

## **NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 2 October 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**

#### **13.1 Membership and Terms of Reference**

a) Membership. The Committee noted its membership, which consists of: Mr Richard Jay (Chairperson), Mr Ken Nelson (Vice-Chairperson), Mr Trevor Neilands, Councillor James Currie, Mr Matt Murray and Mr Jason Clyde.

b) Terms of Reference. The Committee reviewed its Terms of Reference and agreed a number of adjustments to the remit, membership and duties of the Committee. **The Committee agreed that the revised Terms of Reference should be forwarded to the Governing Body for approval (see Appendix 1).**

#### **13.2 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor J Currie, Mr J Clyde and Mr M Murray. It was noted that it may be necessary to change the day on which the Committee meets in light of Mr Murray's teaching commitments.

#### **13.3 Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

#### **13.4 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee, held on 15 May 2012, were approved.

#### **13.5 Matters Arising**

##### **13.5.1 Funded Learning Units (minute 12.5.1)**

The Principal informed Members that the issue in regard to the number of HE places allocated to the College would reappear as an item on the agenda for the meeting of the Governing Body on 10 October 2012. He said that the Governing Body (13 June 2012 and 5 July 2012) had discussed the current distribution of full-time Higher Education places across the Sector and noted that NRC had the lowest number of places of the six Regional Colleges. The Governing Body had agreed a number of steps to redress the imbalance. The Principal advised that he had undertaken the first of these steps and had written to DEL asking for a statement of the current criteria for the allocation of MaSN caps to Colleges. He advised the Committee that a response had been received, which would be discussed at the meeting of the Governing Body on 10 October 2012. He also indicated that he had engaged with an MLA with a view to asking a question in the Assembly regarding the allocation of MaSN places in the Sector.

### **13.6 Chairperson's Communications**

There were no Chairperson's communications.

### **13.7 Correspondence**

The Committee received and noted the following correspondence:

- a) DEL Circular 09/12 dated 21 June 2012 concerning funding for students with a learning difficulty;
- b) DEL letter, dated 19 September 2012, regarding revisions to the Health Check document. The Principal advised Members that Mr Andy Cole, Head of FE Corporate Governance and Accountability at DEL, would be attending a future meeting of the Governing Body to discuss the revised format.
- c) DEL Circular FE 14/12, dated 10 August 2012, clarifying student eligibility and residence requirements for drawing down funds from the Department's funding formula; and
- d) DEL Circular FE 15/12, dated 31 August 2012, setting out the eligibility for asylum seekers to access ESOL provision and FE courses.

### **13.8 Curriculum Management Structure**

The Committee received a paper concerning the realignment of the Curriculum Management Team and associated changes to the Quality Improvement Unit. It was noted that the first phase of this exercise was completed in May 2012.

It was noted that two strands had been addressed during the second and final phase:

- a) The transfer of the existing permanent post-holders (senior lecturers) to curriculum posts each with an identified number of responsibility points; and
- b) The recruitment of 14 permanent responsibility point posts, the majority of which had been carried out on a temporary basis for some 3 years.

During the process three new Curriculum Management (CM) posts in Special Needs, Hairdressing and Essential Skills were identified and the recruitment process took place in June. All posts were filled with the exception of the CM Special Needs post, which is now out to external recruitment.

The College has also made a number of other appointments at CM level for roles that are considered temporary, time-bound or externally funded. It has recently been agreed to recruit a CM post for Leadership and Management for Acumen development.

Referring to the School of Business & Computing, the Principal indicated that the College was intent on developing an Assessment Centre for Chartered Management awards.

The Chairperson questioned whether the Committee should continue to receive presentations from Faculties and Schools. It was suggested that it would be more appropriate to receive presentations on innovative practice eg: the Development of the Leadership and Management School (Acumen); Essential Skills; and the Careers Academy Engineering.

In response to a query regarding the impact of the redundancy of 1,300 employees at FG Wilson's, the Principal advised that Claire O'Neill had been appointed as the NRC Lead Person.

### **13.9 Further Education Student Success Rates**

The Committee received notes of a presentation given to the Governing Body (13 June 2012) by the Analytical Services Branch DEL regarding research in relation to FE Student Success Rates across the Sector using 2010/2011 performance data. It also received a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body referring to the presentation and the subsequent discussion. The Principal emphasised that there was a strategic agenda operating in the College, which should not be abandoned as a result of performance data for 2010/2011. He informed the Committee that data for 2011/2012 would become available in November 2012 and suggested that no precipitate action should be taken until this information was taken into consideration.

### **13.10 Balanced Scorecard**

The Committee received two papers:

a) Enrolments – Further Education, Higher Education and Training Provision. Planned enrolments for FE full-time, HE full-time and Training provision full-time for 2012/2013 are as follows:

(i) 3,359 FE Full-time Enrolments. MIS reports on 24 September 2012 indicate that 3,264 places have been filled (the Director of Curriculum stated that this had increased to 3273).

(ii) 266 HE Full-time Enrolments. Recruitment for courses is ongoing; 255.5 enrolments have been recorded. The Principal stated that the enrolment situation at the University of Ulster had had an impact on numbers and had affected enrolments particularly on a new cohort. The Director of Curriculum stated that the MaSN enrolment had increased to 262.5.

(iii) 883 Apprentices Full-time Training Provision. 696 enrolments were recorded at the beginning of September 2012. The Director of Curriculum said that enrolments had been planned on the basis of a new training contract, which has still to be allocated.

b) Retention, Achievement and Success Targets. Revisions have been made to a number of targets set for Retention/Achievement/Success by type of provision and in keeping with corporate targets for 2012/2013.

Retention performance for all types of HE, FE and ES provision from 2009/2012 onwards shows an upward trend; the NRC retention for 2010/11 was at or above the sector average with the exception of Essential Skills. The 2010/2011 NRC data for Achievement and Success was the same or higher than sector average with the exception of part-time HE and ES. All Achievement targets for 2012/2013 show an increase on the 2010/2011 performance.

Further work has been undertaken and new targets set for Recruitment/Retention/Achievement and Success and associated Income Projections for the Apprenticeship NI, Programme Led Apprenticeship and Skills for Work strands of the Training programme.

Revised targets for 2012/2013 have been set for Entitlement Framework.

The Director of Curriculum affirmed that the Deloitte 'Improving Performance Management' project and the subsequent workshops had made a major contribution in the understanding of performance management and in the embedding of continuous quality improvement.

### **13.11 College Business Development Plan**

The Committee received a paper regarding Business Development Activities, which now encompasses Economic Engagement, International Developments and Community Strategy, all with a focus on increased income generation. The Director of Curriculum stated that planning for economic activity had been undertaken at a Faculty level, supported by the Head of Business Development and her team.

The Committee noted that:

a) Key Performance Indicators had been set for NRC Employer Engagement Activities on Cost Recovery Courses based on Faculty Plans. Targets are also being set for other economic engagement activities, which will be determined by the funder.

b) The College had achieved an average score of 5.4 in 2011/2012 and had set a target score of 5.6 for 2012/2013. The quality of Economic Engagement activity is measured by client satisfaction on a scale of 1-6, with 6 being the highest score.

The Director informed the Committee that the Minister had announced that Colleges would have to submit applications to acquire specialisms for the DEL designated priority areas. DEL has advised that if College Principals accepted the six Employer Support Programme (ESP) Leads as 'Sector Leads' then DEL would not require applications in these areas. It was noted that NRC is involved in all six themes and is the Sector Lead in Advanced Manufacturing and Materials. It was further noted that the Principals' Group would meet on 18 October 2012 for further discussion on sector specialisms.

### **13.12 Whole College Inspection**

The Committee received a paper indicating the extensive preparations for the forthcoming Whole College Inspection, scheduled to commence on 5 November 2012. The inspection will last for approximately two weeks and will include a sample of the College full-time and part-time further education provision up to and including Level 3, Entitlement Framework and the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI provision.

The focus of the Inspection will revolve around the Improving Quality Raising Standards (IQRS) document. Three broad headings each with a range of quality indicators will be assessed: Leadership and Management; Quality Provision for Learning; and Achievement and Success

In addition the College safeguarding arrangements, student support, economic engagement activities, tutorial and pastoral care arrangements, ILT and blended learning developments and links and partnerships will be scrutinised. Strategic leadership, including governance, will also be assessed. It was noted that the Inspectors wished to meet Governors during the course of the inspection.

It was noted that preparations are ongoing within all three Directorates. The Director of Curriculum and Heads of Faculty, led by Head of Quality Improvement, are undertaking preparations from lecturer to senior management level.

Leadership and Management issues would include the focus on the SER process and the implementation of the College Quality Improvement Plan, setting KPI and targets for the student experience and strategies to support and improve professional practice

The Director of Curriculum highlighted concerns in a number of areas:

a) Appraisal Scheme. While a formal Appraisal Scheme exists, which involves classroom observation, the Director of Curriculum and the Head of Quality Improvement are presently leading management discussions on the development of a culture of support visits to lecturers with a view to improving professional practice.

b) Essential Skills. Health Check data and recent PSA inspections have indicated underachievement in both Essential Skills and part-time provision. Substantial work has been undertaken in ES in an endeavour to remedy the situation.

c) Collation of Data. NRC is presently collating the outcome of the Achievement/Success rates from 2011/2012 for its FE Leavers' Survey return, which will be beneficial as it indicates an improvement in most vocational areas.

The Director of Curriculum stated that NRC would highlight very positive practice and developments to the Inspection Team.

The Principal informed Members that the Governing Body would receive a verbal report on the inspection at its meeting on 21 November 2012. The written report and College Action Plan would be received by the Governing Body at its meeting on 23 January 2013. He said future Education Committee agendas would be influenced by the outcome of the inspection.

### **13.13 Annual Report Student Services**

The Committee received the Annual Report for Student Services 2011/2012, which provided details of:

- a) The Structure of the Student Finance and Education Support teams;
- b) Hardship Funds, which are specifically earmarked for the purpose of providing assistance for students. The total Hardship Funds expended during 2011/2012 amounted to £126,113; 118 students were assisted;
- c) Additional Support Funds, which are earmarked for students with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities. £227,818 were expended during 2011/2012 and 342 students assisted;
- d) Care to Learn Scheme provides childcare support for parents aged 16 and under 20. 18 students were in receipt of £92,351;
- e) Education Maintenance Allowance is a fortnightly payment of up to £60 for students 16-19 years. 1,823 students were in receipt of the EMA;
- f) Safeguarding Policy, procedures and documentation were reviewed and revised in 2011. ETI conducted a survey on Safeguarding in 2011, which indicated that the College's approach was very good;
- g) Annual Summary Report 2011/2012 in relation to child/vulnerable adults, which provided details of 8 incidents; and
- h) Student Disciplinary Procedures were reviewed and amended in 2011. During the 2011/2012 academic year there were 8 suspensions, one of which resulted in a dismissal.

It was noted that it would be necessary to appoint a designated Governor, who has responsibility for Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection to replace Mrs U O'Kane.

**The Committee agreed that Mr R Jay be appointed as the Designated Governor and that training be provided by Mrs J McKay, the Head of Customer Services and Communications.**

### **13.14 Education Committee Action Plan 2012/2013**

The Committee (15 May 2012) gave consideration to the Action Plan for 2012/2013 and agreed that subject to minor adjustments, the Action Plan 2012/2013 be approved and submitted to the Governing Body (13 June 2012). Subsequently the Director of Curriculum has made a number of minor adjustments.

**The Committee considered and agreed the revised Action Plan**

### **13.15 Any Other Notified Business**

#### 13.15.1 Absenteeism in Schools

The Principal referred to Assembly and media discussion regarding educational problems in Protestant deprived areas. Mr Beggs MLA had stressed the necessity to promote the value of education in these communities particularly in terms of attendance. He stated that the community infrastructure made it difficult for these communities to communicate with HE Colleges. He mentioned that the NRC provision was weak. The Principal informed the Committee that he had arranged to meet Mr Beggs on 4 October 2012 to discuss this matter

As there was no further business to transact the meeting closed at 7.30 pm

### **13.16 Next Meeting**

The Chairperson reminded members that the next meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled for 5.30 pm on Tuesday 11 December 2012 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus.

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Richard Jay, Chair

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J A Hunter, Secretary