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SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

Governing Body – Education Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 21st February 2018, Bangor Campus

Item No	Item
1.	<p>Chair's Business</p> <p>a) Attendance and Apologies</p> <p>Present: Mr K Webb (Principal/CEO), Prof A Woodside, Mr D Sagar (Chair of the Governing Body), Mr S Pollard, Mr A Corbett, Ms K Scott, Ms H Reid, Ms B Larkin</p> <p>Apologies: Ms S Corbett, Ms C King, Ms R Heaney</p> <p>In Attendance: Dr Michael Malone (Director of Curriculum and Information Services), Heather McKee (Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support), Heather Miller (Head of Quality Excellence and Development), Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Annie Hamilton (Boardroom Apprentice)</p> <p>In the Chair: Barbara Larkin</p> <p>b) Declarations of Conflict of Interest</p> <p>Mr Pollard advised that if the Ulster University Business and Management degree was discussed he would be conflicted.</p> <p>c) Chair's Report</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to her first committee meeting as the newly appointed Chair and provided a brief verbal report on the committee's plans for the rest of the academic year for 2017/18. She advised that the committee's principal role with the College Development Plan this year is around implementation and highlighted the importance of the Higher Education audit in June this year which she would be calling on colleagues for support.</p> <p>The Chair informed members that she had attended a workshop prior to this meeting as part of the NI Science Festival in the Bangor campus, the workshop was delivered by staff and level 3 applied students for local school children and the</p>

Chair advised that it was an extremely welcoming and positive experience, she was particularly impressed with the collaboration with local schools.

d) Review of the Committee Terms of Reference

The Chair noted that she had received some comments from members by email prior to the meeting on the review of the Terms of Reference specifically around language and enquired if there were any further comments from members to make. Mr Pollard highlighted he felt the language used to describe the committee’s role in the College Development Plan was too passive and had provided this feedback by email to the Chair. The Chair advised that as this is a transition year into a new structure for the CDP this committee does not have a significant role in its development and if responsibility shifts back to the committee next year this can be reviewed again in September 2018 when the Terms of Reference annual review is undertaken. The Chair of the Governing Body suggested that it was highlighted that he is a member of the committee in the paragraph setting out committee membership.

Action Point: The Terms of Reference will be benchmarked across the sector for the review in September 2018

Action Point: The Chair agreed to review the language used in the Terms of Reference in the next review in September 2018

Action Point: The GB Secretary will amend the paragraph setting out the committee’s membership to highlight the Chair of the GB is a member

Key Decision: Subject to the change being made on committee membership the committee approved the Education Committee Terms of Reference with the view to review them again in September 2018

Proposer: Steve Pollard

Seconder: Andrew Corbett

e) Programme of Work 2017/18

The committee reviewed the proposed plan of work the rest of the academic year 2017/18 and agreed it was a sound approach for the two meetings left this year.

Key Decision: The committee approved the Education Committee’ Plan of Work 2017/18

Proposer: Steve Pollard

Seconder: Alan Woodside

2. Matters arising:

a) Action Points from meeting 15th/27th November 2017

The Chair highlighted that an action point from the last meeting regarding partnerships had been presented to the GB and asked members were they content that this has been taken over by the GB as further categorisation was requested in the GB meeting. Members confirmed they were content to remove this from the committee's action point list to save duplication of work. The Chair noted that an action point had not been included in the list from the minutes of 27th November under the items discussing Applications and Enrolments, the action point referred to the discussion Kim Scott will lead in the next GB meeting to help better understand school's strategy.

Action Point: The committee agreed the Governing Body were now reviewing the partnerships role and this could be removed the committee's action point list

Action Point: The GB Secretary will include the action point discussing school strategy from the meeting on 27th November to the action point list

Action Point: Data on applications v enrolments for a sample of courses to understand the conversion rates was requested by the committee

a) Minutes from 27th November 2017

The committee noted the minutes form 27th November had been agreed by email.

Proposer: Rachael Heaney

Secunder: Steve Pollard

3. College Development Plan

a) CPD Update February 2018

The Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support directed members to the CDP commission Note received from Beverley Harrison, Director of FE at the Department for the Economy which clearly sets out the background to the College Development Plan and the structure that is expected from DfE in producing the CDP. The Director of SPQS advised that the first draft of the CDP has to be submitted to DfE on 16th March and this will be circulated to members for comment before that, it was noted that whilst comments can be taken from members it has to be in the framework set out by DfE.

The Principal advised members that he met with DfE the day prior to this meeting and it is likely further direction will be provided by them to all the Colleges on how data should be structured which again will affect the draft document, this direction will be shared with members as soon as it has been received. The Principal highlighted the role of the committee and the GB in the production of the CDP and highlighted the GB workshop on 11th April will provide

members with an opportunity to discuss and review the document before it is submitted as a final draft. The Principal also advised that work is continuing with the other Colleges on the One Corporate Plan, which is more of a promotional document than a business plan for the Sector. The first draft of this document will be presented to the Principals and Chairs group meeting on 26th February, the expectation is that it will come back to the individual Governing Body's for final approval along with the CDP. In answer to a question the chair of GB confirmed that the CDP has to be approved by the GB and the One Corporate Plan by the six GBs before submission to DfE

A brief discussion took place around the method of Outcome Based Accountability and the move to look at outputs. The Director of Curriculum highlighted that the College is trying to give DfE a complete picture of the College's work rather than focusing on one funding stream. The Principal advised that the aim is whatever the College is measuring it needs to demonstrate that we are making a difference and meeting the aims of the Programme for Government.

The Director of SPQS directed members to the update provided on the CDP targets and highlighted that target 2 is currently amber because of low retention rates in the Restart and Access programs, she informed members that at the end of 2017, 6 people had to come out of these courses due to an issue with their benefits being cut, she advised that the College are continuing to lobby on this issue. On the whole other areas are progressing well within targets and the College are on target to meet most.

The Chair enquired if there is a sense that we should try to input something into all of the aims of the Programme for Government. The Director of SPQS advised that there is no requirement to do so and we do hit ones that concern health for example as the outcomes quite often overlap. In response to a question around the amount of outcomes currently listed in each target the Director further advised that the revised version of the CDP will focus on 5 outcomes of the PfG for each target.

Action Point: The Chair of the GB requested if the Director of SPQS could email updated numbers for each section of the CDP

b) CDP Commissioning Note 2018/19

Members noted the correspondence which detailed the framework in which the CDP should be written and the timeline for submission.

4. Items for approval

a) HE Review Board Minutes

The Head of Quality, Excellence and Development asked members to review the Higher Education Review Board Minutes from 31st January 2018, a brief discussion took place and the following points were noted:

- The Head of QED highlighted the HE Research and Scholarship event which took place on 7 February 2018, she advised that It is a QAA requirement that scholarly research is taking place at HE. The event was extremely successful, and Governor Karen Fraser delivered a session to staff on how this area will develop further. The feedback received from staff was extremely positive.
- The Chair queried if the term 'Academic Collegiality' had been defined as set out in the minutes under point 9. The Head of QED advised that the College have to turn current practice into a definition and she is currently working with staff to agree a suitable framework. She noted that it is challenging to put into context and work is progressing on this term.
- The Chair enquired what the term Success Measure 2 refers to in the minutes. The Head of QED explained that Ulster University as part of its obligations as an awarding body sets performance targets for each programme. Success 2 includes resit students to be included as successful. Success 1 was being used and is harsher as it only includes those students who are successful at the first attempt.
- Members enquired about the 4-5% improvement in retention rate noted in the minutes and what that means for the College. The Head of QED confirmed the College has had a big push in retention and has gone from 4th to 2nd in the Sector according to DfE Health Check.

b) HE Courses and update on enrolments

The Director of Curriculum & Information Services provided a verbal update to the committee on Higher Education courses and enrolments the following points were noted:

- In terms of full time courses last year there were 22 programmes, this year the College has 28. For part time courses there were 44 last year and this has been increased to 50 this year.
- Full time courses ran 57 sessions across the different campus' and part time offered 102. This has been expanded out for 2018/19 and the offering for full time sessions this year is 65 and 178 for part time.
- The Director of C&IS informed members the College has been proactive in responding to what the demand is from potential students, for example single units have been offered that can be completed in one semester to allow people the opportunity to upskill without having to complete a full course.

5. Items for Information

a) Applications and Enrolments

The Director of C&IS asked the committee to note that the MaSN (Maximum Student Numbers) is down across FE, this is the first time SERC have not hit their target, DfE are looking at allocations of MaSN and there is little room to over recruit. The committee enquired if the reallocations of MaSN had been taken into account if it is likely that University places will continue to grow, the Director replied that it is not firmed up yet and it is a difficult number to predict as so many of the places are filled by walk ins because there is no UCAS system in place within FE.

The Chair of the GB enquired why some private companies and training organisations have gained in Essential Skills when students are subject to the same end testing that has affected the drop in enrolment figures and success rates across the FE Sector. Members noted that University places have increased despite an increase in fees.

A brief discussion took place around entry requirements for University places and that the College is unable to drop to drop entry requirements for foundation degrees which are set by Ulster University. The Director of Curriculum and Information Services informed members he met with DfE along with the other Curriculum Directors to request that foundation degrees are treated with equal parity, but no progress has been made on this matter.

The Chair noted the challenges faced by the College and enquired if there was any support the Governing Body could provide to assist. Ms. Reid suggested that it would be useful to enquire if statistics on bottom line level entry grades could be made available to the College as a piece of hard evidence.

Professor Woodside suggested the College could introduce a HLA in civil engineering like SWC had successfully delivered and enquired if a Work Plus system could be introduced in SERC. The Chair of the GB noted this was a useful discussion and it should be continued to be discussed across committees and the GB.

Action Point: The Chair requested if the Applications and Enrolments report could include an executive summary and the most recent information at the start going forward

Action Point: Management were asked to consider again the breadth of the HE prospectus as an issue and to provide data on average HE student numbers per course offered.

Action point: The committee requested if statistics on bottom line level entry grades could be made available to the College as a piece of hard evidence.

b) Update on Whole College Quality Improvement Plan 2017

The Head of QED directed members to the report providing an update on the targets agreed in November by the Governing Body on the Whole College Quality Improvement Plan which provides an update across FE, HE and Work Based Learning. She advised that progress is being made on the targets, there a few that are behind target but there are no concerns they will not be completed. The committee thanked the Head of QED for the comprehensive update and advised it was encouraging to see so many of the targets are green.

c) Cause for Concerns

Members noted the written update provided on Cause for Concerns, the Director of SPQS highlighted the help of partnership organisations after the deaths of two students. Carecall, PIPS and ASCERT have engaged with students to highlight the support in place for mental health and drugs awareness. There has been an increase in referrals to the Youth Health Advice Clinic and the Director noted that this is positive as it demonstrates the awareness of the service in the College.

The Chair of the GB noted this was a good report and enquired at what point would the College alert the police about an individual and if students can raise concerns about their peers. The Director advised the police become involved with individuals if there is a safeguarding concern and students can raise concerns through staff or the Student's Union if they have a concern about a peer.

Ms Scott enquired how much staff time is spent by lecturing staff handling these issues. The Director advised that it would be hard to quantify the staff time spent as it is very much a case by case basis. The Principal informed the committee that resilience training for staff is in place and staff are very willing to help students that require it. The Staff Governor, Mr. Corbett echoed these views and stated that as a tutor it is part of the role and lecturing staff do not complain about having to dedicate time to these issues.

The Chair read out Some comments from the Student Governor in her absence in which she suggested in response to some of the recent increase in behavioral issues the Respect Campaign could be rebooted, the Principal confirmed that this could be relaunched.

Action Point: The Principal agreed to look at relaunching the Respect Campaign through the Students Union

d) Community HUB update

The Director of SPQS directed members to the written report detailing the work the College is conducting on the Community HUB. Members were advised that work is progressing well in Newcastle and Ballynahinch and Engagement Officers are working with Supporting Communities to engage hard to reach communities in Newtownards. The Director also highlighted the planned engagement events focused around careers planned for March. Members welcomed the report and the activity contained within, they noted it will be interesting to see the impact of the activity over time in future reports.

e) HE & FE Prospectus 2018-19

The Director of SPQS presented the HE and FE Prospectus for 2018/19 to the committee, she highlighted that the document is completely interactive which aims to make the information easier to understand and easier to apply online for prospective students. The Principal further highlighted that the online document allows the College to amend it in year which is much more cost effective. Members of the committee suggested that the College should focus on the costs that can be saved by coming to SERC compared to University in future marketing campaigns. The committee congratulated the Marketing and MILT on the document and noted it was very impressive.

f) Student Survey

The Head of QED advised the committee that the survey results show a generally positive outlook from students. The Chair read out some comments received from the Student Governor in her absence specifically around issues with timetabling at the beginning of each year that was flagged as a concern in the survey. The Director of C&IS noted the concerns and acknowledged whilst this is a difficult issue at the beginning of each year; the communication of the issues to students can be reviewed.

The Chair noted that a 79% response rate for the survey and queried if there was a way to raise the response rate of part time students as it is extremely low at 10%. The Director of SPQS advised that an engagement event for PT students has recently been carried out which was very successful in raising the return rate of questionnaires.

g) ETI Training for Success Evaluation Report

The Principal asked members to note the report and advised the committee the results of this audit had been reported previously and this was the official report. The committee congratulated the staff team on an excellent report.

6. Correspondence

a) Higher Education Quality Assessment Arrangements from 2017/18 onwards

Members were asked to note the enclosed correspondence, the Head of QED advised that the letter shows there is no change at the moment or implications for the planned review, but this may change the closer we get to Office for Students. The committee will be kept briefed of any changes.

b) Thank you letter from Andrew Cabrey

The Chair directed members to the email received from a student who had recently attended the Excellence Awards in Bangor. The committee noted that this was an excellent and positive letter to receive on the student's experience at the Awards ceremony and his SERC experience overall. The Chair echoed these comments and stated the College and Governing Body are very appreciative that Mr. Cabrey took the time to write this letter of thanks,

7.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>Mr. Pollard highlighted that there is more media coverage recently around productivity and queried if it is something that the College might use in galvanizing the industry partners we have to form more partnership arrangements with them.</p> <p>The Chair of the GB thanked Mr. Pollard for his suggestion and asked Mr. Pollard and the Director of SQPS to lead a discussion on this at a future Governing Body meeting.</p> <p>Action Point: The GB Secretary will add a discussion to the agenda for the April GB meeting around productivity led by Mr. Pollard and the Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support</p>
8.	<p>Date and time of next meeting:</p> <p>Wednesday 21st May 2018, 5pm, Lisburn Campus</p>

The meeting concluded at 19.16pm

Abbreviations:

ASCERT: Action on Substances through Education and Related Training

CDP: College Development Plan

DfE: Department for the Economy

Director of C&IS: Director of Curriculum and Information Services

Director of SPQS: Director of Strategic Planning Quality and Support

ETI: Education Training Inspectorate

FE: Further Education

GB: Governing Body

HE: Higher Education

Head of QED: Head of Quality, Excellence and Development

HLA: Higher Level Apprentice

NI: Northern Ireland

PIPs: Public initiative for the Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm

PT: Part time

SERC: South Eastern Regional College