

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 DECEMBER 2019

1. PRESENT

Helen Wright (Chair), Jo Maher (from item 4), Helen Mather and Chris Pett.

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

Attendance 100%

2. ACTION LOG

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

3. MINUTES

Members reviewed and approved the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 2 October 2019.

Chris Pett noted that information on industry placements had been provided. Helen Wight queried whether the visit to Grimsby Institute had taken place and it was confirmed that it had. Chris asked whether these were reciprocal visits. The committee was advised that the college has reciprocal arrangements with Grimsby, Grantham and Stamford and that a representative from Grimsby had attended the SAR validation last year.

Helen Wright asked if an appointment had been made in engineering and it was confirmed that a one year post had been introduced for HE delivery.

4. SAR 2018/19

The committee received SAR documents from the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality.

Vicki Locke reminded members that the SAR leads into the Quality Improvement Plan. The SAR presented is the last produced under the old framework and is not being externally validated this time. The college is confident of the grades and is comfortable to recommend them to the committee. Vicki advised that the positive elements are increasing year-on-year and she believes that the college is on the cusp of 'Outstanding'. It was noted that the successful 'Outstanding' inspection of residential accommodation had looked at many elements of provision which were applicable to all learners.

The committee reviewed that SAR information presented and noted that the first section would be passed on to the Corporation. Chris Pett noted that the document was comprehensive and readable and asked if the move to the new framework will be good for the college. Vicki confirmed that the new framework focussed more on strengths of the college such as learner progress. Helen Mather commented that conversations with learners during the most recent inspection had supported to the positive outcome. In response to a query from Helen Wright, Craig Gosling explained that the inspection had looked at learner voice and at data on VITAL which had been separated out and so was easier to use. VITAL is being actively used by learners and Ruth Catlett gave an example of her learners using it to forecast their grades.

Helen Wright asked about areas for further development. Vicki advised that the destinations of learners when they leave college is an area of focus and reminded the committee that quality of education is a determining grade.

The committee discussed questions and themes to be pursued as critical background work before the next inspection. Helen Wright asked about the quality of careers guidance and Vicki Locke confirmed that it is very good. It has been strengthened for apprenticeships and the college is well on with Gatsby benchmarks. The college now has access into most schools. Ruth Catlett advised that her learners record against the Gatsby benchmarks in VITAL. The committee agreed that awards should be mentioned in the SAR. Chris Pett asked if the college has enough parental engagement and Vicki advised that this was being strengthened with enhanced reporting.

Jo Maher joined the meeting at this point

In discussing areas for improvement, Helen Wight queried whether there had been an improvement in Hair and Beauty. Vicki Locke confirmed that it is doing better with improved attendance, a more settled team and additional monitoring. Uniformed Public Services is also more settled now although Jo Maher advised that investment in resources for training and exercise was required. Visual Arts and Media was noted to be strong but Animal Care has an issue with level 2 direct entry. There are some issues with level 2 study programmes and with level 1 adult provision regarding speakers of other languages. The college is addressing the issues and being more stringent over admission levels.

The committee noted that the QIP will be presented at the next meeting and will include Higher Education.

Jo Maher advised members that some colleges had now been inspected under the new framework so feedback was now available. The college's likely inspection timing was discussed together with a plan to bring in external advisers with experience of inspection under the new framework to help with the preparations. The college needs to focus on consistency and staff engagement and target a grade 1 SAR next time. It was noted that the change of Principal will give rise to a risk flag for inspection. Helen Wright asked about limiting grades which were noted to be quality of education and safeguarding.

The committee approved the grades and content of the SAR.

5. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2019/20

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

Vicki Locke took the committee through the detail of proposed KPIs and particularly noteworthy elements, but cautioned that this was a very early view of performance.

Vicki advised that learner progress is looking positive and there is a focus on attendance. She suggested that monitoring of learners needing support in English and maths could be improved. Jo Maher told members that the data needed to be monitored with inspection in mind. It was noted that there had been a 40% improvement in early retention and learner numbers are on target. The college is aiming to increase numbers further by February. Local demographics are now at their lowest point regionally and applications are up compared with last year.

Vicki identified targeted growth areas for apprenticeships and Helen Wright asked if there would be higher level apprenticeships through the EMAT centre. Jo Maher advised that the college may express an interest in T-levels in engineering.

Helen Mather pointed out that the percentage of observations demonstrating best practice was lower than last year. Craig Gosling suggested that this might be due to the transition to

the new inspection framework. Vicki agreed that this should be reviewed again in six months' time.

Helen Wright asked when HE progression would be confirmed and the committee was advised that this was imminent.

The proposed KPIs were approved.

6. LEARNER SURVEY - START OF YEAR

Members received a report from the Head of Quality.

Craig Gosling advised that the survey outcomes were positive overall. Some concerns, such as knowledge of course representatives, were felt to reflect the stage of the year at which the survey had been completed and had now been resolved. Others could be a result of learners not fully understanding the terminology used in the survey. It was agreed that concerns need to be addressed as quickly as possible. The committee noted that careers advice needed to be addressed with learners from the outset.

Kate Folling asked if completion of the survey was compulsory and it was confirmed that it was strongly encouraged and facilitated but not compulsory.

7. HIGHER EDUCATION PERFORMANCE

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

Vicki Locke took the committee through the key points in the report and explained how key issues are captured. Jo Maher advised that the college had submitted to raise its HE fee levels to facilitate further investment, since the college needs to focus on driving up satisfaction and addressing gaps in quality.

Helen Wright asked if it would possible to improve the TEF Bronze rating but it was confirmed that this lasts for four years.

The committee noted that formal sign off of the report was no longer required.

8. TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATE

Craig Gosling provided a verbal report to the committee on Teaching Learning and Assessment.

Craig advised that curriculum walks had been repeated and were still overall positive. There had been some variations identified which had been fed back and addressed quickly. These walks will continue throughout the year and walks for the committee members need to be scheduled.

Craig told the committee that two QMRs had been completed, again overall positive with support in place where required.

A discussion took place about how information on learning was shared with the committee. Craig suggested example statistics could be provided and some learner work could be shown.

Craig advised that Smart Assessor was still working well and also outlined work on long term memory planned for next term.

9. RISKS AND REPORTABLE EVENTS

Vicki Locke advised the committee that risk areas were identified as:

- ESOL adult learner numbers which appeared to have been affected by the political uncertainty
- Hair and Beauty performance
- Potential impact on achievement rates of reduced sub-contractor work
- OfS

It is anticipated that the new digital offer may offset reduced adult numbers. Helen Wight asked how the adult offer was being communicated and it was confirmed that a targeted marketing campaign is underway.

10. OfS REGULATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

Vicki Locke advised that she had attended an OfS briefing and that OfS was taking a risk-based approach was monitoring. Boston College is currently regarded as being low risk. A change in risk level could be triggered by factors such as reduced student outcomes or altered financial health status. Jo Maher told members that it was critically important that OfS maintained use of ESFA financial standards for monitoring purposes.

Helen Wright asked what the Standards committee has to do to monitor OfS compliance. Jo Maher shared a check timetable which shows where the college is currently and which will be shared with the Corporation. Members were asked to review this and make any comments when the timetable is presented to the Corporation.

11. RESIDENTIAL INSPECTION

Helen Wright asked how the college was making use of the Outstanding inspection outcome in its marketing. Jo Maher advised that it is being used primarily in international marketing.

12. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 22 January 2020.