

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 18 August 2025 on MS Teams at 4.30pm.

Present: Dr P Graham (Chair), Ms J Hemphill, Mr M Higgins, Mr G McAllister, Mr S Shevlin, Mr D Small

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Ms H Hampsey, Dr L Monteith, Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

73.1 Apologies Mr Patterson

73.2 Declaration of Interests

PG reminded members of his wife's position within ETI.

73.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Document shared in advance: Draft minutes of 21.05.25

On the proposal of DS and seconded by GMA, the draft minutes of 21.05.25 were approved.

73.4 Matters Arising

ETI Step-Up Evaluation Report: CB confirmed the College hadn't met the progression target in this report. However, inconsistencies across the sector on methodologies used for reporting had since been discovered. Following a post evaluation review of the data, the College progression level stands at at 78%, 8% above the progression target.

PG asked that a line be put in the next communication with ETI in relation to this programme evaluation to show this and DS agreed.

In-depth review of ES: Members noted that this review had been overtaken by the ES review action plan.

CB reported that ES outcomes are recognised as a sectoral challenge and on that basis, 6 individual college action plans and a sectoral action plan would be developed and submitted to DfE's Quality Improvement Team.

PG noted that ES would go forward as a running agenda item with monthly updates.

MH stated that ES was a key area for improvement and would benefit from regular focus. Along with the action plan developed by LM, this should result in better final outcomes focused on the right areas, going forward.

PG noted discussion in the Assembly on this topic and hoped that the report would generate outputs which could be worked on to raise achievement standards.

CB also noted steps being taken to share good practice and experience across the sector, with Quality Improvement Team in DfE taking the lead on a series of events which will also give exposure to some case studies from private sector organisations.

QIP Information shared with QIT: CB confirmed this had been completed and as a standing item, provides evidence going forward that members receive regular reviews and have the opportunity for challenge.

73.5 Chair's Communication/Correspondence

Documents shared in advance: Chairs' and Principals' Briefing DE NI; SUB-0553-2025 letter WAPP approval; Apprenticeship Action Plan August 2025; NI Traineeship Blueprint V4.0; NI Traineeship Operational Guidelines

Chairs' and Principals' Briefing: CB noted that the 5 principles for new curriculum development can act as a checklist for inclusion in development of our new curriculum strategy. Also, inclusivity within the curriculum is challenging but highlights the need for improved collaboration between DE and DfE, especially in relation to pathways for 14-19 years.

Approval of WAPP 25/26: Members noted that the HE lead was now progressing with planning for delivery of the plan.

Apprenticeship Action Plan: CB advised that the plan evidences what the College already knows including emphasis on apprenticeships up to HLA, the role of sector partnerships, which are under review and the appetite to explore innovative development opportunities and increase inclusivity, which the College has already made headway in. The plan would be taken cognisance of when developing the College curriculum strategy.

CB noted that the Traineeship Blueprint and Operational Guidelines provided information and context and set out the blueprint for traineeship delivery 25/26.

Members discussed Department responsibilities on the Project Board and the 3 priority workstrands agreed for the coming year.

MH provided the rationale for presenting the reports for members' information.

DS agreed the importance of seeing the documents and suggested provision of a covering paper to highlight the relevance for Committee and issues which need noted or considered.

Action: CB would provide a briefing on documents within her summary report as part of the regular meeting cycle.

In response to a query from DS, MH confirmed delivered costs with Apprenticeships, including HLAs compared to traditional FE programmes, so any increase to apprenticeships and traineeships would be subject to securing funding, especially in the current and challenging budget situation.

CB noted that nothing in the plan presented any real surprise to the College who were already carrying out some of the work to a degree and agreed that any expansion would be budget dependant.

73.6 Quality Improvement Plan

Documents shared in advance: Submission paper; Review ES Action Plan; Review Traineeship Action Plan; QIP Update

Members noted that this would be a standing agenda item for meetings this year and that the current QIPs, which have a submission date of 26.08.25, were being shared for oversight and would be feeding into the sector QIP. Both improvement plans will be incorporated into whole college QIP for reporting and monitoring in due course.

LM advised that college Traineeship QIPs were currently out of sync with the normal QIP cycle and would be completed with results information before submission. She updated members on her work with other colleges to identify the key items impacting on student and traineeship success, context for which was contained in the presentation provided. She noted a major success during 2024/25 as the collaboration between the College and the University of Ulster.

LM outlined arrangements for DfE peer support training which would be rolled out to 7 staff who had expressed interest, and a new approach to CPD for ES with more peer observation and better utilisation of digital skills and AI. Meetings with responsible owners would be carried out over the coming week.

LM offered to provide a deeper dive for Committee at any time, on request.

PG and DS recognised the extensive amount of work being carried out on QIPs. The process was welcomed as of benefit to the College for clarifying focus and in setting out the strategic plan. It was also anticipated that the Department would, in future, carry out an assessment of the information before forwarding to ETI.

MH noted that the QIP is developed by the College and used to map improvements in outcomes, with governance initially provided by Committee. Members noted that the plans were living documents which would be reviewed as the year progresses, to inform governors, ensure responsible officers take the right steps going forward and to increase quality and standardisation of delivery.

CB outlined use of the documents internally to improve outcomes for students and reported increased appreciation by staff of the need to focus on wraparound elements of transversal skills and work placement to achieve positive impacts overall.

In response to a question from DS, LM advised that target dates would be put against all focus areas once teams have an opportunity to provide input on what is achievable for them. She also noted an extensive piece of work to be carried out on timetabling.

Members discussed the amount of advanced planning work carried out to provide a plan with clear purpose to actions, which progress could be tracked against. LM also advised that following communications by herself and CB with L Warren on a 2-year action plan, it had become clear that the Department's focus was on a 1-year plan.

Members asked that Committee's strong view on developing a 2-year plan with 1-year actions be included in a covering letter to the submission.

LM welcomed feedback and constructive conversations with ETI and advised that she would be happy to provide a snapshot of progress at any point throughout the year.

Action: LM would draft a covering letter once all relevant information has been received and circulate to members for information before submission.

Action: DS asked that key actions be prioritised for governor information going forward, to facilitate decision making where needed.

73.7 Any Other Business

PG advised members that the ARAC was currently short a member and it was likely that IM would be contacting Education Committee members for a volunteer, as members of Resources could not sit on the ARAC.

PG also noted that a volunteer was required for the role of safeguarding governor, which is currently vacant.

Action: Members interested in the role of safeguarding governor were asked to notify KW.

73.8 Date of next meeting 24.09.25 at 4.00pm.

The meeting closed at 5.35pm.

Dr P Graham, Chair



Date 30.09.2025

Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

