

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 11 November 2015 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus

Present Mr R Jay (Chairperson), Mr B McCluggage, Mr M Murray, Mr K Nelson and Professor T Scott (Principal).

In Attendance Dr C O'Mullan and Mr J Hunter

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

28.1 Membership, Terms of Reference and Apologies

The Chair reminded the Committee that the Governing Body (21 October 2015) had agreed the membership of the Education Committee as follows: Mr Jay (Chair), Mr Murray, Mr McCluggage, Mr Nelson, Mr Bradley and Professor Scott. The Chair welcomed Mr McCluggage to his first meeting.

An apology was received from Mr R Bradley. A view was expressed that the Student Governor might be more comfortable if he were accompanied to the meeting by another student (at the Vice-President level). It was also suggested that there was a need for the Head of Student Services to check if the Student Governor has received his papers and to remind him of forthcoming meetings.

ACTION: Dr O'Mullan to investigate both matters with Student Services and revert to the Chair before the next meeting

It was also suggested that there was a need for the Student President to have a Governor as a mentor.

ACTION: The Secretary to contact the Chair of the Governing Body concerning the appointment of a Mentor.

The Committee gave consideration to its Terms of Reference. It was considered that the Terms required alignment with the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP).

ACTION: The Director of Curriculum to liaise with the Chair to update the Terms of Reference to dovetail with the SIP.

28.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

28.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee, held on 19 May 2015, were approved.

28.4 Matters Arising

28.4.1 ETI Report Work-Based Learning (minute 27.8b))

The Report indicates that the overall effectiveness of the work-based learning provision inspected (June 2015) is now 'Good'. The Committee acknowledged progress made to date and SIP target of achieving an outstanding grade.

28.4.2 Level 2 Pearson Examinations (minute 27.4.1). The Director of Curriculum stated that results from the Level 2 Pearson examinations at NRC and across the Sector were still disappointing as a result of a move from a non-exam to exam orientated courses. The College was scrutinising performance on courses with a view to raising standards.

ACTION: The Director of Curriculum to provide an update on this matter at the next meeting

28.5 Chairperson's Communications

The Chair had no communications to report.

28.6 Correspondence

The Committee received the following correspondence:

a) Correspondence from DEL dated 13 October 2015 (Circular FE11/15) providing guidance on the format, content and timing requirements of the College Development Plan process for the period 2016/2017 to 2018/2019. It was noted that the FLU element of the CDP process would be broadly similar to last year. As with last year, colleges will be provided with a provisional FLU allocation. Colleges will then be asked to submit proposals for enrolments to be delivered within its budget. It is highly unlikely that the Department will be able to reinvest back to the Sector any budget reductions for under-delivery or quality performance. It was noted that the CDP Bi-lateral meetings, scheduled for March 2016, would focus on the College's performance against FE funded curriculum targets, and a review of the College's rates of learner retention, achievement and success.

It was further noted that colleges would be required to provide specified information in relation to HE in FE. The Principal stated that College had met the MaSN target for HE, which had strengthened its case for additional MaSN places

b) FE College Health Check 2014/2015 Issue 2. The Committee noted that this Issue was now dated and had been considered by the Governing Body at its June meeting. The Principal stated that she had submitted a response to the recent Review of the Health Check. It is understood that statisticians are now examining the format of Health Checks to ensure the report is appropriately aligned to the FE strategy.

c) DEL correspondence relating to ESOL. DEL has drawn attention to the potential for an increased level of ESOL enrolments from January in respect of Syrian refugees. It was important for the College to be seen as socially responsible. The Principal stated that the College was in a position to respond rapidly to such needs.

d) Correspondence relating to NRC 2014/2015 End of Year Outturn. The under-delivery at NRC (435 FLU) amounts to £1,478,332.

28.7 Strategic Improvement Plan

The Committee received two papers:

a) Report on Strategic Improvement Plan KPI 1. It was noted that progress relating to student recruitment has been monitored on a daily basis from the end of August. The Director of Curriculum drew attention to a number of changes to the Full-Time FE curriculum provision such as: the withdrawal of courses with declining enrolments in Built Environment, Sport and Art & Design; positive recruitment to Business with IT, Computing and Performing Arts & Interactive Media.

Attention was also drawn to the FLU Report, which indicates that the College is c70 FLU above the DEL target. The Director of Curriculum stated that the College was validating the FLU data; she was of the view that there appears to be a duplication of enrolments and that the FLU outturn would be at or below the DEL target

b) Student End of Year Survey (May 2015) and Student Induction Survey (September 2015) were noted. The target for the Student End of Year Survey had been set at 4.50 (good to very good); the whole college average score had been 4.44. The College had achieved its target of 78% in respect of the Student Induction Survey. The Chair requested that information regarding the number of respondents, should be supplied for all future surveys. It would be necessary to encourage more students to undertake these online surveys

28.8 Curriculum

The first round of School Challenge sessions (2015/2016) has been completed. The Principal, Director of Curriculum, Challenge Team and selected managers have met with teams from each school. Sessions have revolved around the analysis of recruitment, course viability, class size and staff utilisation. The Principal stated that the exercise had been completed during the transition stage from the old to the new organisational structure and the next Challenge sessions would be with new Heads of Department.

The Challenge sessions have identified three areas of potential redundancy: Plastering, Art & Design and Essential Skills. It was noted that it would be possible to reinstate Plastering should the market improve.

The Director of Curriculum reported that initial calculations had indicate that recruitment and course mergers have generated an average class size of 15.5 but this was subject to further confirmation. The average class size is being kept under review and the Committee will receive an update at the next meeting.

28.9 Any Other Business

28.9.1 Student Services Annual Report 2014/2015

It was agreed that the Student Services Annual Report, which contained details of Student Discipline and Safeguarding, would be forwarded to the next Governing Body meeting.

28.9.2 Assistant Head of Department Posts

The Principal advised the Committee that there had been in excess of 50 applications for Head of Department posts and that there would be a competition for each of the 19 posts.

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 5.30 pm

R Jay, Chair

Date

JA Hunter, Secretary