

## SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**  
held on Wednesday 22 March 2023 at 5.00 pm  
via Microsoft Teams

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**PRESENT:**

- Ms Siobhan Breen
- Mrs Deborah Brown
- Mrs Maureen Brunt (*from item 4.0*)
- Mrs Sandra Isherwood
- Ms Celine McCartan, Chief Executive
- Ms Anne McCleary
- Mr Michael McGuckin, Presiding Committee Chair

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
- Mr Padraig McNamee, Assistant Chief Executive, Learner Experience
- Ms Carol Viney, Head of Professional & Social Sciences Faculty (*item 5.0 only*)

**APOLOGIES:**

- Dr Frances Campbell
- Mr Jack Daly
- Dr Lynsey Quinn

### **1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES**

Mr McGuckin, Presiding Committee Chair, welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were tendered on behalf of Dr Campbell, Mr Daly and Dr Quinn.

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

No conflict of interest declarations were made.

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

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 18 January 2023.

There were no matters arising.

***Mrs Brunt joined the meeting at this juncture.***

### **4.0 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04.01 List of Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 04.02 Key Strategic Issues Management Update
- Paper 06.10 Curriculum Consolidation in SWC.

#### **4.1 Reduction in Full Time Further Education Student Numbers and Retention**

Ms McCartan commented on the increased enrolments to Further Education (FE) programmes in 2022/23 and on the positive indicators for strong enrolments in 2023/24 evidenced by increased applications following well attended Open Days held on the Dungannon, Enniskillen and Omagh campuses.

She went on to report that the Annual Accountability Meeting with the Department for the Economy (DfE) had been held during which the challenging budget situation was raised and the value for money offered by colleges was highlighted.

#### **4.2 Curriculum Delivery Model**

With reference to paper 06.10, Mr McNamee outlined the drivers for change to the curriculum planning model as well as the principles to be applied in the 2023/24 curriculum planning exercise including alignment with the Skills for a 10X Strategy and priority skills areas. He advised of the demand led approach to curriculum provision adopted in prior years and of the need to move to an affordability led approach in light of anticipated budget challenges. He spoke of the actions being taken to maximise income, improve efficiency and maintain provision through new models, noting that provision will be discontinued only where a viable delivery model cannot be identified.

In response to questions and comments from members, the meeting was apprised of the balance to be achieved in providing curriculum in areas of skills demand as well as in areas of student demand in light of affordability constraints; of the opportunity to meet these demands through the proposed Strategic Alliance; of the potential for curriculum delivery to international markets as an income generating initiative; of the importance of providing services to meet the needs of the local community; of the importance of collaborations with schools; of the positive impact that increased enrolments would have on value for money metrics; of the potential for expansion of the services provided to refugees; and of the consideration of staff impacts on any significant amendments to the curriculum plan.

#### **4.3 Student Success**

Ms McCartan referenced the update provided on initiatives to enhance student success.

#### **4.4 Essential Skills**

Ms McCartan, supported by Dr Cush, reminded the Committee of the appointment of an Essential Skills Co-ordinator and the implementation of an Essential Skills Action Plan to maintain focus on the improvement of the Essential Skills success rate. The change of Awarding Body for Essential Skills qualifications was also reported.

#### **4.5 Access to Higher Education**

Ms McCartan spoke of the strong enrolments to Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLA) programmes and the reducing enrolments to other Higher Education (HE) programmes and of the requirement to pivot resources to accommodate this demand. She noted the challenging environment in terms of competition from Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and the difficulties presented by the less streamlined pathway from vocational education to HE. She commented on the low level of awareness of level 4 and 5 provision and advised

that the funding model for HE programmes may be transformed following the DfE Review of Level 4 and 5 Provision and HE in FE.

#### **4.6 Quality of Teaching and Learning**

Ms McCartan noted the positive feedback received from DfE on the College's Quality Improvement Plan 2022-24 and provided assurance on the ongoing implementation of the eight key quality improvement actions within.

#### **5.0 HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Higher Education Report.

***Ms Viney joined the meeting at this juncture.***

By way of background to this item, Ms McCartan commented on the importance of Governing Body oversight of HE and its input into planning considerations.

With the aid of the slides in paper 05, Ms Viney then presented an overview of HE provision in the College during which she highlighted the growth in enrolments to HLA programmes and the decrease in enrolments to traditional HE programmes; provided an analysis of HE enrolments by curriculum area and level of provision; and listed the HE achievements in the preceding five years. She went on to outline the key strategic priorities for HE including the development of a HE strategy aligning to government economic strategies, collaborations with other colleges, the growth of level 3 FE provision due to its contributor to HE enrolments and preparations for forthcoming reviews. She also apprised the meeting of the threats and challenges faced by the College in regards to its HE offer including the lowering of entry requirements by universities; the restriction on validation of programmes with HEIs outside Northern Ireland; the impact of decreased FE enrolments on progression to HE programmes; and the anticipated budget challenges.

During the discussion that followed, the Committee was apprised of the College's good relationships with local and cross-border HEIs, of the work underway to deliver HE programmes in a more efficient manner, of the opportunity to enhance collaboration with other colleges through the development of common curriculum, and of the importance of awareness raising of the value of foundation degrees and the benefits of HE in FE. It was also noted that the recommendations from DfE's review of HE in FE are awaited and may influence strategy.

***Ms Viney withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.***

#### **6.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Management Report
- Paper 06.01 Further Education Update
- Paper 06.02 Higher Education Update

- Paper 06.03 Work Based Learning Update
- Paper 06.04 Digital Learning Update
- Paper 06.05 Social Inclusion Update
- Paper 06.06 Quality Report
- Paper 06.06a DfE Response to Quality Improvement Plan Submission
- Paper 06.07 Safeguarding Report
- Paper 06.08 CDP Report Card Update Summary
- Paper 06.09 SWC Hub Engagement Update
- Paper 06.10 Curriculum Consolidation in SWC
- Paper 06.11 Curriculum Planning Matrix
- Paper 06.12 Foundation Degree Timetable Tool
- Paper 06.13 Report on Externally Funded Projects
- Paper 06.14 Policy for Students with Caring Responsibilities
- Paper 06.15 Centre Assessment Policy
- Paper 06.16 Post 16 PTE Quality Assurance Handbook 2023 – 2025.

Mr McNamee began by summarising key matters within the Management Report highlighting the additional initiatives in place to support student success, the strong performance against College Development Plan targets, the scoping exercise underway in relation to SWC Online, the indications of healthy 2023/24 enrolments, the increased reporting of mental health issues amongst students and the anticipated budget challenges.

### **6.1 Further Education**

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Paper 06.01*

Mr McNamee advised that mental health issues are increasingly cited as contributors to withdrawals and outlined the measures put in place to provide support to affected students. He reported the transition of much level 2 FE provision to the Traineeships model for 2023/24 and the forthcoming review of the level 3 Advanced Technical Awards to inform the future scope of this provision. He also noted the earlier discussion on 2023/24 curriculum planning and the differing levels of engagement with Area Learning Communities.

### **6.2 Higher Education**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Paper 06.02*

Mr McNamee referenced the earlier discussion on HE. He identified recruitment to full time HE programmes as the most significant issue in this area and noted DfE's proposal to change the HE funding model.

### **6.3 Work Based Learning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Paper 06.03*

Mr McNamee commented on the good enrolments to Work Based Learning (WBL) programmes evidencing the strength of demand and effective marketing in this area. He also reported on the revised remit of Training Support Officers to raise awareness of other college services amongst employers and noted the continuing issues with the Trainee and Apprentice Management System (TAMS).

#### **6.4 Essential Skills**

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.0*

Mr McNamee referenced the change of Awarding Body for Essential Skills accreditation and the focus placed on supporting students on WBL programmes to attain Essential Skills qualifications.

#### **6.5 Digital Learning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Paper 06.04*

Mr McNamee commented on the research underway into the possibility of delivering online programmes to international markets as an income generating initiative.

#### **6.6 Social Inclusion**

*Ref: Management Report Section 6.0 and Paper 06.05*

Mr McNamee confirmed the submission of funding applications for new social inclusion programmes and noted the positive outcomes arising from Project Focus, which was established to manage the resourcing and communications implications of the significant reduction in access to EU funding.

#### **6.7 Excellence in Teaching and Learning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 7.0 and Papers 06.06 & 06.06a*

Mr McNamee reported on the value of the enhanced quality assurance model put in place in identifying potential weaknesses at an early stage.

#### **6.8 Economic Engagement**

*Ref: Management Report Section 8.0*

Mr McNamee highlighted the range of economic engagement activity within the College and undertook to circulate the final report of the College's Erasmus programme when available.

#### **6.9 Safeguarding**

*Ref: Management Report Section 9.0 and Paper 06.07*

Mr McNamee referenced the statistics provided in paper 06.07 on the safeguarding referrals made on each campus in the 2022/23 academic year to date.

#### **6.10 Update on Implementation of 2022/23 Annual Development Plan / Report Cards**

*Ref: Management Report Section 10.0 and Paper 06.08*

Mr McNamee referenced the data provided in paper 06.08 on performance against qualification targets and commented on the focus placed on Full Time FE and Full Time and Part Time HE.

### **6.11 Update on College Engagement with Curriculum Hubs**

*Ref: Management Report Section 11.0 and Paper 06.09*

Mr McNamee referenced the update provided on sectoral curriculum hubs and advised that the issues regarding progression from a number of level 3 programmes to HE courses had been resolved.

### **6.12 Curriculum Consolidation**

*Ref: Management Report Section 12.0 and Papers 06.10, 06.11 & 06.12*

Mr McNamee outlined the steps that will be taken to protect curriculum provision in 2023/24 including the transfer of courses to alternative funding models and improving the efficiency of delivery. He acknowledged that a number of programmes may prove to be unviable and will be discontinued.

In response to questions and comments from members, Mr McNamee commented on the importance of fairness and transparency in the curriculum planning process as well as the importance of open communication with staff on the basis of decisions.

### **6.13 Additional Items**

*Ref: Management Report Section 12.0 and Paper 06.13*

The Report on Externally Funded Projects was noted by the Committee.

### **6.14 Policy Reviews**

*Ref: Management Report Section 13.0 and Papers 06.14, 06.15 & 06.16*

**AGREED: that the Policy for Students with Caring Responsibilities, the Centre Assessment Policy 2022/23 and the Post 16 PTE Quality Assurance Handbook 2023-25 be recommended to the Governing Body for approval.**

## **7.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Outstanding Actions.

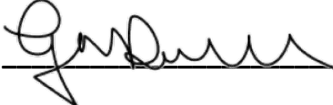
Mr McNamee provided an update on the six actions listed in paper 07 noting the importance of alignment with the Skills for a 10X Economy Strategy, the recent availability of census data to inform an updated regional economic profile which will be circulated to members in due course, and the forthcoming meeting with school principals to discuss potential collaborations and barriers to engagement. A revised list of outstanding actions is included in Appendix B.

## **8.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

No further business was raised.

*Ms Breen and Mrs Brown withdrew from the meeting at this juncture. The meeting then went into confidential session and concluded at 7:00 pm.*

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL 2023**

**VICE CHAIR**  \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** 26/04/2023

**POLICIES RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY FOR APPROVAL**

#	Policy
1	Policy for Students with Caring Responsibilities
2	Centre Assessment Policy 2022/23
3	Post 16 PTE Quality Assurance Handbook 2023-25



## SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	19/10/2022	4.0	Presentation on the priorities of the Skills for a 10X Economy Strategy to be provided to the Governing Body.
2	19/10/2022	11.0	Updated paper on the regional economic profile to be provided at the March 2023 committee meeting to incorporate additional data available at that time including the 2021 census statistics.
	22/03/2022	7.0	Regional economic profile to be updated to incorporate recently released census statistics and circulated to the Committee.
3	22/03/2023	6.8	Mr McNamee to circulate the final report of the College's Erasmus programme when available.