

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 6 May 2014 at the Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

Present Mr R Jay (Chairperson), Mrs J Eve, Mr S Kelly, Mr A Kennedy, Mr M Murray and Mr T Neilands (Principal)

In Attendance Dr C O'Mullan and Mr J Hunter

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

21.1 Apologies

An apology was received from Mr K Nelson.

21.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

21.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee, held on 12 February 2014 were approved.

21.4 Matters Arising

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

21.5 Chairperson's Communications

There were no Chairman's communications.

21.6 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report

21.7 Balanced Scorecard

The Director of Curriculum provided an update regarding the Student Experience domain of the Balanced Scorecard. The Committee noted that the revised FLU target after the FLU tolerance level (2%) is taken into consideration is 6495; the predicted end of year performance is 6,280. It was also noted that the mid-year student survey had been completed and analysed. A detailed report on stakeholder feedback mechanisms and data analysis will be presented at the next meeting.

21.8 Curriculum Vision

The Committee received the draft NRC Curriculum Vision (2014/2015 to 2016/2017), which sets the direction of key curriculum and associated provision developments and related staffing and resource implications for the next three years. Dr O'Mullan, Director of Curriculum, stressed the fact that this was a working document. She said that a final version would be available for the next meeting of the Committee and for the forthcoming ETI Follow-Up Inspection. The Chair referred to the need to ensure that WBL fits in to the Whole College Strategy.

In line with the revised planning cycle, the Director of Curriculum stated that she would be undertaking planning meetings with each Head of Faculty and the relevant Heads of Schools and Curriculum Managers to scrutinise the plans and agree priorities in line with the overall vision.

In response to a query the Director of Curriculum stated that there was a need to locate high resource specialised professional and technical areas in one or two campuses in order to achieve the efficient use of resources.

21.9 Business Development

The Committee received a Business Development Report. It was noted that NRC is involved in an extensive range of economic engagement activity and initiatives including: bespoke cost recovery training; Connected; DEL customised training; community provision; DEL Employer Support programme; DEL Assured Skills programme; DEL Management and Leadership Development programmes; innovation vouchers; EU funded projects; and enterprise activity.

Referring to cost recovery work, the Principal advised that this was an area in which the College can generate a 'profit'. It was noted that there was an emphasis on Engineering courses as large firms were prepared to fund training for their staff. The Principal indicated that there was potential for other Faculties and Schools to generate additional income

The Director of Curriculum informed the Committee that the Three-Year Business Development Plan was being finalised by the Business Development Unit and would be available for the next meeting.

21.10 Quality Improvement

Committee considered the following documents:

a) Learning and Teaching Committee. It was noted that Panel meetings have taken place on a regular basis across campuses. Two Course Teams have been placed in 'NRC Special Measures' category: Hairdressing and the Foundation Diploma Art & Design, both at the Newtownabbey Campus;

b) Classroom Observations. Dr O'Mullan stated that an internal target of sixty classroom observation visits had been established for the period up to the end of May 2014; 38 visits have already taken place.

c) Whole College Quality Improvement Plan (2013/2014) Higher Education and Further Education. This document provides details of specific actions required to meet targets set in the CDP and indicates progress to date. It was noted that some adjustments were required in the section dealing with student feedback. Dr O'Mullan stated that a report on the Generic Employer Survey, carried out in March 2014, would be forwarded to the next meeting

d) Learning and Teaching Panels. It was noted that the Panel had met with Heads of School and Curriculum Managers and had visited several vocational areas.

e) Summary of Learning and Teaching Support Visits. Dr O'Mullan drew attention to the overall College Summary of Classroom Support Visits.

21.11 ETI Follow-Up Visit

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Ronnie Laverty (Head of Faculty Building, Engineering and Science) and Mr David Avery (Head of School, Built Environment) regarding work undertaken for the ETI Follow-Up Inspection.

Mr Laverty and Mr Avery referred to the areas for improvement as detailed by the Inspectorate:

a) Retention and Achievement Rates. A major review of WBL provision has been implemented and reviewed for 2014/2015; the recruitment process and work placement rates have been improved; and there have been improved retention and achievement rates for Brickwork, Joinery and Carpentry, and Plumbing. Greater emphasis has been placed on the collection, at an early stage in the scheme, of work-based evidence for NVQ completion;

b) Leadership and Management and Data Analysis. Mention was made of the development of electronic course tracking documentation, monitoring reports, core data sheets, progress boards, classroom visits and Learning and Teaching panels

c) Curriculum Offer. New courses have been introduced and underachieving provision has been phased out. The Committee noted that Level 3 Apprenticeship on both the Farm Lodge and Newtownabbey campuses had been developed in partnership with the Electrical Training Trust (ETT). NRC was part of a recent ETT inspection and was awarded a Grade 2. ETI has queried whether the College should operate in partnership with ETT.

d) Staff Development. Staff Development has been provided for all WBL and Essential Skills staff. Staff development has also been provided for all WBL staff on the use of Moodle.

e) Skills Competitions and Awards. Reference was made to the considerable success achieved by NRC students in the Skills Competitions. It was noted that a number of rooms had been refurbished and provided with enhanced electrical installations.

Mr Avery stated that although the work undertaken for the forthcoming inspection involved additional effort, members of staff were determined to show themselves in a better light to the Inspectorate. In response to a query Mr Laverty stated that there was a risk that something could go wrong particularly during a classroom visit, but there was an expectation that classroom delivery will have improved.

The Chair thanked Mr Laverty and Mr Avery for an informative presentation.

The Committee received a summary of progress against Inspection Action Plans as at April 2014. It was noted that the documents, indicated below, had been forwarded to members electronically for information. A summary of progress had been provided for Members highlighting the salient points recorded in these extensive documents:

a) Northern Regional College Inspection November 2012 Quality Improvement Plan (Essential Skills FE) January 2013 – updated April 2014;

b) Northern Regional College Inspection November 2012 Quality Improvement Plan (Essential Skills – Work-Based Learning) November 2013 – Updated April 2014;

c) Northern Regional College Inspection November 2012 Quality Improvement Plan

21.12 Student Council Annual Report and Action Plan

The Committee received the Student Council Annual Report for 2013/2014, which provided details of elections 2013/2014, training, publications, student facilities and student events. The Committee noted that the Student Council Action Plan 2014/2015 accompanied the Report. The Student President indicated that the Action Plan had been prepared with an emphasis on further embedding the Student Council culture within the College.

The Chair raised a query regarding student feedback and was informed that class representatives were responsible for ensuring that feedback informs College and Course decision making. It was also noted that there had been increased student participation in College Committees.

21.13 Any Other Notified Business

There was no further unreserved business to consider

21.14 Next Meeting

The Chairperson reminded members that the next meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled for 5.30 pm on Monday 16 June 2014 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus.