North West Regional College
Governing Body – Education Committee
Meeting Date – 26 May 2026
Minutes Approved – 6 October 2026

MINUTES OF THE SEVENTY SEVENTH MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD IN GREYSTONE CAMPUS COMMENCING 16:32

PRESENT:
Mr P Clancy, Committee Chair
Mrs O McEleney
Mr M McCafferty
Mr L Murphy, Principal & CE
Mr B O'Neill
Mr P Thompson

REMOTE ATTENDANCE:
Mr B Dougherty
Dr S Fisher
Mrs M Gormley (until 18:01)
Mrs S McMahon (until 17:21)
Mr F Smyth (until 17:46)
Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services

IN ATTENDANCE:
Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards
Mrs É Doherty, Secretary to the Governing Body

APOLOGIES: None, all members present.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, members were given an opportunity to undertake a tour of Greystone Campus facilitated by Mr L McCloskey, Campus Manager.

77.1 WELCOME
The Committee Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mrs S McMahon gave prior notice that she would need to leave the meeting shortly after 17:15.

77.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS AND OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS
No conflicts of interest were declared, and no items of any other business were raised.

77.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2026

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS
Draft Education Committee Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2026.
The Committee considered the draft minutes of the meeting and approved them as an accurate record.
Proposed by Mr B O'Neill
Seconded by Mrs M Gormley

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REPORT 1 MATTERS ARISING – February 2026 Committee Meeting

The Committee noted that a number of items considered at the previous meeting had subsequently been approved by the Governing Body at its meeting held on 11 March 2026.

- 76.4, Report 1 - The Committee's Terms of Reference
- 76.5, Report 8 - Community Education & Outreach Strategic Plan 2026-2029
- 76.6, Report 2.1 - Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy and Procedures
- 76.6, Report 4 - Complaints & Compliments Sector Policy

76.5, Report 7 - Members noted that the issue previously raised in relation to Essential Skills had been discussed at the subsequent DfE accountability meeting and that, at this stage, no further action was required.

76.5 - The Committee noted that correspondence conveying the College's appreciation to SSE had been issued on behalf of the Principal & CE and the Committee.

76.5 -The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards had previously highlighted the emerging risk associated with Pearson's potential withdrawal of certain Level 3 BTEC qualifications. Members noted that this matter had since been escalated to the Audit and Risk Committee and would remain under review as an emerging risk.

77.4 COMMITTEE CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Committee Chair referred to the recent Departments (DfE) engagement session on FE 'Fit for the Future' (Agenda item Ref 77.5, Report 3) and invited the Principal & CE to provide an update.

The Principal & CE advised that the *FE 'Fit for the Future'* programme remained at an early stage of development. While the overall programme was ambitious, key governance arrangements, terms of reference and delivery structures were still in the process of being developed.

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards, confirmed that the initial focus was on curriculum reform, supported by Task and Finish Group activity across different levels of provision. Early sector workshops had taken place with representation from several colleges and further workshop meetings are expected in June 2026.

Members discussed the challenge of progressing significant reform activity in the absence of confirmed budgets, together with the financial constraints currently facing the FE Sector. The Principal & CE reported that in the absence of an agreed Executive Budget, the College had received correspondence from the Department (DfE) indicating a significant reduction in its budget allocation compared with the previous year, equating to a 6% reduction in a flat cash position. Dr C O'Mullan advised that Curriculum Directors, NIFON and Sector Principals are drafting an Equality Impact Assessment to indicate the significant impact on

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curriculum provision and learner opportunities as a result of the proposed reductions, especially for Section 75 groups. This is also to include a Rural Proofing aspect.
There is a request for the CDP submission deadline to be extended until the budgetary position is clarified; modelling of curriculum provision and target setting for 2026/27 relating to potential cuts is being undertaken by the Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards.

Agreed action: Further updates will be provided to future Committee and Governing Body meetings as matters develop.

The Committee Chair then invited Dr C O'Mullan to present her Reports.

77.5 MANAGEMENT REPORT – Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards.

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

EC 77.5 Management Report
Report 1 College Development Plan KPI Update
Report 2 College Development Plan 2026/27 – Commissioning Letter to Colleges
Report 3 FE Fit for the Future
Report 4 Essential Skills – Sector Return
Report 5 Executive Summary ETI Insight Visit
Report 6 Digital Strategy 2026-28, Review May 2026
Report 7 Project Based Learning Overview
Report 8 Traineeship Employer Survey
Report 9 Whole College Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26 – working document
Report 10 WCQIP 2025-26 Progress Report May 2026
Report 11 Strategic Projects
Report 12 Letter from the Minister of Health
Report 13 Draft Academic Standards Meeting Minutes – March 2026

Report 1 College Development Plan KPI Update
In introducing the papers, the Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards outlined the current position in relation to actual enrolments against College Development Plan targets. As of 18 May 2026, enrolments were reported at 103% of the overall target, while 97% of the target for individuals had been achieved.

Report 2 College Development Plan 2026/27 – Commissioning Letter to Colleges
The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards advised that submission of the College Development Plan had been paused collectively across the sector, as Principals considered it inappropriate to confirm targets in advance of budget clarity. The Committee noted that planning work for 2026/27 was continuing.

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The summary of the MaSN for 2026/27 had been submitted to the Department (DfE) reflecting an increase of 41 individuals compared with enrolments in 2025/26. The Department (DfE) subsequently advised the MaSN allocation will remain at the same level as 2025/26.

The retention rate as at 18 May 2026 stood at 89%, against an overall target of 90%.

In relation to curriculum planning the Timetabling Guidelines for 2026/27 have been refreshed. Particular focus had been given to reviewing the approach to the placement and provision of full-time learners undertaking Essential Skills and GCSE provision, in order to ensure the continued implementation of best practice and to improve student experience and outcomes as part of the NWRC ESK/GCSE Action Plan for Improvement.

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards together with Mr G Ritchie, Curriculum Director, SERC will serve on the CCEA Regulation Committee as representatives of the FE Sector. The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards has also been invited by ETB to chair the Further Education and Training (FET) Quality Council and will take up the position from 16 October 2026.

Report 3 FE 'Fit for the Future'

This Agenda item was discussed earlier under Agenda item 77.4.

Report 4 Essential Skills – Sector Return

The Essential Skills Sector Return, reporting on progress against the actions contained within the College Improvement Plan, had been submitted to the Chair of the Quality Managers Group on 14 May 2026. The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards highlighted key issues arising from the Report.

Report 5 Executive Summary ETI Insight Visit

The ETI Insight Visit undertaken in May 2026 focused on Apprenticeship NI Motor Vehicle provision. Members noted that the overall view of the programme was positive. Areas identified for improvement included strengthening employer engagement and enhancing the marketing of the provision.

Report 6 Digital Strategy 2026-28, Review May 2026

The review highlighted the continuing development of digital learning practice, improvements in staff capability and confidence in the use of learning technologies and the College's increasingly mature approach to technology-enhanced learning and AI-supported educational practice. The Committee welcomed the evidence of ongoing review and intervention to support areas requiring improvement while sustaining good practice elsewhere.

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Report 7 Project Based Learning 2025/26 Overview

Project Based Learning was reported to be well embedded across a range of curriculum areas, providing learners valuable real-world experiences that support employability skills, confidence and industry awareness. The report also highlighted sector level success during the academic year.

Report 8 Traineeship Employer Survey

The paper presented employer feedback on the Traineeship Work Placement Programme and indicated that overall employer satisfaction remained very strong. Employers reported that the programme aligned well with business needs, that College communication and support were effective, and that trainees generally demonstrate good vocational, employability, literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Report 9 Whole College Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26 – working document
Report 10 WCQIP 2025/26 Progress Report May 2026

The Committee noted that the Whole College Quality Improvement Plan (WCQIP) 2025/26 continued to demonstrate strong progress across all strategic themes, aligned with the College Development Plan and Department for the Economy priorities.
Members were advised that strengths remain evident in governance and performance oversight, investment in staff capability, including AI and digital development, strong industry engagement and progress in widening participation and learner support.

The Committee also noted that a number of areas required continued focus, including Essential Skills achievement, consistency in quality assurance and self-evaluation, learner survey engagement and preparation for sector-wide data reform. Overall performance was assessed as 'green–amber', reflecting solid progress to date with some targeted actions required to sustain improvement.

EC 77.5 Management Report - continued

Particular recognition was given to the College's sustainability agenda, including curriculum development, awards and recognition, climate governance and compliance, funded projects, and major College events. Members also noted the successful completion of a Beekeeping course delivered in partnership with the Derry and District Beekeeping Association.

The Committee noted that a group of students had visited Vancouver, Canada, in April 2026 as part of the academic cultural enrichment programme. Appreciation was extended to the former Governing Body Chair, Mrs Jennifer McKeever, who had played an active role in supporting this programme.
Agreed Action: The Committee Chair will issue a formal note of thanks to Mrs McKeever.

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Report 11 Strategic Projects
The Committee noted the report.

Report 12 Letter from the Minister of Health
The Committee noted correspondence from Mike Nesbittt MLA, Minister of Health, commending the ongoing collaboration between RNIB and the College.

Report 13 Draft Academic Standards Meeting Minutes – March 2026
The Committee noted the report.

The Committee Chair thanked Dr O'Mullan and invited Ms Moss to present her report.

77.6 MANAGEMENT REPORT – Client Services

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS
Report 1 Equality Report
Report 2 Safeguarding Report
Report 3 Learning Link Update

Report 1 Equality Report
The Committee noted the extensive programme of events delivered in support of equality awareness. The College plan to continue working with the Rainbow Project to promote Pride Month in June 2026. Members also noted ongoing work in support of the 'Ending Violence against Women and Girls' agenda.
The College held a Culturally Themed Health and Wellbeing Day on 22 May 2026 which had been a very successful event.

Report 2 Safeguarding Report
The Head of Client Services reported that the Sector had raised with DfE a request to strengthen the Safeguarding Policy in relation to the 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' agenda.
There continues to be an increase in students requiring support from the Safeguarding Team with anxiety remaining the most prevalent presenting issue. The Safeguarding Team have supported 19 Looked After Young People this academic year, representing an increase on previous years.
The Safeguarding Team had received 15 referrals from the PSNI through Operation Encompass, which was noted as a significant figure for the City.
Access NI had revised its policy during the year and students are now responsible for uploading all relevant documentation. A total of 454 Access NI checks had been completed to enable students to attend work placements. Eight Enhanced Access NI checks had disclosed offences, however these had been considered by the relevant panel and approved

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as low risk. In addition, two students had disclosed criminal convictions at application stage and were subsequently approved.
Applications received for 2026/27 included 14 applicants who had disclosed a criminal history. These cases were going through the appropriate due diligence process.
During Mental Health Week (11 – 16 May 2026) there was a significant lift around promotion and awareness. The programme with PNEUMA commenced in February 2026 and ran for four weeks in the Strand Road Campus.

Report 3 Learning Link Update
Students with additional needs supported by the Learning Link across all provisions has increased by 8.5% in 2025/26 compared to the same period last year. It was noted that the budget for this provision had not increased since 2012, presenting a challenge for the College in maintaining the same level of service for an increasing number of learners. There were currently 29 support workers assigned to support 180 students across all campuses.

The Committee Chair thanked Ms Moss and her team for all their work and ongoing initiatives within the Client Services area.

77.7 SCHEDULE OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2026/27
The Committee noted the schedule.

77.8 CORRESPONDENCE
No correspondence had been received.

77.9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS
No other business was raised.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 6 October 2026

The Committee Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and brought the meeting to a close at 18:12.

Signed _____
Mr P Clancy, Committee Chair

Date 6 October 2026

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