looking at grades in relation to benchmarks which had not led her subject to be identified as a cause for concern but Fiona Grady advised that overall in this area success rates needed to be at 75%.

Bob Walder identified that there may be an issue with the language and terminology used and that the redraft needed to express itself more positively.

Steve McCracken queried whether staff generally understood descriptions, Fiona Grady advised that she had seen a problem in the past where staff didn't understand the distinction between success and achievement. Orla McMahon advised that it was important to be able to contextualise performance. Fiona Grady had published the full self-assessment report on the intranet at Christmas and had produced a mini report which had been widely distributed. She agreed that there might be a need to promote more understanding at local level. Fiona also agreed that the writing style for the

revised self-assessment report needed to be more positive and to concentrate on improvements.

Mick Gallagher queried whether there was an issue about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and whether the College was investing enough in this. Fiona advised that the College had put a huge resource behind improving teaching and learning, probably in the region of £250,000. The College was having difficulty recruiting staff for a number of reasons including salary levels and the need to attract people to move to Boston. The support being offered by the College is targeted at the staff it has but at some point there may be a need to look at reward mechanisms to make recruitment easier. Mick Gallagher agreed that the College may have to consider ways of releasing resources to recruit staff and identified that other organisations were looking at possibly drastic measures to ensure the quality of service delivery. Peter Copley confirmed that the College was looking at reward mechanisms and that the Governor Development day would look at the way forward. Mick Gallagher shared information on the ways in which a number of other organisations were releasing resources to ensure the quality of staff.

Helen Wright identified a comment by Ofsted that the concentration of the College should be on making good people even better. Amanda Mosek advised that, although there has been some staff turnover, that most people were now engaged with the improvement process.

Peter Copley queried some identified anomalies between student feedback and the rating of performance. Amanda Mosek felt that students' feedback grades might go down as students were under more pressure to achieve. Orla McMahon identified that co-ordination posts had been created to support this emphasis on achievement.

Kathy Wood gave her feedback on the College's self-assessment report and felt that the report doesn't show the impact of what has been done. She felt that it might be helpful to change the layout and highlight the strengths and areas for improvement. She identified that colleges she was working with were looking at the Stockport report and had identified the need to focus on key issues. Kathy felt that Boston College report needed streamlining to make it more readable.

It was confirmed that the new self-assessment report would be shared with Corporation members when it was available. ●

5. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2013-14

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on the progress made against the quality improvement plan for 2013-14.

Fiona Grady advised that she would be making some changes to the presentation format of the plan and that updating progress was a continuous process.

Kathy Wood felt that the quality improvement plan needed to be made a little smarter. Fiona Grady advised that she was going to add a key to make it more accessible.

Helen Wright queried the extent of the focus of apprenticeships in the plan and Fiona Grady advised that there was still a lot of work to be done on apprenticeships.

6. QUALITY AND STANDARDS KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2013-14

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on

performance against the performance indicators.

Helen Wright identified some elements where there was reduction in performance but Fiona Grady confirmed that these were in line with expectations.

Peter Cropley raised a query about a calculation of the level of grade 4 lesson observations and Vicki Locke explained how the grades were being presented. A discussion took place about the presentation of the grades and whether this should be revised to better reflect the quality of teaching and learning.

Kathy Wood raised a query about whether an identified unsatisfactory EV report was an issue. Fiona Grady confirmed that there were actions to be taken before certification but this was to be sorted by the end of January 2014.

7. TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATE

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on teaching and learning. Vicki Locke explained the movement in observation grades and the presentation of grades. A discussion took place about the presentation of grades and the processes being followed. It was suggested that where grades improved on re-observation that the original grades should be removed from the calculations.

In response to a query from Orla McMahon, Vicki Locke explained the process of support offered to staff with grades 3 and 4. Vicki advised that a re-observation at a grade 4 would lead into the capability process.

Fiona Grady advised the committee that there was a flow chart which showed the observation process and that this would be shared with governors.

Helen Wright queried what the inspectorate will be presented with and Fiona Grady confirmed that they would see the current grade profile. Vicki Locke confirmed that the College is getting really good engagement from staff in the process.

Amanda Mosek advised the committee that staff were engaging with the improvement process and it was felt to be important that they should be given the opportunity to show a move to outstanding from good. The J2O (Journey to Outstanding) scheme is about moving good teachers to outstanding and 20 staff had engaged with this in the first week since its introduction. The monitoring inspector had been very positive about this and the J2O process encourages staff reflection on their teaching practice.

Bob Walder queried how the recognition of outstanding teaching was given and it was confirmed that at the end of the year this was recognised. Kathy Wood queried whether an incentive could be offered to staff delivering outstanding teaching and learning.

Mick Gallagher queried the spiky grade profile and asked where the most significant issues were. These were identified to be within A Levels, Access, Visual Arts and Media and delivery of theory in vocational areas. The College was focussing on these areas with support. A query was raised about the engagement of staff and it was confirmed that this had improved. The committee was advised that the observation team's judgements had now been the subject of moderation. A consultant has been brought in to work with the LLLD team to help them move on to outstanding since this is a specialist area.

Helen Wright commented that the position was felt to be much more positive than previously and Peter Cropley agreed that a huge amount of work had been done and progress made.

Kathy Wood felt that there was a more positive approach and it would be useful if a couple of advocates of J2O's success could be identified. She also advised that when the next inspection takes place it would be helpful to have more governors involved since this would be useful to demonstrate the governors' support and understanding. The possibility of governors being engaged on the telephone was considered because of the practical difficulties given the inspection notice period.

8. HIGHER EDUCATION INSPECTION

Members were advised that an inspection was due in the week commencing 12 May by the Quality Assurance Agency.

Kathy Wood queried how much governors knew about the quality of higher education. Fiona Grady advised that full time higher education is in its first year and that this would be an agenda item for the next meeting of the committee. ●

9. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 23 April 2014.