

## **NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 26 January 2010 at the Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

Present            Mrs U O’Kane (Chairperson), Mr T Neilands (Director),  
                         Mr K Nelson, Ms C Taylor and Mr A Watt

In Attendance   Mr I Houston, Dr C O’Mullan and Mr J Hunter

### **UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

#### **3.1 Apologies**

There were no apologies.

#### **3.2 Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

#### **3.3 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee, held on 30 November 2009, were approved.

#### **3.4 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **3.5 Quality Improvement Strategy**

The Committee received a presentation from Mrs Susanne Kennedy, Head of Quality Improvement. She mentioned that the Education and Training Inspectorate’s document ‘Improving Quality: Raising Standards’ (IR:QS) was at the core of the College’s Quality Improvement Strategy.

She informed the Committee that central to the Quality Improvement Strategy of the College are the processes of self-reflection and self-evaluation. The process of self-evaluation will result in teams producing Self-Evaluation Reports (SER). Historically the process of self-evaluation has been carried out by curriculum teams but a similar approach has now been adopted for support services. Self-reflection by an individual is also crucial to quality improvement; this is incorporated within the College appraisal systems.

She added that the key elements of team self-evaluation fall under five main headings:

- (a) Development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Action Planning and Setting of Targets. The KPIs, targets and action plans developed from the self-evaluation process should link closely to the operational plans and objectives.

In response to a query Mrs Kennedy advised that each course team has its own targets to achieve. The Chairperson observed that the College had a

daunting task in familiarising all members of staff with IQ:RS. It was crucial to have the necessary support to ensure that every one contributes to quality improvement across all aspects of the work of the College. Ms Kennedy agreed that it would take time but advised that Team SERs were required by the end of the academic year. In this context it was noted that the Governing Body would be undertaking a Team SER.

Referring to individual appraisals a Member stated that there was a degree of wariness about making statements regarding underperformance. Mrs Kennedy stated that self-evaluations were crucial in achieving high performance. A balance was necessary, however, between team and individual performance;

- (b) Monitoring of Key Performance Indicators, Action Plans and Targets. Intrinsic to the monitoring of KPIs is the benchmarking of performance across the sector. The Chairperson raised concerns about the frequency of monitoring KPIs but was advised that there was a need for regular monitoring by the Senior Management Team in order to address any issues, in a timely manner;
- (c) Identification of Robust Evidence. Mrs Kennedy explained that there are several forms that this evidence can take, for example, student feedback, statistical analysis and classroom observation;
- (d) Action Planning for Quality Improvement. She said that it was important to develop realistic action plans with clearly identified measurable outcomes and targets and which dove-tailed into the cyclical planning process;
- (e) Support Teams. The Quality Improvement Unit will be available to provide support for teams and individuals, who are not meeting their performance measures. The Chairperson suggested that it might be more appropriate to state that support should be provided to teams and individuals to assist them in achieving their performance targets. She also added that support should be given to team leaders to reinforce good practice and develop ownership of the process.

**The Committee agreed that the Quality Improvement Strategy, subject to minor adjustments, be approved and forwarded to the Governing Body**

The Chairperson thanked Mrs Kennedy for an informative presentation.

The Director stated that consideration should be given to the role of the ETI in regard to Quality Improvement. He suggested that the District Inspectors should be invited to a future meeting to talk about their role.

### **3.6 Information and Learning Technology**

The Committee received a presentation from Dr Peter Ming, Principal Lecturer ILT. In his opening remarks he referred to the development of the E-Learning Instructional Programme (eLIP), which had considerable benefits for students, staff and management. The College needed to improve its IT resources in some areas to support the day to day operation of eLIP enabling students to work at their own pace and from home if required.

He drew the Committee's attention to:

- a) External Evaluation Reports
  - (i) An evaluation of the use of ILT in the Northern Regional College by the Education and Training Inspectorate (eti) in the areas evaluated by the Inspectorate in October 2008, the quality of the planning for and use of ILT was good. The evaluation identified important strengths and areas for improvement. In particular comments had been made about inequitable access to computer facilities
  - (ii) Health Inspection of ILT by Regional Support Centre Northern Ireland (RSCni). In their intensive inspection report RSCni indicate that the College is substantially moving towards the 'Embedded' status of the Demonstrating Transformation Framework, which is the primary DEL policy driver for ILT developments. There is a DEL requirement for Colleges to reach this status by 2011. The report states that the College ILT Action Plan does not set targets for objectives to be accomplished by the year-end and the links with other College policies are not clear. It also refers to under-investment in computing facilities and inequities in the deployment of existing ICT facilities.
- b) NRC Newsletter - ILT Survey reports. The Newsletter summarises the main findings of inspections by eti and RSCni and provides details of the College's response.

During discussion reference was made of the increasing demands placed upon ILT by Essential Skills and by the tutorial system. Mr Houston said that it was important for the College to make as efficient use as possible of limited facilities. He referred to the rationalisation of computer facilities, which had been undertaken to ensure the most effective use of ILT resources. He indicated that it was important for Course teams to take ownership of ILT in order to integrate it into the learning and assessment process. Dr O'Mullan noted the input of Dr Ming's work on the development of the student e-lip, the tutorial system, e-library resources and student support systems in general.

It was noted that all students and staff have now access to the internet at home and these facilities are frequently better than those of the College. Some 90% of the PCs were at the College's baseline specification. There was also a shortage of Interactive White Boards (IWBs) compared with other schools and colleges. A Member questioned whether the NRC was capable of achieving 'Embedded' status by 2011 and was reassured that the College was confident that it would reach the necessary standards.

**The Committee noted the position regarding the use of ILT at the College.**

In conclusion the Chairperson thanked Dr P Ming for providing an overview of the College's ILT provision; the Director made reference to his important role in encouraging the use of ILT at the College.

**3.7 Any Other Notified Business**

**3.7.1 Education and Training Inspectorate**

The Director reported that the Education and Training Inspectorate had conducted an interim Follow-Up Priority Skills Level II Inspection during the previous week; they had indicated that the College had made satisfactory progress in implementing the Action Plan prepared following their initial Inspection. The Director advised the Committee

that the official Follow-Up Inspection would be conducted early in the academic year 2010/2011. He also informed the Committee that ETI were conducting an Inspection of Priority Skills III after Easter 2010.

### **3.8 Next Meeting**

The Chairperson reminded Members that the next scheduled meeting would be on Tuesday 23 March 2010 at 7.00 pm at the Farm Lodge Campus, Ballymena.