

## **NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 26 February 2013 at the Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

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

In Attendance Dr C O'Mullan and Mr J Hunter

### **UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

#### **15.1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr J Clyde and Councillor J Currie.

#### **15.2 Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

#### **15.3 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee, held on 11 December 2012, were approved.

#### **15.4 Matters Arising**

##### **15.4.1 HE MaSN (minute 14.4.2).**

The Committee noted that Mr Gilpin, Mr Neilands, Mr Jay and Dr O'Mullan had met with Ms Kerr and Mr Mannion on 22 January 2013. There was an expectation at DEL that the College would be bidding for additional HE places and that additional places would be available for NRC over the next 5 years subject to meeting DEL criteria. It was noted that the College would have to adjust its Curriculum Plans to accommodate additional places. It was also noted that there was a long lead in time for HE courses in association with the University of Ulster; the validation process can take up to 18 months.

##### **15.4.1 Future Presentations to Education Committee (minute 14.4.4)**

Dr O'Mullan, the Director of Curriculum, confirmed that Mr S Bell would give a presentation on Acumen to the next meeting of the Education Committee. Future presentations would be drawn up in light of the findings of the Whole College Inspection

##### **15.4.3 Any Other Matters Arising**

There were no further matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

#### **15.5 Chairperson's Communications**

There were no Chairman's communications.

#### **15.6 Correspondence**

There was no correspondence to report.

## 15.7 IQ:RS 2011/2012

The Committee received a copy of the IQ:RS document, which had been submitted to DEL to meet a 15 February 2013 deadline. It was noted that the document is a resubmission of the March 2012 document, first submitted in April 2012 and resubmitted in August 2012. Dr O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum, reminded the Committee that the document had been considered by Governors at the Strategic Workshop on 12 February 2013, when it was agreed that it should be forwarded to DEL and reconsidered at the meeting of the Governing Body on 6 March 2013 for endorsement. It was noted that the document would be scrutinised by the ETI team on its follow-up visit to the College in May 2013.

She advised the Committee that the IQ:RS document for 2013/2014 was being prepared at present and would be forwarded for consideration by the Education Committee (19 March 2013).

## 15.8 Balanced Scorecard

The Committee received an update regarding the 'Student Experience' domain of the College's Balanced Scorecard. The Committee noted:

a) FLU Performance. The College had recorded an under-delivery of 39.60 FLUs against the DEL target of 6,657.40 FLUs at 18 February 2013. It is predicted that there will be an under-delivery of some 200 FLUs by the year-end. Dr O'Mullan said the NRC compared favourably with the Sector's performance.

b) Retention. It was noted that retention was above target in all areas: FT HE, PT HE, FT FE, PT FE, Training and Entitlement Framework.

c) It was considered important that the Balanced Scorecard should include achievement and success. It was acknowledged that the figures provided would be dated and refer to the previous academic year.

Dr O'Mullan referred to the QP Adjustment and indicated that the claw back for the Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment course with a success rate of 50% would amount to £19,340, which was less than anticipated. It was noted that no claw back would be incurred in respect of the Diploma in Animal Management Course with a success rate of 91%. She stressed the importance of recording all course achievement and success to minimise adjustments in the future.

## 15.9 Curriculum Planning

The Committee received a presentation from Dr O'Mullan regarding curriculum planning. She drew attention to the College's FLU Bid, which had been submitted to DEL for 2013/2014 to 2015/2016. She explained that the targets had been set for full and part-time Further Education, Higher Education and Essential Skills. She said that the Department would discuss the Bid with representatives from the College in March at the Bi-lateral meeting. Targets and recurrent grant income for 2013/2014 would then be issued from DEL. This was likely to happen in April. **(A summary sheet relating to the FLU Bid is attached at Appendix 1)**

Commenting on the Bid, the Director of Curriculum said that the College was planning for a small level of growth in Level 3 full-time FE provision and at Levels 1,2 and 3 part-time FE for 2013/2014. She said that the College was also seeking an increase in its MaSN allocation of 16 places in both 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 and a further 32 in 2015/2016. These additional HE places would be planned in STEM and/or PSA areas. It was noted that the Department sets the FLU target for Essential Skills.

Dr O'Mullan advised the Committee that the Fees Policy had been revised to promote the up-take of part-time FE provision with revised concessionary fees for young people under 19

years and for persons over 60 years. In response to a query it was noted that concessionary fees would be available for the unemployed, subject to a means test.

The Director of Curriculum examined the various components of the FLU Bid:

a) FE Full-Time. She drew attention to a number of additional courses for 2013/2014 in the areas of Special Needs, Childcare, Computing, Travel & Tourism, Sport and Hospitality. She mentioned that there would be reduced provision in Art & Design & Hairdressing and that the L2 Construction course would be withdrawn.

b) FE Part-Time and Essential Skills. Dr O'Mullan indicated that the College would focus on a range of community provision.

c) HE Full-Time. The Committee noted that the College had been allocated 14 extra MaSN places in 2012/2013 and was bidding for an additional 16 places in both 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 and 32 places in 2015/2016. The College would require staff with the appropriate expertise to deliver the new HND and Foundation Degree courses.

d) HE Part-Time. The College was investigating new developments in the areas of Sport, Computing and Childcare.

e) Training. Dr O'Mullan referred to reduced activity and reduced numbers in Training. She said that the level of activity was being reviewed in Brickwork, Carpentry & Joinery and Motor Vehicle and was likely to lead to a reduction in staff.

f) Entitlement Framework. Funding has been secured for the next two years and discussions are being held with schools regarding course provision for 2013/2014 and 2014/2015. Overall activity is predicted to be comparable with the provision in 2012/2013, which resulted in an income of £1.5 million. The Principal informed the Committee that Mr J O'Dowd, DE Minister, would be visiting the College to discuss the EF provision. This would afford an opportunity to discuss Area Planning in relation 14-19 year olds and competition with schools in the provision of vocational training.

Dr O'Mullan drew attention to new courses planned for September 2014 in Environment Technology. Mr Nelson suggested the College should consider expanding its biotechnology provision and offered to provide details of firms that would be keen to work in partnership with the College.

#### **15.10 Student Council**

The Committee received the Student Council Annual Report 2011/2012 and the Action Plan 2012/2013 from the Student Council. The Director of Curriculum highlighted the various sections of the Report: Inception and Constitution; Elections; Training; Publications; Facilities; Clinics; Christian Union and Chaplaincy; and Student Events.

She also drew attention to the Student Action Plan for 2012/2013 with several targets completed or ongoing. It was noted that the Student Council works closely with the Quality Improvement Unit and meets regularly to discuss student issues, student survey feedback and aspects of the student voice.

The Chairman welcomed the establishment of a new satellite branch of the Sexual Health Clinic at the Newtownabbey Campus and the establishment of a Chaplaincy at Ballymena.

#### **15.11 FE College Health Check**

The Committee received the FE College Health Check for the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2012/2013. Members noted a number of areas of particular interest to the Committee:

a) Performance Against CDP Curriculum Targets. The results of actual FLU against target for 2011/2012 reflect under delivery against target in excess of £800k, the most significant under

delivery being in full-time Further Education provision at Level 3. The Report also indicates under recruitment in full-time HE enrolments. Dr O'Mullan stated that NRC had performed favourably against other colleges in the Sector and attributed this to more refined planning.

b) Staff Costs. The Committee noted that staff costs as a percentage of total income had reduced from 75% to 72%. Attention was drawn to the introduction of a new measurement, staff costs as a percentage of student related income, which shows the College to have higher staff costs than the rest of the Sector. Mr Nelson queried as to why DEL had not provided a target range for this ratio and for a number of other ratios. He suggested that the Department should be consulted on this matter.

The Principal stated that there was still a need to refine this ratio. He said that the Director of Finance and Corporate Development was developing a ratio to measure teaching staff costs as a percentage of student related income, which might be included in future Health Checks.

c) STEM Subject Areas. Mr Nelson drew attention to the STEM subject areas where Science & Mathematics were well below the Sector average; Information and Communication Technology below average; and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies above average. The Director of Curriculum advised that the provision in Science & Mathematics and ICT were being revamped.

#### **15.12 Any Other Notified Business**

There was no further notified business

#### **15.13 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.