

BOSTON COLLEGE**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2020**

1. PRESENT

Helen Wright (Chair), Ruth Catlett, Jo Maher and Chris Pett.

Apologies were received from Helen Mather and Mollie Plummer.

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

Attendance 66%

2. ACTION LOG

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

It was noted that links and learning walks had been confirmed and Standards members would be asked to confirm dates when they would be available for these. Chris Pett commented that the presentation on the EIF to members of the Corporation had gone well and raised awareness of curriculum oversight.

3. MINUTES

Members reviewed and approved the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 4 December 2019.

Helen Wright asked about progress on the setting of increased fees for Higher Education. The Committee was advised that the College was still waiting to hear back on this. At the present time fees had to be advertised at the planned higher level with 'pending approval' indicated.

4. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2019/20

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

Vicki Locke advised the committee that lots of action was already underway in terms of delivering the plan.

Chris Pett asked about an issue with Animal Studies Level 2. Vicki advised that there had been some loss of Level 2 learners and the progression from Level 1 to Level 2 was being reviewed to see what needs to be done to improve it. It is pleasing to note that Hair and Beauty is performing better and is really positive. Retention has improved and the staff team is better. Helen Wright asked about in-year destination tracking and Vicki explained the work being done on this. This is a focus of the new EIF. Helen also asked about whether schools would share attendance information, Vicki confirmed that some are prepared to do this, and where this is available it is used in VITAL.

Case studies are being produced to show how learners develop over time. Jo Maher commented on the use of VITAL and how it supports the College's ability to tell a story of learner development. Jo explained that the College had a focus on attendance. Ruth Catlett told the committee how she is able to track this on VITAL and about the impact on learners of incentivising attendance.

Chris Pett asked how Vicki Locke's inspection experience on study programmes had gone. Vicki explained that she was feeding back useful information to Managers. The College is generally doing the right things and the main issue is to ensure that Managers articulate the curriculum well. Guidelines on curriculum articulation within observations are being shared as well. Chris asked how the College would get staff to buy in to EIF preparations. Vicki explained that the College was trying to get a measure of staff confidence. The February staff development will include follow-up on EIF planning and Managers are being encouraged to share best practice. Members asked if the College was confident that initiatives are cascading down and it was confirmed that this was the case. Vicki outlined the plans which were in place for inspection preparation and Jo Maher stressed the need to keep aware of Ofsted views.

5. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2019/20

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

Vicki Locke advised the committee that the College was starting to see impact from lesson visits into high or improved attendance learner groups. Competition on attendance is being encouraged but there is a need to focus on Adult learner attendance and how technology might help with this. Retention is holding up well.

Chris Pett asked if there were any issues arising from Brexit. Jo Maher explained that there appeared to be certainty for this September but there may be issues the following year. The natural growth in population should offset any shift in EU numbers.

Helen Wright asked about Higher Education enrolments. Vicki explained that there was a clear plan on progression for level 3 learners and a number of marketing activities including marketing to the schools. Modest growth is planned for 2020/21. Validations through the University of Derby are proving to be more accommodating than the previous arrangements and this relationship is strong with the capacity to grow. HE Animal Science will also be new for the next academic year.

6. HIGHER EDUCATION PERFORMANCE 2019/20

Members received a report from the Head of Quality on the outcomes of the HE survey.

The committee was advised that the questions mirror the NSS survey which comes out later in the year. There were 12 improved responses but overall satisfaction has dropped by 6%. There are issues in Computing which are being pursued and there is also work being done through some focus groups. Focus group meetings have identified an issue with the business group's planned move to Spalding. Heads of Curriculum and Programme Managers have reviewed the feedback and actions to address issues are being taken before the NSS survey.

Chris Pett asked whether there were areas of concern within this data. Vicki Locke commented that the options to answer 'neither agree nor disagree' to the question mimics the NSS survey but is unhelpful and is going to be discontinued. Vicki advised that she is happy with the follow up which has been taken.

Helen Wright asked about differing results in Visual Arts and Media. Vicki advised that an issue with this group had been that the start of the year had not been affected because the new studio had not been ready from the outset. Helen also queried student union involvement and it was confirmed that the union, although small, could do more to support these learners.

Vicki Locke advised that there were too many questions overall and, in response to a query about how influential the NSS survey is, confirmed that the Office for Students gives significant regard to it.

7. **TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATE**

Members received a report from the Head of Quality.

Craig Gosling advised the committee that observations are continuing and that best practice in study programmes is now at 11%. Feedback goes through to the staff and Programme Managers find it useful to have this prior to PMRs. Ruth Catlett advised the committee how this works in her experience and how she felt that it encouraged staff to talk to and engage with the Quality team. Jo Maher confirmed that a good culture is needed to ensure that staff are comfortable with people going into their lessons. Ruth advised that the visits are beneficial in her opinion because it gets staff and learners used to other people being in the room.

It was confirmed that smart assessor would be demonstrated to the committee at the next meeting.

Chris Pett asked if areas where no measures were required was a negative but it was confirmed that these were areas which just need to move on to best practice. Vicki Locke confirmed that by default this is mainly a positive outcome. Helen Wright asked whether this information can be shared with inspectors. Vicki confirmed that it was not required because individual sessions are no longer graded, however as a College it is important to know where the best practice is.

Ruth Catlett expressed a view that the new system is an improvement and it was confirmed that the data presented included observations of all types. It was agreed that the committee should continue to focus on this.

8. **RISKS AND REPORTABLE EVENTS**

Vicki Locke advised the committee that no new risks had been identified. The Office for Students have been advised of the Horncastle opening and the planned change of Accountable Officer.

9. **OfS REGULATIONS AND COMPLIANCE**

The committee noted that OfS want to be assured that the College is competent in what it is doing so that it gets the full picture of providers. The plan to ensure compliance will be brought back to the next meeting of the committee before submission to the main Corporation meeting in May.

10. **CHANGE OF PRINCIPAL**

Chris Pett asked whether the change of Principal would change any of the monitoring arrangements. Ofsted will be aware of the change but it should not affect inspection plans on its own. The new strategic plan will be moved forward and developed with the new Principal.

11. **NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meetings of the committee would take place on 29 April and 10 June 2020.