

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 14 November 2023 on MS Teams commencing at 4.00pm.

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

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Ms H Hampsey, Ms D Kerr, Mr S McCartney, Dr L Monteith

Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

64.1 Apologies/Welcome

The Chair extended welcome to Mr Dornan on his first meeting, and to Mr McAllister who had been reinstated after a brief transition.

64.2 Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Committee that his wife was the Head of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) which would be referred to later in the meeting.

64.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 were approved.

Proposed: Mr Small Seconded: Mr Higgins

64.4 Matters Arising

Committee heard that a deep review of HE provision would be scheduled for the meeting on 15 May 2024, and that an update on external engagement would be provided at the GB meeting on 22 November 2023.

Conditions for upgrading of red risks to agenda items, and highlighting of colours on CDP progress reports, were noted.

It was agreed to take Ms Kerr's report at this point in the meeting.

64.7 Recruitment 2023/24 - Application Conversion Rate Report

Ms Kerr spoke to her report and outlined the complexities in analysing the data – which in oversubscribed vocational areas includes impact of limited delivery capacity on conversion rate.

The Principal confirmed that this issue would be considered at the GB strategy day in February.

Mrs Brown pointed out that this data had not previously been available and would now provide a baseline for future work including admissions review which would be led by Stephen McCartney.

Mr Shevlin referred to colleges collaborating on student referrals and the Chair confirmed that the approach over the coming year would be to look at how partnerships could work together to increase compatibility and competitiveness.

Mrs Brown thanked Ms Kerr for providing the report.

Ms Kerr left the meeting at 5.15pm.

64.5 Chair's Communications / Correspondence

Consideration was given to the Education Committee Terms of Reference (ToR), which had been updated to reflect current membership.

Mr Small queried how often the ToR were reviewed to ensure that content was relevant.

The Principal confirmed that the ToR would be updated in line with any significant changes to business processes.

Committee approved the update to membership.

Action: The ToR would be kept under review and updated to cover changes in Education Committee business where appropriate.

Members heard that work was continuing on the Quality Improvement Planning (QIP) Submission 2023/24. An extra meeting of Committee would be convened in January to consider the QIP prior to the January submission date. Dr Monteith would provide more information later in the meeting.

Committee's attention was drawn to the positive findings of the HLA Interim Evaluation Executive Summary covering the 5-year period 2017/18-2022/23, which had been commissioned by DfE during 2022/23 and completed by SIB. Members noted that the Department were considering changes to the funding and claims process and to policy, both of which would be welcomed by the sector.

The Chair reported that he and Mr Stephen Price, Curriculum Project Lead, had attended the recent Study USA scheme graduation event and had positive discussion with the Head of Education for the British Council NI on increasing involvement of FE students in the scheme.

Members noted the ETI L3 Evaluation Report, recommendations from which are being considered within the context of QIP. The Chair confirmed that he had undertaken to write to ETI on various issues, including delayed reports and response to meeting requests.

Action: Dr Monteith would draft a letter to ETI for the Chair's attention.

64.6 VP T&L Summary Report

The report was taken as read. Mrs Brown highlighted a number of key themes including learner outcomes 2022-23, in particular in relation to Essential Skills (ES) which is at forefront of planning for the sectoral working group; enrolments 2023-24, with areas of growth; FTHE, a priority area for consultation and collaboration across the SAG; and good news stories, with a range of awards showing recognition of the College's teaching and learning for students and staff.

In relation to industrial action, Mrs Brown reported a continuing moderate effect on curriculum for the College with sectoral focus on the impact of lost delivery hours and the impact on assessment.

The Chair extended Committee's congratulations on the range of awards achieved and noted the importance of data capture on the impact of industrial action on students.

Ms Hampsey outlined key benefits achieved as a result of data capture including for monitoring and reporting purposes and mitigating actions eg putting in place learning hubs and additional sessions.

Mr Patterson requested details of outcome figures for ES

in relation to community provision.

Action: Ms Hampsey would provide a breakdown of ES statistics by community and mainstream provision.

In response to a query by Mr Small, Mrs Brown confirmed that overall performance figures were affected by ES and did not reflect extensive effort and input by delivery teams. She advised on research report published by Stranmillis College, including recommendations on current assessment processes, which has been welcomed across the sector. Members noted that, in the meantime, an operational working group had been set up by the College which was working closely with Northern Plus team.

Dr Monteith referred to lack of guidance from ETI on practical steps to improve ES in vocational education and outlined work in progress by the College to identify same. Dr Graham noted the need for clarification on guidance as a key reason for seeking a meeting with ETI.

64.7 Recruitment 2023/24 – Enrolment Update

In the context of the report provided, Ms Hampsey highlighted increased stability on enrolments since the last meeting, with enrolment targets aligned to curriculum strategy and the skills barometer. She also referred to increased cancellation of non-viable classes for 2023/24, with a resultant increase in average class size in some areas.

The Principal noted that DFE would be attending the upcoming strategy day on 6 February 2024, which will provide an opportunity to engage on social inclusion provision and the need for the College to respond to the skills barometer.

A period of discussion ensued on the future of HE in the College. The Principal advised that engagement on HE was taking place within the SAG, alongside sharing of information. He emphasised that the College's focus was on access to progression pathways for students, which could be promoted by the College, to benefit the wider population served.

The Chair reiterated that HE would be looked at in depth at the May 2024 Committee meeting, when it was hoped that a deeper appreciation of the benefit to students would be identified.

Dr Monteith outlined current analysis taking place on student progression data, and sectoral discussion on flexibility models with partner universities by the Quality Forum.

Mr Small looked forward to seeing a set of actions to map the way forward for Higher Education provision.

The Chair advised that future Committee meetings would look at a core piece of activity on an issue central to Education Committee work.

Action: A draft of future planning for Committee work would be circulated to Committee members for feedback.

64.8 Teaching & Learning Excellence Update

Consideration was given to this report. Dr Monteith referred to the high level information aligning Committee to T&L strategy, and highlighted key issues including survey response; difficulties and mitigations re unmarked registers; and how to support staff and students.

The Principal advised that a sector-wide funding application for £900k had been made to run a cost of living intervention again in 2023/24 and asked Mr Dornan to encourage student feedback on target interventions needed.

Mr Dornan stated students' strong appreciation of the breakfast club in 2022/23.

The Chair confirmed Committee's support for this initiative.

Mr Small welcomed reassurance provided on the amount of assessment and monitoring work being undertaken, the strong focus and future work planning, and the positive impact of the Northern Plus initiative.

64.9 Student Governor Update

Mr Dornan presented the update report and outlined key activities of the Student Union for October and November 2023. He reported a reduced number of class representatives for the year but would continue to work with the Student Engagement Officer to highlight the benefits of the system and ensure two-way feedback process.

Mr Dornan also reported student interest in establishing new clubs and societies in the coming term.

Members welcomed the report and thanked Mr McCartney and the team for their support for Mr Dornan.

64.10 Any Other Business

None.

64.11 Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on 17 January 2024 to consider the QIP submission.

The meeting concluded at 5.29pm.

Dr P Graham



Date 17 January 2024

(Chair)

Mrs K Wallace



(Secretary)