

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 30 September 2025 on MS Teams at 4.00pm.

Present: Dr P Graham (Chair), Mr M Higgins, Mr G McAllister, Mr B Patterson, Mr S Shevlin, Mr D Small

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Ms H Hampsey, Mr S Lavery, Mr S McCartney, Ms F McDowell, Dr L Monteith, Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

74.1 Apologies

Ms Hemphill

74.2 Declaration of Interests

No new declaration of interests.

74.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Document shared in advance: Draft minutes 18.08.25

On the proposal of DS and seconded by SS, the draft minutes of 18.08.25 were approved.

74.4 Matters Arising

Documents shared in advance: QIP covering letter; ES Action plan; Traineeship action plan

Members noted the attached documents which had been submitted to the Department on 26.08.25.

There were no outstanding actions.

74.5 Chair's Communication/Correspondence

Document shared in advance: Committee agenda/priority areas for 25/26

Expressions of interest for the position of Safeguarding Governor: A volunteer for this position was sought.

Action: BP was appointed as Safeguarding Governor.

Outline of Committee agenda priority areas for 25/26 cycle: PG presented the agenda and noted the following updates: Committee TOR and Update on HE WAPP would be added to the November meeting; more regular updates on complaints will be added.

It was suggested that the extra Committee meeting in January be used for a deep dive on one of a number of subjects – decision to be made at November meeting

CB noted the fluidity of the programme which was based on the assumption that the Whole College QIP would follow the same timeline as last year although confirmation of this was awaited.

Action: Any comments on the programme to be addressed to PG.

Student Union President: Members heard that Parker Burke had been appointed as Student President. Approval to put their name forward to the Department for appointment as Student Governor would be requested from GB members by email. It was noted that Parker would join Committee once appointed.

FMD joined the meeting at 4.12pm.

74.6 Annual Safeguarding Report 2024/25

Documents shared in advance: Annual Safeguarding Report 2024/25

FMD presented the report and summarised developments in the areas of safeguarding, governance and care and welfare.

She noted the importance of Operation Encompass and the Inspire Counselling Service for students, with refresher training having been delivered to the team and mandatory training rolled out to all staff. Members noted that the sector safeguarding policy was currently under review and would come back to Committee once finalised.

DS queried and was updated on the reason for the increase in the total number of safeguarding referrals from 23/24.

FMD also noted the ongoing impact from measures put in place during Covid and plans being put in place to address the issue of suicide.

Members welcomed a good report and acknowledged awareness raising carried out by the team.

MH thanked FMD and SMC and reminded members that safeguarding was the role of everyone in the College. He referred to recent reports from the Covid enquiry and outlined the continuing impact of covid in society and the importance of student wellbeing. Any live issues brought forward would be carefully considered for action.

FMD noted that awareness of messages could be taken forward through eg mental health training.

SS suggested the lessons learnt from the original covid experiences and the long-term impact on the student population could be included in feedback to the Department's Exercise Pegasus.

MH noted that in future colleges would be extremely cautious around closing campuses for any significant time, given the report from the inquiry on isolation experiences of students.

CB noted that there is also a sectoral working group relevant to these discussions.

Action: SMC and FMD would draw up a report on lessons learnt for a future meeting of Committee.

74.7 Student Experience Report 2024/25

Document shared in advance: Student Experience Report 2024/25

FMD provided a summary of the 3 key topics of this report and noted areas for improvement.

Members welcomed the range of activities and positive experiences taking place.

MH welcomed the increase in number of class representatives and noted that this was due to lecturers more actively raising awareness and communicating opportunities to students.

The report was noted.

74.8 ASF Audit

Documents shared in advance: Audit Report; Submission sheet

FMD presented the report and highlighted that, based on speedy action taken in response to findings, the original audit opinion of Limited assurance had been re-evaluated to Satisfactory assurance in the annual report. She noted that work continued to close out all actions by December 2025, with a new policy now approved and available on the College website.

CB gave credit to the team for the speed of actions taken and for accepting audit findings as an opportunity to improve.

FMD left the meeting at 4.33pm.

74.9 Curriculum Director Summary Report

Document shared in advance: Curriculum Director Report May – September 2025

CB spoke to the report and highlighted key issues including:

- Academic KPIs - CB caveated results reported noting further growth in figures since the reporting date of 12.09.25. Final figures would be updated to Committee in November.

- SEN evaluation – briefing on which gives wide scope on evaluation from policy and strategic placement of SEN in curriculum provision to operational delivery matters. Committee noted the information and would continue to oversee and monitor SEN activity.
- Good news stories – best wishes especially to students competing in Worldskills UK Industrial Robotics competition in November.

DS noted good performance and enrolment figures. He queried comparison of CDP achievement targets against other colleges. CB noted some other college CDPs would be higher at this point. She highlighted that targets set were based on 23/24 achievements and the intention would be to increase those targets.

HH noted that work continued on making incremental improvements to targets.

MH paid tribute to the curriculum team and noted that improving statistics were the outcome of key decisions made in previous years to remove sub-optimal provision, which had resulted in a more sustainable curriculum.

74.10 Enrolment Update

Document shared in advance: Enrolment Presentation

HH took members through the presentation, which had been considered at GB on 24.09.25 and updated on the positive change in figures since the report date of 12.09.25.

In response to requests for further information, HH reported:

- Increase in FT HE as a result of new programmes introduced this academic year.
- Childcare – retention and achievement very positive.

MH noted that a number of programmes had been put in place for those closed in Magherafelt, with FT and PT Access programmes to be further reviewed.

HH reported that a full review of Access was being carried out across the College network.

CB was pleased to note no displacement issues across apprenticeships as a result of significant growth in the traineeship programme. Also very good growth across the FT HE and HLA programmes.

SL congratulated the team on growth across all campuses and noted enthusiastic feedback from the student survey on new campuses and facilities, including specialist equipment.

74.11 Curriculum Strategy 2022/25

Document shared in advance: Curriculum Strategy Presentation

HH took members through the 2022-2025 review of curriculum strategy presentation and noted progress against key targets. She noted that all areas would be reviewed, with rollover for the next 3-years with specific emphasis on Student Voice, Retention and Achievement, Essential Skills, Traineeship and Talent Framework Development.

Committee was asked to approve proposal for a refresh of the strategy for the 3-year period from 2026-2029.

PG highlighted the need to keep in mind the political situation and impact of potential changes to Ministerial priorities from the May 2027 election.

BP left the meeting at 5.05pm.

DS requested and received clarification on transversal skills and welcomed growth in class sizes, HE and L3 delivery.

MH noted that increased focus on SEN should be reflected and carried over in the curriculum strategy, possibly looking at integrating better pathways, for endorsement by Committee.

PG congratulated HH and the team on achievements.

74.12 Essential Skills

Members noted that this had been included in the agenda as a standing item but for the purposes of this meeting would be covered under Quality Improvement.

74.13 Quality Improvement

Documents shared in advance: Annual Quality Report 2024/25; Traineeship/Essential Skills QIP Presentation; Quality & Academic Standards summary report 2025/26

LM took members through the presentation. She advised that sector QIPs were in final development, noted some areas of further work to be added to the report and highlighted a number of challenging targets. CB expected the report to be finalised by 10.10.25.

LM reported no formal feedback to date on the college QIPs submitted to the Department on 26.08.25. In response to a member's question she advised lack of clarity on how reporting would be taken forward but advised that the College would adhere to its review dates.

Action: LM would provide update on any actions not closed out.

LM presented the Q&AS Committee summary report showing achievements and areas of focus.

Referring to the Annual Quality Report, she highlighted reduction in level of malpractice and complaints for 2024-25 along with impact of work being done with Joanne McCourt, PL Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

MH noted lessons learned on malpractice and complaints. In relation to AI, he welcomed achievement of a bronze award and suggested that AI be built into a refocus of curriculum strategy.

LM noted this as a huge topic for colleges and outlined work ongoing with staff, resources needed and discussion across course teams on AI considerations.

Action: Refocus of curriculum strategy to include AI, to be put on the agenda for the next strategy day.

74.14 Any Other Business

SS advised members that his term as governor would end in January 2026 and suggested that a new member of Committee be appointed before that date to provide overlap.

PG noted that the new Chair was currently looking at membership of GB and committees.

74.15 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 19.11.25 at 4.00pm.

The meeting closed at 5.30pm.

Dr P Graham, Chair



Date 19.11.2025

Mrs K Wallace, Secretary

