

Northern Regional College

Education Committee

Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 10 November 2021 on Microsoft Teams, commencing at 5.00pm.

Present: Mrs I Allison (Chair), Mr K Chambers, Ms A Dynes, Dr P Graham, Mr M Higgins, Mr D Macauley, Mr T Montgomery

In Attendance: Mr I Abraham (55.1-55.9), Mr A Ballantyne (55.1-55.4), Mr R Bolt, Mrs C Brown, Dr L Firth, Ms H Hampsey (55.1-55.5), Ms D Kerr (55.1 – 55.11), Mr M Murray (55.1-55.5), Ms J Small, Mr P Wallace

Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

55.1 Apologies

Mr Bryson and Ms Close.

55.2 Declaration of Interests

Dr Graham declared his wife's position as a member of ETI.

55.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2021 were approved.

Proposer: Dr Graham Seconder: Ms Dynes

54.4 Matters Arising

Members noted that a message had been sent to all staff on behalf of the Education Committee, to thank them for their work over the Covid-19 period.

Congratulations to students competing in the WorldSkills national finals had been included in the Principal's October update to staff.

55.5 Chair's Communications / Correspondence

None.

55.9 ETI Entrepreneurship Hub Evaluation

Mr Abraham referred to the work undertaken for the ETI evaluation, as outlined in the pre-evaluation action plan. Members heard that verbal feedback received to date had been very positive, with recognition of strong, strategic vision and direction of travel for 2022-2025. Committee's guidance, leadership and active participation had been acknowledged by the ETI along with the benefits of the Hub to the sector. Mr Abraham recorded his thanks to all involved in the Hub and advised that an ETI standardisation meeting would take place on 19 November.

Dr Graham endorsed the preparation work undertaken for the inspection and would talk with the Chair on working within the Economic Engagement Forum to address issues indicated by inspectors. He referred to a recent session delivered as part of Global Entrepreneurship Week on IPR and noted that a meeting had been set up with the Patent Office.

The Principal noted work to be done on embedding provision and expanding across campuses, and on addressing ETI's comments referencing the College 'selling itself short' in a number of areas.

5.16pm Mr Abraham left the meeting.

55.6 Teaching & Learning Committee Minutes

The Teaching & Learning Committee minutes of 2 November 2021 were noted.

55.7 VP Teaching & Learning Report

Mrs Brown spoke to her report, which provided evidence of the College's strong performance position within the sector. Special mention was made of the work of the Essential Skills team, which had provided excellent outcomes for the College.

The Principal advised that a request had been made to the Department for retention of funding for HE programmes of enrolments. The Department would also be asked through College Development Plan for reconsideration of the funding position based on the College's strong enrolment figures.

Collaboration with colleges on the future of HE in FE by the Department and Ulster University was welcomed and the potential for partnering with other universities noted. Members heard that Mr Mark Lee, Director of Tertiary Education Reform, would be the Department contact going forward.

Action: Dr Graham asked that overall marketing and promotion of achievements be included on the Strategy Day agenda.

55.8 Curriculum Planning

Mr Bolt, along with the HODs, took members through the review of new and extended provision for September 2021 and proposals for 2022/23. He highlighted that all courses had been, or would go through, necessary external processes.

Members considered and queried proposed course developments with each of the Department Heads. Successful enrolment figures on WBL and over-subscription of apprenticeship programmes were noted along with establishment of relationships/partnerships with HSC&A stakeholders. Details on areas for potential future growth within each of the Departments were noted. Members also noted efforts being made across all colleges to ensure impartial careers advice provision on future pathways, for both students and parents.

Interest expressed by Dr Graham in working on future direction of business and management curriculum, was welcomed by Mrs Brown and Mr Ballantyne.

The Principal drew Committee's attention to difficulties of recruiting staff, particularly in trades, IT/computing and digital areas, and the impact on taking forward the curriculum. As a result, a dispensation had been sought from the Department, to recruit staff/individuals and train them within the IT curriculum area.

Action: Committee approved the schedule of proposed new and extended provision for September 2021 and for 2022/23 in principle, subject to further exploration of proposed courses.

55.10 Essential Skills Action Plan

The Action Plan was taken as read. Ms Hampsey advised that amber actions would move into the 21/22 QIP and highlighted the increase in outcomes achieved in 2021, which compared favourably against other colleges. She noted excellent success with online courses and CPD for staff, based around outcomes and observations carried out in the past year. Mr Macauley confirmed staff's appreciation of the CPD focus from a lecturers' viewpoint. Members noted that a whole-College approach to ES would be taken forward for 2021/22.

The Principal commended the work carried out by the ES team in achieving an excellent success rate and members endorsed his comments.

55.11 Whole College Quality Improvement Plan

Ms Small reported that since the last meeting of Committee, the STS Board had asked her to Chair the Sector Reporting Group, which would look at work to be done on reporting on LMS across the sector, to ensure improved functionality for users.

Committee noted that this action would remain amber; all other actions were now green or complete.

55.12 Performance Report

Ms Kerr presented the September performance report detailing inter alia, enrolments against 21/22 targets; retention rates; and unmarked registers/attendance. She noted a sizeable increase in enrolments since the date of the report with targets on schedule to be green. Members noted that student and leaver tracking information would be updated on a monthly basis going forward.

Action: The October Performance Report would be shared with Committee members once internal review had been completed.

55.13 Student Voice 2021/22

Dr Firth summarised the contents of the Student Experience report and highlighted a number of key points including: high response to the student experience survey on induction; the importance of numeracy and literacy being embedded in the vocational curriculum; and some outcomes from the FE leavers' survey. She noted that Ms Close would provide a verbal update on student experience at a later date.

The Principal referred to very positive feedback from students, indicating staff support at an early stage. Congratulations were extended to Dr Firth and the team, and to curriculum staff who participated in the induction process, for a very positive outcome.

55.14 Any Other Business

The Chair thanked Ms Dynes, who would be finishing her term as staff governor on 14 January 2022, for her commitment and support to Committee and the Governing Body.

The Chair noted that issues in relation to the upcoming movement of governors, including appointment of a Safeguarding Champion, would be covered at the Governing Body meeting on 24 November.

55.15 Date of next meeting

9 February 2022 on Microsoft Teams.

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

Mr K Chambers



Date 28 February 2022

(Chair)

Mrs K Wallace:



(Secretary)