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**MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD IN THE BOARDROOM, STRAND ROAD CAMPUS, ON MONDAY 19 JANUARY 2009 AT 4.00P.M.**

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**PRESENT:** Prof F Monds (Chair)  
Miss E Cavanagh (from 4.15pm)  
Mr S Murphy (Director)  
Mrs G McCafferty  
Mr A Rainey

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr D Kinnaird (Assistant Director, Client Services)  
Mr C Morrison (Assistant Director, Curriculum)  
Mr J Mullen (Area Inspector, ETI)  
Mr D McClelland (Secretary)

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Following a request from the Director, the Chair invited Mr Mullen to be present at the meeting and extended a welcome to him.

**ACTION**

**7.1 APOLOGIES**

Apology was received from Dame Geraldine Keegan.

**7.2 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2008**

It was proposed by Mr Rainey seconded by Mr Murphy and agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.

Secretary –  
publish  
approved  
minutes

**7.3 MATTERS ARISING**

**Additional item: College Development Plan – part 2.** The Chair reported that this work had now been completed and forwarded to DEL. In reply to a question the Director indicated that a complete version of the whole Plan would be brought to the next meeting of the Governing Body.

**6.3 (5.3) (4.6) Key dates for CDP cycle.** The Director suggested that this matter could be dealt with under item 7.11. This was agreed.

**6.11 All-island skills study.** The Chair questioned the relevance of some aspects of the report due to changing economic circumstances. The Director agreed and suggested that such changes would be reflected when considering item 7.12 and also be incorporated within the CDP for 2009/10.

Director –  
CDP to next  
GB meeting

**7.4 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

The Chair

- thanked the Director for his concise summary paper on Funded Learning Units (FLUs)
- congratulated all concerned on a very well managed HE Graduation Ceremony

- commented on the balance of the agenda for the meeting reflecting the Committee's work in
  - attending to routine matters where oversight and monitoring were required and
  - giving consideration to matters of a strategic and developmental nature.

**ACTION****7.5 CHINA DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (Ref: Paper EC7.5)**

The Assistant Director (Curriculum), referring to the paper, summarised the development of the project to date. He highlighted a major problem in relation to Chinese students being granted visas to study in the UK. He mentioned that the British Council was keen that the College develop further work with China including staff exchanges. Members noted the report.

**7.6 ETI SURVEY REPORTS AND ACTION PLANS (Ref: Papers EC7.6.1 & EC7.6.2)**

The Director indicated that the 2 reports being considered arose from sector-wide surveys and that the associated action plans concentrated on issues identified by staff as being relevant to the College.

Construction survey – The Chair enquired about uptake from staff on the Lecturers into Industry Scheme. The Director replied that he was pro-active in encouraging staff, particularly those involved in more academic courses, to take advantage of opportunities but that the availability of placements varied between industries. A member asked if there was an equality issue in relation to item 2 of the action plan. The Director felt that staff were seeking to minimise any potential disadvantage to particular students.

Motor Vehicle – The Chair commented on the distribution of enrolment numbers across the sector. He also noted the good quality of work achieved. The Director mentioned the need for the L3 contract to return to the College which could result in a more efficient use of facilities.

Members noted the reports and action plans. The Assistant Director indicated that a review of the action plans would take place after 6 months.

**7.7 ANNUAL REVIEW OF HE COURSES (Ref: Papers EC7.7.1 & EC7.7.2)**

The Chair said that he was impressed by the frankness of comments contained in the report to the Academic Board. The Assistant Director (Curriculum) explained that, because of industrial action during the past 3 years, not all self-evaluation forms had been fully completed by course teams. In an effort to improve the situation

- course documentation is being revised
- examples of good practice are to be highlighted
- workshops on 'the reflective teacher' will be provided for staff.

The Assistant Director pointed out that, generally, external examiners' reports were favourable and felt that the report to the Academic Board reflected the quality of documentation returns rather than quality of teaching. He mentioned that a quality

assurance audit was due in May and that he hoped it would show an improved position.  
Members noted the contents of both reports.

**ACTION**

**7.8 QAA REVIEW OF HE IN FE (Ref: Paper EC7.8)**

The Chair and Director both expressed some concern over the time which would be required by staff to participate in the review. The Director said he considered classroom observation will form a valuable part of the review. The Chair suggested that a request be made for a report on classroom observation to be received by the College. Members endorsed the decision to form a sub-committee of the Academic Board to monitor and review HE provision and report to the Academic Board. Members noted the College response to the QAA consultation document.

**7.9 ACADEMIC BOARD (Ref: Papers EC7.9.1, EC7.9.2 & EC7.9.3)**

It was agreed to recommend to the Governing Body that the amended constitution for the Academic Board be approved subject to provision being made for wider student representation if possible as requested at the last Committee meeting.  
Members noted the agenda and minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2008.

Chair –  
recommendation to GB

**7.10 STUDENT RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT (Ref: Paper EC7.10)**

The Chair commented on the excellent information provided by the data. He noted that the performance analysis by school showed some very good outcomes but that there were also areas of concern. The Assistant Director (Client Services) explained that data provided at central level still requires Heads of School to examine their school’s statistics at course level in order to identify problem areas. He also pointed out the impact which students who fail to return for year 2 of a 2 year course has on the performance data for that school. In reply to a question the Director indicated that targets have been set by course teams and that it should be possible to benchmark across teams. He also mentioned that the directors of colleges were examining the possible development of a system of benchmarking across colleges. A member remarked on the benefits that target setting and benchmarking has had in the schools’ sector.  
Members noted the information provided in the paper.

**7.11 KEY STATEGIC THEMES (Ref: Paper EC7.11)**

The Chair reiterated the responsibility of the Committee to consider key strategic themes as well as having an ‘oversight’ role. He suggested a number of themes by way of example. These included Disengaged, Progression, Links with Business and Industry (SMEs), HE Profile, Economic context response, Strabane plan. He suggested that they be incorporated into the agenda of future Committee meetings. The Director indicated that he would prepare a paper on two themes, one for the meeting in March and the other for the meeting in May.

Secretary –  
pass list to  
Director

Director – to  
prepare  
papers for  
future EC  
meetings

**7.12 IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN (Ref: Paper EC7.12)**

As described in the paper, the Director outlined the responses which DEL is making to the current economic problems and the actions being taken by the College in the

north-west area. After receiving re-assurance from the Director that it would only have a minor impact on the college budget, it was proposed by Mr Rainey seconded by Mrs McCafferty and agreed to recommend to the Governing Body that the Executive be given approval to further reduce, or waive, course fees for unemployed individuals participating in accredited vocational courses. The Chair commented favourably on the engagement by the college with external bodies to address these problems.

**ACTION**

Chair –  
recommend-  
ation to next  
GB meeting

**7.13 HE GRADUATION CEREMONY REVIEW (Ref: Paper EC7.13)**

Members noted the intention of the College to further develop celebration of student success.

**7.14 NW WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FORUM (Ref: Paper EC7.14)**

Members noted the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2008.

**7.15 CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**7.16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Members noted the publication of the College's prospectus on full-time courses for 2009/2010.

**Date of next meeting.** It was agreed to meet on Monday 23 March 2009 at 4.00pm in Strand Road.

The meeting ended at 5.30pm.