
**MINUTES OF THE SIXTIETH MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD ON
13 APRIL 2022, COMMENCING 1600**

PRESENT: Prof M Ó Néill, Committee Chair
Mr P Canavan
Mrs R Dougherty
Mr G Killeen
Mr S McGregor
Mrs J McKeever
Mr P McKeown, Interim Principal & Chief Executive
Mr P Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards
Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services
Mrs C McWilliams – Boardroom Apprentice
Mrs É Doherty, Governance Secretary

Due to restrictions associated with COVID-19 pandemic members and attendees joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

60.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Committee Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He extended the welcome to Mrs J McKeever and Mr P Thompson who were attending their first Education Committee meeting and to Mrs C McWilliams who was in attendance as part of the Boardroom Apprenticeship Programme.

The Committee Chair congratulated Dr C O' Mullan on her recent appointment as Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards and to Mr P McKeown on his appointment as Interim Principal & Chief Executive.

It was noted that the Student Governor, Mr D Ferns was not present. **It was suggested that the Governance Secretary and Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services follow up on this matter.**

60.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr P Canavan noted Fin TrU was referenced in the papers. He stated he is on the Advisory Board of Fin TrU, however he has no commercial interest in Fin TrU.

There were no declarations of any other business.

60.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2022**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Paper EC 60.3 Draft Education Committee Minutes of the meeting held on
26 January 2022

The Draft Minutes were taken as read and agreed were a true and accurate record of the meeting.

PROPOSED, Mr G Killeen

SECONDED, Mr S McGregor

60.3.1 MATTERS ARISING – 26 January 2022 Committee Meeting

The Governance Secretary updated members on two action items arising from the meeting;

59.4 The Committee's Terms of Reference were approved by the Governing Body at their meeting on 23 February 2022. An additional point was included to cover the work of the Head of Client Services.

59.5 The ETI review/revaluation of the HSC Curriculum Hub Report/Composite Report were included as a paper for the April meeting (Ref 60.5, Reports 2/3).

59.8 The Safeguarding Report was included as a paper for the April meeting (Ref 60.8, Report 1).

60.4 COMMITTEE CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Committee Chair had no business to discuss under this heading.

The Committee Chair then invited Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards to present the Education Management Report.

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

➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

PAPER EC 60.4 Management Report

Report 1 Curriculum Policy, April 2022

Report 2 ETI Evaluation; The Curriculum Hubs in the Six Colleges of FE

Report 3 Curriculum Hub Letter – March 2022

Report 4 DfE CDP Commissioning Letter on the Interim CDP 2022/23

Report 5 Quality Enhancement – Request Letter to FECs – Annual Assessment Return

Report 6 Higher Education Report 2020/21

Report 7 DfE Letter re HLA Evaluation and QMER, 2 March 2022

Report 8 RSM Internal Audit Plan – Academic Framework Governance

Report 9 Academic Staff Development Update – Inter-semester Activities

Report 10 Academic Standards Committee Draft Minutes – February 2022

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards reported that following her recent appointment it was timely to outline the key areas of responsibility of her post together with the recently reviewed Curriculum Policy, April 2022 (Report 1).

Following on the recent strategic developments (Report 2, 3) were referred to, these included;

- Curriculum Reform, Traineeship and Advanced Award Workshop which was delivered on 24 March 2022 to relevant College staff.
- HE in FE – a collaboration with OU to diversify the HE offer is progressing. An Institutional Approval Event is scheduled to take place on 27 April 2022.
- Strategic discussions are taking place to consider a Single Tertiary Education System for Northern Ireland.
- The Sector has collated responses to the Paper presenting the findings of the Strand 1 review of Essential Skills literacy and numeracy. ETI are now progressing with Strand 2 of the review which is a review of tutor qualifications to deliver the Essential Skills programmes.

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards took questions from members at this juncture.

For the benefit of new Governors, the Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards provided background to the work of the Sector Hubs. NWRC is the recognised leader in the Health & Social Care Hub. The Department (DfE) commissioned the ETI to provide an independent evaluation of the work undertaken by the six FE Colleges (Report 2). Report 3, Curriculum Hub Letter, provided the key findings from the review visit of the College Hub. These findings were positive with some areas that the College should focus on. Going forward there was a need to develop the governance of the hubs and for the hubs to be further integrated into curriculum planning for each College and the Sector.

The Strabane City Deal Project work is progressing well. The Interim Principal highlighted concerns with the recent rising building costs against a fixed budget.

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards and the Interim Principal provided Governors with an update on the College Development Plan (2022/23) timeline (Report 4). The Plan will come through the June 2022 Committee and Board meetings.

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards reported that the Department (DfE) published a statistical bulletin in January 2022, 'Further Education Sector Activity in Northern Ireland 2016/17 – 2020/21'. This showed FE College enrolments have decreased by a net 36.3% in 2016/17 - 2020/21.

In referring to the analysis of Sector enrolment data 2020/21 (COVID year) the College experienced a significant decline in full-time and part-time enrolments with the second highest decline in full-time enrolments (8.9%) and fourth highest decline in part-time enrolments (23.3%). 67.8% of student enrolments in 2020/21 were student resident in areas of high deprivation, quintiles 1 and 2.

As at 31 March 2022 the College achieved 97.5% of the part-time target; 85.2% of the full-time target and 89% of the Essential Skills target. The overall College retention rate was 90.75% at 31 March 2022. Each course team regularly monitors this.

Progressing to the Quality Reports (5,6,7,8) the Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards referred to the Higher Education Report 2020/21 (Report 6). The Report provides evidence and assurance to Governors that the College is implementing robust quality processes within its Higher Education provision. The Report underpins the approval for the Accounting Officer to sign off the Annual Quality Assessment Return (Report 5) which will be forwarded to DfE by 30 April 2022.

Mr G Killeen, as Governing Body Acting Chair to the Board reported that due to timescales the Report will not progress through a Board meeting. On the assurances received of the Committee/Senior Management the Report will be forwarded to the remaining Board members for their perusal and an opportunity for them to send any queries/questions through the Governance Secretary before the signing off the Annual Quality Assessment Return (Report 5).

Subject to approval by the Governing Body the Annual Quality Assessment Return (Report 5) will be signed by the Accounting Officer as a Governor on behalf of all Governors to confirm the Governing Body oversight of academic governance arrangements for the 202-21 academic year.

PROPOSED; Mr G Killeen

SECONDED; Mrs J McKeever

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards noted two further Quality Reports, the Higher Level Apprenticeship Evaluation Return is due with the Department (DfE) by 29 April 2022 together with Quality Monitoring and Evaluation Return (QMER) 2 to be submitted by 17 June 2022. This report covers details for year one (2021/22) Traineeship and Skills for Life and Work Programmes (Report 7).

Referring to the Academic Staff Development (Report 9) the annual Learning and Teaching Conference was held in January 2022 with the theme 'Creating a culture where everyone grows'. A College Sustainability Working Group has been set up.

A number of further staff development events are being planned over the Easter period.

In conclusion the Academic Standards Committee Draft Minutes – February 2022 (Report 10) was noted.

It was agreed that the Project Based Learning presentation to the Committee/Board be included into the Programme of Business for 2022/23. In the interim the Project Based Learning presentation provided to the Senior Leadership Team will be shared with the Committee.

The Committee Chair thanked Dr C O'Mullan for her comprehensive report and invited the Interim Principal to bring members through the Business Support Centre Report.

60.6 BUSINESS SUPPORT CENTRE UPDATE REPORT

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 60.6 Business Support Centre Update Report

The Interim Principal reported on the Innovation Projects and Skills Programmes targets to 31 March 2022. Most targets had been achieved/exceeded. The Higher Level Apprenticeships target (30) came in below target (24) enrolments. Four welding academies were delivered to 31 March 2022, however the Skills Focus and InnovateUs funding has been reduced for 2022/23 and the ERAP Fund may not be available for 2022/23 which was disappointing, discussions are taking place with the Department (DfE).

60.7 COVID UPDATE REPORT

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 60.7 COVID Update Report

Dr C O'Mullan delivered the COVID Update Report. Following the relaxing of the NI Executive guidance the College has decided to continue with best practice to the end of this academic year.

The Interim Principal reported that the financial support provided by the Department (DfE) in respect to the COVID pandemic has ceased from 1 April 2022. The Lost Learning funding will continue to the end of this academic year.

The Committee Chair invited Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services to report to the Committee.

60.8 CLIENT SERVICES

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1 Safeguarding Report

Report 2 Update on Recommendations from Internal Audit Review

The Head of Client Services reported that from September 2021 to March 2022 there was a significant increase in referrals. The most common reason for referrals being for anxiety and depression. Three referrals were made to the Gateway Team during this time. Emergency financial support was provided to two students.

To address the rise in student referrals a Deputy Safeguarding Officer for Limavady Campus was appointed.

The Safeguarding Team are currently supporting twelve Young Adult Carers. The Action for Children Charity attends Strand Road Campus one day per month to offer a drop in support facility for the Young Adult Carers.

Internal Audit conducted a review on Safeguarding in December 2021. Areas of good practice were noted. The Report will pass through the Committee.

Members noted the various promotional campaigns that recently took place by the Safeguarding Team and the update on the students registered on the Elemental Student Support Platform.

The Committee Chair thanked Ms G Moss for her valued report.

The Governance Secretary reported on the update following the Internal Audit Review that took place on Safeguarding previously mentioned in Ms Moss's Report (Report 1). There was one low priority action in respect to outstanding staff safeguarding training. A verbal update was provided for March 2022, 94.7% of staff have now completed the mandatory safeguarding training. Work continues to improve this figure.

60.9 CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence received.

60.10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no any other business to discuss.

That being the end of business the Committee Chair thanked everyone and the meeting ended at 1735.

Date of Next Meeting: 1 June 2022

Signed; _____


Prof M Ó Néill, Committee Chair

Date; 1 June 2022