

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee**
held on Wednesday 29 May 2024 at 5.00 pm
in the Boardroom, Dungannon Campus

- PRESENT:** Mrs Maureen Brunt (*from item 4.2*)
Dr Frances Campbell
Mrs Sandra Isherwood
Ms Celine McCartan, Chief Executive (*via MS Teams*) (*items 1.0–6.0*)
Ms Anne McCleary
Dr Lynsey Quinn, Committee Chair
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
Mr Pdraig McNamee, Director of Curriculum
Mr John Moore, Head of Health, Life & Personal Sciences
Department (*item 6.0*)
- APOLOGIES:** Mrs Deborah Brown
Mr Tom Corr

1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Mrs Brown and Mr Corr.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

Dr Quinn noted her employment with the Open University.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 03 Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee meeting held on Tuesday 12 March 2024.

There were no matters arising.

4.0 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04.01 List of Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 04.02 Management Update on Key Strategic Issues.

4.1 Curriculum Profile

Ms McCartan spoke of the ongoing development of the 2024/25 curriculum offer and the Higher Education (HE) Maximum Student Numbers (MaSN) bid, noting the largely unchanged offer as well as the new all-age apprenticeships in Healthcare and Team Leading and explaining that a Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) in Dental Nursing is in development for 2025/26 delivery.

4.2 Student Experience

Ms McCartan, supported by Mr McNamee, reported a decline in student satisfaction rates, advised that recent industrial action and curriculum efficiencies may have contributed to this decline and confirmed the shift in focus from the implementation of efficiencies in 2023/24 to the quality of the student experience in 2024/25.

Mrs Brunt joined the meeting at this juncture.

4.3 Essential Skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Ms McCartan reminded the meeting of the concerns in relation to Essential Skills success rates, their impact on overall success rates and the action plan in place to address the challenges encountered. She outlined the actions implemented in year as well as those planned and advised that the full impact of these actions will be evidenced in 2024/25 with marginal improvements likely in 2023/24 success rates.

In response to questions from members, Mr McNamee reported on the timetabling changes to be implemented to improve class attendance, on the benefits and drawbacks of incurring examination resit fees on students, on the requirement to pass two mock examinations before students are entered into final examinations, on the procurement of adaptive software to tailor progress to individual abilities and on the need for apprentices to achieve Essential Skills qualifications to enable drawdown of funding.

4.4 Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

It was noted that a report on the review of Special Educational Needs provision will be presented later in the meeting.

5.0 MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05 Management Report
- Paper 05.01 College Educational Report Card Targets for 2024-25
- Paper 05.02 Current Enrolments vs Total Enrolments 2023-24
- Paper 05.03 Essential Skills Action Plan Timetable
- Paper 05.04 Rates of Exam Non-Attendance and Pass
- Paper 05.05 Commercial & Business Services Curriculum Planning
- Paper 05.06 Engineering, IT & Creative Curriculum Planning
- Paper 05.07 Health, Life & Personal Sciences Curriculum Planning
- Paper 05.08 Sustainability, Construction & Transport Curriculum Planning
- Paper 05.09 NI Traineeship Blueprint
- Paper 05.10 Initial Evaluation of the Advanced Technical Award
- Paper 05.11 Review of Special Educational Needs Provision
- Paper 05.12 HE in FE MaSN Commissioning Memo
- Paper 05.13 SWC Response to MaSN Commissioning Memo
- Paper 05.14 FT and PT HE Analysis 2022-2025
- Paper 05.15 DfE Response to 2023-24 QIP Submission
- Paper 05.16 Quality and Student Engagement Report
- Paper 05.17 Advance HE - Governance
- Paper 05.18 Draft Principles of AI within SWC

- Paper 05.19 Draft Risk Register for the use of AI
- Paper 05.20 Benchmark AI Tools For Teachers
- Paper 05.21 Worldskills Presentation
- Paper 05.22 Business Development Report
- Paper 05.23 GRASP Application
- Paper 05.24 Construction Sustainability Innovation Centre Concept Paper
- Paper 05.25 Draft Terms of Reference for the FE NI Curriculum Hubs
- Paper 05.26 Marketing Strategy Update
- Paper 05.27 Marketing Strategy Development Workshop
- Paper 05.28 Careers Education, Advice and Guidance Policy
- Paper 05.29 Higher Education Tutorial Policy
- Paper 05.30 Higher Education Admissions, Admission Appeals and RPL Policy
- Paper 05.31 Higher Education Assessment Appeals Policy
- Paper 05.32 Higher Education Internal Moderation Policy
- Paper 05.33 Higher Education Submission of Coursework Policy.

5.1 College Development Plan Performance

5.1.1 College Outcomes - Enrolments

Ref: Management Report Section 1.1 and Paper 05.01

Referring to the 2023/24 College Development Plan Scorecard in the Management Report, Mr McNamee commented on his satisfaction with the enrolment performance evidenced and explained that targets will be set at a departmental level in 2024/25.

5.1.2 College Outcomes – Retention and Success

Ref: Management Report Sections 1.2 & 1.3 and Papers 05.02, 05.03 & 05.04

Mr McNamee highlighted a concern regarding non-attendance at examinations, following which a discussion ensued on the benefits and drawbacks of incurring re-examination fees on students, on the impact of industrial action on class and examination attendance and on the work underway to update college systems with manual attendance records kept by lecturers during the industrial action.

5.1.3 Curriculum Planning

Ref: Management Report Section 1.4 and Papers 05.05 – 05.14

Mr McNamee referenced the 2024/25 departmental curriculum plans provided in papers 05.05 to 05.08.

5.1.3.1 Traineeships

Ref: Management Report Section 1.4.1 and Paper 05.09

Mr McNamee reminded the Committee of the sectoral policy to transition all non-employed level 2 provision to the Traineeship qualification by September 2024 and spoke of the challenges encountered in achieving this objective. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed to continue with the traineeship development process in line with sector policy.

AGREED: to continue the transition of all non-employed level 2 provision to the Traineeship qualification by September 2024.

5.1.3.2 Further Education

Ref: Management Report Section 1.4.2 and Papers 05.10 & 05.11

Mr McNamee reminded the meeting of the risk posed by the potential discontinuation of support by Awarding Organisations for BTECs, the level 3 Further Education (FE) qualifications commonly used in Northern Ireland, arising from the introduction of T Levels in England, and spoke of the possibility of a reversal of government policy on the transition to T Levels, which may eliminate the risk posed.

He also spoke of the sectoral challenges in embedding the Advanced Technical Award as an alternative to BTECs due to the difficulty in sourcing requisite work placements, advised of the development of work simulation projects as a substitute for work placements where required, and recommended the continuation of the three Advanced Technical Award programmes offered by the College in IT, Engineering and Construction.

Ms McCartan commented on the opportunity posed by Traineeships and Advanced Technical Awards to develop qualifications unique to the FE sector and create clear progression pathways. In response to comments from members, management provided anecdotal evidence of improved public awareness of the value of the FE sector pathway.

AGREED: continuation of the three Advanced Technical Award programmes offered by the College in IT, Engineering and Construction.

5.1.3.3 Work Based Learning

Ref: Management Report Section 1.4.3

Mr McNamee referenced the development of all-age apprenticeships in Healthcare and Team Leading for 2024/25 delivery.

5.1.3.4 Higher Education

Ref: Management Report Section 1.4.4 and Papers 05.12, 05.13 & 05.14

Mr McNamee spoke of plans to develop new Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes in Dental Nursing and Sustainability for 2025/26 delivery.

He referenced the 2024/25 initial HE MaSN bid submitted to the Department for the Economy (DfE) in paper 05.13, highlighting the increased places requested as well as the potential for clawback in the event of under achievement of target.

He also apprised the meeting of the plan to establish a HE Committee, outlined the responsibilities and time commitment required of its members and sought a nomination for a HE Specialist Governor to join this Committee.

AGREED: to recommend to the Governing Body the appointment of Dr Quinn as a HE Specialist Governor.

5.1.3.5 Social Inclusion

Ref: Management Report Section 1.4.5

Mr McNamee referenced the updates provided in the Management Report on the REAP, Step Up, Going Places and Youthscape Plus programmes.

5.2 Quality Assurance

5.2.1 Compliance

Ref: Management Report Section 2.1 and Paper 05.15

Mr McNamee drew attention to DfE'S response to the College's Quality Improvement Plan Update in paper 05.15 confirming the effectiveness of the College's planning for quality and learning improvement.

5.2.2 Student Engagement

Ref: Management Report Section 2.2 and Papers 05.16 & 05.17

In response to members' questions regarding the decline in student satisfaction levels, Mr McNamee reported that feedback commonly relates to timetabling issues and canteen food prices. He went on to explain that timetabling guidelines have been updated and that a review of catering services has commenced.

5.2.3 Teaching & Learning

Ref: Management Report Section 2.3 and Papers 05.18, 05.19 & 05.20

Mr McNamee reported on the resignation of the Project Based Learning Co-ordinator and the non-replacement of this post due to the embedded nature of project based learning in the College. He spoke of the development of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) project and suggested that the budget committed for the Project Based Learning Co-ordinator post is used for AI research, training and software.

AGREED: to use the budget committed for the Project Based Learning Co-ordinator post for Artificial Intelligence research, training and software.

5.3 Business Development

Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Paper 05.22, 05.23 & 05.24

5.3.1 International Activity

Mr McNamee spoke of the benefits of student participation in international mobilities through the Turing Scheme. He noted the marginal expense to the College through backfill costs and sought support for the continuation of involvement in this scheme.

AGREED: to support the College's continued participation in the Turing Scheme.

5.3.2 Funded Projects

Management apprised the meeting of an application for funding to the PeacePlus Programme for a Green Accelerator Skills Project (GRASP) for the construction sector in partnership with a number of other colleges and education & training boards (ETBs) in the border region; of discussions with Invest NI and Mannock regarding the potential establishment of a Construction Sustainability Innovation Centre to support the decarbonisation of concrete products; and of discussions with DfE, Invest NI, Manufacturing & Engineering Growth & Advancement (MEGA) and local councils regarding the potential establishment of an industry based learning facility to provide in demand skills. The potential impact of the latter two proposals was highlighted.

5.4 Strategic Partnerships

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Paper 05.25

Mr McNamee referenced the draft terms of reference for the review of the operation of FE Curriculum Hubs, noting the three refreshed priorities of curriculum review and development, continuous professional development and cross college and industry communication.

5.5 Events, PR and Marketing

Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Papers 05.26 & 05.27

Mr McNamee reported on the development of the 2024-27 Marketing Strategy.

5.6 Policy Reviews

Ref: Management Report Section 6.0 and Papers 05.28 – 05.33

AGREED: that the following policies are recommended to the Governing Body for approval:

- **Careers Education, Advice and Guidance Policy**
- **Higher Education Tutorial Policy**
- **Higher Education Admissions, Admission Appeals and RPL Policy**
- **Higher Education Assessment Appeals Policy**
- **Higher Education Internal Moderation Policy**
- **Higher Education Submission of Coursework Policy.**

6.0 REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06.01 Report on the Review of Special Educational Needs Provision
- Paper 06.02 Special Educational Needs Provision Presentation.

Mr Moore joined the meeting at this juncture.

With the aid of the presentation in paper 06.02, Mr Moore provided an overview of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision in the College, of the challenges faced in relation to progression and resources and of the plans in place to develop and improve the College's SEN provision.

A discussion then ensued during which the following was highlighted:

- The importance of early access to background information from schools, social workers and other related parties on each SEN student joining the College to inform individual development plans;
- The need for close monitoring and recording of progress against individual student objectives and the multi-disciplinary approach to be adopted in determining next steps in each case;

- The increasing demand for college SEN provision and the challenge in recruiting a sufficient number of Learning Support Workers to provide necessary care and support to students;
- The balance to be achieved in student support and progression;
- The need for progression of students to alternative college or non-college pathways at the appropriate juncture to facilitate the availability of spaces for new students requiring college intervention;
- The plans for a cross-college review of physical resources for SEN students; and
- The opportunity to source additional funding to supplement provision.

ACTIONS:

- **Explore options for additional sources of funding to support SEN provision;**
- **Clarify the criteria for admission to and progression within the College’s SEN courses; and**
- **Establish a SEN Working Group comprising internal and external stakeholders.**

Mr Moore was thanked for his report and withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

Ms McCartan also withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

7.0 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE’S PERFORMANCE IN 2023/24

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 07 Partially Completed Review of Committee’s Performance in 2023/24.

With reference to Paper 07, Mrs McCauley advised that the self-assessment checklist had been completed where a factual response was available and sought members’ views on remaining questions. The resulting review is attached at Appendix A.

8.0 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2024/25

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08 Schedule of Meetings 2024/25.

The Committee accepted the proposed schedule of meetings for 2024/25 with the October 2024 and March 2025 meetings to be held virtually and the January 2025 and May 2025 meetings to be held in the Dungannon campus.

AGREED: acceptance of the proposed schedule of Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee meetings for 2024/25.

9.0 REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 09 List of Outstanding Actions.

A review of the status of each of the actions listed in paper 09 was undertaken.

It was noted that the College's relatively low provision under the Skills Focus and Skill Up programmes compared with the sector, which attract a higher student age profile, has contributed to its below sector average enrolments from the over 25 age category.

It was also noted that the Principles on AI within South West College (SWC) paper and the risk register for the use of AI within SWC will inform a review of policies to ascertain their sufficiency in setting the framework for the use of AI in teaching and learning.

A revised list of outstanding actions is included as Appendix B.

10.0 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

No further business was raised.

11.0 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIR 2024/25 – 2025/26

Mrs McCauley advised of the forthcoming expiration of Dr Quinn's two year appointment as Committee Chair and invited nominations for the position in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

AGREED: on the proposal of Dr Quinn, seconded by Mrs McCleary, that Mrs Isherwood is elected to the position of Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Dr Quinn apprised the meeting of the workload demands limiting her capacity to continue to chair the Committee and was thanked by members for her effective chairing of the Committee in the preceding years.

12.0 REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members commented on the added value of in-person meetings.

The meeting concluded at 7.23 pm.

CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE 2024

CHAIRPERSON



DATE 12/06/2024

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE OF CURRICULUM & QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE 2023/24

		Yes	No	Comments
Terms of Reference				
1	Does the Curriculum & Quality Assurance Committee have written terms of reference?	✓		
2	Were the terms of reference reviewed by the Committee and approved by the Governing Body?	✓		Reviewed by the Committee on 25 October 2023 and approved by the GB on 15 November 2023.
3	Has the Committee complied with the provisions of its terms of reference in its proceedings throughout the year?	✓		
Programme of Business				
4	Did the Committee agree a programme of business for the academic year?	✓		Agreed by the Committee at its 25 October 2023 meeting.
5	Did the Committee cover all business listed in the programme of business?		✓	A number of outstanding policy reviews deferred to 2024/25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti Bullying Policy for Students - Student Charter - Student Attendance Policy
6	Have all actions identified by the committee been satisfactorily delivered?		✓	A number of outstanding actions.
7	Is there any business that members feel do not need to be covered next year?		✓	
8	Is there any additional business that members feel should be included next year?		✓	
Skills, Knowledge and Competences of Members				
9	Does the appropriate mix of skills, knowledge and competences exist within the Committee to perform most effectively?	✓		Suggest addition of a governor with industry experience.
Governing Body Key Performance Indicators				
10	Did attendance levels at Committee meetings average at least 65%?	✓		Average 77%.
11	Did Committee meetings generally last no more than two hours?	✓		
Additional Comments				
12				

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	17/01/2024	4.1	Management to present an analysis of sub-regional skills needs when available.
2	17/01/2024	5.9	Management to further review the Anti-Bullying Policy for students to outline the support available to students impacted by bullying.
3	17/01/2024	5.11.1	Management to undertake a review of policies to ascertain their sufficiency in setting the framework for the use of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning.
4	17/01/2024	7.0	An invitation to the launch of the YouthScape Plus Programme to be extended to committee members.
5	29/05/2024	6.0	Management to explore options for additional sources of funding to support SEN provision.
6	29/05/2024	6.0	Criteria for admission to and progression within the College's SEN courses to be clarified.
7	29/05/2024	6.0	SEN Working Group to be established.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNING BODY APPROVAL

1	Appointment of Dr Quinn as a HE Specialist Governor
2	Careers Education, Advice and Guidance Policy
3	Higher Education Tutorial Policy
4	Higher Education Admissions, Admission Appeals and RPL Policy
5	Higher Education Assessment Appeals Policy
6	Higher Education Internal Moderation Policy
7	Higher Education Submission of Coursework Policy