

BOSTON COLLEGE**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2021**

1. PRESENT

Daran Bland (Chair), Ruth Catlett, Kate Folling, Claire Foster and Helen Rumbold.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Cary Edwards (for the presentation only), Craig Gosling (Assistant Principal: Performance & Quality), Vicki Locke (Deputy Principal) and Andy Readman (for the presentation only).

Attendance 100%

2. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed the committee's action log.

3. ONLINE LEARNING PRESENTATION

Members received a presentation from Cary Edwards and Andy Readman which was introduced by Craig Gosling.

Cary Edwards presented a document on online learning which will be circulated to members of the committee. He talked about approaches to Teaching and Learning and about how learning was monitored and checked. He noted that content took longer to deliver in on-line learning. Different formats had been tried and he ran through the techniques and challenges of this new model. He noted that a mixed model of home and in-College delivery could be problematic. Daran Bland asked about the equity of provision for learners. Cary advised that recording sessions helped and that devices had gone out to learners quickly. There were other issues such as wi-fi connectivity which was helped by capturing the learning so that the learners can review it. It was also important to identify learners who had problems. Daran asked whether theoretical learning was more straightforward than practical and Cary identified that some practical areas had front-loaded the practical elements of their courses.

Daran asked what the College does for students where engagement is problematic and Cary explained the tracking arrangements and follow up through tutors. Some learners have come into College to do online sessions which was helpful. Kate Folling commented that she had found this very insightful and was impressed by the consideration given to the issues.

Cary advised that there are some uncontrollable variables in this type of delivery and it was sensible for teachers not to try too much with too many variables at once because that increased the risk. There is also a need to have back up plans. Staff have had to accept the limits of what they are able to control. Daran asked what feedback from learners had been like and what had been done in response of their feedback. Cary advised that learners were asked for feedback but also that if interaction was high it was a good indication of the quality of the session.

Andy Readman explained to the committee approaches being taken to the missing elements of practical work for learners where staff teach with their hands and showing learners the required skills. There is a need to share the enjoyment of practical work and this has been done through live and recorded demonstrations. The best way to keep learners engaged has been found to be delivery online with a variety of content, regular breaks and break out tasks. The use of live PowerPoints can offer the learners opportunity to communicate with each other and quizzes can be used to check knowledge at the start and finish of sessions. A professional approach is adopted as it would in practical sessions in College. There has been a challenge of creating learning environments with demonstrations at home. Lots of

learners have shared pictures of what they have been doing at home and staff teams have been sharing best practice with the methods used. One lesson learned has been that it is not possible to deliver as much as usual in the time. Lecturers have had to find out what they are comfortable with to support learners and to give learners tasks and activities which were engaging.

Daran asked how this was affecting the staffs work/life balance and Andy suggested that this depended on what the staff member wanted to put into their sessions but this process was building a great bank of resources for future use. Staff are coping really well and those with less-advanced IT skills are doing their best but he noted that not everyone has the equipment or facilities for delivering practical sessions from home. The lecturers' primary interest is in the wellbeing of the learners. Daran asked if the College is providing the necessary equipment and Andy advised that he has the tools to do the job from home and staff should ask for resources if they need them. Some people have also been going into College to use the resources there.

Cary advised that on-line delivery has been well supported but sometimes the problem is knowing what you need and staff have had to educate themselves and each other. Andy stressed the importance of carrying on this type of learning to maintain learner skills.

Cary Edwards and Andy Readman left the meeting

4. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 25 November 2020 were reviewed and approved.

5. **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020-21**

Members received a report from the Deputy Principal on Key Performance Indicators.

The report identified key points which included learner applications continuing to increase and concern about attendance in English and maths which was still too low for full-time and adult learners. Managers are supporting learners in this and seeing some increase. Adult learners who are non-native speakers have a particular challenge. Daran Bland asked whether English and maths low attendance related to vulnerable learners. Vicki Locke explained that English and maths is a key focus and that part of the issue is on-line delivery to these learners. There is some co-delivery for vocational staff and additional attendance monitoring to support it. Daran asked whether it was affected by the offer and Vicki explained that it was part of the condition of funding so learners were obliged to take English and maths if they did not hold required entry qualifications. The College anticipated some difference in attendance to the main course but the gap is too high. Daran asked for the next report to identify actions to be taken on this and what impact they were having.

Looking at the KPIs, Daran asked how the College measured learners on track to achieve. Vicki explained that this related to the qualification and the purpose of the tracking data is to identify gaps so that action can be taken about them. Daran asked whether adult learners were harder to keep on track and Vicki agreed that they were at the moment. Staff are able to identify whether learners' issues are attendance or standard of work so that appropriate action can be taken.

In response to a query from Daran, Vicki explained the range of support offered to learners by Learner Services and the curriculum articulation which reflected Ofsted requirements.

Daran asked about best practice in observations, Craig Gosling explained that with the change to online learning the College needed to be able to identify best practice. Daran commented that the presentation had demonstrated the passion and commitment of staff. Craig advised that some work is being done on standardisation of online observations.

6. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2020-21

Members received a report from the Deputy Principal on the Quality Improvement Plan.

Vicki Locke explained that she was happy with the progress being made on the plan and the focus is on keeping the momentum. Some of the work identified will continue beyond the end of the academic year.

Kate Folling asked about improvements identified in the plan and whether the College was able to quantify these and make the targets smarter. It was agreed that the next report would give a sense of the current position, links between the QIP and KPIs and add additional information into the headers for each section. Daran Bland suggested that it would be helpful to see the starting points and what success would look like so that there was specificity in the outcomes. He also asked if the committee could see the Golden thread document and Vicki Locke offered to send some examples at curriculum level to the committee.

Kate asked what mechanisms were in place to get employer feedback and demonstrate its impact. Vicki explained the range of interaction which included some hard data collection and some feedback. This was shared with curriculum teams and considered in curriculum planning. The impact would be demonstrated through articulation by learners and employers.

Daran asked what carbon literacy meant in practice as a target and how it would be demonstrated. Vicki explained that all learners were engaged in the green agenda and know how it links to their sector. Daran asked how progress would be measured and what good would look like. Vicki explained that there is a plan of actions. Claire Foster suggested that the next iteration could include information on what success would 'look like'. Kate suggested that it would be helpful to see how this fitted in with the overall College strategy and it was agreed that clearer links with the strategic leadership plan would be helpful. Claire Foster advised that information would be coming to the next Corporation meeting regarding College commitment to tackling climate change.

Kate asked about wellbeing champions identified in the plan. Vicki advised that this was driven by the People directorate with a wellbeing strategy and staff representation. Claire advised that the Staff Council had this as a main topic and that Jen Durrant, Interim Executive Director: People, is getting to grips with this although Covid complicates it. The feedback from the Staff Council will be useful. Helen Rumbold advised that she had had a couple of good meetings with Jen Durrant and that what was being looked at was development of a strategy which staff have influenced and could engage with. Kate expressed interest in how the end point could be identified and how governors can help to get to Outstanding in this area when it may not be fully defined. Daran suggested that the end point should be defined including what success looks like. Claire agreed to review this through the Leadership Team and to ensure that it doesn't overlap with the strategic plan. Vicki Locke agreed that better cross referencing would be helpful where this was feasible.

7. HE SURVEY

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Performance and Quality on the HE Survey.

Craig Gosling identified that feedback from HE learners had been positive. The challenge is getting the response rate up when learners have to complete the survey in their own time in a less controlled environment than in previous years. The survey was noted to monitor the NSS survey. Craig explained the structure of the survey and the follow up arrangements. Daran Bland commented it was pleasing to hear the positive feedback and identified a need to get under the skin of things that are not going as well. Craig suggested that the committee might find receiving all of the comments useful. Craig to share with the committee.

It was noted that there is a focus on accessible online learning and work is being done to improve this aspect. Kate Folling asked how the College would know what the size of the IT issue identified is and Craig advised the committee that it was primarily an issue in Spalding and the College was listening to learners and doing what it could to assist with some external issues.

Daran asked what is the College's greatest concern in Higher Education and Craig advised that it is the achievement gap for those with specific needs and focus groups are being used to address this. The overall learner experience was positive and there is a focus on progression through the courses and beyond as well as keeping standards high and offering value for money.

Kate asked about the timing of the survey and whether what had been learned could have an impact on the NSS survey. Craig Gosling advised that the College has a track record with in-house survey outcomes of taking actions which affect the NSS survey.

Daran Bland asked about some concerns where learners disagreed that their course is well organised and running smoothly. Craig Gosling advised that this is the focus of the HE lead who is generally confident about this. Daran asked how the College was addressing lower performance and how the Board can be assured that areas needing attention are identified and followed up. Craig explained how this was followed up at programme and Assistant Principal levels and through the QMR process. Claire Foster suggested that follow up was needed to demonstrate actions taken and their impact. Helen Rumbold felt that this would demonstrate to learners that their input is valued. Craig to share 'You said, we did' evidence.

8. TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATE

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Performance and Quality on Teaching and Learning.

The committee's attention was drawn to the new QMR process, training to develop confidence with online teaching and learning and an update on the digital skills project.

Craig Gosling advised that the new QMR process is less focused on in-window observations but rather reviewing engagement in ongoing observations. The observations now being undertaken allow more opportunity to talk to staff and learners using themed focus groups such as progress towards achievement and English and maths. Additional themes being pursued through QMR were specific to programme areas. There is developing use of Microsoft Forms to get more feedback and also reviewing learners' work.

The College Collaboration Fund project on digital skills was noted to be making good progress. In response to a question from Daran Bland it was confirmed that this was externally funded and was led by Lincoln College. Colleges are learning a lot from each other in this project. In response to a query from Kate Folling about an example of this, Craig explained the digital hub development and it was agreed that an example of this work should be brought to a future meeting. Kate asked about improvement of communication using digital skills and Craig explained that the use of pre-recorded work aids consistency and is supportive to staff and learners.

Daran asked about lesson observations and what constituted an observation. Craig explained that this was 'dropping in' for an extended period rather than a brief visit. Daran suggested that improvement involves a lot of trust and a holistic approach with ongoing conversations. Craig advised that staff would try to play safe in their lessons in more limited observations but the ongoing process makes it easier for them to take a risk and to develop it. Daran asked about impact measurement and it was confirmed that impact was measured through KPIs.

Daran asked if the observations with a 'no measure' outcome meant that the College was comfortable with them, Craig Gosling advised that it did and it was noted that there was a

wide range in this category with a suggestion that the range should be reviewed to identify a need to follow up. Craig Gosling advised that there are elements within this which are tracked to help identify training needs. Daran asked how the Standards Committee could identify the impact of what was being done and Craig suggested that this could be reported on in future. The College could also look at how other colleges are approaching these issues.

Ruth Catlett advised that staff see this as a positive process which is supportive and has an impact on working lives. The emphasis has shifted to become more reciprocal and feels positive and supportive and she feels that it is having real impact.

Claire Foster left the meeting at this point

9. RISKS AND REPORTABLE EVENTS

Vicki Locke advised the committee that the OfS has updated its reportable events guide and this would be circulated to the committee with the minutes. There has been a reduction in the reporting requirements.

10. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would be held on 29 April 2021.