

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**
held on Wednesday 19 March 2025 at 5.00 pm
via MS Teams

PRESENT: Mrs Maureen Brunt
Dr Frances Campbell
Mr Tom Corr
Dr David Cutting
Mrs Maria Hackett
Mr Diarmuid Hanna
Mrs Sandra Isherwood, Committee Chair
Dr Nichola Melanaphy (*items 1.0 – 5.3 only*)
Dr Lynsey Quinn

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

APOLOGIES: Ms Celine McCartan, Chief Executive

1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES

Mrs Isherwood welcomed all present to the meeting.

An apology was 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 15 January 2025.

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 04.03 Strategic Priorities.

4.1 Curriculum Profile

Mr McNamee apprised the meeting of the ongoing development of apprenticeships in non-traditional areas such as healthcare, noting the delivery model amendments required. He also advised of plans to increase online and hybrid programmes in a number of areas.

4.2 Student Experience

Mr McNamee reported on the introduction of a new admissions process to better support students with special educational needs (SEN), on the evaluations underway to prioritise capital developments for students, and on the adoption of a more responsive student feedback framework.

In response to questions and comments from members, Mr McNamee spoke of the value of the various student feedback mechanisms and undertook to consider raising awareness amongst students of the interventions put in place as a result of the feedback received as a means of encouraging further student engagement.

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

Mr McNamee made the Committee aware of the initiatives undertaken to address the challenges in Essential Skills success rates including lobbying for a change to the qualifications criteria for tutors, the procurement of adaptive learning and gamified software, and earlier identification of support needs.

Regarding ESOL, he explained that a change to a modular delivery model has been adopted to meet the needs of students.

4.4 Review of Special Educational Needs Provision

Mr McNamee confirmed the launch of the SEN-SE Project to address special educational needs and student experience matters. He added that funding has been sought to further support SEN students to find sustained employment, that the development of sensory rooms is under consideration and that a review is underway to determine the most appropriate numeracy and literacy qualifications for SEN students.

A discussion took place on the suitability, benefits and drawbacks of sensory rooms for college students and Mr McNamee undertook to explore the option of calm spaces as an alternative.

4.5 College Strategic Planning

Mr McManus updated the meeting on the development the three year Strategic Plan, noting the consultations undertaken and the anticipated presentation of the draft Strategic Plan to the Senior Leadership Team for review later in the month.

5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 NI Skills Barometer Summary Report 2023-33
- Paper 05.02 2019 West Sub Regional Skills Barometer
- Paper 05.03 Sub Regional Economic Plan
- Paper 05.04 Sector Curriculum Rationalisation Scenarios
- Paper 05.05 Curriculum Development Template
- Paper 05.06 Draft Blueprint for NI Traineeship

- Paper 05.07 James Kane Foundation EOI
- Paper 05.08 Draft Bridge to Build Project Operational Plan
- Paper 05.09 EPIC Futures NI Policy Commissioning Call
- Paper 05.10 SWC OU Administrative Audit Draft Conclusions Report
- Paper 05.11 SWC OU Institutional Reapproval Draft Conclusions Report
- Paper 05.12 2024-27 Quality Improvement Plan Summary
- Paper 05.13 Results of Student Questionnaire
- Paper 05.14 Safeguarding Report
- Paper 05.15 Report on Business Development Activity
- Paper 05.16 Social Inclusion Report
- Paper 05.17 Destinations of 2023-24 Leavers Report
- Paper 05.18 FE WBL Centre Assessment Policy 2025-26
- Paper 05.19 Post 16 PTE Handbook 2025 - 2027
- Paper 05.20 SWC Student Personal Mobile Device Guidance
- Paper 05.21 Higher Education Admissions, Admission Appeals and RPL Policy
- Paper 05.22 Student Disciplinary Policy
- Paper 05.23 Student Disciplinary Procedure
- Paper 05.24 Admissions Policy
- Paper 05.25 Admissions Procedure
- Paper 05.26 Taster Day 2025 Flyer.

5.1 Background

Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Papers 05.01 - 05.03

Mr McNamee drew attention to the 2019 West Sub-Regional Skills Barometer, the 2023-33 NI Skills Barometer Summary Report and the Sub-Regional Economic Plan and advised of progress in the establishment of Local Economic Partnerships to deliver the Sub-Regional Economic Plan. He then apprised the Committee of the briefing received during a recent Department for the Economy (DfE) Partnership Meeting highlighting the expectation of a challenging 2025/26 budget and the continued commitment to the Departmental Economic Vision of Good Jobs, Regional Balance, Raised Productivity and Reduced Carbon Emissions.

5.2 College Development Plan Progress

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0

With reference to the data provided in the Management Report on enrolments, Mr McNamee commented on his satisfaction with performance to date and noted the attention placed on a number of under-target areas.

5.3 Curriculum Developments

Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Papers 05.04 – 05.11

Mr McNamee reported on the curriculum planning underway, the sectoral scenario modelling undertaken in relation to potential rationalisation options, the relocation of Erne Campus catering provision to the Omagh Campus to facilitate further maintenance, the forthcoming launch of the Smart Rural Innovation Driven Empowerment (STRIDE) project and the Green Accelerator Skills Project (GRASP), the provisional institutional re-approval awarded by the Open University and the revalidations of a number of Higher Education (HE) programmes.

In response to questions from members, Mr McNamee commented on the ongoing prevalence of students leaving school with less than five GCSEs, reflected on the College's previous postgraduate provision and informed the meeting of the integration of transversal skills development into college programmes.

Dr Melanaphy withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

5.4 Student Experience

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Papers 05.12 & 05.13

Mr McNamee updated the meeting on students' participation and success in WorldSkills and HE Corn Na Mac Leinn competitions, the pilot underway of a revised quality cycle, the availability of free meals to all students from the reallocation of uncommitted student hardship funding and the resourcing challenges encountered during recent examinations.

In response to comments from members, Mr McNamee provided assurance on the rectification of the examination resourcing challenges and undertook to investigate IT issues encountered by students.

5.5 Safeguarding Report

Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Paper 05.14

Management referenced the update provided in the Management Report on safeguarding and spoke of the whole college approach taken to safeguarding including the focus placed on compliance with training requirements.

5.6 Business Development

Ref: Management Report Section 6.0 and Paper 05.15

Mr McManus outlined the benefits and progress of the College's funded projects including the new STRIDE and GRASP projects funded under the Peace Plus Programme and advised of the commencement of a new Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP).

5.7 Social Inclusion

Ref: Management Report Section 7.0 and Paper 05.16

Mr McManus reported good progress in performance against targets in relation to the College's social inclusion projects. He commented on the uncertain funding environment and on the likelihood of extensions to the Rural Economic Accelerator Programme (REAP) and Step Up Programme, albeit at reduced levels of funding. He also apprised the meeting of the submission of applications for other funded projects, noting the success of a bid to deliver upskilling for Classroom Assistants through Fermanagh & Omagh District Council's Labour Market Partnership.

In response to a question from a member, Mr McManus spoke of the impact of compulsory financial contributions on recruitment to funded projects and of the selection process in place to ensure the commitment of participants.

5.8 Strategic Partnerships

Ref: Management Report Section 8.0

Mr McNamee made the Committee aware of investigations underway in relation to the potential development of a capital resource for the Engineering sector in conjunction with Queen's University Belfast's (QUB) Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC). He also advised of an ongoing review of the College's partnership with the Nerve Centre.

5.9 Resourcing Considerations

Ref: Management Report Section 10.0

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

5.10 Destination of Leavers

Ref: Management Report Section 11.0 and Paper 05.17

The Report on the Destination of 2023/24 Leavers was noted by the Committee.

5.11 Policy Reviews

Ref: Management Report Section 12.0 and Papers 05.18 – 05.25

Mr McNamee commented on the significant reviews undertaken of the Student Disciplinary Policy and the Admissions Policy. Feedback on a number of the policies was then provided by committee members and Mr McNamee undertook to further revise these policies to reflect the feedback received.

AGREED: that the following policies are recommended to the Governing Body for approval, subject to the incorporation of the feedback received from members:

- **FE WBL Centre Assessment Policy 2025-26**
- **Post 16 PTE Handbook 2025 - 2027**
- **SWC Student Personal Mobile Device Guidance**
- **Higher Education Admissions, Admission Appeals and RPL Policy**
- **Student Disciplinary Policy**
- **Student Disciplinary Procedure**
- **Admissions Policy**
- **Admissions Procedure.**

5.12 Events, PR and Marketing

Ref: Management Report Section 13.0 and Paper 05.26

The update in the Management Report on Events, PR and Marketing was noted by the Committee.

6.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 List of Outstanding Actions.

It was noted that all actions had been closed.

7.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

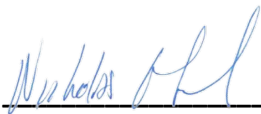
No further business was raised.

8.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members commented on the effectiveness of the meeting.

Mr Corr and Mr Hanna withdrew from the meeting at this juncture. The meeting then went into confidential session.

CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2 APRIL 2025

CHAIRPERSON 

DATE 02/04/2025