

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON TUESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 17.30, VIA TEAMS.

Present:

Mr Stuart Harper (Chair)
Mrs Lee Campbell (Principal / Chief Executive)
Dr Liz Finnigan
Dr Laura Milner
Dr Thomas Moore
Mrs Hilary Singleton
Mrs Angela Whiteside

In Attendance:

Ms Libby Shackels, Director of Curriculum
Mrs Elaine Nesbitt, Acting AD Apprenticeships & Essential Skills
Mr Gary Mackin, Head of Faculty BUTE
Mrs Carmel Murray, Head of Faculty HESC
Mr Stephen Rogan, Head of Faculty CDAC
Mr Matt Turner, Head of Faculty PRSE
Ms Carolyn Davison, AD FE, HE & Quality
Ms Sandra Barry, Acting Secretary to the Governing Body

Apologies:

The meeting convened at 17.30.

A01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

A02. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Chair reminded those present to declare at the commencement of the meeting interests held in any matter to be discussed. No interests were declared.

A03. MINUTES OF THE MEETING 28 MAY 2024

The Chair referred Members to the minutes of the last meeting held on 28 May 2024. These had recently been presented to the Governing Body meeting in unapproved draft form. The minutes were checked for accuracy and 2 minor amendments made.

The minutes were unanimously approved following a proposal from Dr Moore and seconded by Dr Finnigan.

A04. MATTERS ARISING

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

Ms Shackels advised that there has been no further progress made with AI, however sector meetings will be held from October onwards and it is hoped to get a sector agreed policy in place.

- **Thematic Approach**

Mr Harper discussed the thematic approach being used to focus on the recruitment position and student performance at this meeting. The December

ACTION BY WHOM
Ms Barry

meeting will focus on future curriculum including Higher Education (HE) and Higher-Level Apprenticeships (HLA).

- **Term of Reference (TORs)**

Mrs L Campbell advised that she is undertaking an initial review of TORs for all the committees.

- **Safeguarding**

Dr Milner advised that a safeguarding update will be presented after the next sector meeting.

- **Curriculum Strategy**

The curriculum strategy update is included in this meeting, agenda item 8.

Mrs L Campbell

A05. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

The Chair congratulated Mrs L Campbell on her new role as Principal and Chief Executive.

It was reported that the new student Governor, James Hutchinson, commences on 01 October 2024.

A06. EDUCATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair advised that the committee annual report covers everything that had taken place over the 2023-24 year. Members were asked to contact the Chair if any issue or topic needs addressed and advised that the governance effectiveness review will provide an opportunity to raise any issues.

A07. FACULTY PRESENTATION

- 2023-24 Student Performance
- 2024-25 Student Enrolment Update

Each Head of Faculty gave a presentation on their respective Faculty's for 2023-24 and responded to members questions.

- **Faculty of Building, Technology & Engineering (BUTE)**

Mr Mackin advised that his faculty had delivered 60 full time, 110 part time and 42 apprenticeship courses and noted that whilst these courses are predominantly male there are more females now undertaking courses.

Mr Mackin stated that this is the first year of his faculty running an Open University (OU) level 6 course and advised that he is immensely proud of the students who have been with us for the past number of years who have progressed to this course.

There are 12 students who will travel to the WorldSkills UK competition in Manchester and a former student Isaac Bingham has won the medallion of excellence in the WorldSkills competition in Lyon, this consisted of 1400 competitors across 70 countries. SRC are hosting the WorldSkills UK Automation Masterclass (Engineering Hub) for all NI colleges.

Mr Mackin advised of staff visits to the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE) 3D Construction printer in Drogheda to build partnerships for Construction & Engineering and all HLA students are to visit this site to develop further. New HLA level 6 Quantity Surveying and Construction course and Engineering Traineeships and Apprenticeships have been introduced.

Mr Mackin gave an update on the current enrolment position.

- **Faculty of Computing, Design and Academic Studies (CDAC)**

Mr Rogan advised that his Faculty has 42 full time courses covering various areas and 227 part time courses. 53% of the cohort are females. The HLA courses are engaging with 24 companies who have come back asking for a level 6 course.

There were outstanding results at A' level and were 13% higher than pre-Covid. The Media course had 100% achievement with all students obtaining a merit or distinction. This year, the first cohort of OU Computing for Industry BSc (Hons) Degree (Top-Up) graduated with 6 students achieving a First-Class Honours classification.

Mr Rogan advised the College is hosting the NI qualifier IT Support Technician / Network Infrastructure Technician in Armagh Campus. This is a first for the Faculty and will increase this competition strand.

Mr Rogan gave an update on the current enrolment position.

- **Faculty of Health & Science (HESC)**

Ms Murray advised that her Faculty runs 20 full time courses and 93 part time courses from level 2 to level 6 and 20% of the students are male. The Faculty works with 3 industry pharmaceutical companies, with other small science industries now coming onboard.

The Faculty had great success with The Royal College of Nursing Prince of Wales Cadet Scheme, this was the first cadet scheme in Northern Ireland. At the WorldSkills National Finals 1 student secured a gold medal in the Laboratory Technician category and a silver medal in Health and Social Care. Six students will be going to the National finals in November. The Level 3 Dental Nursing course had 100% achievement. A year 1 Applied Science student won a place at the prestigious space programme for young people in the University of Clear Lake, Texas, for 2 weeks over the summer break.

In partnership with Almac Group, the College was awarded the Mentor Award at DfE's Apprenticeship Awards 2024.

Ms Murray gave an update on the current enrolment position.

- **Faculty of Professional Services PRSE**

Mr Turner advised that his Faculty runs 30 full time, 150 part time and 12 apprenticeship courses, 60% of the courses are female. Many of the courses are outward facing in terms of hairdressing and beauty, sports and the restaurant.

The Faculty had 170 Graduates in the 2023-24 year. The first BSc Honours Degree in Sport and Exercise Science had 13 Graduates. All 9 students who

entered the IFEX competition won medals, 2 gold, 4 silver and 3 bronze. There are 2 students progressing to the WorldSkills UK competition in Culinary Arts and Restaurant Services. There were 6 course areas with 100% achievement.

Mr Turner gave an update on the current enrolment position.

Each Head of Faculty gave an update on the in-year position and plans going forward.

The Chair thanked all Heads of Faculty for giving their reports.

The Heads of Faculty left the meeting at 7pm.

A08. CURRICULUM STRATEGY UPDATE

Ms Shackels advised that a significant amount of work has taken place on the curriculum plan. Further work will be undertaken to ensure it aligns with the Economic Vision and the relevant objectives in the Programme for Government (PfG) and the Colleges updated strategic objectives.

Mrs Singleton advised that NIAO had recently issued a report focusing on development skills for NI future, in particular, the DfE skills strategy. Mrs Singleton noted the report was critical of the strategy in particular noting that for large sums of public funds spent it showed little demonstrable progress made in addressing the skills shortage with a weakness in governance and oversight strategies and a need for better use of data. In conclusion, they say it is difficult to see how DfE ensure all the skills programmes it funds align with the skills needs in Northern Ireland. The first recommendation refers to the TAMS system, stating that DfE has been unable to produce fully validated progress reports and immediate action must be taken and DfE should focus spend on skills programmes in achieving skills. Mrs Singleton stated that this audit report is worrying for both the sector and DfE and feels that Mrs L Campbell is correct to put the curriculum strategy on hold until DfE resolve issues.

The Chair thanked Ms Shackels and Mrs Singleton for their discussion.

A09. WHOLE COLLEGE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT (WCQIP)

The Whole College Quality Improvement Plan (WCQIP) was discussed.

The Chair queried the timescale and Ms Davison advised that the sector is undertaking a piece of work to align the WCQIP college development planning process. DfE are using 2024-25 as a transition year.

Dr Moore felt the exercise should focus on driving up quality. Ms Davison assured Members that robust processes are in place in the College.

A10. CURRICULUM DIRECTORS' WORKING GROUP (CDWG)

Ms Shackels advised that the Curriculum Directors' Working Group continue to meet fortnightly and have reviewed key priorities for 2024-25.

A11. CIRCULARS

- Sector FT MaSN Position

Members were directed to the DfE letter outlining the Maximum Student Number Allocation (MaSN) for 2024-25. The allocation of full-time places for SRC for 2024-25 is 264.

A13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No further business to be discussed.

The Chair thanked Members for their attendance.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled for Wednesday 04 December 2024 at 18.30pm in the Boardroom of Newry West Campus.

The meeting concluded at 19.23pm


CHAIR

4th Dec 2024
DATE

