

BOSTON COLLEGE**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2023**

1. PRESENT

Daran Bland (Chair), Claire Foster, Kimberley Jones, Helen Rumbold and Nick Worth.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation) and Tom Hughes (Assistant Principal: Quality, Performance & Standards).

Wendy Poole (Director of Learning: Adults & Apprenticeships) and Adam Wardell (Director of Learning: Health & Care Industries) attended for item 2 only

Attendance 63%

2. PRESENTATION – CHALLENGE 90

Wendy Poole and Adam Wardell gave a presentation on Challenge 90 including information on attendance, retention, and the learner voice.

The committee noted that last year's attendance level was 86% and Daran Bland asked how this compared with other providers. It was reported that 80-85% was the norm with 90% being outstanding. It was noted that retention was also positive last year.

In response to a query about why apprentices dropped out of their courses, Wendy Poole advised that there was a variety of reasons including earnings, change of direction and some apprentices losing their jobs. The national average for apprenticeship achievement is 53%.

Nick Worth asked how relevant English and maths is made for learners. The committee was advised that tutors do try to do this and that next year, provision will be grouped by directorate to allow it to be more aligned. Claire Foster commented that GCSE requirements limit how relevant it can be since there are core elements that have to be covered in readiness for the exam. AW commented that English and maths is also embedded in vocational areas. Daran asked if there was an alternative to GCSE and Wendy advised that functional skills are used for apprentice learners although Claire noted that there continues to be debate on the direction of English and maths qualifications in the future. Positive progress is being tracked as well as exam achievements. Helen Rumbold asked if employers were giving the required support and Wendy confirmed that the majority were.

A positive picture on learner satisfaction was reported as were good response rates to surveys. Tom Hughes reported that a robust approach was being taken to the 42-day window.

3. ACTION LOG

Members reviewed the committee's action log.

Claire advised of the need to move from VITAL to a more holistic system. Tom Hughes said that making this shift would reduce the administrative burden. Tom also said that updated reporting systems had been implemented in teaching, learning and assessment and these continued to be refined.

A report on English and maths will be brought to the next meeting. ●

Requests from the Audit committee for the Standards committee to review some issues were noted and it was agreed that reports would be brought to the next meeting. ●

End of year KPIs were noted. Claire advised of the importance of establishing a baseline of learners being ready to learn. Tom reported that models of attendance, particularly for adult learners, were being reviewed to ensure that learners are not missing out. The intention is to provide multiple ways to access learning.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 27 September 2023 were reviewed and approved.

5. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2023-24

Members received a report from the Deputy Principal.

Members discussed approaches to closing performance gaps for learners with learning difficulties and Claire Foster suggested that this was a topic the committee would need to return to. Tom Hughes noted that there were particular issues for adult learners. Claire identified a need to ensure that learners better appreciated the financial and other commitments they were taking on when they started courses and this tied in with an increase in fee debt noted by the Finance and Resources committee.

Daran Bland advised that feedback from high needs learners was positive but it was more difficult for learning needs to be identified and addressed in other courses. Tom noted a requirement to be able to drill down on identified needs. The focus in the last round of staff development had been on the use of digital tools to support this. Helen Rumbold noted that adults could also have a lot of unidentified needs. Claire commented on an uplift in mental health and anxiety issues.

6. LEARNER VIEWS

Members received a report from Assistant Principal: Quality, Performance and Standards.

The committee was advised that there had been a very good response rate for surveys. It was noticeable that there was a correlation between poor data and areas with staffing issues. A further point which was noted was the challenging nature of the application process for SEND learners.

Daran Bland noted a dip in Health and Social Care performance and Kimberly Jones commented that there was some negative feedback due to staffing issues. Some learners are dissatisfied that issues are continuing and this relates to challenges in recruitment of staff which are exacerbated for this area by increasing demand in the National Health Service. The college is doing everything it can to recruit despite this challenging climate. In response to a query from Daran, Kimberly also gave feedback on the learner experience of completing surveys.

The committee commended the format of the report presented.

7. SELF ASSESSMENT 2022-23

Members received a report from the Deputy Principal.

The committee found the self-assessment report to be very useful and informative and agreed to recommend it to the Corporation for approval with a note to amend the title to 2022-23. ●

8. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Performance, Quality & Standards.

Tom told the committee that external support was being looked at for dealing with challenging behaviour. Claire reported that, although learner behaviour is generally good, there has been an increase in behaviour issues requiring intervention.

Claire commended Tom's work in leading the college's focus on improved teaching.

9. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 7 February 2024.