

## SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Education, Quality & Performance Committee**  
held on Wednesday 19 January 2022 at 5.00 pm  
via Microsoft Teams

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**PRESENT:**

- Ms Siobhan Breen
- Mrs Deborah Brown
- Mrs Sandra Isherwood
- Mr Colin Lewis (Interim Chief Executive)
- Mr Michael McGuckin
- Miss Caitlyn McLoughlin
- Mrs Joanne Moore (Committee Chair)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
- Dr Barry McCarron, Senior Business Development Officer (*Item 6.0*)
- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
- Mr Ciaran McManus, Assistant Chief Executive (Industry Partnerships & Centres for Excellence)
- Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chair of the Governing Body (*from item 4.1*)
- Mrs Elizabeth Shackels, Quality Assurance Manager (*Item 7.0*)
- Mr Mark Sterrit, Boardroom Apprentice
- Mrs Nicola Quinn, Business Development Support Officer (*Item 6.0*)

### **1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES**

Mrs Moore opened the meeting by welcoming all present; she extended a particular welcome to Mrs Isherwood to her first meeting of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee.

### **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 24 November 2021.

There were no matters arising.

### **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 04.03 College Development Plan Progress Report.

Mr Lewis referenced the management update on the Committee's key strategic issues provided in paper 04.02 and advised that a comprehensive report on the matters within had been presented at the 12 January 2022 Governing Body meeting. He proceeded to provide further updates by exception.

#### **4.1 Curriculum**

Mr Lewis assessed the year to date performance against College Development Plan targets as satisfactory in the context of pandemic implications and the forthcoming change management programme. He explained that enrolment targets for full-time Higher Education and Traineeships will not be achieved and identified the factors leading to this result as a decline in progression from further education programmes, competition from universities and the popularity of Higher Level Apprenticeships. He noted the sectoral reduction in Higher Education in Further Education enrolments generally and the need for a wider review of government policy in this area to address this decline. He added that a critical analysis of performance over recent years will be undertaken and reported to governors.

***Dr O'Shiel joined the meeting at this juncture.***

#### **4.2 Budget**

Mr Lewis reminded the meeting of the likelihood of a reduced budget allocation in forthcoming years and added that this may impact on teaching and qualification metrics.

He quantified outstanding student debt at £1.2 million and commented on the support offered to students facing debt issues. He then spoke of the need to demonstrate strong financial management and advised that progression towards a zero tolerance approach to student debt has commenced.

In response to questions on the issues reported in relation to the online course application process, Mr Lewis explained that work is underway to identify means of addressing the issues encountered by applicants and undertook to provide an update on progress to the Committee. It was suggested that hardcopy applications may be more appropriate for some applicants and that such an option should be made available.

In response to questions and comments on marketing, the meeting was apprised of the focus on digital channels and discussed the influence of parents and teachers on students' course choices as well as the need for early engagement with school students. It was suggested that marketing campaigns should be developed targeting adult returners and those withdrawing from university places.

#### **5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05                      Management Report
- Paper 05.01                Further Education Centre for Excellence Implementation Plan Progress Report
- Paper 05.02                Higher Education Centre for Excellence Implementation Plan Progress Report
- Paper 05.03                Work Based Learning Centre for Excellence Implementation Plan Progress Report

- Paper 05.04 Digital Learning Centre for Excellence Implementation Plan Progress Report
- Paper 05.05 Social Inclusion, Community Learning & Development Centre for Excellence Implementation Plan Progress Report
- Paper 05.06 Safeguarding Report
- Paper 05.07 Erne Campus Years 1-3 Operations Benefits Realization Plan
- Paper 05.08 Annual Marketing Services Report
- Paper 05.09 Survey FE College Leavers Report
- Paper 05.10 SWC Higher Education Profile and Projections
- Paper 05.11 Teaching and Learning Report 2020-2021
- Paper 05.12 Further Education Induction Survey Report
- Paper 05.13 Higher Education Induction Survey Report
- Paper 05.14 Induction Survey and Focus Group Composite Report
- Paper 05.15 Quality Improvement Plan
- Paper 05.16 Malpractice Action Plan
- Paper 05.17 Report to Independent Review of Education NI Colleges
- Paper 05.18 Stakeholder Advisory Group Draft Foundation Degree Policy Paper
- Paper 05.19 HEAR and Tutorial Policy
- Paper 05.20 Safeguarding Care and Welfare Policy
- Paper 05.21 Safeguarding Care and Welfare Covid-19 Addendum
- Paper 05.22 South West College Centre Assessment Policy 2021 -2022
- Paper 05.23 Policy for the Promotion of Positive Student Behaviour Jan 2022 Revision.

## **5.1 Further Education**

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Paper 05.01*

Mr McManus drew attention to the analysis provided of the feedback received from students through the Further Education and Work Based Learning Post Induction Survey. He highlighted the positive and negative feedback received and acknowledged the need for improvements to the application process.

Mr McManus welcomed the plan to host on-campus Open Days in February and March 2022 noting the positive impact of such open days on recruitment. He also apprised the meeting of the proposed areas for collaboration with NI Screen.

## **5.2 Higher Education**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Paper 05.02*

Mr McManus reported that the feedback received from higher education students through the QDP Higher Education Post Induction Survey has been broadly positive with scores above average in all areas when benchmarked against responses from the other colleges surveyed. He acknowledged the reported difficulties encountered in the application process in concurrence with the feedback received from further education and work based learning students.

In relation to the proposal to offer a level 4 Certificate in Healthcare Practice course, Mr McManus explained that scoping activity and stakeholder consultations have taken place to support the development of a business case.

### **5.3 Work Based Learning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Paper 05.03*

Mr McManus commented on the College's past achievements in skills competitions and informed the meeting of the introduction of competitions in non-traditional areas as well as the appointment of Skills Champions to lead on the preparations for these competitions going forward. He also spoke of the recognition of the College's apprenticeship provision having been shortlisted in three categories in the forthcoming 2022 Apprenticeship of the Year competition.

### **5.4 Digital Learning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Paper 05.04*

Mr McManus referred to the statistics documented on the training and helpdesk support provided by the Digital Learning team and explained that a project is underway to consolidate the five existing digital helpdesks into a single portal.

### **5.5 Social Inclusion, Community Learning and Development**

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Paper 05.05*

Mr McManus spoke of the achievements of the College's social inclusion programmes in providing support to those who most need it and explained that two applications for funding from the Peace Plus programme are under development. He added that a gap between the end of the existing Youthscape programme and the commencement of the proposed extension is likely and that a request will be brought to the Staffing Committee to retain affected staff in anticipation of the new programme.

Mr McManus reminded the meeting that extensions to the College Connect and SUSE+ programmes have been approved under the European Social Fund, explained that match funding for the SUSE+ extension has been secured and reported that no firm commitment has been received from DfE in respect of match funding for the College Connect extension.

### **5.6 Economic Engagement**

*Ref: Management Report Section 7.0*

Mr McManus spoke of the popularity and impact of the Assured Skills Academies and of the Welding Academies in particular. He reported the likelihood of a reduced budget for such provision in 2022/23, despite demand from industry, and confirmed that alternative funding options are being explored.

### **5.7 Update on Erne Campus Years 1 – 3 Operations and Benefits Realization Plan**

*Ref: Management Report Section 10.0*

Mr McManus referenced the list of nine post occupancy outcomes to be achieved in relation to the Erne Campus and explained that work is ongoing to realize the benefits identified. At a later point in the meeting, it was suggested that the contribution made by the Erne Campus to the Department's Skills for a 10x Economy Strategy are documented.

### **5.8 Safeguarding**

*Ref: Management Report Section 11.0 and Paper 05.06*

Mr McManus drew attention to the statistics provided on referrals to Safeguarding Assistants in the year to date in paper 05.06 and provided an overview of the messaging

campaign undertaken over the Christmas period to raise awareness amongst students of the support services available.

## 5.9 Policy Reviews

*Ref: Management Report Section 14.0 and Papers 05.19, 05.20, 05.21, 05.22 & 05.23*

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

- **HEAR and Tutorial Policy**
- **Safeguarding Care and Welfare Policy**
- **Safeguarding Care and Welfare Covid-19 Addendum**
- **South West College Centre Assessment Policy 2021 -2022**
- **Policy for the Promotion of Positive Student Behaviour.**

## 5.10 Other

*Ref: Management Report Sections 6.0, 8.0, 9.0, 12.0 & 13.0 and Papers 05.07, 05.08, 05.09, 05.10, 05.11, 05.12, 05.13, 05.14, 05.15, 05.16, 05.17 & 05.18*

The updates and additional information provided in the Management Report and associated papers on Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Internationalisation (Curriculum), the Engineering & Manufacturing Hub, Implementation of the Annual Development Plan, Marketing, the Destination of Leavers, Higher Education Projections, Induction Surveys, Quality Improvement, the Quality Assurance Action Plan, the Independent Review of Education in NI and the Draft Foundation Degree Policy Paper were referenced. It was noted that a number of these papers would be revisited during the Quality Assurance Report later in the meeting.

Members welcomed the progress reported by Mr McManus, particularly in relation to improvements to the application process, the consolidation of support helpdesks, on-campus Open Days, the proposed retention of Youthscape programme staff and the development of a business case for the Certificate in Healthcare Practice course.

In response to a question on the resourcing of the College's social inclusion programmes, Mr McManus explained that the majority of social inclusion provision is delivered by college staff with specialist external expertise acquired where appropriate.

## 6.0 REPORT ON THE PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGIC PLANS OF THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SECTION

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Performance & Strategic Plans of the Business Development Section.

***Dr Barry McCarron, Senior Business Development Officer, and Mrs Nicola Quinn, Business Development Support Officer, joined the meeting for this item.***

With reference to paper 06, Mrs Quinn began the presentation on the performance and strategic plans of the Business Development section by providing a progress report on the delivery of the Innovate Us, Skills Focus, KTP and Innovation Boost (formerly known as Fusion) programmes noting that the achievement of all targets is anticipated. She went on to outline the parameters of the new Flexible Skills Fund and report that less demand has been evidenced to date than for its predecessor, the Skills Intervention Programme.

Dr McCarron then provided an overview of the eight ongoing EU funded projects delivered by the Business Development section, highlighting the imminent end of the Renewable Engine programme and its achievement of a Green Gown Award in the Research with Impact category. He moved on to detail the achievement of all strategic KPIs and provide a breakdown of revenue generation within the Business Development section. He concluded the presentation by listing the new projects approved or under assessment, including a successor to the Renewable Engine programme, and outlining the awards recently received, highlighting the College's designation as a member of the United Nations' High Performance Buildings Centres of Excellence.

Dr McCarron also acknowledged the uncertainty around the availability of EU funding going forward and provided assurances that contingencies are in place to adapt the business model to increase delivery of domestically funded programmes if required.

In response to questions and comments from members, Dr McCarron and Mrs Quinn then provided details of planned international student mobilities funded through the Turing Scheme, outlined the internal collaborations with faculties and centres for excellence and apprised the meeting of the high turnover of staff as well as the concerns regarding the future stability of the Business Development section. A summary of the reasons given for leaving posts within the Business Development section was requested.

***Dr McCarron and Mrs Quinn withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.***

## **7.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07.01            Quality Assurance Presentation
- Paper 07.02            Accompanying Notes.

***Mrs Elizabeth Shackels, Quality Assurance Manager, joined the meeting for this item.***

Mrs Shackels referenced the papers provided to members in advance of the meeting and proceeded to provide an update on the Quality Assurance Action Plan. She commented on the sanctions imposed by Pearson and explained that the Quality Assurance Action Plan had been developed in response with a view to restoring the confidence of Awarding Organisations in the College's quality assurance systems and controls. She outlined the actions taken to date, commented on the commitment of staff to the process and provided assurance on the isolated nature of the malpractice, the robust implementation of awarding body regulations and the integrity of qualifications awarded.

In response to a question on the failings that led to the malpractice, Mrs Shackels, supported by Mr Lewis spoke of the workload of staff in all areas and of the impact of structural, planning and leadership changes within the College in recent years in losing focus on quality. They provided assurance on the renewed focus on quality and on the open book approach adopted to restore confidence and rebuild the College's reputation amongst Awarding Organisations.

Mrs Shackels also welcomed engagement with the Student Governor to better understand the issues faced by students.

The Committee Chair thanked Mrs Shackels for her work in developing and implementing the Quality Assurance Action Plan and for her report to the Committee.

***Mrs Shackels withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.***

**8.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

The Committee Chair reflected on the action agreed at the last meeting to listen to the feedback of staff governors on issues facing staff and thanked Ms Breen and Mrs Brown for their contribution on this matter at the most recent Governing Body meeting.

**9.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09 Outstanding Actions.

It was noted that a meeting with representatives from MEGA has been arranged and that all listed actions have been addressed.

A revised list of outstanding actions is provided in Appendix A.


**10.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING**

The Committee Chair spoke of the value of the reports provided by Mr Lewis and Mr McManus.

***Ms Breen, Mrs Brown, Miss McLoughlin & Mr Sterrit withdrew from the meeting at this juncture (6:50 pm) and the meeting went into confidential session.***

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2 MARCH 2022.**

CHAIRMAN



DATE 02/03/2022

## SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	19/01/2022	4.1	A critical analysis of performance over recent years to be undertaken and reported to governors.
2	19/01/2022	4.2	An update on progress in addressing issues encountered by students in relation to the online course application process to be provided to the Committee.
3	19/01/2022	6.0	A summary of the reasons given for leaving posts within the Business Development section to be provided to the Committee.