

MINUTES OF THE SEVENTY THIRD MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 JUNE 2025, COMMENCING 16:00 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT: Mr P Clancy, Committee Chair
Mr B Dougherty (until 17:46)
Dr S Fisher (from 16:31)
Mr B O'Neill
Mr P Thompson (from 16:17)
Ms V Toland (until 17:34)

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

APOLOGIES: Mrs M Gormley, Mr L Murphy, Mr F Smyth, Ms G Moss

73.0 PRESENTATION➤ **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 **PowerPoint Presentation**

Report 2 **Quality Improvement Plan 2024-27 – link**

The Committee Chair welcomed Mrs Moore, Head of Quality & Performance to the meeting.

Mrs Moore provided an update on the new structure of the Quality and Performance Department following recent appointments. The Draft Digital Strategy will be presented to the September Committee meeting. An update on the Teaching and Learning Academy and feedback on the Whole College Quality Improvement Plan (WCQIP) 2024/25 was provided. The Head of Quality & Performance brought the Committee through the nine areas for improvement within the WCQIP and how these were progressing.

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| AFI 1 | Drive regional economic growth through innovative curriculum delivery and strategic partnerships by continuing to deliver Industry-Aligned Curriculum, Strategic Partnership Building, Innovation and Sustainability Integration and a focus on student success | on target |
| AFI 2 | Through proactive leadership drive the sustainability agenda across both the estate and through the curriculum to achieve ambitious Government targets of net zero by 2035 | on target |
| AFI 3 | Leverage inter-college collaboration to drive excellence through systematic quality improvement | on target |

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| AFI 4 | Curriculum: To implement targeted interventions across all curriculum levels from the retention and achievement strategies and timetabling guidance to meet the retention, achievement and progression targets in line with the College Development Plan | Whole college retention across L1-L5 is not going to achieve the ambitious target of 90%, currently sitting at 91.5% but some areas are below target which will impact final ETI data sets. |
| AFI 5 | To significantly improve outcomes for those studying Essential Skills | Work in Progress. Data analysis shows that the fast-track cohorts have better outcomes with pass rate of 40+% as opposed to college average of 24% |
| AFI 6 | Develop and implement a comprehensive resource and Staff Development Strategy to deliver curriculum excellence through robust Curriculum Resource Planning, the innovative Staff Development Programme and through future proofing identify current and future skills shortages in high-priority sectors to create responsive training programmes. | Staffing Plan is complete for September 2025. Staff development for October 2025 – Annual Conference, planning is underway to include AI and Pebble Platform for projects |
| AFI 7 | Continue to ensure financial stability and through innovation and creativity explore additional funding streams | achieved |
| AFI 8 | Continuously enhance student support services and engagement strategies to improve students experience and outcomes by providing pathways to work in support of a more inclusive society | on target and recent contact with ETI suggests that the agenda around SEN Provision is moving forward in line with ministerial priorities. |
| AFI 9 | To recognise the importance of campus safety and good citizenship in line with the Programme for Government | on target |

Mr P Thompson joined the meeting during this item.

Further highlights included updates on the ETI Evaluations 2024/25 on the Step Up Programme, noting the positive outcomes and good practice identified. Two areas for action were identified (Ref EC 73.5, Report 5).

The Evaluation of the Traineeship Programme noted positive outcomes with three areas for action identified (Ref EC 73.5, Report 7). One of these areas was discussed earlier in the meeting (Ref AFI 5) in relation to the challenges with Essential Skills. Action Plans have been drawn up to improve outcomes across the NI Traineeship programmes and Essential Skills. The outcomes for Essential Skills across the sector and within the collective programme have been raised as a concern, especially in relation to numeracy. While good practice has been identified in some colleges an action plan for improvement for Essential Skills within Traineeships has been requested as well as a plan for the other Traineeship recommendations, from each college.

It is anticipated that there will be a focus on a collective cpd and sharing of best practice in 2025/26; while other aspects of the Essential Skills e.g. format of the syllabus and examination and assessment should also be reviewed.

The Whole College Quality Improvement Plan 2024/27 was referred to. The nine key actions were again highlighted (Report 2). If Committee members had any queries/comments they were requested to forward these to the Governing Body Secretary.

A question and answer session followed on AI and the SEN agenda, one of the ministerial priorities.

The Committee Chair thanked everyone for the input into the presentation and discussion.

Mrs K Moore left the meeting at this juncture.

73.1 WELCOME

The Committee Chair opened the meeting formally and welcomed everyone.

73.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no conflicts of interest declarations. There were no declarations of any other business.

73.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2025

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report Draft Education Committee Minutes of the meeting held on
12 February 2025

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

PROPOSED, Mr B O'Neill

SECONDED, Mr B Dougherty

REPORT 1 MATTERS ARISING – February 2025 Committee Meeting

- **72.6, Report 1** Dates to be agreed in September 2025 for Board training delivered by White Ribbon NI.
- **72.6, Report 2** Approval was received at the Governing Body Meeting held on 12 March 2025 to commission a piece of work to capture data in relation to the social value for learners. **An update/report will be provided at the next Committee meeting.**
- Mr B O'Neill forwarded information to Dr O'Mullan and Ms Moss as agreed.

73.4 COMMITTEE CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Committee Chair reported he had visited Greystone Campus and was very impressed with what the facility has to offer. The Committee Chair suggested it would be useful for a Committee meeting to be held in Greystone to give Governors the opportunity for a walkabout.

Report 1 Committee Membership – verbal Report

Following the recent staff election in April 2025, Mrs Orlaith McEleney was duly elected as Support Staff representative on the Board.

The Committee were content to recommend to the Governing Body for Mrs McEleney to serve on the Education Committee.

PROPOSED, Mr B O'Neill

SECONDED, Mr B Dougherty

73.5 MANAGEMENT REPORT – Dr C O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards.**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

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| EC 73.5 | Management Report |
| Report 1 | College Development Plan Progress – March 2025 |
| Report 2 | Communication from Ms L Watson, Director of FE - CDP 2025/26 Commissioning |
| Report 3 | Draft College Development Plan 2025/26 |
| Report 4 | Educational Report Card 2025/26 Guidance Notes |
| Report 5 | ETI Evaluation of the Step Up Project in NWRC – October 2024 |
| Report 6 | ETI Evaluation of the Step Up Project in FE Colleges in NI – April 2025 |
| Report 7 | ETI Evaluation of the Traineeship Programme in NWRC – May 2025 |
| Report 8 | ETI Evaluation of the Traineeship Programme in FE Colleges in NI – May 2025 |
| Report 9 | Correspondence ETI SEN Visit |
| Report 10 | Sustainability and Social Responsibility Report |
| Report 11 | Peace Plus Project Grid |
| Report 12 | Academic Standards Committee Minutes March 2025 |

EC 73.5 Management Report**Report 1 College Development Plan 2024/25 Update – March 2025**

The progress as at 28 March 2025 showed the College achieved 95% of full-time targets. APPNI targets were exceeded and there was an increase of 14% in full-time HE learners against 2023/24 HE enrolments.

Following a targeted focus in semester 2 (2024/25), at the end of March 2025, 89% of the part-time, individual enrolment target was achieved (KPI 2.1).

The retention rate at the end of March 2025 was 91.5% (KPI 2.4).

In relation to enrolment versus individual targets for 2024/25, targets were achieved in enrolments, however despite the focus in Semester 2 on short, part-time courses there was a shortfall in individual targets. The focus will continue for the 2025/26 academic year on short, part-time provision.

Report 2 Communication from Ms L Watson, Director of FE - CDP 2025/26 Commissioning

It was noted that the Department (DfE) have reviewed the timelines for receipt of the 2025/26 College Development Plan. Version 1 of the Draft College Development Plan was due with the Department (DfE) in May 2025, with submission of the final Draft CDP for Department (DfE) approval on 30 June 2025. The format has not changed significantly on the previous year.

Dr O'Mullan drew attention to figures 2 and 3 in the report, highlighting the emphasis on target setting for 2025/26 for both enrolments and individuals for curriculum activity. It is anticipated that the year end 2024/25 will show c 8000 individuals (slightly below the 2024/25 target but at 5% growth on 2023/24 and over 13300 enrolments (over target and growth on the 2023/24 figures). These figures have formed the baseline for planned growth for 2025/26.

Dr O'Mullan has led the four Heads of Faculty in a planning process relating to courses for all types of provision for 2025/26; recruitment targets have been set for all year groups; there has been an emphasis on sustaining an uplift in year 1 to year 2 retention rates, a planned increase in part-time, short courses provision including aspirational targets for community and outreach provision and achievement of targets for the delivery of Peace Plus funded activity.

There is also a focus on increasing the offer of additionality, e learning courses and micro credentials to new and existing learners broadening their educational experience.

As a result, the Directorate have collated a plan for 2025/26 targeting over 8,400 individuals and 13,600 enrolments. This reflects an uplift in planned activity again for 2025/26; and has been profiled into the present reduced budgetary constraints and triangulated with the Directorate Staffing Resource Plan.

NWRC leadership will receive initial feedback from DfE on the proposals on 23 June 2025.

Report 3 **Draft College Development Plan 2025/26**
Report 4 **Educational Report Card 2025/26 Guidance Notes**
Report 4.1 **Educational Report Card 2025/26**

The Head of Curriculum & Academic Standards drew particular attention to the four aims/outcomes and associated KPIs.

Aim 1 – Raise Productivity/Promote Regional Balance - the potential targets set are subject to confirmation of funding for some programmes.

Aim 2 – Good Jobs/Promote Regional Balance/Raise Productivity - for 2025/26 it is planned to increase the total number of individuals enrolled in the College from 7,995 individuals in 2023/24 to 8,405 individuals in 2025/26 academic year (Ref KPI 2.1).

- To increase the retention rate within the College from 89% to 90% in the 2025/26 academic year (Ref KPI 2.4)
- To increase the achievement rate within the College from 85% to 89% in the 2025/26 academic year (Ref KPI 2.5)

Aim 3 – Reduce Carbon Emissions - Evolving and substantial pieces of work ongoing with KPI's set to train College staff in delivery of green/sustainable skills with individuals participating on green/sustainable courses in the 2025/26 academic year. (Ref KPI 3.1, 3.2).

Aim 4 – Reduce Carbon Emissions - linking in with Estates Department to deliver against the Public Body reporting duties of the Climate Change legislation an energy efficient and sustainable estate.

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards added that the CDP is a responsive plan. Any identified, potential growth as the year progresses has been allowed for within the Staffing Plan and Budget.

A discussion followed on the demographic of students within quintiles in 1 and 2 and the College supports in place. The challenges with the 14-19 Action Plan were highlighted.

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards agreed to provide information on the postcode analysis of students. This might help identify particular gaps which may assist with marketing and targets.

The Committee were content to recommend the Draft College Development Plan 2025/26 to the Governing Body.

PROPOSED, Mr B Dougherty

SECONDED, Dr S Fisher

EC 73.5 Management Report

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards provided detail to the MaSN bid. The 2025/26 bid is an increase of 79 from 2024/25. The College submitted proposals to offer Level 6 to the Department on 31 March 2025. The Colleges is waiting Departmental (DfE) approval on the MaSN bid and also the Level 6 proposals.

Referring to retention rates, the overall retention as at 28 May 2025 was 91.69% down on May 2024 which was 92.33%. The full-time attendance rate is currently at 83.3% for full-time learners and 87.3% for part-time learners.

The wide range of courses planned to be delivered in the campuses for full-time and part-time for 2025/26 were noted.

Strategic issues reported by the Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards included the concern sector wise with the outcomes and also the impact on the reduction of the Essential Skills qualification equivalency against GCSE. The Department (DfE) and ETI are also looking into this matter. The focus for the College for the 2025/26 will be to continue staff development and good practice in delivering Essential Skills.

It was also noted that Dr O'Mullan is the College and Curriculum Director representative on the sector workforce group undertaking the work aligned to discussions on the implementation of the lecturer contract and workload, with management and Unions.

The Committee were apprised of the key highlights on the recent achievements in skills competitions, inter-Campus and regionally.

- Report 5** **ETI Evaluation of the Step Up Project in NWRC – October 2024**
- Report 6** **ETI Evaluation of the Step Up Project in FE Colleges in NI – April 2025**
- Report 7** **ETI Evaluation of the Traineeship Programme in NWRC – May 2025**
- Report 8** **ETI Evaluation of the Traineeship Programme in FE Colleges in NI – May 2025**

These reports were discussed earlier in the meeting under agenda item 73.0.

Report 10 Sustainability and Social Responsibility Report

The Committee noted the recent and upcoming cross College activities including securing external funds, new sustainability courses and events.

Report 11 Peace Plus Project Grid

The Peace Plus programmes were noted together with the targets. Funding for a number for significant projects has been secured focusing on digital, sustainability and green skills delivery by NWRC supporting the wider economic development in the North West. The funding is of the order of £1.132m per year over the next 2-4 years and staff will be recruited to support the delivery of training.

Report 12 Academic Standards Committee Minutes, March 2025

The Minutes were acknowledged and key points noted. The Adult Access provision (Level 3) was reviewed and reported through the ASC. It is hoped to increase the recruitment in these courses. A Task and Finish Group has been established for this purpose.

A short question and answer session followed.

The Committee Chair thanked Dr C O'Mullan.

73.6 MANAGEMENT REPORT – Client Services**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS****Report 1 Equality Report**

The Equality Report was noted.

73.7 CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence received.

73.8 SCHEDULE OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2025/26

The Schedule was noted.

73.9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

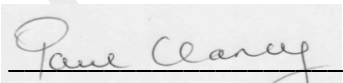
73.10 RESERVED BUSINESS

Taken separately.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 16 September 2025

The Committee Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and attendance and closed the meeting at 17:46.

Signed


Mr P Clancy, Committee Chair

Date 16 September 2025