

## **NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 11 December 2012 at the Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

Present Mr R Jay (Chairperson), Mr M Murray and Mr T Neilands (Principal)

In Attendance Dr C O'Mullan and Mr J Hunter

### **UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

#### **14.1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor J Currie, Mr J Clyde and Mr K Nelson.

#### **14.2 Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

#### **14.3 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee, held on 2 October 2012, were approved.

#### **14.4 Matters Arising**

14.4.1 Absenteeism in Schools (minute 13.15.1). The Principal advised the Committee that he had met with Mr R Beggs MLA to discuss his statement to the media concerning attendance at educational institutions in Protestant deprived areas. Mr Beggs stated that his statement had not been intended to criticise schools and colleges but to draw attention to the lack of community infrastructures in these areas making it difficult to liaise with educational institutions such as the Northern Regional College

14.4.2 HE MaSN (minute 13.5.1). The Principal stated that he had prepared a further letter to forward to DEL concerning the current distribution of full-time Higher Education places across the Sector. He advised the Committee that he intended to adjust the letter to emphasise the need for DEL to address the imbalance in terms of equity of provision. **The Committee agreed that a DEL HE representative, Ms N Kerr, should be invited to the College to meet with the Chairs' Committee and the Executive Management Team to discuss the matter.**

14.4.3 Curriculum Management Posts (minute 13.8). Dr C O'Mullan, the Director of Curriculum, stated that Ms H Hampsey had been appointed to fill the CM Special Needs post.

14.4.4 Acumen (minute 13.8). The Director of Curriculum informed the Committee that Mr R Humphries had been appointed to fill the CM post for Leadership and Management. The Committee noted that Acumen had secured a contract to deliver DEL Leadership and Management courses at Levels 4, 5 and 7. The Committee congratulated the Acumen team and suggested that the Committee should receive a presentation on the work of Acumen at a future meeting. **It was agreed that the Director of Curriculum should give consideration to future presentations in light of the findings of the Whole College Inspection.**

## **14.5 Chairperson's Communications**

14.5.1 Past Students' Association. The Committee noted that it was intended to launch a Past Student Association, to be known as 'Link', at the Graduation Ceremony on 13 December 2012. This would be followed by a general recruitment campaign. The Director of Curriculum stated that Link would enable the College to keep track of past students and avail of their expertise as ambassadors for the College.

## **14.6 Correspondence**

The Committee received and noted the following correspondence:

a) DEL Circular FE 17/12, dated 10 October 2012, setting out the context and arrangements for the introduction of a mainstream Learner Access and Engagement (LAE) Programme, and the arrangements for the piloting of a similar programme for 16-18 year olds (NEETs). The LAE programme has been developed to support 'hard to reach' adults, who are economically inactive, disengaged from the labour market and with few or no qualifications and to encourage them to undertake suitable further education to help prepare them for employment or further learning. Colleges have been invited to tender for the delivery of learning support services for 'hard to reach' adults, in accordance with specified criteria. The Principal advised that the College must contract with a local community based organisation to be effective. It was noted that LAE enrolments are eligible for FLU funding and are required to be incorporated within the College Development Plan.

b) DEL Circular FE 19/12, dated 25 October 2012, providing information and guidance on the principles and definitions of learner retention, achievement and success. Dr O'Mullan stated that the definitions should lead to a consistent approach throughout the sector to recording data on the Northern Ireland College's Information System (NICIS), to enable quality statistical analysis and benchmarking.

## **14.7 Performance Management**

The Director of Curriculum presented two papers:

a) The College Health Check for the Fourth Quarter 2011/2012. It was noted that the Audit Committee, the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Staffing Committee and the Governing Body had already reviewed this document. The Director of Curriculum drew attention to Section 2, Performance Against CDP Curriculum Targets, which indicated that NRC had an under-delivery of its FLU targets in 2011/2012 particularly in respect of FE Level 3 provision. It was noted that other Colleges in the Sector had under-performed and the Department was considering how to deal with this difficulty.

b) Performance Management Analysis for 2011/2012. The Director of Curriculum highlighted a number of issues arising from the Analysis:

(i) College FLU Performance 2011/2012. The final FLU outcome for 2011/2012 against target was lower than anticipated. A reduced financial allocation for 2011/2012 limited the Level 3 offering available. The Committee noted and approved the NRC FLU target for 2012/2013, which had been drawn up before the availability of actual figures for 2011/2012.

(ii) Performance in Retention, Achievement and Success. The retention rates for FLU funded provision for 2011/2012 have remained the same as for 2010/2011, with the exception of the full-time FE provision, which has increased by 5% to 91%. NRC achievement rates 2011/2012 have increased for all provision, with the exception of part-time FE. Success rates have also increased in all types of provision with the exception of part-time FE. There has been a welcome increase particularly in the success rate for Essential Skills but the College is still below the Sector average. Dr O'Mullan stated that strategies are being put in place to increase achievement and success rates for Essential Skills.

It was noted that the Department is planning to introduce a Quality and Performance Adjustment (QPA), which will instigate a tapered level of recovery from the 2013/2014 academic year, based on 2011/2012 final year data. NRC has two courses, which failed to achieve the required level of success and which will result in recovery costs. The Learning and Teaching Committee will review both courses.

#### **14.8 Balanced Scorecard**

The Committee reviewed the 'Student Experience' domain of the College's Balanced Scorecard. The Committee noted details of the College's performance in the following areas:

a) FLU Management 2012/2013. The College is exceeding its FLU target of 6,697 by 154 FLUs as of 30.11.12. Dr O'Mullan suggested that historic trends indicate that FLUs would decrease by the year-end; the College would continue to monitor retention in a robust manner. She added that the planned Community and Essential Skills provision would contribute additional FLUs in the forthcoming months.

b) Enrolment. FE full-time enrolments are largely as planned. Recruitment to HE full-time programmes has reached 262.5; the College MaSN for 2012/2013 is 266. Referring to MaSN recruitment in 2012/2013, Dr O'Mullan stated that there had been a Year 1 HE full-time intake of 150 students and that a high uptake for places in Year 2, along with a planned Yr 1 similar to this academic year would evidence a rationale for an increase in the MaSN allocation.

The College presently has a part-time FE enrolment of 8,580 against a predicted enrolment of 9,321 with enrolments from the January intake, the Community provision and Essential Skills courses still to come. It was noted that there were variances in actual vs planned numbers in Business and Computing, Built Environment, and Art, Design, Media and Performing Arts

Figures for 30.11.12 show there has been a decline in HE part-time enrolments at this point; 1,029 against a predicted 1,300 enrolments. The reduction has been due to a number of reasons including a decrease in the number of progressors from Year 1 to Year 2.

There has been a decrease in Training enrolments since 2010/2011. The College had 696 actual enrolments against a predicted 785 enrolments. The merging and withdrawal of classes have minimized costs of delivery.

The target enrolment for Entitlement Framework was 2,200. There are presently 2,573 enrolments. The Principal indicated that this provision was under threat as Collaborative Funding was being withdrawn. It was noted that a FE delegation would be having discussions with the Department on 12 December 2012 regarding Collaborative Funding.

c) Community Education. There were 732 enrolments as at 30 November 2012 against a target of 844 for Term 1 2012/2013. The College is confident that targets will be achieved by the year-end as a result of initiatives at Carrickfergus, Larne, Moyle and Newtownabbey.

d) NRC Employer Engagement Activities. A target of £827k has been set for funded and bespoke business development activities. Funds amounting to £738k have been achieved by 30 November 2012.

#### **14.9 Whole College Self Evaluation Report**

The Committee received a draft copy of the Whole College Self-Evaluation Report and Quality Improvement Plan 2012/2013 to 2015/2016, which consisted of three sections: Achievements and Standards; Quality of Provision; and Leadership and Management. It was noted that the final Report would be forwarded to the Governing Body (23 January 2013) for consideration and approval. A scrutiny visit will take place later in the year.

The Committee gave detailed consideration to the Report and the following suggestions were made:

- a) A more robust review of the main Strengths and Areas for Quality Improvement should be undertaken;
- b) Measurable targets should be set for as many of the areas for improvement as possible; and
- c) The document should be adjusted in light of the ETI Main Findings Report of the Whole College Inspection.

**The Committee agreed that:**

- a) Members should forward any comments on the Report to the Director of Curriculum by 21 December 2012; and**
- b) The Chairman and the Director of Curriculum should meet in early January 2013 to discuss the revised document for submission to the Governing Body.**

#### **14.10 Northern Regional College Community Strategy**

It was noted that following a review in May 2012 responsibility for the management of all Community Education provision in NRC had passed to the Department of Business Development. Each Faculty and School within the College delivers FLU funded Community Education but the external liaison with groups is carried out by the two Community Education Co-Ordinators, who are an integral part of the Business Development Department.

Dr O'Mullan referred the Committee to the following sections of the Community Strategy document: the Vision for Community Education; the key Community objectives; the strategic context set by policies emanating from Government Departments; the current level of Community activity, which delivered 106 FLU funded Community Education courses in 2011/2012; and the proposed level of activity for 2012/2013, which plans to maintain provision at the same level as in 2011/2012.

The Chairman suggested that Ms C O'Neill, the Head of Business Development should produce a composite document on the College's External Relations to include not only Community Provision but also Economic Engagement and International Developments.

**The Committee approved the Community Strategy subject to the inclusion of future targets.**

#### **14.11 Any Other Notified Business**

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

#### **14.12 Next Meeting**

The Chairperson reminded members that the next meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled for 5.30 pm on Tuesday 19 March 2012 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus.