

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Minutes of the unreserved business meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 1 June 2022 in Newtownabbey campus, commencing at 4.00pm.

Present: Mrs L Crilly, Dr P Graham (on Teams), Mrs P Martin, Mr W McCluggage (Chair), Mr D Small

In Attendance: Mr P Barr (NIAO), Ms K Craig, Mr M Higgins, Mr S Lavery, Mr I McCartney (RSM NI), Mr K Nelson, Mr J Ross (Item 73.7-73.8), Ms H Sampson (DfE), Ms J Small

Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

73.1 Apologies

Apologies were noted for Mrs Brown and Mr Hutchinson.

The Chair welcomed Mr Nelson to the meeting and congratulated Ms Craig on her appointment as Head of Finance, Risk and Governance.

73.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

73.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 were approved.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mr Small

73.4 Matters Arising

- Members heard that an update on the appointment of an independent financial specialist had been circulated to the recruitment panel members.

Action: Committee agreed that the panel proceed with the appointment of an independent financial specialist.

- Committee were advised that, subject to available resource, an Information Governance audit would be included in the audit schedule for 2022/23 which is based on new emerging risks for the College.
- 2 members had provided views on volume of paperwork considered at Committee. Both considered it to be appropriate to the topics under Committee's remit.

73.5 Chair's Communication / Correspondence

Committee heard information on the withdrawal of the FE Audit Code and details of the resultant requirement for an amendment to the Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference (TOR).

Action: Committee approved the amendment to the TOR, which would be noted to the Governing Body on 22 June.

73.6 Information Governance

Consideration was given to the update to 30 April 2022. The Chair outlined the remit of the College Connect Programme and compliance issues with its operation were noted.

An incident involving communication to students using personal email addresses was discussed and action to enhance communication and training for staff and students noted.

4.17pm Mrs Crilly joined the meeting.

73.7 Cyber Security Update

Mr Ross spoke to his report on cyber security and summarised concerns around the results of what had been the third simulated phishing exercise carried out in the College.

Committee considered the proposed actions to address the severity of the security risk posed to the College. Possible performance and policy measures to increase staff awareness of the seriousness of this risk were debated, alongside details of training and measures taken to date. Mrs Crilly and Mrs Martin queried some of the wording used in the report and asked that it be amended.

Members' suggestions that the mandatory training form part of the terms of employment and/or the IT user policy were noted by the Principal.

Chair referred to raising matter at Governing Body.

Action: Members agreed the proposed actions as detailed in the report, subject to wording as discussed being changed.

73.8 Internal Audit

Mr McCartney drew members' attention to the External Quality Assessment (EQA) Outcomes report on RSM's conformance with the IIA Standards and Codes of Practice. The Chair advised that this satisfied the Departmental requirement to carry out an EQA on Internal Audit.

The following reports were noted:

- College Progress Report. Mr McCartney advised that the report on the sectoral review of LMS would be with the College shortly.

The Chair referred to 4 low and 2 medium priority issues relating to compliance with policies and procedures and welcomed the opportunity to improve in these areas.

- Cyber Security: Satisfactory assurance with 2 medium and 5 low priority actions. Mr Ross accepted the recommendations outlined in the report and detailed actions which would be taken to address these.

The Chair referred to the cyber security requirement underpinning the move to hybrid education. Mr Laverty highlighted associated cost and resource implications, in particular with signing up to the Department requirement of Cyber Essentials Plus.

- FE Benchmarking report 2020/21. Members noted the report.
- Progress against Outstanding Audit Issues. Ms Craig spoke to this report and advised no concerns.

Members welcomed the full implementation of all outstanding issues and heard that full implementation of recommendations on Teacher Assessed Grades could only be tested at the year end.

5.02pm Mr Ross left the meeting.

73.9 External Audit

Mr Barr presented the NIAO Audit Strategy 2021/22 for the College. He asked that members consider the strategy prior to the start of audit and make the team aware of any issues of concern.

The Chair referred to the NIAO's expanded role in providing audit for all 6 colleges, rather than the previous 2. Mr Barr reassured Committee that NIAO has the capacity and capability to meet dates specified in the College's audit strategy. The Principal sought assurances on dates for reports and sign-off to coincide with College GB meeting and Audit & Risk Committee.

Ms Craig summarised the contents of the NRC PID and highlighted key issues including project constraints and scope/planned activity. She advised that the Annex A action plan was in line with the NIAO strategy.

Mr Lavery updated Committee on efforts to recruit a College accountant, hopefully to be in place over the next few months.

73.10 Risk Register

Consideration was given to the Risk Register to May 2022 and Mr Lavery drew members' attention to the creation of a Black risk category. Members queried and agreed the status of risks with risk 7, which had been reworded to reflect the move to business as usual, remaining the main area of concern. Ms Small outlined the rationale for including the learner management system risk as red due to concerns on performance issues at enrolment days. It was noted that the new Change Management Board would meet on 17 June, when it was hoped to have assurance from the STS team.

Committee were content to note the report.

73.11 Health & Wellbeing Update

Consideration was given to the update on activities to the end of 2022, which forms part of the HR report to Resources and had been provided at the request of the Chair.

Members welcomed the breadth of activities being provided by the College.

Action: A report on Safeguarding would be provided at the next meeting of Committee.

73.12 Other Registers

Nil return.

73.13 Any Other Business

None.

73.14 Date of Next Meeting

Details of future meetings to be confirmed.

The Chair thanked members for their attendance and wished everyone a good summer.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 5.48pm.

Mr W McCluggage



Date 28 September 2022

Chair

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary