

## SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**  
held on Wednesday 23 October 2024 at 5.00 pm  
via MS Teams

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**PRESENT:**

- Mrs Maureen Brunt
- Dr Frances Campbell
- Mr Tom Corr
- Mrs Maria Curran
- Dr David Cutting
- Mrs Maria Hackett
- Mrs Sandra Isherwood, Committee Chair
- Ms Celine McCartan, Chief Executive
- Dr Lynsey Quinn

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
- Mr Pdraig McNamee, Director of Curriculum

### **1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES**

Mrs Isherwood welcomed all present to the meeting, extending a particular welcome to new members Mrs Curran, Dr Cutting and Mrs Hackett. She also noted the student governor elect's forthcoming membership of the Committee upon his appointment to the Governing Body by the Department for the Economy (DfE).

Mrs Isherwood then reminded members of the 2024/25 college focus on the student experience as well as of DfE's objectives for the sector of increased enrolments, reduced costs and enhanced quality, and asked members to bear these in mind during the course of the meeting.

### **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. Dr Cutting declared his employment with Queen's University Belfast.

### **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 29 May 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 09                      Circular 2024-14 - Use of Personal Mobile Phones.

#### **4.1      Student Experience**

Mr McNamee reported on the establishment of a Student Experience Project Team and referenced the range of factors identified as contributing to the student experience as listed in paper 04.02. He added that consideration is being given to the nomination of a standalone resource to support the development of the student experience across the College and represent the student voice within the management team.

He went on to apprise the meeting of the positive response to the student insights posted on the College's social media platforms as well as the of the increased prevalence of medical, mental health, safeguarding, behavioural and discipline issues amongst students and, with reference to paper 09, spoke of plans to develop a guidance document on the use of mobile phones within the College.

In response to questions and comments from members, Mr McNamee advised of procedural changes to hasten the implementation and evaluation of interventions identified through student feedback; spoke of the effects of the inappropriate use of mobiles phones, both within and outside of college settings, on students and staff; and undertook to consider the provision of information on best practice in mobile phone usage during student inductions.

**ACTION: Guidance on the use of mobile phones within the College to be provided to the Committee for review at its March 2025 meeting.**

#### **4.2      Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Mr McNamee made the Committee aware of the change in approach to the progression of students with special educational needs into employment to enhance the support offered to both the student and the employer during the transition period, and advised of the research underway to source funding to resource the additional support required.

In response to a query on the previously reported challenge in recruiting a sufficient number of Learning Support Workers to provide necessary care and support to SEN students, Ms McCartan reported on a lessening of the problem due to the provision of work placement opportunities within these roles for college students, and went on to highlight the continuing issue of lack of timely access to up-to-date background information from schools, social workers and other related parties on each SEN student joining the College.

#### **4.3      Curriculum Profile**

Mr McNamee spoke of the risk of withdrawal of support from English Awarding Organisations for BTEC qualifications depending on the policy of the UK government in relation to proposed T Levels.

#### **4.4      Essential Skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)**

Mr McNamee reported an increase in the overall Essential Skills success rate, noting the significant increase in achievement in Essential Skills ICT and the decrease in achievement in Essential Skills Numeracy. He outlined the issues leading to the disappointing numeracy achievement rates and advised of the proposal to purchase adaptive software to tailor progress to individual abilities following positive feedback on a pilot of this product in 2023/24. In response to a query from a member, the meeting was apprised of the factors leading to the increased achievement in Essential Skills ICT including the restructure of the management of Essential Skills within the College and the portfolio based assessment

approach taken with ICT in contrast with the examination based assessment for Literacy and Numeracy.

Members commented on the value of benchmarking the abilities of students at the commencement of programmes in order to measure progression, as well as on the need for apprentices in NI to achieve Essential Skills accreditation in order to obtain an apprenticeship qualification and of the divergence of this policy from that in other parts of the UK.

In relation to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Mr McNamee reminded the meeting of the modular approach adopted to recognise the achievements of students requiring a longer period of study due to changing work patterns, and advised of the collaboration between the curriculum and social inclusion teams with a view to increasing enrolments and enhancing support for students.

## **5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 Draft Programme for Government 2024-27
- Paper 05.02 DfE Economic Vision Action Plan
- Paper 05.03 Sub-Regional Economic Plan
- Paper 05.04 NI Audit Office Report - Developing the Skills for NI's Future
- Paper 05.05 SWC College Development Plan 24-25
- Paper 05.06 TATWG Draft Terms of Reference
- Paper 05.07 Traineeship Qualifications Master Document
- Paper 05.08 Traineeships Issues Log
- Paper 05.09 Full Time Higher Education MaSN Bid 2024-25
- Paper 05.10 UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024
- Paper 05.11 UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 Sector Agreed Principles
- Paper 05.12 Social Inclusion Report
- Paper 05.13 Revised SWC Quality Improvement Plan 2024-28
- Paper 05.14 Quality Assurance and Student Engagement Report
- Paper 05.15 WorldSkills Competitions - SWC Internal Funding Proposal
- Paper 05.16 Business Development Report
- Paper 05.17 Report on Strategic Partnerships
- Paper 05.18 Marketing Report
- Paper 05.19 HE and FE Marketing Campaign Review
- Paper 05.20 Part Time Provision Marketing Campaign Review
- Paper 05.21 Draft Marketing Strategy 2024-2029
- Paper 05.22 Artificial Intelligence Policy
- Paper 05.23 Anti-Bullying Policy for Students
- Paper 05.24 Examinations Conflict of Interest Policy
- Paper 05.25 Learner Work Placement and Work Experience Policy
- Paper 05.26 Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Policy
- Paper 05.27 Examinations Malpractice Policy
- Paper 05.28 Examinations Malpractice Policy
- Paper 05.29 Student Attendance Policy

- Paper 05.30 Student Charter.

## 5.1 Background

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Papers 05.01 - 05.04*

Mr McNamee referenced the documents provided in setting the strategic context for the College's operations.

## 5.2 College Development Plan Performance

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.1 and Paper 05.05*

### 5.2.1 College Outcomes – Enrolments

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.1.1*

Referring to the 2023/24 enrolment data provided in the Management Report, Mr McNamee noted his satisfaction with the out-turn in all areas. The value of the data available to inform the report cards was highlighted and it was suggested that a presentation of the Curriculum Dashboard is provided to the Committee at its next meeting.

Mr McNamee then reminded members of the presentation provided to the Governing Body at its 11 September 2024 meeting on the draft 2024/25 College Development Plan and advised of the revision to a target increase of 3% in students in 2024/25 as required by DfE across the sector. It was noted that a further increase had been requested which had not been accepted in the absence of supporting resource.

Mr McNamee also drew attention to the shift in focus from enrolment targets to student number targets and reported a 7% increase in student numbers in the academic year to date. In response to a question on the impact of this shift in focus, Ms McCartan provided an overview of enrolment and student number statistics and reported no detrimental impact arising from the amended approach.

**ACTION: Presentation of the Curriculum Dashboard to be provided at the January 2025 committee meeting.**

### 5.2.2 College Outcomes – Student Performance

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.2*

Regarding student performance, Mr McNamee reported on the increase in success rates to 76.6% in 2023/24, noting that this represents the highest success rate in the seven years that such data has been recorded in the College with the exception of 2021/22 when assessment mitigations were in place due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

### 5.2.3 Essential Skills

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.3*

It was noted that an update on Essential Skills had been provided under the Key Strategic Issues agenda item.

## 5.2.4 Curriculum Planning

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.4*

### 5.2.4.1 Traineeships

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.4.4 and Papers 05.07 & 05.08*

In response to a query from a member, management outlined the components of traineeship qualifications highlighting the objective of providing a level 2 qualification unique to the FE sector and providing a seamless pathway to level 3 apprenticeships. Members were also made aware of the issues encountered in the delivery of traineeships, of the progression challenges in a number of curricular areas and of Ms McCartan role in co-ordinating traineeship matters between DfE and college principals.

### 5.2.4.2 Further Education

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.4.5*

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

### 5.2.4.3 Work Based Learning

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.4.6*

Mr McNamee reported on plans to deliver All Age Apprenticeships to 100 apprentices in 2025/26 in the areas of Leadership and Healthcare.

### 5.2.4.4 Higher Education

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.4.7 and Papers 05.09, 05.10 & 05.11*

Mr McNamee apprised the Committee of the work underway to prepare for the College's institutional reapproval exercise with the Open University and for evaluations under the revised Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code. He also noted that that training will be provided for HE Specialist governors at a sectoral level.

### 5.2.4.5 Social Inclusion

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.4.8 and Paper 05.12*

Mr McNamee referenced the overview provided of the College's social inclusion programmes adding that the term of a number of these programmes ends in March 2025 and noting that this is not a matter of concern at present. He also apprised the meeting of the ongoing Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspection of the Step Up project with initial positive feedback received. It was suggested that a greater lead in time is incorporated into future project applications to mitigate impacts of delays in participant recruitment.

Reflecting on the Education Minister's announcement of his intention to legislate to ensure that all children remain in education or training until the age of 18, members commented on the associated opportunity afforded to the sector as well as on the College's significant experience in supporting those not in education or training.

### 5.3 Quality Assurance

#### 5.3.1 Compliance

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.1 and Paper 05.13*

Mr McNamee apprised the Committee of ETI's new Framework for Inspection, 'Empowering Improvement', and of the District Inspector's scheduled presentation of the new framework at the College's Curriculum Conference in late October 2024. He noted that the revised inspection approach will be adopted during the inspections of traineeships and the Step up project taking place in 2024/25.

Mr McNamee also made the Committee aware of the identification of non-conformance issues and confirmed that corrective action has been taken.

#### 5.3.2 Student Feedback

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.2 and Paper 05.14*

Mr McNamee advised that training is underway to equip the Quality Assurance team to shorten the cycle between the identification, implementation and evaluation of interventions based on student feedback.

#### 5.3.3 Teaching and Learning

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.3*

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

#### 5.3.4 Quality Improvement

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.4*

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

#### 5.3.5 Safeguarding

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.5*

Management reported an increase in the number and severity of safeguarding issues in the Enniskillen campuses and, in response to a query from a member, advised that no reason has been identified for this disproportionate increase. Management spoke of the additional student counselling resource in place as well as of the need to strengthen the safeguarding team in Cookstown and Enniskillen.

#### 5.3.6 SkillBuild

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.6 and Paper 05.15*

Mr McNamee reminded members of the success of the College and its students in the SkillBuild and WorldSkills competitions. He explained that a further six curricular areas will compete in the 2024/25 SkillBuild competition and sought approval to reallocate resource to facilitate this.

**AGREED: to recommend to the Governing Body that a maximum of £10,000 of college resources are committed to support the 2024/25 SkillBuild competition.**

#### **5.4 Business Development**

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Paper 05.16*

Ms McCartan apprised the Committee of the success of applications for funding for the Smart Rural Innovation Driven Empowerment (STRIDE) project and the Green Accelerator Skills Project (GRASP) under the Peace Plus Programme, and provided an overview of the objectives, benefits, financials and delivery arrangements of these projects. On behalf of the Committee, the Committee Chair extended congratulations to all involved in securing the funding outlined.

**ACTION: Presentation of the College's externally funded projects to be delivered to the Governing Body.**

#### **5.5 Strategic Partnerships**

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Paper 05.17*

The Report on Strategic Partnerships was noted by the Committee.

#### **5.6 Resourcing Considerations**

*Ref: Management Report Section 6.0*

Mr McNamee reported on work done in setting protocols for ensuring the integrity of data as well as on the work to be done in defining roles and responsibilities for data integrity going forward.

#### **5.7 Events, PR and Marketing**

*Ref: Management Report Section 7.0 and Papers 05.18, 05.19, 05.20 & 05.21*

Mr McNamee provided an overview of the draft 2024-2029 Marketing Strategy highlighting in particular the seven strategic communications objectives within.

Members commented on the effectiveness of the College's marketing activities to date and provided suggestions for further enhancement of reach through both physical and social media actions.

#### **5.8 Policy Reviews**

*Ref: Management Report Section 8.0 and Papers 05.22 – 05.30*

In response to questions and comments from members on the Artificial Intelligence Policy, Mr McNamee explained that the principles within had been derived from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and will be incorporated into other policies as necessary upon review, and advised that related guidance will be provided to students on induction from 2025/26.

Regarding the Anti Bullying Policy for Students, the Committee Chair sought a further review to specify the support available to the perpetrator of bullying.

Mr McNamee commented on the resource required for policy management and spoke of plans to benchmark the volume and type of policies against those of other colleges with a view to rationalising if possible.

**ACTION: Review Anti-Bullying Policy to specify the support available to the perpetrator of bullying.**

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

- **Artificial Intelligence Policy**
- **Anti-Bullying Policy for Students, subject to review as detailed above**
- **Examinations Conflict of Interest Policy**
- **Learner Experience & Work Placement Policy**
- **Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy**
- **Examinations Malpractice Policy**
- **Examinations Word Processing Policy**
- **Student Attendance Policy**
- **Student Charter.**

#### **6.0 REVIEW OF CURRICULUM & QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee Terms of Reference.

It was noted that a review of the Committee's Terms of Reference had been undertaken with no amendments proposed.

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

#### **7.0 PROPOSED 2024/25 PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Proposed 2024/25 Programme of Business.

**AGREED: acceptance of the proposed 2024/25 Programme of Business.**

#### **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.

**ACTION: Mr McNamee to consult Invest NI on their plans to update the Sub-Regional Skills Barometer with a view to providing an analysis of local needs.**

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



**9.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09 Circular 2024-14 - Use of Personal Mobile Phones.

No further business was raised.

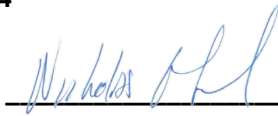
**10.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING**

Members commented on the Committee Chair's effectiveness in chairing the meeting.

*The meeting concluded at 7.00 pm.*

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2024**

CHAIRPERSON



DATE 20/11/2024

## SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	17/01/2024 23/10/2024	4.1 8.0	Management to present an analysis of sub-regional skills needs when available.
2	17/01/2024 23/10/2024	5.9 5.8	Management to further review the Anti-Bullying Policy for students to specify the support available to students impacted by bullying.
3	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.
4	23/10/2024	5.2.1	Presentation of the Curriculum Dashboard to be provided at the January 2025 committee meeting.
5	23/10/2024	5.4	Presentation of the College's externally funded projects to be delivered to the Governing Body.