

**MINUTES OF THE SEVENTY FIFTH MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
COMMENCING 16:00 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

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**PRESENT:** Mr P Clancy, Committee Chair  
Mr B Dougherty  
Dr S Fisher  
Mrs M Gormley  
Mrs O McEleney  
Mr P Thompson  
Ms V Toland

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Dr C O’Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards  
Ms G Moss, Head of Client Services  
Dr L Hegarty, Acting Head Quality & Performance (until 16:56)  
Mrs É Doherty, Secretary to the Governing Body

**APOLOGIES:** Mr L Murphy, Principal & CE  
Mr B O’Neill  
Mr F Smyth

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**75.1 WELCOME**

The Committee Chair, Mr Clancy opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

**75.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS AND DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

**75.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2025**

**PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

**Draft Education Committee Minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2025**

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

**PROPOSED**, Mr B Dougherty

**SECONDED**, Dr S Fisher

## **REPORT 1      MATTERS ARISING – September 2025 Committee Meeting**

Matters arising from the previous meeting were addressed through the following reports and presentations:

- Entitlement Framework Position (Report 1.1)
- Progression Analysis of Level 3 Occupational Studies (Report 1.2)
- Social Value Report (Report 3)
- Presentation on Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Report 4)

### **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

#### **Report 1.1 NWRC Entitlement Framework Position - July 2025**

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards reported that the College engages with three Area Learning Communities. Challenges remain in sustaining enrolment levels, with funding and competition for places being ongoing issues. Only 343 of 7,321 Year 11–14 pupils are engaged, with uptake concentrated in a small number of schools. While there is potential to broaden the reach, this is contingent on increased school engagement and additional funding. Relationships with schools are constructive; however, the College’s influence over area-based planning is limited. Entitlement Framework provision remains concentrated at Level 2, rather than at higher levels as planned, with a focus on the Limavady and Strabane campuses only.

The Committee discussed the findings and associated challenges.

### **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

#### **Report 1.2 Progression Analysis of Level 3 Occupational Studies 2021/22 -2024/25**

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards reported that the Occupational Studies programme offers alternative pathways for students, particularly those less engaged with the standard curriculum. Evidence indicates that Occupational Studies supports progression to Level 3 qualifications and apprenticeships. Funding remains a challenge for both schools and the College and the programme is not fully cost-effective. The College continues to promote excellence and maintain strong relationships with schools, but further expansion is limited by external factors including competition for school places. The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards will undertake some further exploration of the data.

## **75.4      COMMITTEE CHAIR’S BUSINESS**

### **Report 1      Committee Membership – verbal report**

Following an expression of interest Mrs S McMahon was nominated to join the Education Committee. Approval was sought for Mr M McCafferty, recently appointed Student Governor to join the Committee, pending receipt of the official Minute of Appointment from the Department (DfE).

**PROPOSED**, Dr S Fisher

**SECONDED**, Mrs M Gormley

**Report 2 AI Staff Conference – verbal report**

The Committee Chair reported on recent external and internal engagements, including attendance at the Tip O’Neill Diaspora Awards event. The Staff Conference, *Empowering Improvement – AI The Future for Further and Higher Education*, was held on 27 October 2025, with 151 staff attending. This featured keynote speakers, hands on demonstrations and practical sessions. The Committee Chair also attended the College HE Graduation Ceremony on 30 October 2025.

The Committee Chair and College staff with approximately 70 attendees attended the Network of Network Conference hosted by the College. This network is an informal alliance of regional and national grouping of colleges.

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

**75.5 MANAGEMENT REPORT – Dr C O’Mullan, Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards.**

**PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

**EC 75.5 Management Report**

The final draft of the CDP 2025/26 was re-submitted to the Department (DfE) on 30 September 2025 and final approval is pending (Ref EC 75.5, Report 1).

As of 4 November 2025, the College retention rate was 97%. The reasons for withdrawals (381) from courses was presented. The figures are consistent with previous years.

**Report 2 CDP Enrolment & Individual v Targets**

In terms of enrolment figures as at 5 November 2025 were: 74% of part-time, 95% of full-time, and 55% of Essential Skills targets achieved. This reflects a positive picture of part-time enrolments at this point in the academic year.

In relation to College individual targets v actuals as at 5 November 2025 the College has achieved 73% of part-time, 95% full time and 65% of Essential Skills. The focus will continue this year, aligning with a developing Community Strategy for short courses.

**Report 3 College Development Plan 2025/26**

**Report 4 NWRC Curriculum Strategy, October 2025**

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards noted the College Curriculum Plan and Strategy for 2025/26. A number of other colleges are developing three-year Corporate Plans and there is work ongoing to consider a collective Sector Curriculum Plan. The current Plan is underpinned by the College Strategy.

The Curriculum Strategy is influenced by government policy and the strategic direction of the Department (DfE). The extensive list of the relevant strategic documents was noted in the Strategy and taken into consideration when the Strategy was drafted.

Dr C O’Mullan then invited Dr L Hegarty, Acting Head of Quality & Performance to present the Quality Reports.

#### **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

##### **Report 5 Quality Report**

- The FELs retention data for 2024/25 decreased by 2.8%, achievement increased by 1.2% and success decreased by 1.4% compared to the previous year.
- The ETI data for 2024/25 showed overall there has been a slight increase in retention (0.3%) and a 3.1% increase in achievement.
- ETI Traineeship data for 2024/25 for retention and achievement are both classified as ‘good’.
- Courses with retention or achievement below 60% are subject to detailed review.

#### **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

##### **Report 6 Complaints & Compliments Report 2024/25**

- Both complaints and compliments have declined compared to the previous year.
- Most compliments came from students, parents and external organizations, highlighting staff dedication and quality of teaching.
- Most complaints are resolved informally; five cases escalated to formal processes.
- An increasing trend in complaints from parents of students with special educational needs was noted.
- The College maintains strong links with the Equality Commission and continues to monitor and address trends.

The Committee discussed the Report. Governor questions were answered by the Senior Management Team. The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards **will enquire** as to the number of complaints upheld/not upheld in 2024/25.

#### **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

##### **Report 7 Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25**

Nine areas for improvement were identified; six have been achieved in the areas of (curriculum, partnerships, staff development, financial stability and student support). Three areas remain in progress; sustainability, essential skills and campus safety, these remain ongoing priorities. The detailed evidence was noted within the report. The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards noted the College awaits the Commissioning Letter for the Whole College Quality Improvement Plan for 2025/26 from the Department (DfE). The College is working towards this piece of work which will come to the Board in due course.

**Report 8      ETI Presentation – Evaluation of FE Colleges**

ETI are currently conducting a sector wide evaluation of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision. SEN has been identified as a key Government priority. The College and Sector Summary Reports will be shared with the Committee in due course. SEN provision remains resource intensive. Initial informal feedback comments from ETI are positive in relation to practice at the College.

**The Director of Curriculum returned to the Management Report EC 75.5**

Following the recent ETI sector evaluation in Essential Skills a workshop was delivered for Essential Skills staff with a focus on improving outcomes in Essential Skills, in particular literacy and numeracy. The College is finalising its final Essential Skills Action Plan. This also is the case for Action Plans for the Traineeships. Both plans will dovetail into collective sector Action Plans. Discussions are still ongoing as to the reporting mechanisms for improvement.

This discussion was followed by the Committee noting the Literacy & Numeracy Strategy which has been comprehensively reviewed. (Ref; EC 75.5, Report 9).

The Committee received a summary of activities at the DIAL Centre and the HSC Curriculum Hub, including cross border collaborations. The College have received confirmation that the Education, Skills & Training: Empowering Economic Mobility (ESTEEM) Project bid was successful with funding secured for €305k.

**PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

**Report 10      Peace Plus Project Update**

The Committee noted the progress of various PEACEPLUS projects.

**PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

**Report 11      Correspondence from DfE Re Level 6**

Approval was received for the College to proceed with the part-time delivery of the Level 6, BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies to commence in January 2026. Collaboration continues with stakeholders to streamline the approval process for the Level 6 provision.

**The Director of Curriculum returned to the Management Report EC 75.5**

The Director updated the Committee on the extension of the Prison Programme Contract to March 2027, with ongoing work to improve the current SLA and prepare for future contract bids. The Committee Chair acknowledged and congratulated all staff on achieving Grade 4, the highest possible award, following the inspection at HMP Magilligan in September 2025.

Following reporting at the September 2025 Committee meeting that the DfE funding for Skills Competition would cease (Ref ED 74.5, Report 3), the Committee welcomed the Department's (DfE) invite for colleges to bid for funds in this area allowing the College to apply for support and continue with the skills activities. (Ref Report 12).

A strategic sector transformation plan has commenced, led by the Department (DfE) aiming to improve collaboration and to develop a sector Curriculum Plan. Curriculum Directors and Principals are involved.

The numerous competitions, awards and events were noted. Mr B Dougherty had previously shared earlier in the meeting a student success story, Jonathan Thompson, a music student, was recognised for his accomplishments. Jonathan was invited to perform with Sir James Galway. These awards provide significant benefits to students and their families by formally celebrating their achievements.

### **Report 13 Academic Standards Committee Minutes**

The Director of Curriculum & Academic Standards reported that student representation on the Committee has been established and is welcome. It is encouraging to see staff apply for the Fellowship Scheme.

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

## **75.6 MANAGEMENT REPORT – Client Services**

### **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

#### **Report 1 Equality Report**

The Head of Client Services reported ongoing work with NW Migrant Forum and the hosting of the Black Heritage History Project, noting positive student engagement and feedback.

**White Ribbon and End Violence Against Women & Girls** - the College's focus continues on supporting White Ribbon and addressing violence against women, including staff training and plans for a related conference.

### **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

#### **Report 2 Safeguarding Report**

There has been an increase in safeguarding cases, particularly related to anxiety and mental health. The College is working with the PSNI in cases involving psychosis.

The College received reaccreditation of the Carers Quality Standard 2025 and is currently supporting eight new carers this year.

There was an increase in students referred to and attended the College Counselling service. The Head of Client Services highlighted the marketing of some of the recent campaigns.

### **PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

#### **Report 3 Social Value Report**

The Head of Client Services brought the Committee through the new framework for tracking social value. A Social Value Steering Group will be established and tracking will be implemented through the Social Value Engine License.

The Committee Chair commended Ms Moss and Governor, Mr B O'Neill for their contributions to the Report.

**PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

**Report 4 Presentation – Special Educational Needs**

With reference to a PowerPoint presentation, the Committee were apprised of the number of students in full-time discrete (ASF03) curriculum areas, noting an increase in 2025/26 compared to 2024/25. The number of mainstream students accessing support (ASF02) across all categories has also risen relative to 2023/24. The challenges associated with SEN provision were discussed posed by static funding despite rising expectations and needs.

Recent achievements include Autism NI Award re-accreditation and the purchase of sensory spaces for high-need areas. The College's approach to transition support, including orientation days, collaboration with external partners and early assessment to ensure learning plans and supports are in place promptly was outlined.

The in-house Learning Support staff model provides continuity of support. ETI's sector wide review of SEN is ongoing, with findings to be presented to the Committee in due course.

**PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

**Report 5 Partnership Opportunity**

Collaboration is underway with the University of Haripur and the College Foodovation Centre. Further updates will be provided to the Committee as the partnership develops.

**75.7 CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence received.

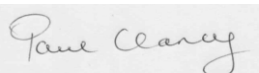
**75.8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was raised.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – 11 February 2026, thereafter, rescheduled to 16 February 2026.

The Committee Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and attendance with particular thanks to Dr S Fisher for chairing the September Committee meeting and Dr L Hegarty for delivering her reports.

The meeting concluded at 17:56.

Signed   
Mr Paul Clancy, Committee Chair

Date 16 February 2026