

## SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Education, Quality & Performance Committee**  
held on Wednesday 18 January 2023 at 5.00 pm  
via Microsoft Teams

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**PRESENT:**

- Ms Siobhan Breen
- Mrs Deborah Brown
- Mrs Maureen Brunt
- Dr Frances Campbell
- Mr Jack Daly
- Mrs Sandra Isherwood
- Ms Celine McCartan, Chief Executive
- Ms Anne McCleary
- Mr Michael McGuckin (*from item 4.0*)
- Dr Lynsey Quinn, Committee Chair

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
- Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
- Mr Pdraig McNamee, Assistant Chief Executive, Learner Experience
- Ms Sharon Pritchard, Student Engagement & Support Manager (*item 5.0 only*)

### **1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES**

Dr Quinn, Committee Chair, welcomed all present to the meeting.

It was noted that all members were present.

### **2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

No conflict of interest declarations were made.

### **3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 23 November 2022.

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 Key Strategic Issues Management Update.

### **4.1 Reduction in Full Time Further Education Student Numbers and Retention**

Mr McNamee informed the meeting of the current focus on student retention and the commencement of the 2023/24 marketing programme with forthcoming Open Days in the

Dungannon, Enniskillen and Omagh campuses. He also informed the meeting of new initiatives to enhance the classroom experience and to identify students requiring learning mentor support at an earlier juncture through a more integrated approach.

#### **4.2 Essential Skills**

Mr McNamee reported on the College's Essential Skills performance noting its congruence with the sector average. He explained that an Essential Skills Action Plan has been developed, an Essential Skills Co-ordinator appointed and a review of data tracking commissioned with a view to improving performance.

#### **4.3 Curriculum Delivery Model**

Mr McNamee reported that the 2023/24 Curriculum Plan has been developed and will be reviewed upon confirmation of the 2023/24 budget allocation. He added that the schools engagement marketing model has been expanded to include mobile roadshows and a short course portfolio to be delivered in schools.

#### **4.4 Access to Higher Education**

Mr McNamee reported on falling enrolments to full time Higher Education (HE) courses and increasing enrolments to Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs) and advised that consolidation of courses will be considered if required.

#### **4.5 Quality of Teaching and Learning**

Mr McNamee advised that a single overarching quality assurance approach has now been adopted within the College to facilitate compliance and continuous improvement. He also advised that regular student pulse surveys have been introduced to garner feedback on the student experience.

In response to questions and comments from members, management detailed the sectoral performance model in terms of retention, achievement and success, commented on the difficulty in measuring qualitative success, and explained the framework used to respond to student feedback. Members welcomed the introduction of student pulse surveys on student experience as well as the initiatives to share classroom best practice and to identify support needs at an early juncture. It was agreed to regularly monitor the impact of the Essential Skills Action Plan and to schedule a presentation on Higher Education at the next committee meeting.

***Mr McGuckin joined the meeting during the above item.***

#### **5.0 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICE REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05                      Student Engagement and Support Service Report.

***Ms Pritchard joined the meeting at this juncture.***

Ms Pritchard began her report by drawing attention to the information provided in paper 05. She went on to inform the meeting of the key pastoral challenges faced by students

including those relating to mental health, gender identity, homelessness and cost of living increases. She detailed the key role played by Learning Mentors in supporting students in all aspects of their college experience and outlined the careers guidance service offered as well as the schools engagement undertaken in conjunction with curriculum teams. In concluding her report, Ms Pritchard spoke of the channels used to gather student feedback and of the analysis undertaken of this feedback with a view to continuous improvement.

In response to questions and comments from members, Ms Pritchard spoke of the importance of building relationships with schools and provided further details of the roadshow initiative. She also advised on the marketing of the wraparound support provided within the College and on the importance of social media as a tool for disseminating information to students. Mr Daly noted the positive impact of the increased promotion of the support available to students and Ms McCartan spoke of the challenges recently faced in recruiting to Learner Mentor positions.

Ms Pritchard undertook to provide statistics on mentorship referrals in the September to December 2022 period and to detail the rationale for the choice of schools to be visited by the roadshow.

***Ms Pritchard withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.***

## **6.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06 Management Report
- Paper 06.01 Terms of Reference – Advanced Technical Award Insight Gathering Exercise
- Paper 06.02 Higher Education Activity Report
- Paper 06.03 Essential Skills Action Plan 2022-24
- Paper 06.04 Digital Learning Activity Report
- Paper 06.05 Whole College Quality Improvement Plan 2022-24
- Paper 06.06 Semester One Safeguarding Activities Report
- Paper 06.07 CDP Report Card Update
- Paper 06.08 Annual Marketing Services Report
- Paper 06.09 Annual Virtual Services Report
- Paper 06.10 Report on Destination of Leavers
- Paper 06.11 Examinations Policy
- Paper 06.12 Summary Report on DfE Consultations on HE in FE and Vocational Qualifications in Northern Ireland.

### **6.1 Further Education**

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0*

Mr McNamee explained that whilst steady incremental improvement in the student success rate has been evidenced in recent years, it remains below the sector average, due to lower achievement rates. He added that focus has been placed on retention, recruitment with integrity to 2023/24 programmes, improving the classroom experience through a new

Classroom Focus Strategy and enhancing pastoral care through a more integrated approach to identifying students in need of Learner Mentor support at an earlier stage.

## **6.2 Academic Maladministration**

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0*

Ms McCartan advised that the College's action plan devised in response to the allegations of academic maladministration has been reviewed by a member of the Change Management Team with positive feedback received. She also noted that a report on lessons learnt is under development.

## **6.3 Traineeships and Advanced Technical Awards**

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Paper 06.01*

Mr McNamee provided an overview of the FE specific Traineeship and Advanced Technical qualifications as well as an update on the progress of their implementation.

## **6.4 14 – 19 Agenda**

*Ref: Management Report Section 1.0*

Mr McNamee referenced the NI government's recently published 14-19 framework which aims to encourage partnerships to ensure that young people are supported to choose the educational pathway that will best facilitate them to fulfil their potential. He commented on the ongoing issues in relation to the current 14-19 model and on the efforts made to build relationships with schools and create awareness of the College's offering amongst young people.

## **6.5 Higher Education**

*Ref: Management Report Section 2.0*

Mr McNamee noted the trend in declining enrolments to HE provision and increased enrolments to HLA programmes and advised of a planned review of HE with a view to enhancing enrolments, success and efficiency of delivery.

## **6.6 Work Based Learning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 3.0*

Mr McNamee commented on the strength of relationships with employers and demand for skills as evidenced through good enrolments to work based learning and HLA programmes. He also noted ongoing issues with the Trainee and Apprentice Management System (TAMS).

In response to a query from a member, Mr McNamee explained that hospitality provision is currently transitioning from the FE model to the Apprenticeship model.

## **6.7 Essential Skills**

*Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Paper 06.03*

Mr McNamee advised that an Essential Skills Action Plan has been developed and an Essential Skills Co-ordinator appointed. He highlighted the need for apprenticeships to attain the Essential Skills qualification in order to meet the requirements for Apprenticeship

accreditation and commented on the need to enhance the importance placed on Essential Skills.

#### **6.8 Digital Learning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Paper 06.04*

Mr McNamee commented on the mainstreamed nature of digital learning tools and techniques and suggested that the College's expertise in this area could be exploited to develop and sell online courses.

#### **6.9 Social Inclusion**

*Ref: Management Report Section 6.0*

Mr McNamee made the Committee aware of the applications submitted and under development for social inclusion provision.

#### **6.10 Excellence in Teaching and Learning**

*Ref: Management Report Section 7.0 and Paper 06.05*

Mr McNamee confirmed that the Self Evaluation Report 2020-22 and the Quality Improvement Plan 2022-24 has been submitted to DfE. He also reported on the various channels used to gather the views of students, on the introduction of an enhanced staff induction program, and on the strategy to implement a small number of high impact actions to improve the student experience.

#### **6.11 Economic Engagement**

*Ref: Management Report Section 8.0*

Mr McNamee referenced the update provided on the support provided to industry through EU funded programmes as well as DfE funded skills and innovation programmes.

#### **6.12 Safeguarding**

*Ref: Management Report Section 9.0 and Paper 06.06*

The Committee noted the update provided on safeguarding activities.

#### **6.13 Update on Implementation of 2022/23 Annual Development Plan / Report Cards**

*Ref: Management Report Section 10.0 and Paper 06.07*

With reference to paper 06.07, Dr Cush highlighted the below target performance in full-time FE and full-time HE, adding that transfers to HLAs had affected recruitment to full-time HE programmes. She also drew attention to the high targets set in relation to innovation programmes and cautioned of the challenge in meeting these targets.

#### **6.14 Additional Items**

*Ref: Management Report Section 11.0 and Papers 06.08, 06.09 & 06.10*

The Annual Marketing Services Report, the Annual Virtual Services Report and the Report on the Destination of Leavers were noted by the Committee.

## 6.15 Policy Reviews

*Ref: Management Report Section 12.0 and Paper 06.11*

It was noted that the review of the Centre Assessment Policy 2022/23 had been deferred to the 22 March 2023 committee meeting.

**AGREED: that the Examinations Policy be recommended to the Governing Body for approval.**

## 6.16 Consultations

*Ref: Management Report Section 13.0 and Paper 06.12*

Dr Cush outlined the key issues arising from ongoing DfE consultations on 'Level 4 and Level 5 Provision and Higher Education in Further Education' and 'Principles for Vocational Qualifications in Northern Ireland' and welcomed input from members. The importance of highlighting the differentiation of colleges' offering from that of schools was highlighted.

Members commented on the importance of taking an evidence based approach and considering local need in any review of the curriculum plan which may be necessitated by budget cuts. In response to questions from members, Mr McNamee outlined the continuing professional development provided to existing staff, confirmed that best practice resources are available on the Staff Hub and spoke of the Awarding Bodies' trend towards examination based assessments following alternative arrangements put in place during the pandemic. He also made the Committee aware of a survey of local industry on their awareness of the green economy which will inform the College's plans in this field.

## 7.0 REVIEW OF THE EDUCATION, QUALITY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee Terms of Reference.

Dr Quinn referenced the Committee's proposed revised terms of reference in paper 07. She highlighted the proposal to rename the Committee to 'Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee', to convene a minimum of three times per academic year in line with key business and to focus the Committee's function and authority with curriculum and quality assurance.

Ms McCartan explained that the review of the Committee's term of reference has been undertaken in the context of the change process and that reviews of the terms of reference of the other committees will also be undertaken. It was noted that the functions listed in the Terms of Reference will be cross referenced with the reports presented to provide assurance on the discharge of the Committee's responsibilities.

**ACTION: that the revised Terms of Reference be recommended to the Governing Body for approval.**

**8.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08 Outstanding Actions.

Dr Quinn led a review of the outstanding actions listed in paper 08. A revised list of outstanding actions is included in Appendix B.

**9.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

No further business was raised.


**10.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING**

Members commented on the value of the information provided in the Management Report.

In response to a query, it was agreed that the papers may be shared with the Management Team.

*The meeting concluded at 6.50 pm.*

**CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2023**

CHAIR 

DATE 08/03/2023

**POLICIES RECOMMENDED TO THE GOVERNING BODY FOR APPROVAL**

#	Policy
1	Examinations Policy



## SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	19/10/2022	4.0	Presentation on the priorities of the Skills for a 10X Economy Strategy to be provided to the Governing Body.
2	19/10/2022	11.0	Updated paper on the regional economic profile to be provided at the March 2023 committee meeting to incorporate additional data available at that time including the 2021 census statistics.
3	18/01/2023	4.0	Progress on the implementation of the Essential Skills Action Plan to be reported on in the Management Report.
4	18/01/2023	4.0	Presentation on Higher Education to be provided at the March 2023 committee meeting.
5	18/01/2023	5.0	Ms Pritchard to provide statistics on mentorship referrals in the September to December 2022 period.
6	18/01/2023	5.0	Ms Pritchard to detail the rationale for the choice of schools to be visited by the roadshow.