

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**
held on Wednesday 14 January 2026 at 5.00 pm
via MS Teams

PRESENT:

Mrs Maureen Brunt
Dr Frances Campbell
Mr Tom Corr
Dr David Cutting
Mrs Maria Hackett
Mrs Sandra Isherwood, Committee Chair
Mr Ryan Kearney
Ms Celine McCartan, Principal & Chief Executive
Dr Nichola Melanaphy
Dr Lynsey Quinn

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
Mr Brian McIllduff, Head of Quality & Student Engagement (*from item 5.0*)
Mr Pdraig McNamee, Director of Curriculum

1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES

Mrs Isherwood welcomed all members to the meeting.
It was noted that all members were present.

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 22 October 2025.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

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 Learner Experience

Ms McCartan reported on areas of good practice and areas for improvement identified through recent student surveys; advised of the success of South West College (SWC) students

in the WorldSkills UK National Finals and the NI Apprenticeship Awards as well as of the College's achievement of NI CyberFirst Gold re-certification demonstrating excellence in cyber security education; confirmed the Department for the Economy's (DfE) approval of the sectoral business case for the 'Winter Warmers' student support scheme; and drew attention to the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy 2025-28 presented for approval and informed by internal and external assessment and feedback.

4.2 Review of Special Educational Needs Provision

Ms McCartan reminded the meeting of the College's refreshed Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision in light of growing demand and developing DfE policy in this area, as well as of the ongoing review of the SEN framework under the Special Educational Needs – Student Support (SEN-SE) project. She also reported on the positive feedback received following a November 2025 Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI) evaluation of Further Education (FE) colleges' discrete provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD); highlighted the ongoing consultation on the future Further Education (FE) inspection model as detailed in papers 05.10a and 05.10b; and commented on the challenges faced including communication, staffing, school to college transition arrangements and estates suitability.

In response to questions from members, Management advised of the College's policy in relation to complex personal care requirements; confirmed consultation with current SEN students and their advocates on the design of the College's SEN provision; spoke of the awareness of DfE of the need for enhanced funding to support SEN learners; acknowledged the increasing supply of Learning Support Workers through Labour Market Partnership Classroom Assistant Academies; and noted the opportunity for collaboration with the Department of Communities.

4.3 Essential Skills

Ms McCartan reported on the significant improvement in the College's Essential Skills success rates in 2024/25 and outlined the interventions put in place to contribute to this performance as detailed in the Quality Improvement Plan. She also advised of the strengths and areas for improvement identified through a November 2025 thematic review of Essential Skills Literacy and Numeracy and of the actions taken to address the latter. She commented on the challenge presented by staffing constraints and the reduction in the Essential Skills to GCSE equivalency rate, as well as on the amendments made to achieve improvements in GCSE Maths success rates in response to an ETI focus on this area.

Mr McIllduff joined the meeting at this juncture.

5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 Executive Summary of November 2025 CDP Progress Report
- Paper 05.02 November 2025 CDP Progress Report and Educational Report Card
- Paper 05.03 FE Sector Activity Statistical Bulletin - 2020-21 to 2024-25
- Paper 05.04 FE Sector Activity in NI 2024-25 Summary Infographic
- Paper 05.05 SWC vs Sector Activity 2018/19 to 2023/24 Summary
- Paper 05.06 Work Based Learning Report
- Paper 05.07 Essential Skills Quality Improvement Plan Update
- Paper 05.08 Summary of Essential Skills Thematic Review

- Paper 05.09 SEN Preparedness Report
- Paper 05.10 Draft 2025-28 SWC Curriculum Strategy
- Paper 05.10a ETI Consultation on FE Inspection Strategy and College Inspection Model
- Paper 05.10b Feedback on ETI Consultation on FE Inspection Strategy and College Inspection Model
- Paper 05.11 2024-27 Quality Improvement Plan Progress Report
- Paper 05.12 Quality Report
- Paper 05.13 HE Student Voice Report 2024-25
- Paper 05.14 Winter Warmer Scheme Business Case
- Paper 05.15 SEN-SE Project Management Report
- Paper 05.16 Safeguarding Report
- Paper 05.17 Business Development Report
- Paper 05.18 Social Inclusion Report
- Paper 05.19 SLT Discussion Paper on Supporting Middle Managers
- Paper 05.20 SWC Mentoring and Coaching Framework
- Paper 05.21 Timetabling and Room Utilisation Review 25-26
- Paper 05.22 Clubs and Societies in South West College Guide
- Paper 05.23 Skills and Apprenticeship Awards
- Paper 05.24 Digital Conference Flyer - Upscaling T Levels Delivering New Pathways to Success
- Paper 05.25 Cyber First NI Gold Announcement
- Paper 05.27 Quality Assurance and Improvement Policy
- Paper 05.28 Learning Resource Centre Policy
- Paper 05.29 Personal Mobile Device Guidance
- Paper 05.30 HE Assessment Appeals Policy
- Paper 05.31 HE Admissions and Admission Appeals Policy
- Paper 05.32 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy 2025-28
- Paper 05.33 Artificial Intelligence Policy
- Paper 05.34 Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy.

5.1 College Development Plan Performance

5.1.1 CDP Progress and Sector Position

Ref: Management Report Section 2.1 and Papers 05.01 – 05.05

The Committee noted the submission of the first 2025/26 College Development Plan (CDP) Progress Report and Educational Report Card to DfE in paper 05.02.

Mr McNamee then provided up to date statistics on student and enrolment numbers noting an overall better than target performance. Members endorsed his proposal to focus resource on recruitment to full-time Higher Education (HE) programmes, part-time programmes funded through non-core grant funding and Apprenticeships, including Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs).

He went on to reference the analysis provided in the Management Report on sectoral performance highlighting the College's increasing share of regulated enrolments in parallel with enhanced success rates.

AGREED: endorsement of the proposal to focus resource on recruitment to full-time Higher Education (HE) programmes, part-time programmes funded through non-core grant funding and Apprenticeships, including Higher Level Apprenticeships.

5.1.2 Curriculum Provision, Priorities and Plans

Ref: Management Report Sections 2.2 & 2.3 and Papers 05.06 – 05.10

Drawing attention to the draft 2025-2028 Curriculum Strategy, Mr McNamee spoke of its alignment with the College's Strategic Plan, Curriculum Vision and Quality Improvement Plan, provided an overview of the three tests to be applied in curriculum decisions in the forthcoming period, and welcomed feedback on the draft strategy.

In response, members commented favourably on the content of the draft strategy, spoke of the resource required to monitor its implementation, accepted the need to rationalise provision where necessary, acknowledged the fluid nature of the strategy to reflect emerging priorities and put forward suggestions regarding provision in some areas.

5.2 Quality Assurance, Student Experience and Teaching

Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Papers 05.10a - 05.13

Mr McIlduff highlighted the amendments made to the 2024-2027 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) including the addition of traineeship and essential skills actions at the request of DfE and sought the Committee's endorsement of the revised QIP. He went on to report positive progress to date in all actions in the QIP, noting the achievement of five actions and the near achievement of a number of others. He also advised of the development of a sector QIP, noting the benefits and drawbacks of this approach; apprised the meeting of the extension of the induction programme for new lecturers to a four year model; and spoke of the resourcing limitations affecting the availability of real-time attendance data.

In response to questions and comments from members, management provided assurance on the collation of attendance data, spoke of the challenges presented through external input into the College's QIP, and acknowledged the need to manage the QIP to ensure that actions are closed when complete. The Committee acknowledged its responsibility in ensuring continuous improvement through its oversight of the implementation of the QIP.

AGREED: endorsement of the revised 2024-2027 Quality Improvement Plan.

5.3 Examinations, SLDD and Safeguarding

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Papers 05.14 – 05.16

The updates in the Management Report on student support, examinations, SEN, skills competitions and safeguarding were noted by the Committee.

5.4 Business Development, Social Inclusion and Partnerships

Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Papers 05.17 & 05.18

The updates in the Management Report on business development activity, social inclusion programmes, strategic partnerships, externally funded projects and international activity were noted by the Committee.

5.5 Resourcing Considerations

Ref: Management Report Section 6.0 and Papers 05.19 - 05.21

Mr McNamee outlined the progress made by the sectoral Lecturers' Workload Task & Finish Group including the development of common Contract Implementation Guidelines and a standard Programme of Duties template. He added that the focus placed on the actions undertaken to date has impacted on progress of the remaining actions.

With reference to papers 05.19 and 05.20, he outlined challenges faced by Curriculum Managers, advised of the outstanding action relating to standardisation of workload for Curriculum Managers and apprised the meeting of the objectives of the developing Whole College Coaching and Mentoring Framework, including confidence building and staff empowerment.

In response to questions and comments from members, Management undertook to consider a cross-departmental buddy scheme for managers; confirmed that the Coaching and Mentoring Framework will apply to both academic and support staff; spoke of the steps to be taken in aligning resource planning with curriculum planning; and acknowledged the preference for face to face learning evidenced through student surveys.

5.6 Events, PR & Marketing

Ref: Management Report Section 7.0 and Papers 05.22 – 5.25

The updates provided in the Management Report on events, PR and marketing were noted by the Committee.

5.7 Policy Reviews

Ref: Management Report Section 8.0 and Papers 05.27 – 05.34

Management undertook to clarify a query regarding fees within the Learning Resource Centre Policy and to further review the Higher Education Assessment Appeals Policy to incorporate feedback from members.

ACTION: Management to further review the Higher Education Assessment Appeals Policy to incorporate feedback from members.

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

- **Quality Assurance & Improvement Policy**
- **Learning Resource Centre Policy**
- **Personal Mobile Device Guidance**
- **Higher Education Admission and Admissions Appeals Policy**
- **Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy 2025 - 28**
- **Artificial Intelligence Policy**
- **Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy.**

It was noted that DfE mandated amendments had been made to the Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policy and will be presented to the Chair of the Governing Body for approval to meet the submission deadline.

6.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 List of Outstanding Actions.

With reference to the action listed, it was noted that Dr Quinn had been appointed to the Higher Education Academic Board.

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

7.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

The Committee Chair spoke of her satisfaction with the scope of the ETI inspection of the College's SEN provision as well as with the positive feedback received.

8.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members commended the Committee Chair for her effective management of the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7.00 pm.

CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026

GB CHAIRPERSON



DATE 04/02/2026

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	14/01/2026	5.7	Review Higher Education Assessment Appeals Policy to incorporate feedback from members.