

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 10 May 2023 on MS Teams commencing at 5.00pm.

Present: Mr K Chambers (Chair), Dr P Graham, Ms J Hemphill, Mr M Higgins, Mr G McAllister, Ms A Morrow, Mr S Shevlin

In Attendance: Mr A Ballantyne, Mrs C Brown, Ms H Hampsey, Mr S Laverty, Mr S McCartney, Mr K Nelson, Dr L Monteith, Ms L Sloan, Ms J Small, Mr P Wallace, Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

62.1 Apologies/Welcome

Apologies were noted for Mr Murray.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the final Education Committee meeting of the 2022/23 year and his final meeting as Chair. He welcomed Mr Nelson who was attending the meeting as an observer.

62.2 Declarations of Interest

None.

62.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2023 were approved.

Proposed: Dr Graham Seconded: Mr McAllister

62.4 Matters Arising

Mr McCartney updated Committee on safeguarding initiatives being rolled out across each campus of the College including: resilience training workshops for students; signposting to the "Inspire Hub"; and a Wellbeing Roadshow highlighting mind bath classes, health and self-care.

The Chair extended congratulations to the College football teams for their achievements in reaching 2 all-Ireland finals.

The Chair thanked Dr Graham, Mr Small, Mr McCluggage and Mr Murphy who had agreed to take part in an impact analysis research group. Members heard that development of a Terms of Reference would align with the 10X strategy and any initiatives proposed by DfE to measure the impact of this. An update would be reported to the GB meeting on 20 June.

62.5 Chair's Communications / Correspondence

The Chair thanked Dr Graham for agreeing to take up the role of Education Committee Chair from 1 August 2023. Expressions of interest for the position of Vice Chair would be sought at the first meeting of Committee in the 2023/24 academic year.

Committee noted the HLA proposal 2023-24 as submitted to DfE. Members heard that the 2 programmes not scheduled for delivery had been replaced with updated versions and that information contained in the table presented was a summary of Annex C documentation provided to the Department.

Members considered a report on the MaSN bid for 2023-24 and noted details of planned provision and projected enrolments contained therein.

Members received the College Entrepreneurship Hub Action Plan 2018-23 which had now been approved by the Department. Mrs Brown reported that the timeline for the document had been confirmed with Department representatives on the basis that annual review of the plan would be required. She emphasised the strategic importance being placed on entrepreneurship by the College which was taking every opportunity to embed it into curricular activity.

62.6 VP T&L Summary Report

The report was taken as read. The Chair referred to a number of success stories contained within this report and congratulated students on their achievements in the NI Young Enterprise Awards and Naval Cook and Serve competition. He extended best wishes to Ben Brown and Conor Dallas in their upcoming competitions and to entrants for the OCNNI Endeavour Awards.

Mrs Brown highlighted that key issues in the report evidenced the difficult operating environment which the Teaching & Learning Directorate were currently working in, which was being balanced through continued forward planning.

Mrs Brown paid tribute to Dr Monteith, Ms Hampsey, Ms Hagan, the Quality team and the Curriculum and Support teams for their work and involvement on the very significant ETI Level 3 Evaluation and Open University Institutional approval events, which had been very successful.

Mrs Brown referred to ongoing activity on essential skills, with revision of the plan to be proposed at the first meeting of Committee in 23/24 and highlighted recent stakeholder engagement initiatives. She reported that the College had now been invited to join the NI Screen Steering Group to explore opportunities for curriculum development within the creative sector.

The Chair congratulated Mrs Brown, Dr Monteith and Ms Hampsey for their extensive work on the OU Institutional Approval award and Dr Graham endorsed these comments.

62.7 Curriculum Plan 23/24

The Curriculum Plan was taken as read. Ms Hampsey asked members to note that this was a live document, dependent on budget and subject to expected change over time. She then handed over to HODs to provide departmental overviews of new and extended provision, for Committee's approval.

Mr Wallace gave an update on traineeships reporting the aim for all L2 provision to transfer to Traineeship, with workplace attachment, by 2024; embedding of apprenticeships within local industry and aligned with 10X strategy; and importance of industry recognition for apprenticeship provision.

Mr Ballantyne highlighted the wide range of employers which the Business & Services Industries department was working with and predicted enrolments for the various programmes, highlighting L3 UPS with current applicant numbers at 20. He shared the expectation that an extended Foundation Degree in Sport would be added to the programme for 2023/24, subject to applicant numbers and in conjunction with Larne FC. It was hoped that an opportunity to attract international students could then be developed within the next couple of years, which would be a unique position for the FE sector in NI. The development of a Level 4 Certificate in Higher Education in Tour Guiding was also highlighted as new provision, providing a progression pathway not currently available in this vocational area.

The Chair welcomed Ms Sloan to her first meeting of Committee. She outlined a move to a Work Based Learning (WBL) approach for childcare courses which would create a pipeline into HLAs. Ms Sloan reported commitment to a continued culture of lifelong learning and supporting children with special needs as they come out of Covid. Members heard that the College was linking with the GP Federation on L2 Primary Care and had a Memo of Understanding with the WHSCT and the NIHE for a range of training.

The Principal joined the meeting at 5.40pm.

Committee approved the Curriculum Plan 23/24.

Ms Morrow joined the meeting at 5.44pm.

62.8 Draft Curriculum Strategy

The Chair asked members to note that this was a first draft of the strategy, which was subject to budget, and presented for members' feedback.

Mr Laverty thanked all curriculum staff who had contributed to the report, which would link in with the Estates strategy going forward.

The Principal highlighted the importance of the College as a centre of excellence with the key focus of alignment of the strategy to the Department's 10x and key skills areas, and emphasis on innovation, sustainability and growth in HE. He reflected the importance of allowing people to enter the workforce and upskill.

Ms Small drew members' attention to the Word format of the document and explained the benefits of formatting the report as a PowerPoint presentation, which would enable combination of graphical display cut into narrative.

Members endorsed the interim document and direction of travel and accepted that in further development the use of infographics/visual presentation should be maximised, whether in PowerPoint or document presentation format.

62.9 Student Experience

Ms Morrow spoke to her report and highlighted key subjects including ongoing work with the Student Engagement Officer to resolve issues and continued engagement with NUS USI to ensure increased consideration of issues affecting FE students. Ms Morrow informed members that cost of living (COL) initiatives put in place by the College had been very well received, and the resultant reduction of services was being felt. She acknowledged the Staff/Student Consultative Committee as a useful forum for raising and getting feedback on student concerns.

The Principal advised that any extension of COL services would be dependent on additional funding from DfE.

Mr Laverty thanked Ms Morrow for raising student concerns and reported resultant work, in line with sustainability and net zero strategy commitments, which was being taken forward to resolve same.

The Principal welcomed Ms Morrow's activity to promote the College on social media platforms.

The Chair endorsed these comments and thanked Ms Morrow for her good work as Student President.

62.10 Quality & Academic Standards Committee Minutes

Committee noted minutes of the meetings on 10 March 2023 and 28 April 2023, key points from which were included in the T&L Excellence May 2023 update.

62.11 Teaching & Learning Excellence

Dr Monteith took members through her report on development activity from September 2022 to March 2023 and highlighted amber status actions as being due to budget issues or industrial action, with work on 1 red action for L2 FT, under review. She outlined strategies being put in place, in cooperation with the College's Northern Plus team, to use data to inform course teams on changes to student attitudes post-Covid and develop targeted interventions.

The Principal thanked Dr Monteith for her report. He outlined issues with the current level of teacher training provision available to the sector and plans to engage with DfE on extending choice of programme delivery to include more providers.

Dr Monteith advised members that meetings had taken place with the current Ulster University Programme Director to discuss developing the curriculum to better reflect changes in the sector, but no changes had resulted to date.

The Chair thanked Dr Monteith for her excellent work and members voiced the view that no external provider should be excluded from options.

62.12 College Development Plan

Ms Small summarised the contents of the report submitted to DfE on 28 April and provided a detailed explanation of risks contained therein.

In regard to the Employers Report Card, Ms Small explained that the programmes showing as red risks related to Skills Focus and some of the Innovation programmes. A performance report to Resources Committee on 27 March by the Head of Marketing and Communications, showed forecasted external business engagement for the current year at almost double the original target set. This remains the case. The difference with the CDP Progress Report is that a number of areas in which the College has generated significant income in the current year are not included in the CDP Progress Report (eg Skill Up, Schools Partnership, Hydrogen Academy).

The Chair congratulated Ms Small and colleagues on a very positive report and welcomed detailed explanation of actions being taken to change status of red risks

62.13 Any Other Business

The Principal offered thanks and appreciation to Mr Chambers on behalf of all members and staff, for his stewardship and participation as Chair of the Education Committee and his support for the College.

Mr Nelson thanked Mr Chambers, as Chair of the GB, for his work as a Committee Chair who would be much missed by the Committee and the GB.

Dr Graham reflected on the unprecedented Chairmanship of Committee by Mr Chambers and extended best wishes for him in the future.

Mr Chambers responded on the pleasure and privilege it had been to work with NRC and remarked on the incredible strides made by the college in the past 2 years. He thanked colleagues and senior staff for their support during his time with the College.

62.14 Date of next meeting

To be confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 6.25pm.

Dr P Graham

P Graham

Date 20 September 2023

(Chair)

Mrs K Wallace



(Secretary)