

## SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**  
held on Wednesday 3 June 2026 at 5.00 pm  
in the Boardroom, Dungannon Campus and via Microsoft Teams

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| <b>PRESENT:</b>       | Mrs Maureen Brunt<br>Dr Frances Campbell<br>Mr Tom Corr<br>Dr David Cutting<br>Mrs Maria Hackett<br>Mrs Sandra Isherwood, Committee Chair<br>Mr Ryan Kearney<br>Dr Nichola Melanaphy<br>Dr Lynsey Quinn |
| <b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b> | Ms Pdraig McNamee, Director of Curriculum<br>Breidge Morrison, Notetaker                                                                                                                                |
| <b>APOLOGIES:</b>     | Ms Celine McCartan, Principal & Chief Executive                                                                                                                                                         |

### **1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES**

Mrs Isherwood welcomed all present to the last committee meeting of the 2025/26 academic year.

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Ms Celine McCartan.

### **2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

None declared.

### **3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of 18 March 2026 Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee Meeting.

### **4.0 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04.01 List of Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 04.02 Management Update on Key Strategic Issues

#### **4.1 Curriculum Strategy, CDP Performance and Provision Sustainability**

Mr McNamee reported a strong year in Curriculum and Quality, with high enrolment and retention rates and effective engagement across key sectors. Evidence confirmed that

curriculum provision continues to meet the three core tests of demand, delivery capability, and financial viability.

The Three-Year Curriculum Plan (2025–2028), developed through extensive consultation, sets out a clear strategic vision encompassing staffing, accommodation, and resource requirements, alongside priority growth areas including AI, Green Skills and Engineering. In-year performance remains strong, with enrolments exceeding target and positive progress across innovation, tailored training, Skill Up, and social inclusion initiatives. SWC was also recognised as the largest provider in employer engagement for HLAs.

Challenges remain in ensuring delivery of this ambition, particularly in Full-Time HE provision, adult participation (25+), and ongoing pressures in the post-16 market. It was noted that schools are increasingly retaining learners through a more diversified offer, potentially including broader extracurricular provision. Discussion also took place regarding the recognition and value of extended diplomas by universities.

Mr McNamee advised that SWC will continue monitoring and reporting on areas of weaker recruitment and actions to address post-16 and adult participation challenges.

#### **4.2 Learner Experience**

Mr McNamee reported high levels of student satisfaction, supported by strong student voice and quality assurance evidence. The 2025/26 Learning and Teaching Survey achieved a 78% response rate, with very high agreement levels (93–99%) across key areas including teaching quality, learner support, inclusion, and practical learning. External verification outcomes were satisfactory, with no risks to student achievement, and a JCQ inspection confirmed fully compliant exam management and security.

Areas for continued focus include enhancing active and collaborative learning, improving assessment feedback, ensuring consistency of resources, strengthening industry engagement, clarifying progression pathways, and maintaining capacity in learning support.

In light of this positive assurance, it was agreed that the risk relating to the quality of the student experience, which has remained on the register since the Covid period, can now be downgraded.

#### **4.3 Review of Special Educational Needs Provision**

Mr McNamee reported that SEN and inclusive provision remain strategic priorities and continue to gain increased recognition within DfE, with the College's direction closely aligned to departmental strategy. A strong emphasis is being placed on embedding a whole-college inclusive ethos, moving away from viewing SEN as a discrete area and ensuring inclusion is integrated across all provision. Strengthening transition arrangements at the point of entry, including consideration of statutory requirements, was highlighted as a key priority.

Mr McNamee confirmed that SEN and inclusive progression, supported by a range of initiatives including the new SEN curriculum model, the *Bright Sparks* pilot, supported employment activities, and the *Bridge to Build* project (£130k funding), all aimed at improving progression to independence, further learning, and employment.

Mr McNamee stated that increasing demand for supported provision is creating resourcing pressures, particularly in relation to Learning Support Worker capacity and the complexity of learner needs within current funding models. Ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure sustainability.

Overall, the shift towards a whole-college approach to inclusion, aligned with the SEN project, was endorsed, with continued focus on strengthening transition planning and learner outcomes.

#### **4.4 Essential Skills**

Mr McNamee reported that Essential Skills remains a significant and sector-wide challenge, particularly where literacy and numeracy needs have not been fully addressed prior to entry to Further Education. Both the Sector Essential Skills Improvement Plan and the College's internal plan are being progressed, alongside ongoing consideration of the balance between Essential Skills and GCSE pathways.

Mr McNamee advised that Essential Skills within traineeships continues to be a key focus for quality and progression. Improved induction processes, entry validation, and qualification audits have strengthened identification and tracking of learners. Retention remains strong (92% Literacy, 91% Numeracy), although attendance is more variable. A range of delivery models has been piloted, supported by multiple exam opportunities and interim review points to identify and support at-risk learners, with GCSE pathways utilised where appropriate.

Key risks include uncertainty of final achievement outcomes until August 2026, ongoing attendance challenges, limited availability of sample assessment materials, and staffing and timetabling pressures associated with GCSE delivery. Continued oversight will be required to ensure that current improvement actions translate into sustained outcomes.

#### **4.5 Partnerships & Collaboration**

Mr McNamee advised that partnership activity continues to expand and strengthen the College's regional impact, supported by growing networks of strategic partners, increased employer engagement, and strong international collaboration. Key programmes including Skills Focus, Skill Up, and InnovateUs have performed well, exceeding targets and supporting SMEs across priority areas such as digital transformation, advanced manufacturing, and sustainability. International activity remains robust, with Turing mobilities underway and continued delivery of projects including GRASP, STRIDE, and PRISM.

The Committee noted the importance of these partnerships in contributing to local industry and enhancing learner opportunities. However, funding sustainability remains a key strategic risk, with uncertainty and potential reductions across several programmes (including REAP, Skill Up, InnovateUs, Going Places, and mobility funding). Scenario planning is underway, alongside efforts to identify alternative funding sources, to mitigate risks and maintain delivery and impact.

#### **5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report

- Paper 05.01 CDP Update
- Paper 05.02 Annex A KPI Update March 2026
- Paper 05.03 Enrolment Update
- Paper 05.04 Executive Summary - Areas of Underperformance
- Paper 05.05 Essential Skills in Traineeship Report
- Paper 05.06 SWC Curriculum Plan 2025-28 V3.0
- Paper 05.07 Quality Report
- Paper 05.08 SWC Quality Improvement Plan 2024-2027 Update
- Paper 05.09 Safeguarding Report
- Paper 05.10 Business Development Report
- Paper 05.11 Social Inclusion Report
- Paper 05.12 Marketing Report
- Paper 05.13 SWC Internal Audit Student Recruitment Report
- Paper 05.14 FE Personal Tutoring & Academic Support Policy V6.0
- Paper 05.15 HE Attendance Policy V3.0
- Paper 05.16 HE Student Engagement Policy V2.0
- Paper 05.17 Learning Support Policy V2.0

## **5.1 College Development Plan Progress**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2 and Papers 05.01 - 05.05*

Mr McNamee advised that SWC is performing strongly across most areas, with positive outcomes in curriculum delivery and key performance indicators. Areas of concern remain in full-time HE and FE recruitment, adult learner participation, and certain funded programmes.

In response to queries from members, it was confirmed that a pilot approach in Essential Skills has been undertaken to test alternative delivery methods, with outcomes awaited at sector level.

Mr McNamee clarified the pipeline approach which focuses on identifying gaps in provision, assessing demand, delivery capability, and funding availability. This includes the development of new green skills and renewable provision, primarily as specialist “top-up” courses for learners already working within relevant vocational areas such as construction, automotive, and engineering, supported through programmes including GRASP and PRISM.

Traineeships were noted as well embedded within business-as-usual delivery, with apprenticeships and HLAs continuing to perform strongly, including growth in non-traditional areas. Essential Skills outcomes remain positive, with retention and achievement above sector averages.

Members noted wider sector developments, including ongoing Level 3 qualification reform in England, and a targeted recruitment campaign aimed at improving full-time HE uptake. It was also confirmed that while HLAs provide strong employer engagement, full-time HE provision remains more financially advantageous.

## **5.2 Curriculum Strategy and Planning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3 and Paper 05.06*

Mr McNamee presented the Three-Year Curriculum Plan (2025–2028) which provides a clear and structured framework for the phased development of curriculum provision over the next three years.

He emphasised that all curriculum decisions are underpinned by three key tests: value, capability and viability. These criteria guide decisions on whether provision should be expanded, maintained, enhanced, redesigned, or discontinued.

The Plan identifies key growth areas including green skills, digital and AI capability, advanced manufacturing and engineering, health and life sciences, SEND and inclusive provision, apprenticeships, Higher Level Apprenticeships, and flexible adult upskilling.

The Committee noted that successful delivery will depend on aligning strategic ambition with operational capacity. Key risks include constraints in specialist staffing and accommodation, resource and equipment requirements, maintaining quality in new delivery models, and ensuring robust data informs decision-making.

**AGREED: The Committee endorsed the Three-Year Curriculum Plan and its structured, evidence-based approach to curriculum development.**

### **5.3 Quality Assurance and Student Experience**

*Ref: Management Report Section 4 and Papers 05.07 - 05.08*

Mr McNamee welcomed Mr McIllduff, who confirmed that external verification activity has progressed positively, with no issues of maladministration anticipated.

Mr McIllduff reported that student voice activity, including surveys, focus groups, and follow-up analysis, provided strong assurance. The 2025/26 Learning and Teaching Survey achieved a 78% response rate with very high agreement levels (93 - 99%) across key areas such as teaching quality, learner support, inclusion, and practical learning. Focus group feedback was also positive, particularly in relation to staff–student relationships and practical, skills-based learning.

Areas identified for further improvement include assessment feedback, increased active learning, consistency of resources, strengthening industry engagement, and improving progression clarity. Scholarship provision remains challenging due to restrictive eligibility criteria.

Mr McIllduff updated members on progress against the Whole College Quality Improvement Plan (2024–2027), noting that 14 of 22 actions have been completed, with significant progress in strengthening internal assurance boards and embedding student voice more systematically across the curriculum. While the delivery of a fully sustainable curriculum remains challenging, progress is being made through the development of green skills provision via GRASP and PRISM projects, albeit through a revised delivery approach.

Student voice is now increasingly embedded as standard practice within curriculum management. Members also received clarification on operational matters, including improved coordination of traineeship placements through a dedicated Training Support Officer, and ongoing challenges with staff induction processes linked to delays in system

access. It was confirmed that corporate training modules will be incorporated into staff programmes of work and CPD schedules.

Mr McIllduff reported that SWC is implementing both college-level and sector-level essential skills improvement plans, including a pilot programme offering alternative assessment routes and fast-track delivery methods to enhance student achievement. Following a sector evaluation, the college developed action plans to increase completion rates, promote GCSE resits for students with grade D, and expand external work placements, with ongoing reporting to the Department for the Economy (DfE).

Mr McNamee highlighted that overlapping Sector requirements and reporting processes have created confusion and additional administrative burden.

Members acknowledged the difficulty in determining the most appropriate pathway (Essential Skills or GCSE) for learners, emphasising the importance of placing students on programmes aligned to their individual needs and likelihood of success and early indications suggest that Fast Track Essential Skills delivery has been effective.

#### **5.4 Examinations, Student Support and Safeguarding**

*Ref: Management Report Section 5 and Paper 05.09*

Mr McIllduff advised that the summer examination window is progressing well, with a high volume of entries and no reported malpractice. JCQ inspections across campuses confirmed full compliance with examination management and security requirements.

Student support needs continue to increase, reflected in a significant rise in access arrangements, placing additional administrative and resourcing pressures on support services.

**Mrs Quinn left the meeting at 18:00**

**Mr McIllduff left the meeting at 18:13**

#### **5.5 Resourcing Considerations**

*Ref: Management Report Section 6*

Mr McNamee reported that work is progressing to develop flexible specialist resourcing through a consultant model to support delivery without impacting core provision. Ongoing challenges remain in maintaining Learning Support Worker capacity, though this is being actively managed.

Accommodation constraints have been reached in some curriculum areas, with improved timetabling and space planning introduced to maximise existing capacity, and future growth aligned to available resources.

#### **5.6 Business Development, Innovation and International Activity**

*Ref: Management Report Section 7 and Papers 05.10*

Mr McNamee advised that performance across Skills Focus, Skill Up and InnovateUs remains strong, with high levels of course delivery achieved. While funding for the coming

year remains uncertain, the College is actively exploring alternative funding streams to sustain activity levels projects such as GRASP, STRIDE and PRISM are progressing.

International programmes continue to perform well and student mobility opportunities expanding, including Erasmus applications, which are expected to further enhance international engagement.

## **5.7 Social Inclusion and Employability**

*Ref: Management Report Section 8 and Papers 05.11*

Mr McNamee advised that Youthscape continues to perform strongly, with positive recognition through the Labour Market Partnership and strong employer engagement. While funding uncertainties remain for next year, alternative options have been identified to sustain delivery.

Level 1 programmes, delivered through a mentor-led, vocationally focused model, were highlighted as a key strength with continued growth anticipated, although there is a risk of scaling back due to funding pressures. Work is also progressing through LMP academies to support apprenticeship pipeline development.

## **5.8 Marketing and Student Recruitment**

*Ref: Management Report Section 9 and Papers 05.12 - 05.13*

Mr McNamee advised that current marketing and advertising activity is progressing well, including promotion of Skills Focus and Skill Up. An Internal Audit of recruitment processes provided the highest level of assurance, with one recommendation to explore the use of AI in recruitment. This has been referred to the Digital Steering Committee, with plans to pilot its implementation.

## **5.9 Policy Review**

*Ref: Management Report Section 10 and Papers 05.14 - 05.17*

Mr McNamee presented updated policies, including FE Personal Tutoring and Academic Support Policy, HE Attendance Policy, HE Student Engagement Policy, and Learning Support Policy for approval.

**AGREED: That the policies are recommended for approval at the Governing Body meeting.**

## **6.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 List of Outstanding Actions

Mrs Isherwood advised there were no outstanding actions.

## **7.0 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE'S PERFORMANCE IN 2025/26**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Review of Committee's Performance in 2025/26

Mrs Isherwood advised that the self-assessment checklist had been completed where factual responses were available and invited members' views on any additional matters for consideration in the coming year, including the scope of business and the appropriateness of the Committee's skills and expertise.

The Committee confirmed that all planned business had been effectively covered during the year, with any outstanding matters to be progressed in the next cycle. It was agreed that a continued focus on sustainability would support future considerations, including staffing and curriculum development.

Members also reflected on the skills, knowledge and competencies within the Committee and agreed that enhancing expertise in sustainability and green skills would further strengthen its effectiveness.

**AGREED: The Committee confirmed that its business had been effectively discharged and endorsed a continued focus on sustainability priorities.**

**ACTION: Consider the inclusion of a Committee member with specific expertise in green skills and sustainability for the next academic year.**

#### **8.0 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2026/27**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08                      Schedule of Meetings 2026/27

**AGREED: acceptance of the proposed schedule of Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee meetings for 2026/27.**

#### **9.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

No further business was raised.

#### **10.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING**

Members noted their satisfaction with the effectiveness of the meeting.

Mr Kearney, Mr Corr and Mrs Melanaphy left the meeting at this juncture.

***The meeting concluded at 6.39 pm.***

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE 2026**

**GB CHAIRPERSON \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_**