

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 28 February 2024 on MS Teams commencing at 4.00pm.

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

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Ms H Hampsey, Mr S McCartney, Dr L Monteith, Ms L Sloan (66.8)

Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

66.1 Apologies/Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received for Mr Higgins and Mr Laverty.

66.2 Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded members of his connection to ETI, which would be referred to later in the meeting.

66.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 were approved.

Proposed: Mr Small Seconded: Mr McAllister

The Chair updated members on information provided informally confirming that, contrary to the understanding of the College as presented in the above minutes, ETI do not use the College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to inform the ETI workplan.

4.06pm Mr Shevlin joined the meeting

66.4 Matters Arising

Breakdown of ES statistics included in agenda item 8.

The Chair advised rearrangement of agenda items to facilitate those joining from a campus location to vacate the premises at 5.00pm. Members were content with the arrangements.

66.10 Safeguarding Mid-Year Review

Mr McCartney took members through this 6-monthly report. He highlighted the main themes for an increased number of referrals, and arrangements for care and welfare of students including reduction in waiting times for counselling to an average of 3 days.

Members noted a well-structured and robust approach to the safeguarding framework and extended congratulations and thanks to Mr McCartney and the safeguarding team.

66.11 Student Experience Mid-Year Review

The Student President presented his 6-monthly update on the activities of the Student Union. He reported appreciation for the cost-of-living interventions, with the Breakfast Club and welfare packs very well received.

Mr McCartney reported it was hoped to continue the project through to May 2024.

Mr Dornan drew members' attention to the NUS-USI report prepared for the College, detailing the cost-of-living impact on students.

Members welcomed the report and the breakdown of issues specific to students of the College.

Action: The report to be attached to the GB agenda for information.

66.9 Admissions Review

Mr McCartney spoke to his report detailing changes to admissions processes and methodology resulting from review of the 2024 recruitment cycle.

Members noted an update to application figures to reflect the current position and heard proposals for ES summer provision..

Members were reassured by a 96% positive student experience of the admissions process and the ongoing work to offer continual improvements on an incremental basis.

The Chair thanked Mr McCartney for his report.

66.5 Chair's Communication/Correspondence

The Chair advised that he would be attending a DfE Peer Learning Conference with the Principal on 7 March and noted the work being done by Mrs Brown and Dr Monteith in preparation, including a presentation by Dr Monteith on Tutor Education.

The Chair highlighted the key issue for FE of impact on students from action short of strike and hoped that the imminent pay offer to staff would be accepted to settle this issue.

The Chair referred to the Manufacturing NI presentation given at the GB Strategy Day and a resultant section on micro credentials included in the VP summary report. He was keen that the College develop this area of interest and be in a position to introduce it to the market.

66.6 VP Teaching & Learning Summary Report

The report was taken as read. Mrs Brown highlighted a number of key topics including discussion at the College's annual accountability meeting on 9 February; curriculum planning activity; and ongoing industrial action and actions to mitigate impact as far as possible.

Members noted negotiations currently taking place with unions and efforts to halt industrial action, and conversations with awarding bodies in an attempt to secure some flexibility around submission timelines.

5.00pm Mr Dornan, Ms Hemphill and Mr McCartney left the meeting.

Mr Shevlin advised the importance of developing deliverables around micro credentials with a lot of existing content across the FE sector which could be repurposed for this use. Mrs Brown referenced the establishment of a sectoral working group, with a first meeting scheduled for 6 March.

The Chair highlighted Mr Shevlin's interest in this regard and suggested him as a Committee champion on this topic.

66.7 Teaching & Learning Excellence Update

Dr Monteith delivered her update detailing activity on creative excellence, entrepreneurship education, quality and teaching and learning excellence. She welcomed Mr Shevlin's suggestion for an AI micro credential, having just begun discussion on a proposal for this with the OU.

Dr Monteith advised the support of the Creative Manager in taking forward information provision and development for AI working group activity and a phased approach to identifying possible savings and investment opportunities. Members noted cost of a pilot scheme as a key issue and proposals to utilise a sector group for collective bargaining with MicroSoft to provide CoPilot across the 6 colleges.

Mr Shevlin's offer of assistance in this area was welcomed by Dr Monteith.

Dr Monteith took Committee through investigations detailed in the maladministration log and outlined staff and manager concerns around being included in the register, which is designed to improve processes identified.

Committee agreed with the need for reset training on standards and suggested a change of name for this register.

The Monitoring Update report was noted.

5.22pm Ms Sloan joined the meeting.

66.8 Essential Skills: Action Plan, ETI Engagement and Sectoral Update

Ms Hampsey introduced Ms Sloan as Head of Health Social Care & Access (HSC&A) with responsibility for ES across the College. She outlined the context of ES, which had now been moved back under HSC&A, and noted work involved in achieving the current level of retention and achievement, with plans for improvement in the coming year.

Ms Sloan took members through the report. She highlighted the importance of ES now being embedded into vocational areas and opportunities for timetabling which may arise from the reform scheme. Members noted areas including exam readiness; sharing of good practice; work on delivery of leadership and management; and focus on a replacement ICT qualification. Offer of support from ETI on an action plan would also be taken up.

Dr Monteith outlined discussion with the Department on clarifying the basis of ES ICT development.

The Chair and members recognised that the challenge in developing ES would be a longer term issue but welcomed the discussion and actions being taken. They noted practical plans in place to increase incremental achievement rates and increase exam readiness.

66.9 Any Other Business

The Chair acknowledged the breadth of business covered in the meeting and encouraged presenters of the value in the work being carried out.

66.20 Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on 15 May 2024

The meeting concluded at 5.42pm.

Dr P Graham 

Date 15 May 2024

(Chair)

Mrs K Wallace 

(Secretary)