

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**
held on Wednesday 22 October 2025 at 5.10 pm
in the Boardroom, Dungannon Campus

PRESENT: Mrs Maureen Brunt (*via MS Teams*)
Dr Frances Campbell
Mr Tom Corr (*via MS Teams*)
Dr David Cutting (*via MS Teams*)
Mrs Sandra Isherwood, Committee Chair
Ms Celine McCartan, Principal & Chief Executive
Dr Lynsey Quinn (*via MS Teams*)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
Mr Ciaran McManus, Director of Development & Support
Mr Padraig McNamee, Director of Curriculum

APOLOGIES: Mrs Maria Hackett
Dr Nichola Melanaphy

1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES

Mrs Isherwood welcomed all present to the first meeting of the 2025/26 academic year.
Apologies were tendered on behalf of Mrs Hackett and Dr Melanaphy.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Dr Quinn declared her employment with the Open University.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 28 May 2025.

Mrs McCauley undertook to correct an error identified by Dr Cutting.

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 Profile

Ms McCartan confirmed the alignment of the College's draft Curriculum Strategy with Department for the Economy (DfE) priorities, advised of the development of associated operational plans at directorate level, reported the commencement of 18 new programmes

in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to meet industry need and spoke of the potential development of a Curriculum Intelligence Hub to inform future curriculum design.

4.2 Student Experience

Ms McCartan advised of the high satisfaction rates evidenced in the 2025 National Student Survey and reported on the expansion of the student voice framework.

The student governor elect's forthcoming membership of the Committee upon his appointment to the Governing Body by DfE was also noted.

4.3 Essential Skills

Ms McCartan reminded the meeting of the historical challenge in relation to Essential Skills success rates and reported on improved performance in this area as a result of the ongoing implementation of the Essential Skills Quality Improvement Plan.

In response to questions and comments from members, management outlined the interventions put in place as part of the Essential Skills Quality Improvement Plan including enhanced mentoring, timetable amendments and additional staff training. The meeting was also made aware of forthcoming challenges due to the reduction in the Essential Skills to GCSE equivalency rate and the end of funding for enhanced mentoring under the Multiply Adult Numeracy Programme.

4.4 Review of Special Educational Needs Provision

Ms McCartan reminded members of the significant review undertaken of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, highlighting the establishment of the SEN-SE Project and the commencement of the Bright Sparks pilot and the Bridge to Build initiative.

She referenced DfE's Review of Post-School Education, Skills and Training Provision, and Associated Legislative Protections, for Young People with Special Educational Needs as well as the forthcoming Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) evaluation of Further Education (FE) colleges' discrete provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD). She spoke of the differing provision for SLDD within the sector derived to meet local need and of the concern regarding the assessment framework to be used in the forthcoming review.

Management also commented on the pressure presented by the indications of a significant increase in demand for SEN provision in future years as well as on the challenge reported by lecturing staff in addressing the needs of students with additional needs.

In response to questions and comments from members, management advised of the implications for SEN students of amendments to examination access arrangements set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), commented on the positive impact of the interventions put in place through the Multiply Adult Numeracy Programme, informed the meeting of the new student representation and communication framework, and undertook to consider a college response to a number of government consultations.

Ms McCartan went on to reflect on the College's four strategic priorities of Learner Experience, Sustainability, Governance & Culture and Partnership & Collaboration and their alignment with the key strategic issues of committees. It was then suggested that Curriculum Profile is de-escalated as a key strategic issue for the Committee and that Partnership & Collaboration is added for reporting on a bi-annual basis.

AGREED: to amend the Committee's key strategic issues to remove Curriculum Profile and to add Partnerships & Collaboration.

5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 Sector Traineeship Quality Improvement Plan
- Paper 05.02 Work Based Learning Update
- Paper 05.03 Skills for Life & Work Support Change and SWC Response
- Paper 05.04 SWC Higher Education Strategy
- Paper 05.05 Validation Agreement Open University & SWC
- Paper 05.06 Changes to Essential Skills Equivalence
- Paper 05.07 Essential Skills Sector Quality Improvement Plan
- Paper 05.08 Review of Post-School SEN Education, Skills & Training Provision
- Paper 05.09 ETI Briefing for Colleges
- Paper 05.10 Draft SWC Curriculum Strategy 2025-28
- Paper 05.11 EIC Curriculum Plan 2025/26
- Paper 05.12 SWC Quality Improvement Plan 2024-27 Progress Report
- Paper 05.13 National Student Survey 2025 Results Analysis
- Paper 05.14 Higher Education Student Voice Report 2024/25
- Paper 05.15 Changes to JCQ Exam Arrangements
- Paper 05.16 Sector Competitions Information
- Paper 05.17 Business Development Report
- Paper 05.18 Social Inclusion Report
- Paper 05.19 Lecturers' Contract Implementation Guidelines 2025/26
- Paper 05.20 Marketing Report
- Paper 05.21 DSWC Terms & Conditions 2026/27
- Paper 05.22 Examinations Policy
- Paper 05.23 Examinations Conflict of Interest Policy
- Paper 05.24 Examinations Malpractice Policy
- Paper 05.25 Examinations Word Processing Policy
- Paper 05.26 Student Attendance Policy
- Paper 05.27 Artificial Intelligence Policy
- Paper 05.28 Learner Work Placement & Work Experience Policy
- Paper 05.29 Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy.

5.1 College Development Plan Performance

5.1.1 2024/25 Performance

Ref: Management Report Section 2.1

Mr McNamee made the Committee aware of the College's good performance against 2024/25 College Development Plan targets, highlighting the overachievement of student number projections.

5.1.2 2025/26 Enrolments

Ref: Management Report Section 2.1

Mr McNamee provided an overview of enrolments to date in 2025/26, noting strong recruitment to FE, Traineeship, Apprenticeship and Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) programmes, and slower recruitment to Higher Education (HE) programmes, due in part to competition from universities. The strong recruitment was commended in light of population decline and it was noted that an analysis of the impact of demographics on enrolments is underway.

5.1.3 2024/25 Success Rates

Ref: Management Report Section 2.2

Mr McNamee advised of a marginal decrease in the HE success rate in 2024/25, albeit from a high base, and of an increase in success rates in all other areas.

5.1.4 Curriculum Development

Ref: Management Report Section 2.3 and Papers 05.01 – 05.09

Mr McNamee referenced the updates provided in the Management Report on curriculum development, highlighting the renewed validation agreement with the Open University, the Higher Education Strategy 2025-28 for the Committee's consideration and the opportunity for Governing Body representation on the Higher Education Academic Board.

AGREED: that the Higher Education Strategy 2025-28 is recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

ACTION: Mrs McCauley to seek expressions of interest from committee members in membership of the Higher Education Academic Board.

5.1.5 Curriculum Priorities and Plans

Ref: Management Report Section 2.4 and Papers 05.10 & 05.11

Mr McNamee referenced the draft 2025-2028 Curriculum Strategy in paper 05.10 and invited feedback from members through the Secretary to the Governing Body to inform its further development. Ms McCartan commented on the College's strategic framework and spoke of her satisfaction with the synergies between departmental plans and the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan.

5.2 Quality Assurance

5.2.1 Progress of 2023/24 Quality Improvement Plan

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 05.12

The update in the Management Report on the progress of the 2024-2027 Quality Improvement Plan was noted by the Committee.

5.2.2 Student Feedback

Ref: Management Report Section 3.2 and Papers 05.13 & 05.14

In response to a query from a member, Mr McNamee spoke of the commitment to communicate actions taken in response to feedback to the student body.

5.2.3 Teaching and Learning

Ref: Management Report Section 3.3

Mr McNamee explained that the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy is under review informed by the outcome of the recent ETI evaluation of the Traineeship Programme.

5.2.4 Student Support

Ref: Management Report Section 3.4

In response to a query from a member, the meeting was made aware of the limited volume of applications for student bursaries and it was suggested that awareness of the support available is raised through student representatives.

5.2.5 Examinations

Ref: Management Report Section 3.5 and Paper 05.15

Mr McNamee highlighted the amendments to examination access arrangements set out by JCQ.

5.2.6 Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (SLDD)

Ref: Management Report Section 3.6

The update in the Management Report on SLDD was noted by the Committee.

5.2.7 Skills Competitions

Ref: Management Report Section 3.7 and Paper 05.16

Mr McNamee informed the meeting of the qualification of college students, including two SEN students, for the Worldskills UK National Finals.

5.3 Safeguarding

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0

It was noted that there were no safeguarding incidents in the reporting period.

5.4 Business Development Activity

Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Paper 05.17

The updates provided in the Management Report on the STRIDE and GRASP PeacePlus funded projects were noted by the Committee.

5.5 Partnerships & Collaboration

Mr McManus provided an overview of the scope of Work Based Learning provision and associated industry partnerships within the College, noting continuing growth in this area. He spoke of the competition from private training providers for apprentices in service industries and the partnerships forged to meet demand for apprenticeships in traditional trade industries.

He also made the Committee aware of the challenge presented by the resignation of the Head of Work Based Learning and of the opportunity presented to review structures and operations.

5.6 Social Inclusion

Ref: Management Report Section 6.0 and Paper 05.18

Mr McManus provided an update on the progress of the REAP, Youthscape+ and Step Up projects, highlighting the preparations underway to develop an application for funding for an initiative to follow the REAP project, the increased recruitment to the Youthscape+ project and the additional specialist support provided to students on the Skills for Life and Work course through the Step Up programme.

Members commented on the growing evidence to attest to the valuable impact of mentor support.

5.7 Strategic Partnerships

Ref: Management Report Section 7.0

Mr McManus provided an overview of the proposal to develop a Concrete Sustainability & Innovation Centre to support the concrete industry in its decarbonisation targets.

Ms McCartan reminded the Committee of the Governing Body's endorsement at its December 2024 strategy meeting of the development of projects in relation to SEN, Decarbonisation within the Concrete Industry and Sustainability within the Green Technology, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Industries and reflected on the progress made in all three areas.

5.8 Externally Funded Projects

Ref: Management Report Section 8.0

Mr McManus commented on the value of the skills academies and Labour Market Partnership initiatives delivered by the College in raising awareness of college activity.

5.9 International Activity

Ref: Management Report Section 9.0

The update provided in the Management Report on the Turing Scheme was noted by the Committee.

5.10 Resourcing Considerations

Ref: Management Report Section 10.0 and Paper 05.19

The update provided in the Management Report on resourcing considerations was noted by the Committee.

5.11 Events, PR & Marketing

Ref: Management Report Section 11.0 and Paper 05.20

The Marketing Report was noted by the Committee.

5.12 Policy Reviews

Ref: Management Report Section 12.0 and Papers 05.21 – 05.29

Management undertook to further review the Artificial Intelligence Policy and the Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy to incorporate feedback from members.

AGREED: that the following policies are recommended to the Governing Body for approval:

- **SWC Terms & Conditions 2026/27**
- **Examinations Policy**
- **Examinations Conflict of Interest Policy**
- **Examinations Malpractice Policy**
- **Examinations Word Processing Policy**
- **Student Attendance Policy**
- **Learner Experience & Work Placement Policy.**

6.0 REVIEW OF CURRICULUM & QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06.01 Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee Terms of Reference
- Paper 06.02 Proposed Amendments to Terms of Reference.

It was noted that amendments to the Terms of Reference were proposed to remove the Committee's obligation to monitor the effectiveness of projects in light of the establishment of the Projects Oversight Committee and to reflect the Committee's role in monitoring the effectiveness of college provision for students with SEN.

AGREED: to recommend the revised Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee Terms of Reference to the Governing Body for approval.

7.0 PROPOSED 2025/26 PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Proposed 2025/26 Programme of Business.

AGREED: acceptance of the proposed 2025/26 Programme of Business.

8.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08 List of Outstanding Actions.

It was noted that both actions had been addressed. A revised list of outstanding actions is included as Appendix A.

In response to a suggestion from a member, Ms McCartan spoke of tentative plans to hold an engagement with political representatives in 2026 following a previous briefing in 2024.

9.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

Following a suggestion from the Committee Chair, management undertook to consider the possibility of commissioning the design and manufacture of sensory tools as project based learning exercises to students undertaking courses in relevant areas.

10.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

The Secretary to the Governing Bod acknowledged the sound issues experienced by members attending the meeting via MS Teams and undertook to raise the matter with the IT team to mitigate the risk of reoccurrence.

The meeting concluded at 7.00 pm.

CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2025

GB CHAIRPERSON



DATE 19/11/2025

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	22/10/2025	5.1.4	Mrs McCauley to seek expressions of interest from committee members in membership of the Higher Education Academic Board.