

BOSTON COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2024

1. **PRESENT**

Daran Bland, David Fannin, Claire Foster, Jurate Matulioniene, Nick Worth and Fiona Wrisberg.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Matt Smith (Deputy Principal) and Tom Hughes (Assistant Principal: Quality, Performance & Standards). Matthew Mackay-James (Quality & Learning Lead) and Alex Dean (Apprenticeship Operations Manager) attended for the presentation under item 3 only.

Attendance 86%

2. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

Having been duly nominated, Daran Bland was appointed as Chair of the committee for 2024-25.

3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

Having been duly nominated, David Fannin was appointed as Vice-Chair of the committee for 2024-25.

4. **PRESENTATION – APPRENTICESHIP AUDITS**

Matthew Mackay-James and Alex Dean gave a presentation on steps which had been taken to address issues raised in audit reports.

The committee noted arrangements which had been made for auditing activity and the planning for findings from these audits to be shared at termly best practise sessions. Fiona Wrisberg asked if termly meetings with coordinators were sufficient and it was confirmed that more could be set up if required. Daran Bland commented that it was clear that the infrastructure was changing but asked if there were challenges in engaging employers with the process. It was explained that there were more opportunities for engagement with employers but there could be particular challenges where employers were engaged in trades as this made fitting in meetings more challenging.

Jurate Matulioniene asked if there were language issues for overseas learners looking for apprenticeships. It was identified that residence eligibility could be an issue. Employers taking on apprentices with low language skills would work alongside them on this but the primary apprenticeship focus was on the English and maths qualifications rather than learning the language. It is possible that the levy might allow employers to fund language training. Daran asked if apprenticeships were able to deal with EDI issues and it was reported that the apprenticeship team has a functional skills lecturer to support English and maths. Tom Hughes advised that technology can assist with barriers for learners and that good examples of this had been seen in other colleges. David Fannin commented that the audit process looks robust and hopefully gets the balance right.

The committee was told that reporting on Smart Assessor was being reviewed and Daran suggested that the committee be given a reminder of what Smart Assessor does.

5. **ACTION LOG**

Members reviewed the committee's action log.

Claire Foster advised the committee that the college was engaging with consultants about VITAL but it may be too early to change over this year. It is hoped that this will be in place by next summer. It was noted that the balanced scorecard is still being developed and that high needs will be a focus throughout the year.

6. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 19 June 2024 were reviewed and approved.

7. **DATA REVIEW 2023-24**

Members received a report from the Deputy Principal.

Matt Smith highlighted key points in the report and advised that achievement was likely to finish in line with last year. Nick Worth noted that there was still an issue with poor learner attendance at English and maths which had declined from last year's level. The session length had been changed to address this but getting learners to attend 3 sessions is proving difficult and hard to fit in if learners are doing both English and maths.

Daran Bland asked if there were still significant staffing gaps affecting performance and it was confirmed that there were not. An issue affecting small animal care had been resolved. Construction has got off to a good start with better staffing than last year.

The committee noted that there had been controversy about English GCSE pass marks and a lot of students had been offered remarks. Nick asked how the college's performance compares with other colleges and it was noted that this is not an easy comparison because college demographics are very different. Matt noted that different colleges also took a different approach to data management. Claire Foster commented that the English results were disappointing for learners. Fiona Wrisberg advised that this was an issue which had affected schools as well. Daran asked about the impact of this and Matt told the committee that it affected the qualification levels learners can access and the size of the English and maths cohort.

Daran asked if there were any key concerns in the data. Tom Hughes advised that there was a lot of background to shifts in performance. It was noted that A level performance has been a huge success. Jurate Matulioniene asked if learners in underperforming areas received guidance and it was confirmed that they did. The new success coach role to support learners was noted.

8. **PROPOSED KPIs 2024-25**

The committee reviewed proposed KPI targets. Tom Hughes advised that he felt the targets were realistic and Matt Smith supported this and emphasised the importance of getting a balance between realism and aspiration. The proposals were accepted.

9. COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS SUMMARY 2023-24

Members received a report from the Head of Quality which was presented by the Assistant Principal: Quality, Performance & Standards.

The committee was advised that there had been some changes to procedures last year and the number of formal complaints had declined. Matt Smith commented that the number of complaints is exceptionally low. Daran Bland commented on the need to deal properly with issues and ensure that the process for making complaints is clear and accessible. Claire Foster said that the college welcomed complaints and concerns being raised as it helped ensure issues were addressed.

10. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Quality, Performance & Standards which included information on the approach being taken to teaching, learning and assessment.

Members were advised that carrying out observations before Christmas allows follow up later in the year and Tom Hughes explained the risk-based approach being taken to observations. Daran Bland commented on the value of triangulation of information. Tom told the committee that the process is intended to be supportive and steps are taken to address any anxiety.

Nick Worth asked whether there were any areas where the college struggled to recruit or retain staff. Matt Smith confirmed that specialist construction trades were affected. It was suggested that the business breakfast meetings might provide an opportunity to engage with these sectors. Daran commented that the strategies and policies outlined appeared to be very comprehensive.

11. RISKS AND/OR REPORTABLE EVENTS

Matt Smith advised that there was nothing to report. Claire Foster told the committee about some concerns regarding the higher education contract.

12. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Members received a report from the Clerk to the Corporation.

The committee noted performance against 2023-24 targets and agreed that targets to be proposed to the Corporation for 2024-25 should be:

- at least 80% attendance
- increased participation in the curriculum planning process
- maintain oversight of relevant balanced scorecard targets
- increased engagement with the teaching and learning process
- oversight of the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeship and High Needs programmes

13. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 20 November 2024.