

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 17 February 2016 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus **commencing at 4.00 pm**

Present Mr R Jay (Chairperson), Mr M Murray, Mr K Nelson (arrived 5.00 pm) and Professor T Scott (Principal).

In Attendance Dr S Brankin, Mr M Higgins, Dr C O'Mullan, Mr V Taggart and Mr J Hunter

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

29.1 Membership and Apologies

An apology was received from Mr B McCluggage.

29.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

29.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Committee approved the minutes of the last meeting held on 11 November 2015

29.4 Matters Arising

29.4.1 Terms of Reference (minute 28.1).

The Committee received the revised Terms of Reference, which have been aligned with the Strategic Improvement Plan. **The Committee endorsed the revised Terms and forwarded them to the Governing Body for final approval.**

29.4.2 Level 2 Pearson Examinations (minute 28.4.2).

The Director of Curriculum provided an update regarding the Level 2 Pearson Examinations. She reminded the Committee that recent results from the Level 2 Pearson examinations at NRC and across the Sector were disappointing as a result of a move from a non-exam to exam orientated courses.

29.4.3 Under-Delivery of FLUs (minute 28.6 d))

It was confirmed that the under-delivery of FLUs in 2014/2015 had been taken into consideration for funding in 2015/2016. It was noted that DEL had subsequently provided additional funding, which had helped to alleviate the adverse effects of budget reductions.

There were no other matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting

29.5 Chairperson's Communications

a) TES FE Awards. The Chair referred to the meritorious performance of the College, which had been short-listed in three categories. He congratulated the College on its achievement.

b) Retirement Director of Curriculum. The Chair stated that this would be Dr O'Mullan's last meeting as she was leaving the College on 31 March 2016. He thanked her for her dedication and support and wished her well in the future.

29.6 Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

a) Correspondence from DEL Circular FE/15 setting out arrangements for the remuneration of GB Chair and Members from 1 January 2016.

b) FE College Health Check Report 2014/2015 Issue 3. It was noted that this document had already been considered by the Audit & Risk Committee, the Resources Committee and Governing Body.

c) FE Means Success – The NI Strategy for FE. The Strategy outlines the future direction for Further Education in Northern Ireland and sets out the key objectives to achieve this Strategy. It was noted that there was an expectation that, colleges will work collaboratively together, and in partnership with other organisations in the public, private, and voluntary and community sectors, to deliver their services to learners, employers and communities to maximum effect. It was considered that there was nothing in the document which would impede the College's Strategic Improvement Plan.

d) DEL Circular FE/12 ESOL clarifying eligibility to access ESOL provision and other Further Education courses for asylum seekers and refugees

e) DEL College Development Plan Process 2016/2017 providing an outline timetable and guidance on specific aspects of the CDP process:

f) DEL Circular FE 01/16 providing information about the refreshment of Essential Skills. It was noted that an ETI Team would be visiting the College in early March to undertake an evaluation of ES.

The Committee agreed that:

(i) Ms M O'Boyle, ES Co-ordinator, should be invited to the next meeting to provide an overview of the ES provision; and

(ii) Heads of Department should be requested to give presentations at future meetings regarding their areas of responsibilities.

29.7 Strategic Improvement Plan

The Committee noted the College's FLU performance is -55 FLU below target with the main areas of underperformance being Level 2 Essential Skills and part-time HE provision. The CMT is planning to address the potential end-year outturn by improving retention, offering extra 'additionality' to full-time FE students and endeavouring to achieve the Essential Skills FLU target. The present figure indicates an end-year underperformance of -230 FLU.

29.8 Curriculum

The Director of Curriculum advised that the current curriculum portfolio for 2015/2016 was influenced by the implementation of the revised curriculum review process at the end of 2014/2015. A number of strategic decisions were taken regarding the withdrawal of courses from the portfolio and the introduction of new courses across the College. Decisions were also taken with a view to improving

the average class size. It was noted that the College had met its targets in relation to average class size as outlined in the SIP.

Dr O'Mullan stated that the College was preparing for the annual DEL/NRC bilateral meeting on 4 March 2016. She mentioned the draft FLU template, illustrating how NRC plans to meet its overall targets, which had to be completed and forwarded to DEL by 19 February 2016.

Dr O'Mullan outlined the proposed changes to full-time FE provision for 2016/2017. It was noted that delivery of the College full-time HE plan requires 372 MaSN, an increase of 40 to the current provision for 2015/2016. If there is no additional allocation of MaSN the plan for full-time provision will have to be reviewed.

Dr O'Mullan referred to the Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) provision; NRC had the lowest level of HLA provision in the Sector and it would be necessary to give consideration to its enhancement. She said that the curriculum review process for 2016/2017 is still ongoing with CMT having identified a number of courses at risk; team meetings are planned to review the provision in late February 2016. This process will integrate the new corporate challenge function with decisions relating to curriculum planning.

The Chair sought clarification regarding the withdrawal of courses from campuses and asked if the student experience was being comprised. It was noted that remedial action was necessary on the withdrawal of courses necessitating, in certain cases, the provision of transport to bus students from one campus to another.

Mr Nelson asked if the 1,000 redundancies, which had just been announced at Bombardier, would have any implications for the College. It was noted that the College had had involvement with Bombardier at the Newtownabbey Campus and the impact would extend to many companies who supplied Bombardier. Professor Scott noted that the College would be in liaison with DEL and company representatives to offer assistance.

29.9 Quality

The Committee noted:

a) Quality Assurance Review of Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) Pilots. The first phase of quality assurance focussed on the initial stages of the delivery of HLAs relating to recruitment, induction and the early experiences of learners, employers and providers. A date (3 March 2016) has been proposed to receive verbal feedback from Colleges. Mr Taggart indicated that he would be attending the session.

b) Whole College Self-Evaluation Report for 2014/2015 and Quality Improvement Plan for 2015/2016. The SER document is presented in five sections based on the criteria used by Eti as part of the scrutiny process: leadership and management; self-evaluation; views of different user groups; and quality of teaching, training and learning.

The College has self-evaluated each sub section and awarded an overall level of '**confidence**'. This document has been considered by the Chair of the Education Committee and approved on behalf of the Governing Body for submission to DEL.

Dr Brankin and Mr Taggart introduced the Performance Improvement Programme (PIP), designed to raise College performance from 'Good' to 'Outstanding'. Mr Taggart outlined the Four Point Strategy for Improved Quality, which involved: course intervention and support; peer observation; lecturer appraisals; and embedding of the Virtual Learning Environment. The Quality Improvement Team

would be focussing on courses currently performing below average. It was noted that four Teaching & Learning Advisers would be acting as 'Champions for Quality Improvement'.

c) ETI Scrutiny Inspection. The Eti carried out a scrutiny inspection to assess the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes in NRC in February 2016. The inspection team identified a number strengths and areas for improvement. Eti has indicated that it has **confidence** in the College's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes. In response to a query it was noted that the areas for improvement would be incorporated in the Quality Improvement Plan

29.10 Any Other Notified Business

29.10.1 FE College Health Check Report Issue 1 2015/2016

The Report has been prepared using the 1st quarter (31 October 2015) management accounts and includes figures from the first FLU lift for 2015/2016. It was noted that a number of colleges, including NRC, had forecast underspends as at 31 March 2016. DEL has requested Finance Directors to take proactive action to remain within the 0.5% tolerance level. The Chief Operating Officer indicated that this was proving difficult as there was limited time to accelerate projects and reduce underspend.

As there was no other notified business to consider **the meeting concluded at 6.10 pm.**

29.11 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 17 May 2016 at 4.00 pm at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus.

ANNEX 1

EDUCATION COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Constitution

The Governing Body has established, in accordance with the provisions of its Instrument and Articles, a committee known as the Education Committee.

Remit

The Education Committee oversees the College's curricular provision, with a focus on its quality and appropriateness for the community served by the College. Its role is to advise the Principal and Chief Executive on: the general oversight of the academic work of the College, such as the admission, assessment and examination of students; curriculum development; continuous quality improvement; the efficiency of learning and teaching; the student experience; and provisions for the suspension and expulsion of students.

Membership

The Committee shall consist of at least four members of the Governing body including the Chief Executive and Principal. The Committee should also include a Staff and a Student Governor. The

Senior Leadership Team will also attend all meetings. A quorum shall be three members. In addition non-members may be co-opted by the Governing Body to provide specialist expertise. The Chairperson shall be appointed by the Governing Body and the Vice-Chairperson shall be elected by the Committee. In the absence of the Chairperson the Vice-Chairperson will assume the role.

Duties

The responsibilities of the Education Committee are:

1. To oversee curriculum strategy and plans in order to support the Senior Leadership Team in delivering the College's mission and strategic priorities in relation to students as detailed in the Strategic Improvement Plan.
2. To ensure the development and review of an evolving curriculum and associated provisions in response to regional social and economic needs, employer engagement and government policies, particularly in relation to priority skills areas.
3. To oversee arrangements for delivering and monitoring the student experience; to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment; to receive reports on the provision of services to students, and on the suspension and expulsion of students for academic or safeguarding reasons; and to provide a forum for engaging with the Student Council.
4. To agree annual targets for college performance in relation to student recruitment, enrolment, achievement and success; to monitor performance against targets and external benchmarks; and to ensure that appropriate action is taken to address actual or potential shortfalls.
5. To ensure that the college works with stakeholders to improve continuously the quality of its teaching and learning provision with the aim of achieving recognised excellence in all areas of activity; and to support the development and maintenance of local, national and international relationships to enhance the quality of the College's provision.
6. To monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of curriculum provision through the rational allocation of teaching resources and the innovative use of technologies.