

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**  
held on Wednesday 18 March 2026 at 5.00 pm  
via MS Teams

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**PRESENT:** Mrs Maureen Brunt  
Dr Frances Campbell  
Mr Tom Corr  
Dr David Cutting  
Mrs Maria Hackett  
Mrs Sandra Isherwood, Committee Chair  
Mr Ryan Kearney  
Dr Nichola Melanaphy  
Dr Lynsey Quinn

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body  
Mr Ciaran McManus, Director of Development & Support  
Mr Pdraig McNamee, Director of Curriculum

**APOLOGIES:** Ms Celine McCartan, Principal & Chief Executive

**1.0 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Ms McCartan.

**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 14 January 2026.

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**

Mr McNamee reported strong student satisfaction and staff / student relationships evidenced through learner voice activities, quality assurance processes and programme monitoring, and advised of areas for improvement identified. He also reported on enhancements to the

Learning, Teaching and Assessment support model driving improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

Mr McNamee then apprised the meeting of increasing demand for student wellbeing support services, of the actions taken to ensure timely availability of such services, and of the balance to be achieved in managing student behaviour issues.

Members were also made aware of a pilot within the SEN-SE project to simulate real world activities in the classroom environment.

#### **4.2 Review of Special Educational Needs Provision**

Mr McNamee reminded the Committee of the growing demand for discrete Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision and additional support for learners undertaking mainstream programmes.

He then advised of the success of the Brightsparks pilot and of the amendments proposed to its delivery model to increase capacity and viability.

In response to a question from a member, Mr McNamee referenced the Education Authority's ongoing public consultation on enhancing the current SEN classroom support model.

#### **4.3 Essential Skills**

Mr McNamee reflected on the improved essential skills success rates achieved in 2024/25 with enhanced mentoring support, noted the absence of funding for enhanced mentoring support in 2025/26, commented on the below average essential skills success rates within the Skills for Life & Work programme and reported on the continued implementation of the Essential Skills Quality Improvement Plan. He also spoke of the College's GCSE English and Mathematics provision and of the challenge presented by the reduction in the Essential Skills to GCSE equivalency rate.

In response to a query from a member, Mr McNamee noted the maintenance of universities' entry requirements in relation to essential skills.

#### **4.4 Partnership & Collaboration**

Mr McManus outlined the scope of the College's partnerships and collaborations and reported on progress in the development of the Mid Ulster Lean Learning Factory and the Decarbonisation, Innovation & Skills for Concrete Centre (DISC) strategic projects.

Mr McNamee apprised the meeting of the enhanced sectoral collaborations anticipated to arise from the FE Transformation project and spoke of the College's good position in this regard in light of its experience and proven record in partnership working.

In response to a query from a member, Mr McManus commented on the support received from DfE in relation to the DISC project as well as on ongoing engagements with local government representatives in relation to council support for the project.

### **5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05                      Management Report
- Paper 05.01                 Apprenticeship and WBL Report
- Paper 05.02                 Essential Skills Quality Improvement Plan 2024-26 Update Report

- Paper 05.03            Quality Report
- Paper 05.04            Safeguarding Report
- Paper 05.05            HE Assessment Appeals Policy
- Paper 05.06            FE-WBL Centre Assessment Policy 2026-27
- Paper 05.07            Fitness to Practice Policy
- Paper 05.08            Business Development Report
- Paper 05.09            Innovation and Skills Case Studies
- Paper 05.10            DISC Strategic Case
- Paper 05.11            Social Inclusion and Employability Report
- Paper 05.12            Youthscape Buzz Issue 1
- Paper 05.13            Marketing Report.

## **5.1 College Development Plan Performance**

### **5.1.1 Report on Destination of Leavers 2024/25**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.1*

The Committee noted the Report on the Destination of 2024/25 Leavers in the Management Report.

### **5.1.2 CDP Progress and Sector Position**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.2*

With reference to the Educational Report Card in the Management Report, Mr McNamee drew attention to the strong performance against enrolment targets evidenced. He commented on the impact of strong Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) recruitment on recruitment to full-time Higher Education (HE) programmes and commented on the development of enrolment targets for the 2026/27 year.

### **5.1.2 Provision Update**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.3 and Papers 05.01 & 05.02*

Mr McNamee informed the Committee of the withdrawal of Advanced Technical Awards, of the anticipated impact of amendments to the Further Education (FE) qualification framework in England on that in Northern Ireland, of the establishment of the Apprenticeship Support Hub to facilitate co-ordination of all college apprenticeship activity and of the potential for limitations to skills programmes in light of DfE budget considerations.

## **5.2 Quality Assurance and Student Experience**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Paper 05.03*

Mr McNamee referenced the Quality Report provided in paper 05.03 and the student feedback provided earlier in the meeting.

In response to a query from a member on lecturers' attendance at Learning, Teaching and Assessment workshops, Mr McNamee spoke of the non-compulsory nature of the workshops and the importance of part-time lecturers to the teaching framework.

### 5.3 Examinations, Student Support and Safeguarding

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Paper 05.04*

Mr McNamee commented on the administratively intense nature of examination management and confirmed that no safeguarding issues have arisen in the reporting period.

### 5.4 Resourcing Considerations

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.0*

Mr McNamee spoke of the impacts of staff resource challenges and advised of ongoing analyses by academic managers to identify future resourcing needs in alignment with the draft Curriculum Strategy. He also spoke of accommodation pressures arising from increased provision with static estate capacity.

### 5.5 Policy Reviews

*Ref: Management Report Section 6.0 and Papers 05.05 – 05.07*

In response to queries from members, Mr McNamee clarified support arrangements for student appeals and undertook to review the HE Assessment Appeals Policy in relation to the retention of records.

**AGREED: that the following policies are recommended to the Governing Body for approval subject to the review of the HE Assessment Appeals Policy in relation to the retention of records:**

- **Higher Education Assessment Appeals Policy**
- **Further Education / Work Based Learning Centre Assessment Policy 2026/27**
- **Fitness to Practice Policy.**

### 5.6 Apprenticeships

#### 5.6.1 Apprenticeship Support Hub

*Ref: Management Report Section 7.1 and Paper 05.01*

Mr McManus reported good progress in the establishment of the Apprenticeship Support Hub, advised of the potential development of HLAs in Hairdressing and Wind Turbine Maintenance and noted concern regarding possible restrictions on apprenticeship enrolments.

#### 5.6.2 Skills Competitions

*Ref: Management Report Section 7.2*

Mr McManus apprised the meeting of the completion of internal skills competitions resulting in the progression of a number of students to sectoral competitions.

#### 5.6.3 Get Engineering

*Ref: Management Report Section 7.3*

Mr McManus invited members to the forthcoming Get Engineering event.

## **5.7 Business Development**

*Ref: Management Report Section 8.0 and Papers 05.08 - 05.10*

Mr McManus referenced the updates provided in the Management Report and the Business Development Report on business support programmes, innovation projects, skills interventions and the DISC and Mid-Ulster Lean Learning Factory strategic projects.

## **5.8 Social Inclusion and Employability**

*Ref: Management Report Section 9.0 and Papers 05.11 & 05.12*

Mr McManus spoke of the evolution of the Skills for Life & Work programme incorporating integration with the Step Up programme enabling enhanced student support and resulting in increased progression and sustained growth in enrolments.

He noted continued uncertainty on the future funding position of the Going Places Programme and the Rural Economic Accelerator Programme (REAP) as well as the continued delivery of the YouthScape+ Programme.

He also commented on accommodation challenges in relation to social inclusion programmes.

## **5.9 Planning & Curriculum Support**

*Ref: Management Report Section 10.0*

Mr McManus reported on forthcoming student mobilities under the Turing Scheme as well as on the potential re-establishment of the Erasmus Scheme.

## **5.10 Marketing**

*Ref: Management Report Section 11.0 and Paper 05.13*

Mr McManus apprised the meeting of the interest received at the FE Open Days held in February 2026. He commented on the focus placed on recruitment to full-time HE programmes, noting the forthcoming HE Open Days and HE Ambassador briefings.

## **6.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 List of Outstanding Actions.

It was noted that the action listed in paper 06 had been implemented.

## **7.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**


Mr Kearney was commended for his work in raising awareness of the No More Campaign to end violence against women and girls.

## **8.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING**

Members commented on the effectiveness of the meeting.

***The meeting concluded at 6.10 pm.***

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15  
APRIL 2026**

**GB CHAIRPERSON**  **DATE** 15/04/2026