

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 OCTOBER 2019

1. PRESENT

Stephen Brown, Chris Pett, Jo Maher and Helen Wright

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Craig Gosling (Head of Quality) and Vicki Locke (Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality)

Attendance 80%

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Having been duly nominated, Helen Wright was appointed as Chair of the Committee for the 2019-20 academic year.

Helen Wright in the Chair

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Having been duly nominated. Chris Pett was appointed as Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2019-20 academic year.

4. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed the contents of the committee's action log.

5. MINUTES

Members reviewed and approved the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 5 June 2019.

It was noted that staff governor elections were underway and the student governors would also be appointed shortly.

Helen Wright raised a query about Hair and Beauty quality improvement. Vicki Locke advised that study programmes have remained an issue for Hair and Beauty and explained steps being taken to increase monitoring and support. She is confident that the management of the area knows what is required to create improvement but this had not come through in 2018-19. Hair and Beauty numbers were noted to be good and increasing in Spalding where a new theory room had been created for their use.

Chris Pett enquired about staffing in Engineering and the committee was advised that one of the new staff members had had to leave due to health issues but the other two were doing well. Interviews are being held to fill the vacancy.

Helen Wright asked about T-Levels and it was confirmed that the College was still better not participating in the pilot.

6. A-LEVEL AND GCSE RESULTS

The committee received a report from the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality.

Vicki Locke drew members' attention to the key strengths in the results and the issues and areas for improvement. She advised that the College was most proud of the significant improvement in progression to HE. In AS Levels there is a focus on what subjects students are taking, particularly International learners where Craig Gosling is working closely with the residential team and tracking International performance. It was agreed that information about the outcomes of residential learners in 18/19 should be circulated with the minutes. An issue affecting performance is that students often come for just a one year cultural experience with the majority going back after AS levels. Chris Pett asked why the under-performance had not been picked up earlier and the committee was advised that the tracking of predicted grades had been over generous due to lack of experience in the teaching team, some parts of this has now been resolved.

Stephen Brown asked about A2 higher grades going down and Vicki Locke advised the committee that this was in line with the national trend. An issue is that universities are giving students unconditional offers. Jo Maher advised that a consultation about post-qualification offers is to take place. Stephen Brown expressed concern about high grades moving forwards. Jo Maher reminded the committee that the College was second out of 62 on providers for L3 academic progress.

For GCSEs the main issue remains low high grade rates in maths for 16-18 year olds. It was noted that a change to condition of funding rules was likely to affect this with a lot of learners in 2019-20 going onto functional skills rather than GCSE. Helen Wright queried the kudos of functional skills qualifications as opposed to GCSEs, Jo advised that the suitability of qualifications was talked through with learners and that the move to functional skills should lead to better higher level GCSE maths results although functional skills maths may affect overall College results. Vicki Locke explained the approach to streaming of qualifications and the significant increase in the number of learners taking functional skills. Jo advised the committee that national feedback on functional skills shows that it is quite a high standard and is the right thing for this group of learners. Additionally this move also supports the thinking behind the new inspection framework.

7. QUALITY AND STANDARDS KPIs 2018-19 UPDATE

Members received a report from Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality.

Vicki Locke took the committee through the detail of the KPIs and particularly noteworthy elements.

A key issue was noted to be the increasing difficulty in delivering 315 hours of work placement activities for learners. It is currently going well but it is challenging to increase the numbers with this being more difficult in rural areas than in cities. Jo Maher advised that the College has been contributing to the national debate about concerns on work placement and that this affirms why the College is not doing T-Levels at this point. The time committed to work placements can lead to pressure on the main qualifications. This issue is on the college's risk register and being discussed with the Finance and Resources committee. Chris Pett advised that he had received requests for work experience from learners and suggested that employers would find it helpful to have a more standardised explanation directly from the College. It was agreed that Vicki Locke would follow this up. Stephen Brown commented that the College is doing a good job on work placements.

Vicki Locke looked through the year end KPIs which generally showed pleasing performance. It was noted that Apprenticeship performance would definitely exceed last year. Jo Maher commented on Partnership performance and advised the committee that trading conditions were challenging for partners with a number of providers leaving the market.

It was noted that the College was particularly pleased with 19+ achievement rate improvements. Craig Gosling explained how the tracking for adult learners was being rolled

out after last years' trial. Helen Wright asked if there was a positive move to get more adults into college and it was confirmed that there was. This year there would be a Festival of Learning and the introduction of distance learning which would be available fully on-line, paper based or blended delivery. Stephen Brown commented that this was a useful extra stream of provision and suggested that distance learning offered a very successful route. Vicki Locke advised the committee that a visit would be taking place to Grimsby Institute which would include looking at their distance learning offer.

Chris Pett asked whether Higher Education enrolments were a concern and it was confirmed that they were not with over 200 enrolments already this year.

8. COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS 2018-19

Members received a report from the Quality Improvement Manager which was presented by the Head of Quality.

The committee noted that there had been less complaints than in the previous year and Craig Gosling confirmed that these were isolated incidents with no pattern to them. Jo Maher advised that the College keeps a detailed log of complaints and that none of the complaints had been taken external to the College. Vicki Locke advised that any themes which were identified were tracked at PMRs and in Self-Assessment at programme area level.

The committee noted that it would be helpful to include a little more detail on the compliments received. Chris Pett commented that the increasing numbers moving on to HE must demonstrate increasing aspiration and Helen Wright queried how many of these were internal progression. Information on this was provided.

9. TEACHING LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Craig Gosling provided a verbal report to the committee on Teaching Learning and Assessment. He advised that curriculum walks had been introduced looking at six themes and that these would be repeated twice each half term. They had been received well and the biggest strength identified to date was behaviour and attitude in lessons. The purpose of the walks was to identify where to target support.

He advised that on QMRs there was a separate window now for Higher Education as well as for Apprenticeships. There are also Health and Safety walks and the Quality team is working with HR to improve IPRs and staff training/development. Use is being made of an increasing number of focus groups with learners being selected rather than nominated.

Craig advised that Smart Assessor was being rolled out for Apprenticeships and assessors were building resources within the system. Helen Wright asked whether there would be a demonstration of Smart Assessor and it was agreed that the committee would receive such a presentation. Jo Maher explained how much of an improvement using Smart Assessor is for the team. ●

Chris Pett commented that it was encouraging to see Quality focussing on the basics such as punctuality. It was agreed that a Teaching and Learning update would be provided at each meeting in the future. ●

10. RISKS AND REPORTABLE EVENTS

Vicki Locke advised the committee that risk areas were identified as Hair and Beauty performance, potential effects of the swap to functional skills on overall performance, high quality adult growth and the establishment of the new Engineering team.

Helen Wright asked about when learners would be moving into EMAT and it was confirmed that this would be after half term immediately after completion of the building. Jo Maher advised that the College was discussing options for the public launch of EMAT.

11. EIF UPDATE

Vicki Locke gave a presentation on EIF. The committee noted that this needed more Corporation focus and it was agreed that there should be a presentation to all members of the Corporation on this issue. ●

It was noted that a key change was the move from differentiation and the new focus of inspection. A discussion took place about the changes. Stephen Brown commented that one challenge would be to get learners to express what they are learning. It was agreed that the presentation should be circulated with the minutes. ●

13. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Members received a report from the Clerk to the Corporation on committee performance against targets. Members noted the performance against the 2018-19 targets and agreed to recommend to the Corporation that targets for 2019-20 should be:

- Maintain an attendance of 75% or higher
- Oversight of planning and readiness for the new Education Inspection Framework
- Monitoring performance of International and Residential learners
- Oversight of Industry Placements to inform T-Level readiness.

14. STEPHEN BROWN

Members of the committee noted that it was Stephen's last meeting and thanked him for his work as a member of the Corporation and of the committee.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Helen Wright asked about the inclusion of environmental studies in the College's curriculum. This was noted to be an increasing feature in educational establishments. A concern about future strikes was noted.

16. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 4 December 2019.