
MINUTES OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD IN THE BOARDROOM, STRAND ROAD CAMPUS, ON MONDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2009 AT 4.30P.M.

PRESENT: Prof F Monds (Chair)
Miss E Cavanagh
Mr H Faulkner (ex-officio)
Mrs G McCafferty
Mr S Murphy (Director)
Mr A Rainey

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Kinnaird (Assistant Director, Client Services)
Mr C Morrison (Assistant Director, Curriculum)
Mr D McClelland (Secretary)

9.1 APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Dame Geraldine Keegan.

9.2 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2009

It was proposed by Miss Cavanagh seconded by Mrs McCafferty and agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.

9.3 MATTERS ARISING

8.6 Quality Documents. The Chair enquired about time-scale for returns. The Assistant Director (CS) replied that it was an annual exercise with completed documents due at the Committee's March meeting.

8.7 Marketing Strategy. In reply to a question the Assistant Director (CS) reported that the Unit now played a major role in the design and content of the College's web-site. He also reported that surveys had been agreed with the School of Business and would be carried out in local communities with a view to obtaining a more accurate assessment of target audiences.

9.4 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

The Chair mentioned issues of on-going business from the 08/09 year:

- China Development Proposal. The Assistant Director (C) indicated that a further report would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.
- Investors in People. The Director explained that present discussions with DEL concerning the quality route to be followed by colleges have limited the College's progress in developing IiP.

9.5 ILT STRATEGY 2009/12 AND FEEDBACK REPORT (Ref: papers EC9.5.1, EC9.5.2 & EC9.5.3)

The Assistant Director (CS) explained that the strategy was based on achieving 'embedded' status by 2011 for the 14 ILT areas defined in the Demonstrating Transformation framework.

He considered this to be a challenging target for the College. Progress towards it would be reported annually. The accompanying action plan focussed on the development of staff which he felt could be achieved without significant external support and at minimal cost. Members asked a number of questions for clarification. The Chair commented on the high quality of the document and on the positive comments made in the ETI inspection report of September 2009. It was suggested that the Strabane campus should play a leading role in achieving 'embedded' status. It was agreed to commend the strategy to the Governing Body.

9.6 QAA COLLEGE AND SECTOR REPORTS (Ref: Papers EC9.6.1 & EC9.6.2)

The Assistant Director (C) briefly outlined the role, methodology and work of the Quality Assurance Agency in its developmental review of higher education in further education colleges in Northern Ireland. He referred members to the conclusions contained in the College report pointing out that it contained no 'essential' actions. The accompanying plan was designed to meet the 'advisory' and 'desirable' actions identified in the report. Arising from the Sector report the Assistant Director (C) suggested that there may be a need for establishing an HE cross-college forum. The Director mentioned the present review of higher education in the province. The Chair suggested that it gave a unique opportunity for co-operation between the HE institutions in the North West. Members noted the reports.

9.7 ESSENTIAL SKILLS UPDATE (Ref: Papers EC9.7.1, EC9.7.2, EC9.7.3 & EC9.7.4)

The Chair referred to the initial ETI inspection in January 2009 and subsequent report on Priority Skills Provision at Level 2 together with the College's action plan which had been considered by the Committee at its meeting in March. He drew members' attention to the ETI report of a First Interim Follow-up Inspection carried out in September 2009 and the letter issued by the Quality and Performance Branch of DEL addressing matters raised in the report. The Director pointed out that the curriculum area which had previously caused concern is now making satisfactory progress but that the issue now being raised by DEL relates to Essential Skills which had received a 'satisfactory' grading in the initial inspection. Members noted the improvements which had been effected between the inspections and the issues requiring further development. It was agreed that the Director should draft a reply to the DEL letter highlighting the positive progress recorded in the report as well as addressing the issues of concern raised by DEL. Members requested the opportunity to comment on the draft. The Chair thanked members for a valuable discussion.

9.8 STRABANE UPDATE (Ref: Papers EC9.8)

The Chair commented on the encouraging growth in enrolment figures, full-time student numbers having quadrupled between 07/08 and 09/10. The Director paid tribute to the diligent work of the staff at Strabane. He indicated the need to secure appropriate additional temporary accommodation in the short term and that a proposal would be brought to the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. It was agreed that the proposal would have the support of the Education Committee. The GB Chair commented on the positive atmosphere he had experienced on his visit to the campus.

9.9 ENROLMENT UPDATE (Ref: Paper EC9.9)

The Director reported a significant increase in enrolment figures this year. Staff timetables had been reorganised and a re-adjusted budget would be presented to the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

9.10 HIGHER EDUCATION PROFILE (Ref: Paper EC9.10)

The Director referred members to the enrolment figures by school. He pointed out that part-time enrolments were disappointingly low, a reflection of the reluctance of employers to grant day release for higher education.

9.11 ACADEMIC BOARD (Ref: Papers EC9.11.1 & EC9.11.2)

In reply to a question on attendance at meetings, the Director said he was hopeful that it would improve. In connection with the Academic Standards Committee for HE, he agreed to present a quarterly report to the Committee. Members noted the minutes of the Board.

9.12 NW WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FORUM (Ref: Papers EC9.12.1 & EC9.12.2)

Members noted the minutes of the meetings held on 24 June 2009 and on 23 September 2009.

9.13 CORRESPONDENCE

None

9.14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Monitoring of Complaints. It was agreed that complaints concerning educational quality issues would be brought to the attention of the Committee.

Date of next meeting. It was agreed to meet on Monday 25 January 2010 at 4.00pm in Strand Road.

The meeting ended at 5.55pm.

Signed: _____ (Chair)

Date: _____