

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**
held on Wednesday 15 January 2025 at 5.00 pm
in the Boardroom, Dungannon Campus

PRESENT: Mrs Maureen Brunt (*via MS Teams*)
Dr Frances Campbell (*items 1.0 - 7.0*)
Mr Tom Corr
Mrs Maria Curran
Dr David Cutting
Mrs Maria Hackett (*via MS Teams*)
Mrs Sandra Isherwood, Committee Chair
Ms Celine McCartan, Chief Executive
Dr Nichola Melanaphy
Dr Lynsey Quinn

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
Mr Brian McIluff, Head of Quality & Student Engagement (*item 5.0 only*)
Mr Pdraig McNamee, Director of Curriculum
Mr Paul Wade, Head of IT Services (*item 7.0 only*)

1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES

Mrs Isherwood welcomed all present to the meeting, extending a particular welcome to Dr Melanaphy on her first attendance at a meeting of the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee.

No apologies were tendered.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Dr Quinn declared her employment with the Open University as well as her husband's employment with Ulster 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 23 October 2024.

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 Management Update on Key Strategic Issues

- Paper 06.15 SENSE Project Draft Terms of Reference.

4.1 Curriculum Profile

In relation to Work Based Learning (WBL), Ms McCartan reflected on the College's substantial provision in this area through traineeships and apprenticeships and reported on the commencement of an All Age Apprenticeship in Team Leading as well as on an ongoing Public Sector Apprenticeship pilot in Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC). She apprised the meeting of Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI) reviews of traineeships taking place in all colleges in 2024/25 including the forthcoming inspection of such provision in South West College (SWC), and advised of the likelihood of the mainstreaming of traineeships as well as of the development of a Traineeship Framework.

In relation to Higher Education (HE) programmes, Ms McCartan reported strong recruitment to such programmes and explained that some rationalisation of provision has taken place to sustain viability.

She informed the meeting of the campus Open Days taking place in the forthcoming weeks as well as of the development of an Admissions Policy, and undertook to circulate the 2025/26 prospectus to the Committee.

ACTION: 2025/26 Prospectus to be circulated to the Committee.

4.2 Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision and Student Experience

Ms McCartan reminded the meeting of the focus on the student experience in 2024/25 and of the increasing demand for Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision and went on to present a proposal to develop a Special Educational Needs and Student Experience (SENSE) project as endorsed by the Governing Body at its December 2024 Strategy meeting and as outlined in the draft Terms of Reference in paper 06.15. She highlighted the proposal to recruit a dedicated officer to manage the project and to resource the project internally in the first instance and sought the Committee's endorsement of this commitment.

A discussion then ensued during which members commented on the need for such a project in light of the growing demand for SEN provision as well as on the increasing complexity of support required and the equality implications; reflected on the Governing Body's interest in enhancing the student experience; were made aware of the challenges presented by the non-automatic transfer of information on student support needs from previously attended educational institutions; were informed of the plans to review policies, processes and systems to ensure their effectiveness in supporting SEN students and enhancing the student experience; were apprised of the availability of budget to resource the project until 31 March 2025 and of the potential for funding opportunities to support the project in the longer term; suggested that a parent focus group is established to inform the Project Steering Group; and proposed that the project may be supported by a PhD student undertaking research in this field.

AGREED: to recommend to the Governing Body the progression of the SENSE Project including the appointment of a dedicated officer to manage the project and the commitment of associated financial resource.

4.3 Essential Skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Ms McCartan advised on the marginal improvement in Essential Skills success rates, albeit behind sectoral benchmarks.

She suggested that this item is removed as a key strategic issue for ongoing monitoring at management level with updates reported to the Committee through the Management Report.

She also referenced the two industry support projects endorsed for development by the Governing Body at its December 2024 strategy meeting in relation to decarbonisation within the concrete industry and innovation within the advanced manufacturing and engineering industries and suggested that this is added as a key strategic issue for the Committee.

AGREED:

- **to remove Essential Skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) as a key strategic issue for ongoing monitoring at management level with updates reported through the Management Report; and**
- **to add Industry Support Initiatives as a key strategic issue for the Committee.**

5.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05.01 2024/25 Quality Improvement Plan Update
- Paper 05.02 Proposed 2024-27 Quality Improvement Plan.

Mr McIllduff joined the meeting for this item.

Mr McIllduff began his report on quality assurance by explaining the changes made to the Quality Improvement Planning process by the Department for the Economy (DfE), highlighting the move to a flexible multi-year plan.

With reference to paper 05.02, he then presented the proposed 2024-27 Quality Improvement Plan. He detailed the six strategic objectives identified through consultation with stakeholders and referenced the 19 actions proposed to meet these objectives. It was noted that the student feedback cycle has been shortened to ensure timely implementation of actions and that the draft 2024-27 Quality Improvement Plan will be revised further in advance of submission to the Governing Body for approval including incorporation of the SENSE Project.

Members welcomed the draft 2024-27 Quality Improvement Plan and commented on the importance of staff awareness of the quality improvement objectives and associated actions.

AGREED: that the 2024-27 Quality Improvement Plan is recommended to the Governing Body for approval subject to final review and revision by management.

Mr McIllduff was thanked for his presentation and withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

6.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Management Report
- Paper 06.01 FE Sector Activity in NI 2019-20 to 2023-24
- Paper 06.02 FE Sector Activity in NI 2023-24
- Paper 06.03 SWC vs Sector Activity 2018-19 to 2023-24 Summary
- Paper 06.03a SWC Statistics Infographic

- Paper 06.04 Terms of Reference for FE Sector Working Groups
- Paper 06.05 Implementation of New FE Sector Reporting Framework
- Paper 06.06 Training Managers Update to Curriculum Directors
- Paper 06.07 Update on Essential Skills Working Group to Curriculum Directors
- Paper 06.08 Final 2023-24 CDP Progress Report Commissioning Letter
- Paper 06.09 2024-25 CDP Progress Report
- Paper 06.10 Level 2 Non-Employed Traineeship Reforms OBC
- Paper 06.11 NI Traineeship Briefing Presentation to ETI
- Paper 06.12 Traineeship Evaluation Notification Letter
- Paper 06.13 ETI Advice on Traineeship Vocational Qualifications
- Paper 06.14 Blueprint for NI Traineeships Working Draft
- Paper 06.15 SENSE Project Draft ToR for Discussion
- Paper 06.16 Social Inclusion Report
- Paper 06.17 2024-25 Quality Improvement Plan Update
- Paper 06.18 2025-2027 SWC Quality Improvement Plan
- Paper 06.19 Examinations Schedule 2024-25
- Paper 06.20 Quality Cycle 2024-25
- Paper 06.21 Safeguarding Report
- Paper 06.22 Business Development Report
- Paper 06.23 Marketing Report
- Paper 06.24 SWC Marketing Strategy 2024-29
- Paper 06.25 FE Personal Tutoring and Academic Support Policy.

6.1 **Background**

Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Papers 06.01 - 06.07

With reference to papers 06.03 and 06.03a, Mr McNamee provided an analysis of SWC statistics in relation to enrolments, student numbers, mode of attendance, subject areas, achievement rates, success rates and student gender and age profiles stemming from the FE Sector Activity in NI 2019/20 – 2023/24 Report. He highlighted the College’s proportionately high market share in relation to student numbers and enrolments, noting the impact of Confucius on this ratio; the increased achievement and success rates albeit behind sector averages; and the College’s relatively low age profile due to its high proportion of apprentices, who, until the recent introduction of All Age Apprenticeships, were aged under 25. The meeting was also made aware of the 7% increase in enrolments in 2024/25, of the introduction of Apprenticeships in non-traditional areas such as Dental Nursing, and of the planned transition to onsite delivery in some apprenticeship areas.

6.2 **College Development Plan Performance**

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Papers 06.08 – 06.16

6.2.1 **College Outcomes – Enrolments**

Ref: Management Report Section 2.1.1

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

6.2.2 College Outcomes – Student Performance

Ref: Management Report Section 2.2

Mr McNamee explained that delays in recording and claiming certification account for the low success rate reported in the year to date, advised of the procedural changes implemented to address this issue and provided assurance that students have not been adversely impacted by the administrative delays.

6.2.3 Essential Skills

Ref: Management Report Section 2.3

It was noted that an update on Essential Skills had been provided earlier in the meeting.

6.2.4 Curriculum Developments

Ref: Management Report Section 2.4

In response to questions from members, Mr McNamee reported that low enrolments to the Foundation Degree in Cyber Security had contributed to the decision to withdraw this programme from the September 2025 curriculum offer; advised on the recruitment and delivery model in relation to the forthcoming All Age Apprenticeship in Team Leading; and explained that the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) is involved in a potential Food and Drink Group which may be delivered on a sectoral basis through the Advanced Manufacturing Curriculum Hub.

The meeting was also made aware of the College's nomination for an Association of Colleges (AoC) Beacon Award in 'The Sustainable Energy First Award for Education for Sustainable Development' category.

6.2.5 Social Inclusion

Ref: Management Report Section 2.5 and Paper 06.16

The update provided in the Management Report on Social Inclusion was noted by the Committee.

6.3 Quality Assurance

6.3.1 Compliance

Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Papers 06.17 - 06.19

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

6.3.2 Student Feedback

Ref: Management Report Section 3.2 and Paper 06.20

The update provided in the Management Report on Student Feedback was noted by the Committee.

6.3.3 Teaching and Learning

Ref: Management Report Section 3.3

The update in the Management Report on Teaching and Learning was noted by the Committee.

6.3.4 Student Support

Ref: Management Report Section 3.4

A concern was raised in relation to the potential impact on students of the different support processes in place for students undertaking Further Education (FE), WBL, HE and discrete SEN programmes. The Committee was made aware of the plans in place to clarify such processes as well as of the satisfactory assurance awarded following a recent internal audit of Student Experience and Engagement.

6.3.5 Quality Improvement

Ref: Management Report Section 3.5

It was noted that the Quality Improvement Plan had been reviewed and recommended for approval at an earlier point in the meeting.

6.3.6 Safeguarding

Ref: Management Report Section 3.6 and Paper 06.21

In response to a member's concern regarding the vacancy in the Safeguarding Assistant position in the Cookstown campus, the Committee was apprised of the timeframe of the ongoing recruitment process and of the interim arrangements in place.

A concern was also raised on the inadequate level of staff compliance with timely completion of the Safeguarding Corporate Module. The meeting was informed of the facilitated sessions planned to support staff in undertaking this training as well as of the target set by the Staffing Committee of 90% of Active Directory members completing all 10 corporate modules by 28 February 2025.

It was also noted that Safeguarding training for governors will be scheduled in the forthcoming months.

6.3.7 Student Competitions

Ref: Management Report Section 3.7

Ms McCartan apprised the meeting of the achievement of College students in the World Skills competition as well as of the nomination of five college students as finalists in the Apprentice of the Year competition.

6.4 Business Development

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Paper 06.22

6.4.1 International Student Activity

Ref: Management Report Section 4.1

Ms McCartan updated the meeting on the Confucius Programme including the forthcoming Chinese New Year Gala Dinner to be held in the Omagh campus.

6.4.2 Funded Projects

Ref: Management Report Section 4.2

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

6.4.3 Business Development Unit and Curriculum Co-operation

Ref: Management Report Section 4.3

The update in the Management Report on Business Development Unit and Curriculum Co-operation was noted by the Committee.

6.5 Strategic Partnerships

Ref: Management Report Section 5.0

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

6.6 Resourcing Considerations

Ref: Management Report Section 6.0

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

6.7 Events, PR and Marketing

Ref: Management Report Section 7.0 and Papers 06.23 & 06.24

AGREED: that the 2024-29 Marketing Strategy is recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

6.8 Policy Review

Ref: Management Report Section 8.0 and Paper 06.25

AGREED: that the FE Personal Tutoring and Academic Support Policy is recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

7.0 CURRICULUM DASHBOARD

Mr Wade joined the meeting for this item.

PRESENTED at the meeting and subsequently made available to all members:

- Paper 07 Curriculum Dashboard.

With the aid of the PowerPoint presentation in paper 07, Mr Wade began his report by setting the context of the Curriculum Dashboard within the College's Digital Strategy and by providing an overview of the Data Analytics Project within. He went on to outline the objectives and key features of the Curriculum Dashboard and provide a real-time demonstration of its functions. He highlighted the dynamic nature of the dashboard as well as its continual development.

Members commented on the value of the Curriculum Dashboard in providing useful real-time information to management and staff and on the associated assurance provided to the Governing Body. Members also offered feedback on the system in relation to accessibility and data governance.

Dr Campbell withdrew from the meeting during the above discussion.

Mr Wade was thanked for his presentation and withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

8.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08 List of Outstanding Actions.

A review of the status of each of the actions listed in paper 08 was undertaken. It was noted that no update on the Invest NI Sub-Regional Skills Barometer is planned and that the most recent report will be provided at the March 2025 committee meeting.

A revised list of outstanding actions is included as Appendix A.

9.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

No further business was raised.

10.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

The Committee Chair acknowledged the longer duration of the meeting and commented on the value of the presentations received and the discussions held.

The meeting concluded at 7.30 pm.

CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2025

CHAIRPERSON



DATE 05/02/2025

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	17/01/2024 23/10/2024 15/01/2025	4.1 8.0 8.0	Management to present an analysis of sub-regional skills needs when available. Most recent recent Invest NI Sub-Regional Skills Barometer report to be provided at the March 2025 committee meeting.
2	23/10/2024	4.1	Guidance on the use of mobile phones within the College to be provided to the Committee for review at its March 2025 meeting.
3	15/01/2025	4.1	2025/26 Prospectus to be circulated to the Committee.