

MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD IN THE BOARDROOM, STRAND ROAD CAMPUS, ON MONDAY 27 OCTOBER 2008 AT 4.00P.M.

PRESENT: Prof F Monds (Chair)
Miss E Cavanagh
Mr S Murphy (Director)
Mr A Rainey

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Kinnaird (Assistant Director, Client Services) (for additional item)
Mr D McClelland (Secretary)

The Chair welcomed the Assistant Director to the meeting. The Director then explained that circumstances had arisen since the Governing Body meeting held on 24 September 2008 which had prevented the circulation amongst members of a draft of the College Development Plan Part 2. Work was now in progress to rectify the situation and he was requesting that the Committee consider a prepared draft which he would table. He proposed that following discussion he forward a revised document to DEL for 30 October with the proviso that further amendments may be forthcoming after all members of the Governing Body have had an opportunity to comment. The Chair agreed to accept the item but emphasised the need to fully consult with other members of the Governing Body on the matter before a final document was forwarded to DEL. It was further agreed to consider this item before moving to the main business of the meeting agenda.

ADDITIONAL ITEM: COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN – PART 2

The Assistant Director explained that the pro-forma of the tabled report had been defined by DEL and was based on the guidance provided in the ETI self-evaluation document “Improving Quality: Raising Standards”. He drew the attention of members to the main areas for improvement listed under each key performance indicator criteria as well as the key priorities for development identified from the self-evaluation. He mentioned that final decisions had still to be made on the gradings to be awarded. He also reviewed the Continuous Improvement Plan 2008-2009 including the self assessment grades for each of the 12 schools and the main improvement issues to be addressed. The Chair commented on the rigour with which the work was being carried out, on the clear evidence in the document that the college was able to effect self-criticism and that it was striving to improve quality. In reply to a member’s question the Director indicated that it was the role of ETI to moderate grades across the sector. Members endorsed the Chair’s thanks for the work accomplished to date. The Director added his thanks to the Assistant Director and his team for the work involved in drafting the document under difficult circumstances. It was agreed that, following further work, a revised draft would be circulated to all members of the Governing Body for comment and that it also be sent to DEL by 30 October with the understanding that amendments to the document may follow.

The Assistant Director then left the meeting.

6.1 APOLOGIES

Apology was received from Dame Geraldine Keegan and Mrs McCafferty. It was noted that Mr Morrison (Assistant Director, Curriculum) had also made his apologies.

6.2 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2008

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

6.3 MATTERS ARISING

5.3 (4.6) Key dates for CDP cycle. The Director indicated that, following a presentation from DEL at the next Governing Body meeting, he hoped it would be possible to draw up appropriate dates.

5.4 Key strategic themes. The Director suggested some topics and agreed to draw up appropriate dates for their consideration by the Committee.

5.6.2 Further breakdown of statistics for retention and achievement rates. The Director indicated that these should be available for the next meeting.

5.5 Teaching and Learning Policy. In reply to a question the Director reported that the policy had been circulated to all staff.

6.4 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

No business was conducted under this heading.

6.5 ACADEMIC BOARD (Ref: Papers EC6.5.1, EC6.5.2 & EC6.5.3)

The Director invited members to identify the papers they would wish to receive from the Academic Board. It was agreed that the agenda and minutes of each meeting would be sufficient with the addition of any papers which were considered to be of particular relevance to the Committee.

In relation to the Constitution, a member considered that the reference to student suspension/expulsion may be anomalous with the Policy on Student Disciplinary Procedure (to be considered under item 6.8). Another member suggested that the composition of the Board would benefit from an increase in student representation on a cross campus basis. The Director agreed to review these matters and to bring a revised constitution to the Committee. Members noted the minutes of the meeting.

6.6 NEW COURSE PROVISION (Ref: Papers EC6.6.1 & EC6.6.2)

The Director reported that this matter had been considered by the Academic Board. He explained that the revised arrangements would allow for a longer lead-in time for advertising and recruitment on new courses.

6.7 ENROLMENTS (Ref: Paper EC6.7)

The Director, commenting on the enrolment data for the college, suggested that the figures showed that NWRC was less affected by the economic downturn than other colleges in the sector. Because of the economic situation he requested flexibility in setting fees particularly for part-time students on priority skills courses. In reply to a question the Director indicated that the

proposal would not have any serious implications for the college budget. It was proposed by Mr Rainey seconded by Miss Cavanagh and agreed to recommend to the Governing Body that the Director be given discretion in relation to setting fees and that adjustments be reported to the appropriate Committee.

6.8 STUDENT DISCIPLINARY POLICY (Ref: Paper EC6.8)

The Director explained that a revised draft was necessary to ensure clarity and consistency with the College's Articles of Government. The policy had been checked by Human Resources and Student Services. In reply to a question the Director pointed out that arrangements relating to discipline issues with students from schools was part of the service level agreement with the schools. With one amendment it was proposed by Miss Cavanagh seconded by Mr Rainey and agreed to recommend to the Governing Body that the policy be approved.

6.9 DEL CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT – NEW REGULATORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND (Ref: Paper EC6.9)

The Chair commented that the response appeared to be thorough. There was agreement that Ofqual should not be involved in the development of qualifications. Members noted the response.

6.10 ETI INSPECTION REPORTS (Ref: Papers EC6.10)

The Director mentioned that the 3 inspection reports being considered were an outcome of mainly cross-sector surveys. The College had identified particular issues it considered relevant to NWRC and drawn up action plans accordingly.

Members then considered the action plans for the 3 surveys. It was proposed by Miss Cavanagh seconded by Mr Rainey and agreed to recommend to the Governing Body that, for each action plan related to an ETI inspection report, the Committee be updated on progress after a 6 month period.

It was further proposed by Mr Rainey seconded by Miss Cavanagh and agreed to recommend to the Governing Body that proposed Service Level Agreements made with schools under the Vocational Enhancement Programme come to the Committee for consideration.

6.11 ALL-ISLAND SKILLS STUDY (Ref: Paper EC6.11)

It was agreed that members should receive a copy of the full executive summary after which consideration could be given to examining issues stemming from the report which may be relevant to the College.

6.12 NORTH WEST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FORUM (Ref: Papers EC6.12.1, EC6.12.2 & EC6.12.3)

Members noted the paper on Cross-Border Initiatives and the minutes of the Forum's meetings held on 19 June 2008 and 23 September 2008. In answer to a question the Director indicated that the Forum was exploring ways to more actively involve small businesses in its work. In reply to another question he felt that the Forum had helped to reduce misconceptions between employers and further education.

6.13 CORRESPONDENCE

None

6.14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A copy of the Schools Links Prospectus was distributed to each Committee member.

Date of next meeting. It was agreed to meet on Monday 19 January 2009 at 4.00pm in Strand Road. It was also agreed to re-schedule the meeting planned for Monday 16 March 2009 to be held on Monday 23 March 2009.

The meeting ended at 5.55pm.