

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**
held on Wednesday 28 May 2025 at 5.10 pm
in the Boardroom, Dungannon Campus

PRESENT:	Mrs Maureen Brunt Dr Frances Campbell Mrs Maria Hackett 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 Padraig McNamee, Director of Curriculum
APOLOGIES:	Mr Tom Corr Dr David Cutting Mr Diarmuid Hanna

1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES

Mrs Isherwood welcomed all present to the last committee meeting of the 2024/25 academic year.

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Mr Corr, Dr Cutting and Mr Hanna.

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 19 March 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.

4.1 Curriculum Profile

Ms McCartan advised of modifications to some apprenticeships involving enhanced work placement time; referenced the recent Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI) review of traineeships and the related sectoral report in paper 05.06; noted the focus on level 1 provision to ensure clear pathways to traineeships; and commented on the indications of positive recruitment to 2025/26 provision.

4.2 Student Experience

Ms McCartan advised of the amendments made to the job description of the Teaching & Learning Advisor role to reflect the actions to be taken to enhance the student experience as a result of feedback from students. She also commented on the continued demand for support to address student welfare needs.

4.3 Industry Support Initiatives

Ms McCartan reported good performance in the delivery of industry support initiatives in the context of the challenging operating environment, highlighting the positive engagement with the delivery team and the effect of the requirement for financial contributions from employers.

4.4 Review of Special Educational Needs Provision

Ms McCartan reflected on the presentation received by the Committee in May 2024 on special educational needs (SEN) provision and the subsequent establishment of the Special Educational Needs and Student Experience (SEN-SE) Project. She spoke of the enhanced demand for SEN provision, of the indications of a further increase in demand in future years and of the consequent necessity for an improvement in systems to administer an increased intake with limited resources as well as of the requirement for a review of provision to best meet the needs of learners whilst delivering departmental objectives. She commented on the testing undertaken on exploiting Artificial Intelligence to aid systems efficiency and outlined the proposal to extend current SEN provision to include: streamlining of the current Learning for Life & Work programme; a mentor led work placement based employability strand; and a recreational programme delivered on a cost recovery basis. She also made the meeting aware of the receipt of a letter from DfE referencing the potential outworkings of a recent review of education, training and skills provision for school leavers with SEN and providing notification of a forthcoming ETI evaluation of discrete SEN provision.

ACTION: Ms McCartan to circulate the DfE letter referenced above.

In response to questions and comments during the discussion which followed, management acknowledged the increasing applications of Artificial Intelligence in education; commented on the risk of maintaining the current SEN offer only in light of the anticipated enhanced demand; outlined the potential governance of the proposed extended SEN provision; noted the unique nature of this proposal within the sector; advised of plans to pilot a number of elements of the proposed provision in 2025/26 with a view to implementing the full offer college wide in 2026/27; spoke of the importance of appropriate staff engagement and training; and undertook to circulate an information guide on 2025/26 provision for the attention of students and parents / guardians when complete.

ACTION: Mr McNamee to circulate information guide on 2025/26 SEN provision.

5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 Written Ministerial Statement
- Paper 05.02 Cross Sector Workload Group Action Plan
- Paper 05.03 College Development Plan Educational Report Card Target vs Actual
- Paper 05.04 College Development Plan Progress Report
- Paper 05.05 Accounting and Business Related Curriculum Planning
- Paper 05.06 Evaluation of the Traineeship Programme in FE Colleges
- Paper 05.07 SWC 2025-26 Wider Access and Participation Plan
- Paper 05.08 SWC HE Scholarship Flyer
- Paper 05.09 Quality Improvement Plan 2024-2027 Update
- Paper 05.10 SCT HE Module Evaluation 2024-25 S1 Analysis
- Paper 05.11 CBS HE Module Evaluation 2024-25 S1 Analysis
- Paper 05.12 EIC HE Module Evaluation 2024-25 S1 Analysis
- Paper 05.13 HLPS HE Module Evaluation 2024-25 S1 Analysis
- Paper 05.14 Quality and Student Engagement Report
- Paper 05.15 Safeguarding Report
- Paper 05.16 Action Mental Health Awareness Week Communications
- Paper 05.17 Period Poverty Survey Results
- Paper 05.18 Business Development Report
- Paper 05.19 Social Inclusion Report
- Paper 05.20 Higher Education Strategy 2025-28
- Paper 05.21 Policy for Students with Caring Responsibilities.

5.1 Background

Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Papers 05.01 & 05.02

Mr McNamee confirmed the cessation of action short of strike by lecturers following an agreement on pay increases for 2024/25 and 2025/26, provided an update on the progress of the sectoral review of workload and noted that a review of the industrial relations framework is also expected. In response to questions and comments from members, management welcomed the review of workload, advised of the need for standardisation of the application of contracts across the sector and noted the potential impacts for South West College in terms of increased costs and an exacerbation of the College's recruitment and selection challenges.

5.2 College Development Plan Progress

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Papers 05.03 & 05.04

Mr McNamee advised of the circa 10% overachievement of the 2024/25 learner target. He confirmed the submission of the draft 2025/26 College Development Plan, noting the target growth within of circa 3.75% of the 2024/25 learner target.

5.3 Curriculum Developments

Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Papers 05.05 – 05.08

Mr McNamee referenced the report on the sectoral evaluation of traineeships in paper 05.06 highlighting the strengths and areas for improvement identified.

In response to questions and comments from members, he noted the potential for increased enrolments from Women Returners as a result of engagement with First Steps Women's Centre and identified resourcing challenges, staff accreditation and space capacity as limitations to significant further growth in apprenticeships.

5.4 Quality Assurance

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Papers 05.09 & 05.14

With reference to paper 05.09, Mr McNamee reported good progress in the delivery of the 2024-27 Quality Improvement Plan.

In response to a queries from members, management explained that student feedback is now sought monthly enabling the prompt introduction of appropriate interventions; spoke of the challenge in recruiting examination invigilators due to current labour market conditions; and provided assurance that students may avail of examination resit opportunities when required despite rising costs in this area.

5.5 Safeguarding Report

Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Papers 05.15 – 05.17

In response to a query from a member on compliance with completion of the Safeguarding, Care and Welfare corporate training module, Ms McCartan reported a greater than 90% completion rate by staff currently engaged in employment with the College.

5.6 Business Development

Ref: Management Report Section 6.0 and Paper 05.18

In response to a question on the budget of the InnovateUs project, Mr McNamee explained that the transition of staff to other internal roles had contributed to the underspend in this programme.

5.7 Social Inclusion

Ref: Management Report Section 7.0 and Paper 05.19

Mr McNamee highlighted the extension of the Rural Economic Accelerator Programme with reduced funding, the uncertainty regarding the level of funding to be attributed to potential extensions to the Going Places and Step Up programmes, and the additional projects secured to enhance the College's social inclusion offer.

5.8 Higher Education Strategy

Ref: Management Report Section 8.0 and Paper 05.20

Mr McNamee referenced the draft 2025-2028 Higher Education Strategy and explained that it will be reviewed to ensure alignment with the 2025-28 Strategic Plan, when approved, and presented to the Committee for consideration at its October 2025 meeting.

5.9 Strategic Partnerships

Ref: Management Report Section 9.0

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

5.10 Resourcing Considerations

Ref: Management Report Section 10.0

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

5.11 Policy Review

Ref: Management Report Section 11.0 and Paper 05.21

AGREED: that the Policy for Students with Caring Responsibilities is recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

5.12 Events, PR and Marketing

Ref: Management Report Section 12.0

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

6.0 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE'S PERFORMANCE IN 2024/25

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Partially Completed Review of Committee's Performance in 2024/25.

With reference to Paper 06, Mrs McCauley advised that the self-assessment checklist had been completed where a factual response was available and sought members' views on remaining questions. The resulting review is attached at Appendix A.

7.0 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2025/26

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Schedule of Meetings 2025/26.

The Committee accepted the proposed schedule of meetings for 2025/26 with the January 2026 and March 2026 meetings to be held virtually and the October 2025 and June 2026 meetings to be held in the Dungannon campus.

AGREED: acceptance of the proposed schedule of Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee meetings for 2025/26.

8.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

No further business was raised.

9.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members noted their satisfaction with the effectiveness of the meeting.

Dr Melanaphy 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 18 JUNE 2025

PRESIDING CHAIR Brian Ingram **DATE** 18/06/2025

APPENDIX A

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE OF CURRICULUM & QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE 2024/25

		Yes	No	Comments
Terms of Reference				
1	Does the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee have written terms of reference?	✓		
2	Were the terms of reference reviewed by the Committee and approved by the Governing Body?	✓		Reviewed by the Committee on 23 October 2024 and approved by the GB on 20 November 2024.
3	Has the Committee complied with the provisions of its terms of reference in its proceedings throughout the year?	✓		
Programme of Business				
4	Did the Committee agree a programme of business for the academic year?	✓		Agreed by the Committee at its 23 October 2024 meeting.
5	Did the Committee cover all business listed in the programme of business?	✓		
6	Have all actions identified by the committee been satisfactorily delivered?	✓		
7	Is there any business that members feel do not need to be covered next year?		✓	
8	Is there any additional business that members feel should be included next year?	✓		See Additional Comments below.
Skills, Knowledge and Competences of Members				
9	Does the appropriate mix of skills, knowledge and competences exist within the Committee to perform most effectively?	✓		
Governing Body Key Performance Indicators				
10	Did attendance levels at Committee meetings average at least 65%?	✓		Average 88%.
11	Did Committee meetings generally last no more than two hours?	✓		
Additional Comments				
12	Director of Development & Support and Head of Quality & Student Engagement to attend committee meetings twice per annum to present respective elements of Management Report under their responsibility.			

	Revision of Committee's Key Strategic Issues to: 1. Curriculum Profile 2. Student Experience 3. Review of Special Educational Needs Provision 4. Essential Skills.
--	--

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	28/05/2025	4.4	Ms McCartan to circulate the DfE letter referencing the potential outworkings of a recent review of education, training and skills provision for school leavers with SEN and providing notification of a forthcoming ETI evaluation of discrete SEN provision.
1	28/05/2025	4.4	Mr McNamee to circulate information guide on 2025/26 SEN provision.