
**MINUTES OF THE SEVENTY SIXTH MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
COMMENCING 16:32 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT: Mr P Clancy, Committee Chair

Mr B Dougherty

Dr S Fisher (from 16:34)

Mrs M Gormley

Mrs O McEleney

Mr M McCafferty (from 16:51)

Mrs S McMahon (from 16:51)

Mr L Murphy, Principal & CE (from 16:34)

Mr B O'Neill

Mr F Smyth (from 16:37)

Mr P Thompson (from 16:47)

Ms V Toland

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards

Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services

Ms C Gallagher, Head of Faculty - Creative, Performing Arts &
Therapies (for presentation item only)

Ms S Hawkins, Manager of Community & Outreach Education (for
presentation item only)

Mrs É Doherty, Secretary to the Governing Body

APOLOGIES: None, all members present.

76.0 PRESENTATION

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 8 Community Education & Outreach Strategic Plan 2026/29

The Committee Chair invited Ms S Hawkins, Manager of Community & Outreach Education to present her report to the Committee.

Ms Hawkins provided an overview of her professional background and outlined the roles and responsibilities associated with her post, which she took up in November 2025.

The presentation outlined the vision and mission for community and outreach education, the five strategic pillars and associated key actions. Data was presented highlighting current performance and challenges, including resourcing pressures in high demand areas, accreditation costs and the current Fees Policy. An overview was also provided on the extensive engagement with external stakeholders since Ms Hawkins took up post.

Uplift in community enrolments in line with the CDP was noted together with adjusted projected 2026 targets. As at mid-January 2026, actual enrolments were 1289 against a target of 2000 with a further 711 to be achieved in year.

The Community Action Plan for the next eighteen months was shared to ensure it is both deliverable and impactful, supporting long term prosperity and wellbeing across the region.

A discussion and a question and answer session ensued.

The Committee Chair thanked Ms Hawkins for her presentation and for the work completed since her appointment.

Ms Hawkins and Ms Gallagher left the meeting at 17:16.

76.1 WELCOME

The Committee Chair, Mr P Clancy opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees with a special welcome to Mrs Sharon McMahon and Mr Matthew McCafferty who were attending as new members on the Committee.

76.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS AND DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No conflicts of interest declarations were declared. No additional items of business were raised.

76.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2025

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Draft Education Committee Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2025

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

PROPOSED, Dr S Fisher

SECONDED, Mr B Dougherty

REPORT 1 MATTERS ARISING – November 2025 Committee Meeting

75.3, Report 1.2 Dr C O'Mullan noted that approximate 10-15% of students within the Level 3, Entitlement Framework programmes would progress to a higher course at the College. There is an 80% progression rate for Level 2, Occupational Studies students that progress to a higher course in the College. To further promote the higher education progression pathways, links will be strengthened with the Marketing Team.

75.4, Report 1 Approval was received at the Governing Body meeting held on 19 November 2025 for Mrs S McMahon and Mr M McCafferty to serve on the Education Committee.

75.5, Report 6 The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards reported that in relation to the Complaints & Compliments Report 2024/25 that was presented at the November 2025 Committee meeting, (Ref 75.5, Report 6) there were five formal complaints, one fully upheld two partially upheld and two were not upheld.

76.4 COMMITTEE CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Committee Chair attended the Mayor's Civic Reception in recognition of the College receiving the 2025 Queens Prize for Education, acknowledging outstanding work in business support, skills development and innovation. Prof M Ó'Neill, Governing Body Chair, Mr P Thompson, Governor, Senior Management and staff also attended the event.

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1 Committee's Terms of Reference

Following a recommendation from the External Board Effectiveness Review the Committee's Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually. An amendment has been made to no 14 to reflect this change.

The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the Terms of Reference to the Governing Body.

PROPOSED, Mrs M Gormley

SECONDED, Mr P Thompson

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

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

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

EC 76.5 Management Report

Report 1 Executive Summary 2025/26 Progress

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards reported that approval of the 2025/26 CDP has not yet been received from the Department (DfE). Report 1 relates to the high level overview of College performance on 3 November 2025 which was presented to the Department (DfE).

Report 2 Enrolment and Individual Targets V Actuals on 9 February 2026

Updated actual enrolments and individuals against target as of 9 February 2026 showed 90% of target achieved with enrolments and 88% of target achieved with individuals. Work

continues with attendance and retention on Essential Skills and GCSE. A further challenge is the attrition with those students at Level 3 moving from year 1 to year 2.

The overall College retention rate of for 2025/26 as at 10 February 2026 was 92%.

The FE Activity in NI and the College outcomes for 2024/25 were referred to. The outcomes were similar with the sector in several areas. The College success rate was 76% against the average sector success rate at 79%. This presents a 2% decline in overall success rate, which places the College fourth in the sector.

There was a decline of 3% in the College retention rate, now the lowest in the sector, a 1% increase in achievement rate, now third in the sector. One of the quality improvement actions for this year is a focus on retention strategies.

A discussion ensued in Committee on the importance of retention and the reasons for student withdrawing from courses with the understanding of the College data relating to withdrawals. It was highlighted the importance of good recruitment policies. The College has a high proportion of students domiciled in quintiles 1 and 2, who often face multiple challenges, which presents comparative difficulties when measured against colleges with higher proportions of students from higher quintiles.

In terms of growth for 2025/26 there has been a significant increase in growth, securing full-time, part-time and project enrolments.

Report 3 DfE Correspondence RE HLA Application Process 2026/27

The HLA offer planned for 2026/27 was noted.

Curriculum planning has commenced in relation to potential target enrolments for 2026/27.

EC 76.5 Management Report

Returning to the Management Report the Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards notified the Committee of the part-time, Level 6 Early Childhood Studies programme that commenced on 29 January 2026. A submission was sent to the Department (DfE) for approval for Level 6 in Creative Industries and Modern Music Professional Practice.

The Committee were advised of an emerging risk relating to Pearsons, awarding organisation who were considered withdrawing their Level 3, BTEC qualifications.

Report 4 Whole College Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26

Report 5 Whole College Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26 – working document

Report 6 Traineeship Sector Quality Improvement Plan 2025-2027

Report 7 DfE Correspondence – Evaluation of SEN and/or Disabilities Provision in NWRC

Following an update at the Governing Body meeting on 23 January 2026 the Whole College Quality Improvement Plan has been updated.

Report 6 relates to the Sector Traineeship Sector Improvement Plan 2025-2027. The College has its own Action Plan for Traineeships. The Sector Essential Skills/GCSE Action Plan is currently a work in progress.

Report 7 provided positive feedback on the evaluation of the College on SEN provision. The College's Action Plan will be drafted following the Sector Report.

A discussion took place on the current provision of Essential Skills and the challenges within the Further Education Sector and a **suggestion** was made to bring this matter to the next Accountability meeting with the Department (DfE).

Report 8 Community Education & Outreach Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Following the presentation at the start of the meeting (Ref 76.0) approval of the Strategic Plan 2026-2029 was requested.

PROPOSED, Mr B O'Neill

SECONDED, Mr B Dougherty

EC 76.5 Management Report

Returning to the Management Report the Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards reported that the College achieved 'silver' status on its first participation to the NI Environmental Survey managed by Business in the Community NI.

The Director of Curriculum and Academic Standards highlighted the numerous skills competitions. Curriculum events and awards were also noted. Acknowledgement was given to SSE for awarding scholarships again this year to twenty-seven students.

The Principal on behalf of the Committee/College agreed to issue a note of thanks to SSE.

Report 9 Active PEACEPLUS Programme Projects

The update on active PEACEPLUS Project activity within the College was noted.

Report 10 Academic Standards Committee Minutes – January 2026

Members noted the draft Minutes. No questions were raised.

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

76.6 MANAGEMENT REPORT – Client Services

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1	Equality Report
Report 2	Safeguarding Report
Report 2.1	Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy & Procedures
Report 3	SEN Update
Report 4	Complaints & Compliments Sector Policy – February 2026

Report 1 Equality Report

The Head of Client Services noted that in relation to the ongoing work as a College of Sanctuary an invitation has been received to attend Queens University Belfast's Sanctuary Pathways event on 4 March 2026, bringing together FE and HE institutions to co-create sanctuary pathways and opportunities.

The calendar of events includes a College Culture event to take place on 22 May 2026. This will coincide with the Staff Wellbeing Day.

Report 2 Safeguarding Report

There was an increase of seven students referred to the Safeguarding Team compared to the same time last year with a total of thirty-three referrals from September 2025 – January 2026. Anxiety continues to be the most common reason for referral however there is a decrease of twelve students in the same period last year (September 2024 to January 2025).

PSNI have delivered online safety training to students as a result of the increase in bullying referrals. These incidents related to social media activity outside the College. The College also received fourteen referrals from the PSNI regarding Operation Encompass. Support has been provided as appropriate.

The Safeguarding Team achieved the Carers Federation Quality Standards in Carer Support Accreditation in November 2025. There are currently eight young adult carers being supported.

The Safeguarding Team have secured funding from the Public Health Authority (PHA) to run the '*No Mind Left Behind*' project alongside UU PNEUMA.

In line with the Programme for Government's Strategic framework to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls the College is hosting a Conference on 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls'. The Conference will be held in Strand Road Campus on 3 March 2026. The event will include guest speakers, a theatrical performance and a panel discussion, bringing together educational leaders, practitioners, community groups and advocates to advance meaningful action.

Report 2.1 Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy & Procedures

The Policy and Procedures have been updated mainly to add in matters related to online elements of safeguarding.

The Committee recommended approval of the Policy to the Governing Body.

PROPOSED, Mrs S McMahon

SECONDED, Mrs M Gormley

Report 3 SEN Update

The January 2026 update showed a 5% increase in students with additional needs supported by Learning Link in 2025/26 compared with the same period in 2024/25. There is also an increase on the same period within the discrete provision (ASFO3).

Following an investment in two Senso Cubes a request was noted from the Student Council for the Strand Road Campus Senso Cube be relocated to a less busy space. The Student Governor supported this request.

Report 4 Complaints & Compliments Sector Policy – February 2026

The Committee recommended approval of the Policy to the Governing Body.

PROPOSED, Mrs M Gormley

SECONDED, Mr F Smyth

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

76.7 CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence received.

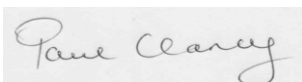
76.8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 26 May 2026

The Committee Chair thanked everyone for their contributions, with particular thanks to the Student Governor's contribution and attendance and brought the meeting to a close at 18:25.

Signed



Mr P Clancy, Committee Chair

Date 26 May 2026