

## **NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

#### **Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on Wednesday 20 November 2024 on MS Teams commencing at 4.00 pm**

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

**In Attendance:** Mrs C Brown, Mr S Lavery, Mr S McCartney, Dr L Monteith

**Apology:** Ms H Hampsey

**Secretary:** Mrs K Wallace

The Chair welcomed Mr Hoey to his first meeting of Committee.

#### **69.1 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded members that his wife is Chief Inspector of ETI.

#### **69.2 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2024 were approved subject to location of meeting being amended.

Proposed: Mr Small      Seconded: Ms Hemphill

Mr Shevlin joined the meeting at 4.07pm.

#### **69.3 Matters Arising**

The Chair advised a realignment of the programme of Committee work for the year ie Community Provision would be covered in March along with interim evaluation report from ETI, and final report from SIB and ETI Traineeship Evaluations along with planned, proposed new and withdrawn provision, in May 2025.

He congratulated Dr Monteith, her team and staff involved, on very positive verbal feedback from ETI on Step Up Evaluation. In relation to concern which had been expressed about a lack of lecturer interaction in some classes, Dr Monteith reported that a robust programme of development for staff was with the TUs for feedback and would be included in the next QIP. The Principal also confirmed that outcomes from performance reviews and classroom observations by HODs would be built into staff improvement plans.

Following up on a previous query from Mr McAllister, Mrs Brown advised that information on the Washington Ireland Programme had been included in a careers information session in

November 2023. She has asked for a similar session to be provided this year and would also raise awareness with HODs through the Curriculum Management Team (CMT).

#### **69.4 Chair's Communication/Correspondence**

FE QIP commissioning letter. The Principal referenced a statement in the letter provided, indicating a change to planned oversight of reporting feedback to governors which would be picked up at the upcoming Principals' meeting. Mr Small stated that it would be good to have clarity on this new process. Mrs Brown referred to a number of points in the letter which she and Dr Monteith would raise at a meeting with Dr Warren on 21 November. The circulation list for the letter was noted.

Mrs Brown advised that the Traineeship Evaluation Terms of Reference would be picked up in her report, with the date for evaluation now confirmed as week commencing 2 December.

The circular on qualifications required to deliver essential skills was considered. Members noted a degree of flexibility provided by the 'comply or explain' clause which could be useful in future if needed.

Dr Graham reminded members of the PAC Committee Inquiry on developing skills, which would be streamed live on 21 November at 2.00pm.

#### **69.5 VP Teaching & Learning Summary Report**

Mrs Brown highlighted key points in her report including learner outcomes; continued improvement and achievement on essential skills (ES); positive feedback on the Step Up programme evaluation, with individual and sectoral report awaited; traineeship evaluation, with Dr Monteith leading on development of the programme for the 4-day evaluation visit commencing 2 December.

In relation to curriculum matters, Mrs Brown highlighted the work of the Open University (OU) /FE Steering Group on collaboration, with the focus on realigning to the Minister's 4 priorities.

Members welcomed a number of stakeholder engagement events which had taken place, and a series of student good news stories. The Principal commended students who took part in a recent event at QUB, where they met US dignitaries, as strong ambassadors and entrepreneurs for the College. Members heard that work to include development of student presentational skills in course design was underway.

Mrs Brown referred to the College's success at the Causeway Coast & Glens People Awards and thanked Mr Laverty and the Causeway Campus Project team, and Mr McCartney and the Student Services team, for their contribution.

Mr Small appreciated improvements with ES. He noted an increased focus on HE as an outcome of OU partnership methodology and to encourage a sectoral approach to validation by OU.

Referring to awarding organisations, Mr Patterson asked whether community ES provision would be standardised by the College. Mrs Brown said that choice of awarding organisations was at the forefront of the ES agenda and further opportunities to provide community provision would be sought.

**Mrs Brown would liaise with Mr Patterson to bring forward community provision as standard, with an opportunity for a deep dive on ES, for the March meeting.**

#### **69.6 Enrolment Update 2024/25**

Mrs Brown gave an overview of the unique student count and enrolment position of the College, in the context of the presentation provided, and was pleased to highlight the January 2025 start of 3 cohorts for the electrical installation course.

The Chair was content to note the position of HE in FE and HLAs, and restated the interest in micro qualifications at the last Strategy Day.

Mr Small asked where the focus for increase of student numbers to achieve target would come from. Mrs Brown explained that this would be predominantly across PT HE and PT FE, with a focus on non-baselined initiatives.

The Principal was comfortable with current numbers and highlighted that supplementation through part-time courses throughout the year was normal practice. He advised that the CDP was still with the Minister and that the increase of 6% in unique learners aligned with the Minister's priority.

The Chair would look into additional training/CPD opportunities for teachers and was otherwise content with the situation at this point in the year.

#### **69.7 Student Experience Annual Report**

Mr McCartney gave an overview of the student survey results detailed in the report and outlined the main findings. He noted a low take-up of the survey and detailed additional plans for gathering student feedback going forwards.

The Chair welcomed the high percentage of positive feedback.

In answer to a question from Mr Small, Mr McCartney explained that where results indicated room for improvement, an action plan was drawn up and communicated to students through class representatives. This included reasons for inability to respond to any issues.

In addressing the Annual Report of the Students' Union, Mr Hoey extended thanks to his predecessor, Mr Tom Dornan, for his work over the past year.

Mr Hoey gave a summary of activities during 2023/24, reporting excellent participation in the Freshers event and appreciation of the Breakfast Club, Winter Welfare weeks and workshops on financial advice and resilience. He thanked the Principal for his input at the student award events and noted the thanks of the Student Union for support provided by College staff. He attributed a reduction in the number of class representatives for the year to the impact of staff strike action.

The Principal thanked Mr Hoey for the report and put on record his thanks to Mr Dornan also. He welcomed the positive feedback on areas needing improvement and encouraged the Student President to help build up the number of class representatives, to ensure a strong student voice. He also extended thanks to students for work carried out on supporting curriculum activities over the year and for their outstanding interaction with the Minister at the Causeway Campus opening and with dignitaries on 2 October.

Mr Lavery thanked Mr Hoey for his report and positive feedback on the DfE funded Breakfast / Information events and confirmed the Department's intention to fund a repeat of the student Breakfast scheme for the 2024/25 Department year, following positive Post Project Evaluation feedback and business case approval.

The Chair endorsed the Principal's comments and asked Mr Hoey to pass on to students the lengthy discussion at Committee and their appreciation for the body of work being done. He thanked Mr McCartney and Mr Hoey for their reports.

## **69.8 SER/QIP**

Dr Monteith presented her report, particularly highlighting the development of a sector agreed QIP template as an extensive piece of collaborative work. Members noted that the self-evaluation was an internal document which the College would be happy to share with ETI when they were carrying out their Traineeship evaluation.. Committee heard that the only submissions to the Department would be an update on last year's QIP to close out, plus the QIP 2024-25, and were content that these be submitted to the Quality Improvement Advisor.

The Chair appreciated the importance of cross sector college and department collaboration which went into the QIP.

Mr Small was very encouraged by the report and the detail provided which demonstrated the importance and relevance of quality improvement planning.

The Principal thanked Dr Monteith for the work put into this process. In response to his question on whether it was possible to extend the report to align with the College's 3-year

strategy plan, Dr Monteith advised the intention was to seek a rolling 3-year period. She also confirmed that clarity in relation to oversight/coordination and responsible owner roles would be agreed prior to submission, with more individual actions to be assigned.

The Chair approved of the rolling timetable linked to strategy and would welcome a long-term financial plan alongside this.

**69.9 Any Other Business** None.

**69.10 Date of next meeting** 3 March 2025.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 5.43pm.

Dr P Graham 

Date 3 March 2025

(Chair)

Mrs K Wallace 

(Secretary)