

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 15 May 2012 at the Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

Present Mr R Jay (Chairperson), Mr K Nelson and Mr T Neilands (Director)

In Attendance Dr C O'Mullan and Mr J Hunter

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

12.1 Chairperson

The Committee appointed Mr R Jay to replace Mrs U O'Kane as Chairperson of the Education Committee. It was noted that Mr K Nelson would continue as the Vice-Chairperson.

12.2 Apologies

The Chairman reminded Members that Mr Ian Houston would no longer be attending meetings of the Education Committee as a result of his forthcoming voluntary redundancy. He thanked Mr Houston for his contribution to the work of the Education Committee. The Committee wished him well in retirement.

12.3 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

12.4 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee, held on 20 March 2012, were approved.

12.5 Matters Arising

12.5.1 Funded Learning Units (minute 11.8)

Following the bi-lateral meetings between the Department and Colleges, DEL has now allocated funds to each College in respect of FE, Essential Skills and HE for the period 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013 from the recurrent block grant of £146 million. The College has been allocated £21,824,600 representing an increase of 1.91% or £408,510 on the 2011/2012 allocation. Colleges have been set FLU Targets at a higher level than the total budget allocation of £146 million as an efficiency mechanism.

It was noted that the College had been allocated an additional 14 places for full-time HE. The Director stated that he would be preparing a paper regarding the distributions of full-time HE places across the sector to the Governing Body meeting in June. The Curriculum Plan would now be finalised in accordance with the FLU targets to be achieved.

12.5.2 Investors In People (IIP) (minute 11.12)

It was noted that the IIP reassessment had taken place on 14 May 2012 and the assessor had recommended that the College be recognised as an IIP organisation.

12.5.3 Quality Assurance Agency Review (minute 11.5.1)

It was noted that an Action Plan, addressing the recommendations of the Review, had been collated and forwarded to the QAA.

12.6 Chairperson's Communications

There were no Chairperson's communications.

12.7 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to consider.

12.8 Performance Management – Key Performance Indicators and Targets 2011/2012

The Committee received a Report providing retention rates as at May 2012 in full and part-time courses in FE, HE, Essential Skills and Entitlement Framework. The Committee noted:

a) FLU Funded Provision. The Director of Curriculum explained that it was too early to predict the whole course retention rates for FLU-funded provision (FE full-time, FE part-time, HE full-time, HE part-time and Essential Skills) for the complete 2011/2012-year but figures as at May 2012 indicate in-year retention rates of around 90% and show an improvement on rates for 2010/2011.

The Chairperson drew attention to the reasons for students leaving and noted that 33% had left for health reasons, 21% had found employment and another 20% for miscellaneous reasons such as travel difficulties and movement out of the area; this he said provided only limited scope for further remedial action. The Director of Curriculum explained that all students withdrawing are offered an exit interview, and that all course teams will have a formal progression board in June 2012 at which the progress of all students would be monitored and decisions made about their return to the 2nd year. This approach will link retention to achievement and success rates

b) Entitlement Framework. The retention rates for courses run for schools is currently 97%. The projected income for Entitlement Framework provision shows a decrease of approximately £120,000 from the original projection of £1.76m due to a drop in the number of EF classes particularly in the Antrim area and increased competition from schools organising their own Occupational Studies classes.

c) Training. The College has achieved its KPIs/Targets for retention and work placement rates. Training enrolments, however, were 667 at 1 April 2012 against a target of 740. The Director of Curriculum stated that there is a variance of some £182k against the original projected income for 2011/2012. She said that this gap could be closed with additional income from DEL and an uplift expected on Output Related Funding (ORF) for 2011/2012.

d) Economic Engagement Activity. The KPIs/targets used for Economic Engagement Activity are based on the number of courses, externally funded income, gross and net cost recovery income and the number of staff hours involved in the activity. The Committee noted that variances, as at 1 April 2012, were largely due to the failure of a number of planned courses to materialise, as companies reviewed their staff development plans.

12.9 Leadership and Management Project

The Committee received a Performance Management Report, which indicated that a second workshop had taken place on 30 March 2012 with the Heads of Faculty, the Head of Quality Improvement, Heads of School, Senior Lecturers, the Head of Business Development, the Training Manager and the Quality Assurance Manager facilitated by the Director of Curriculum, when a number of key issues were discussed.

It was noted that two externally facilitated Continuous Professional Development sessions had also taken place: Situational Leadership and Difficult Conversations; and Leadership/Management Styles. A follow-up session on the Development of Leadership Styles within Senior Teams is planned for 25 May 2012. A further event focusing on up-skilling managers to evaluate the quality of teaching and to support peer observations and appraisal will take place in June 2012.

The Director of Curriculum provided an update regarding the Deloitte Leadership and Management Project. A number of Colleges had still to complete their Projects but it was anticipated that all assignments would be completed by autumn 2012; the NRC Project, 'Using Performance Management for Continuous Quality Improvement', had been completed by the Director of Curriculum.

12.10 FE College Health Check Report

The Committee received the FE College Health Check Report based on information available at the end of Quarter 2 of 2011/2012. The report provides a range of information on various key performance indicators from the financial, economic, staffing and learning categories.

The Report indicates that the College's overall retention, achievement and success figures show a significant improvement from the previous year and are now broadly in line with the sector average.

The Report also indicates that the College has the second highest diversity of income figure in the sector, demonstrating that it is not as reliant on DEL income as some other colleges. The Report suggests, however, that the College is less 'productive' than other Colleges in that the full-time equivalent staff numbers per £1m of income generated are the highest in the sector. The Director advised the Committee that the Executive Management Team was investigating this matter. He stated that PFI had distorted statistics from a number of Colleges

12.11 Curriculum Management Team

The Committee received a Report providing details of the revised Curriculum Management Team and the revised Faculty, School and Quality Improvement Unit Structure.

It was noted that the CMT consists of the Director of Curriculum, three Heads of Faculty (Wellbeing and Lifelong Learning, Professional and Leisure Studies and Building, Engineering and Science) and the Head of Quality Improvement.

The revised Faculty and School structure includes the following significant changes:

- a) The amalgamation of Built Environment, Engineering and Science within one Faculty;
- b) The combination of Computing with Business; and
- c) The transfer of Art and Design along with Media and Performing Arts as a School into the Faculty of Wellbeing and Lifelong Learning.

The Director of Curriculum stated that there had been a number of significant changes to the membership of the Quality Improvement Unit. The Unit will now consist of: the Head of Quality Improvement; the Quality Manager; the Continuous Professional Development Manager; the Training Manager; the PL Education Partnerships; and the PL TEL.

12.12 Education Committee Annual Report 2011/2012

The Committee received the Education Committee Annual Report 2011/2012. It was noted that the Committee had undertaken a diversity of activities during the period of the Report.

It was agreed that the Report, subject to minor adjustments, should be submitted to the Governing Body (see Appendix 1).

12.13 Education Committee Action Plan 2012/2013

The Committee received:

a) A Report indicating progress against the 2011/2012 Action Plan approved by the Education Committee on 11 October 2011. It was noted that the Committee had achieved the targets for the academic year 2011/2012; and

b) The Action Plan for 2012/2013, which follows the 2011/2012 Plan.

The Committee agreed that, subject to minor adjustments, the Action Plan 2012/2013 be approved and submitted to the Governing Body for information (see Appendix 2).

12.14 Any Other Notified Business

There was no further business to transact.

12.15 Next Meeting

The Chairperson reminded members that the next meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled for 5.30 pm on Tuesday 2 October 2012 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus.

R Jay, Chairperson

J A Hunter, Secretary