

Northern Regional College

Education Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 24 May 2017 at the Farm Lodge, Ballymena Campus commencing at 5.00pm

Present Mr R Jay (Chair), Mr W Hutchinson, Dr K McCambridge, Mr K Nelson, Prof T Scott (Principal).

In Attendance Mr C Fairless (item 33.5), Mr M Higgins, Mr V Taggart
Mrs C Robinson (Secretary)

33.1 Apologies

Dr S Brankin.

33.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

33.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minute of the meeting held on 22 February 2017 inclusive of a minor amendment highlighted by Dr McCambridge, was approved.

33.4 Matters Arising

The Chair reported that in response to information provided by the Department and the timeline involved, the Governing Body had decided not to continue with the process to remove the Student Governor.

Mr Hutchinson enquired if any reason for the Student Governor's non-attendance had been identified.

Prof Scott suggested that the timing of meetings and work load may have been factors but it was not entirely clear. She indicated that the Head of Student Experience was working closely with student representatives and the Student Constitution had been revised. She was hopeful that there would be more positive approach next year.

Prof Scott mentioned that a proposal on the timing of GB and Committee meetings would be presented to the Acting Chair in due course.

32.7 i Mr Hutchinson reported that he had spoken with the NIO about a meeting with Lord Dunlop and had been advised that he was willing to accept.

Action: The Chair and Mr Hutchinson would liaise with the NIO and an invitation would be issued at some stage following the election.

32.7 iii The Chair confirmed that a report on safeguarding had been circulated to GB.

The Chair reported that he had met with Stephen McCartney for an update prior to the meeting and he would report back to members at the next GB meeting.

Prof Scott stated mandatory safeguarding training had been provided to all staff. This was a short online session which could be arranged for GB members also.

Action: The Board Secretary to organise training with Stephen McCartney.

32.8 ii Prof Scott reported that the Student Experience Framework document had been reviewed by the SLT and the Head of Student Experience was responsible for overseeing the annual operating plan.

Action: Framework to be circulated to the Education Committee.

33.5 Update on Marketing Activities

Mr Fairless joined the meeting to provide an update on the programme of marketing activities since his last report in February. He made reference to recent open days and the major campaign focused at students and increasing application to the College. He highlighted how digital advertising and social media had been used and provided data that reflected increased interest through the College website. Mr Fairless indicated that overall there had been a 28% increase in website traffic; a 65% increase in application received, 25% of which had been online and a 19% increase through the schools C2K system. The benefits of non-digital activity including new marketing materials and email marketing were also summarised.

Mr Fairless indicated that the campaign to date had been successful. He noted that further activity plus a review of the admission process were planned to help ensure applications followed through to enrolments, particularly in the post 'A' level/GCSE results period. The campaign would also target the new apprenticeship provision, as well as promote progression through current/former students. Work on online applications and redevelopment of the website would also be undertaken during the summer break. Mr Fairless also remarked on the positive impact and value brought by the appointment of a digital content officer.

Members noted the update and discussed the analysis of applications received against the previous year; the effect of the application opening dates and aspects of telemarketing.

Prof Scott and Mr Fairless satisfied members' queries in these areas and acknowledged the importance of tracking/monitoring and capturing data on telephone activity and providing training in this area. They also confirmed that a range of channels other than social media were used to promote the College and target potential applicants.

The Chair reiterated members' commendation of the work carried out and thanked Mr Fairless for the comprehensive report. Mr Fairless left the meeting.

33.6 Chair's Communications

None.

33.7 Correspondence

The HEFCE Guide on publishing information for prospective undergraduate students was noted.

Prof Scott advised that the guidance was circulated for information as it related to a quality assurance framework and partially applied to the College. She indicated that as the University of Ulster validated College programmes there would be considerable amount of work to be done in this area in the next six months.

Prof Scott also reported that student experience was a major focus and an HE Forum had been established. Vincent Taggart, Laura Firth and Aaron Ballantyne were responsible for taking this work forward.

33.8 Update on HLA/Foundation Degree Provision

Prof Scott reported that a bid had been submitted to the Department for additional funding for the proposed extension to the HLA provision. To date the decision had been delayed. The College was putting in place interim arrangements required to support additional courses.

The Chair requested an update on the current position with regard to Foundation Degree courses and Apprenticeship schemes.

Mr Taggart reported that there was still no clarity at present however, Foundation Degree was on the agenda for a forthcoming forum meeting in June. He indicated that Department representatives would be present and perhaps more information would be received.

Prof Scott outlined complications with the HLA pilot scheme and noted that there was significant uncertainty in the long term for both HLA and Foundation Degrees particularly with regard to funding.

33.9 Strategic Improvement Plan

The Committee noted the KPI update report which had been discussed at the last Governing Body meeting. Prof Scott advised that there was nothing further to add to the update.

33.10 ETI Inspection Report and Follow Up

Prof Scott referred to the Letter of Issue and the final ETI Report circulated noting that both documents were now in the public domain. She advised that the outcome had been positive and the College had been aware of the areas for improvement highlighted prior to the inspection. The VP Teaching and Learning and the Head of Finance had collated data and prepared the detailed Quality Improvement Plans for Essential Skills and Training for Success and these had been circulated for information at the request of the Chair.

Mr Taggart outlined issues that had arisen within ES and advised that a core action plan had been identified. To ensure that staff were clear about individual responsibilities in this area mandatory training had been arranged for everyone involved. Staff had also been made aware of the return visits by ETI in September and January. Prof Scott assured that Mr Taggart was best placed to manage this process.

In response to Mr Hutchinson's query on pathways between ES and GCSE, Mr Taggart advised that this was covered by the ES plan mentioned. He also assured the Chair that recommendations from the report were being addressed. The development of a retention strategy was already underway.

The Chair referred back to positive comments within the report, particularly with regard to planning mechanisms, vision and approach to moving forward, as well as the leadership style. He said that the overall outcome was to be commended.

Mr Hutchinson concurred with the Chair and stated that it was important to recognise that Board members were very pleased with the report.

33.11 Curriculum Plan 2017/18

Prof Scott referred to the Curriculum Plan for 2017/18 highlighting the improved planning process which had involved input from CMT and AHoDs. She noted that the Plan had taken a new direction and as a result governors had the opportunity to review a comprehensive document which provided a good insight to what the College offered. Prof Scott also noted that a curriculum strategy was under development.

The Chair commented on the thoroughness of the planning process, the extensive detail within the document and congratulated Prof Scott and everyone involved in its preparation.

The Committee noted the final Curriculum Plan for 2017/18

33.12 SER/QIP document

Prof Scott advised on changes to the IQRS document and outlined the College's approach to information collection and completion of the report. She indicated that the VP for Teaching and Learning had devised a plan of action from team level upwards to SLT which when implemented would help avoid the pressures previously experienced close to the submission deadline. Prof Scott pointed out that the process would commence in June and she was committed to ensuring that the bulk of the work was completed prior to the summer break. She was confident that this would enable outcomes, recommendations and learning to move forward sooner. Final refinement would be carried out in August when outstanding information began available.

The Chair commended the changes to the process and progress made to date.

33.13 WBL Proposal to DfE

The Chair referred to the earlier discussion on work based learning.

33.14 Student's Union Update

The Chair indicated that the updated constitution had been approved by the Governing Body at its meeting on 18 May 2017. He had sight of the additional minor amendments proposed and was content with the recommendation to adopt the updated constitution.

33.15 DfE Health Check 2016/17 - Issue 2

Attention was drawn to the report circulated which had been discussed in detail at the last Governing Body meeting. The Chair highlighted the reference to sector wide difficulties with regard to student numbers which were below target. No further comments were made.

The second quarter report was noted.

33.16 Any Other Business

The Chair referred to the recent change to Committee membership and the requirement as stated in the Articles of Government, for the Committee to include at least four member of the Governing Body other than the Principal and staff members. He noted that currently there were only three members on the Committee.

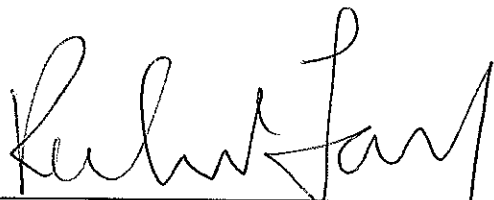
The Committee noted that the departure of the EA representatives had presented capacity issues in committee memberships and GB members had been reassigned in response to ensure a full presence at A&R. In addition to the vacancies to replace the outgoing EA representatives in all colleges, the retirement of the Chair at NRC also reduced the number of governors.

The Chair referred to a committee annual report which had been produced in the past. Mr Higgins advised that only the Audit and Risk Committee was required by AoG to produce an annual report and that a summary of attendance would be required for inclusion in the Annual Report.

33.17 Date of next meeting

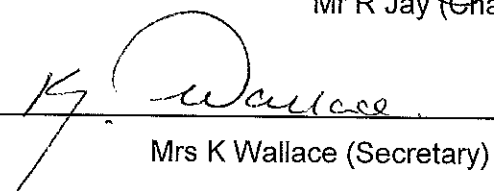
To be confirmed.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.45pm.



Mr R Jay (Chair)

Date 25/10/2017
25 October 2017



Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)