

Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday, 26th May 2020 at 17:30
via Skype teleconference

Item No	Item
1.	<p>Chair’s Business:</p> <p>a) Attendance and Apologies Present: Mrs H Reid, Mr K Webb (Principal/CEO), Mr G Hetherington (Temporary Chair of the Governing Body), Mr J Mackell, Mrs K Fraser, Mr N Bodger, Mr S Pollard, Mr A Corbett, Mr J Lee, Mr D Stanley</p> <p>In Attendance: Mrs H McKee (Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support (the “Director of SPQ&S”)), Mr W Greer (Chief Training and Contracts Officer (the “CTCO”)) Dr M Malone (Director of Curriculum & Information Services ((the “Director of C&IS”)), Ms Elaine Flynn (Commercial Contracts Manager (the “CCM”)), Ms Victoria Boyd (Training Programme Manager (the “TPM”)), Mr Noel O’Hare (Head of Process Transformation (the “Head of TP”)), Mr N Parfitt (Boardroom Apprentice), Ms S Woods (Temporary Secretary to the Governing Body)</p> <p>Apologies: It was noted that Professor Woodside was unable to attend the meeting, and his apologies were duly noted.</p> <p>In the Chair: Mrs H Reid The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the participants for attending via Skype teleconference.</p> <p>b) Declarations of Conflict of Interest Mr Pollard noted his standing conflict in relation to his wife’s employment in SERC’s Finance Department. No further conflicts of interest were made in relation to the tabled agenda items.</p> <p>c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 31st March 2020 The Chair invited members to review the minutes from the previous meeting. The Committee agreed the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Agreed: That the Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 31st March 2020, and that the minutes be tabled for approval at the meeting of the Governing Body to be held on 29th June 2020. Proposed by: Andrew Corbett Seconded by: Gareth Hetherington</p> </div> <p>d) Chair’s Update The Chair noted that all items, on which she had proposed to update the Committee, were included in the meeting Agenda.</p>

Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday, 26th May 2020 at 17:30
via Skype teleconference

<p>2.</p>	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <p>a) Action Points from the meeting held on 31st March 2020 The Chair observed that all action points had either been completed or would be addressed during the course of the meeting.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Correspondence:</p> <p>a) Correspondence The Chair informed the meeting that Correspondence would be covered during a confidential session of the meeting.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Employers:</p> <p>a) Business Services – Online Activities At the Chair’s invitation, the CCM provided the Committee with an overview of Business Services’ online activities during the pandemic. She noted that Business Services’ performance for the year to date had been positive and remained on target. She gave a high-level review of adaptations which had been made in relation to moving the College online.</p> <p>The CCM informed the Committee that a Virtual Prospectus had been created and she outlined the skills initiatives being offered, in addition to providing details of the recruitment numbers and value of the courses on offer. She noted that the College had focused on subjects such as Leadership and Management, Health Care and Computerised Accounts, with additional free webinars being provided in relation to a range of subjects.</p> <p>Turning to Innovation Maximisation, the CCM observed that SERC was still supporting businesses which had live innovation vouchers. She remarked that the Business Services team was proactive in relation to identifying new opportunities which required specific skills interventions and had submitted four proposals for funding. She noted that the team was continuing to work on areas of growth and on opportunities that could be carried out remotely or partially remotely.</p> <p>b) TfS and Apprentices Update – Impact of Coronavirus Lockdown At the Chair’s invitation, the TPM provided the Committee with an update on TfS and Apprenticeships, specifically with reference to the impact of the lockdown. She observed that there were currently 141 students enrolled in Skills for Life, 327 in TfS and 739 Apprentice NI students, of whom 208 were higher level apprentices. Of the 468 TfS and Skills for Life students, she remarked that none were currently in placement but were continuing with online learning.</p>

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday, 26th May 2020 at 17:30
via Skype teleconference**

	<p>With respect to apprentices, the TPM reported that a total of 45 had been made redundant, with 3 of these being in the HE apprentice group. She provided the Committee with an overview of the complicated nature of the situation in which those students who had been made redundant found themselves and the support which the College was endeavouring to provide. The CTCO observed that apprentices continued to remain engaged with SERC, even where furloughed or made redundant and, where possible, the College would ensure they obtained their qualifications.</p> <p><i>At this juncture, Mr Greer, Ms Boyd and Ms Flynn left the meeting. [18:17]</i></p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Social Inclusion:</p> <p>a) Engagement Update Report</p> <p>The Director of SPQ&S presented the Engagement Update Report, noting that the report contained reference to the launch of the creche facility the following week, which would no longer take place as scheduled. She indicated that it was still hoped to open the facility in the autumn and that scenario planning and risk assessment continued to take place.</p> <p>The Director of SPQ&S noted that a virtual coffee morning had taken place in the Bangor area, which had been very successful, and that there was an appetite for adults to return to education. She remarked that information had been provided in relation to SERC’s virtual offerings and careers and that the College remained engaged with students at a community level.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>College Strategic and Operational Activities:</p> <p><i>At this juncture, Mr O’Hare joined the meeting.</i></p> <p>a) College Activities in Coronavirus Emergency: TfS and Virtual Open Day</p> <p>The Director of SPQ&S informed the Committee that, since the previous meeting, the College had been working on establishing a virtual open day. She observed that a large number of universities and colleges were looking at webinars in relation to FE, HE, TfS and Apprenticeship NI offerings, in addition to the provision of support functions and careers information. She noted that SERC had been very involved in these areas and had increased its social media presence accordingly.</p> <p>The Director of SPQ&S commented that staff members were being very proactive in their approach to working online and in furtherance of students obtaining awards and qualifications. She indicated that there were HE webinars scheduled for later that week, with sport and construction webinars having proved very popular. She observed that further webinars for FE, TfS and Apprenticeship NI were in development and would be well promoted via social media and on the radio.</p>

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday, 26th May 2020 at 17:30
via Skype teleconference**

Mrs Fraser asked if the students would be able to ask questions during the virtual open days or if the various sessions were pre-recorded. The Director of SPQ&S replied that some sessions would be pre-recorded but that there were also live sessions and a live chat function on Facebook and on the SERC website. She noted that there would also be a Q&A facility and that it would be possible for students to make contact after the open day. She explained that each team would complete an informational template, which would be emailed to prospective students who would have the opportunity to contact the College for further information.

b) College Development Plan 2019/2020 Progress Report

The Director of SPQ&S informed the meeting that the report reflected data to 15th May 2020 for enrolments and to 31st March 2020 for Business Services. She indicated that the report was not due with the DfE until 30th June 2020 and she proposed to circulate the next update to the Committee by email.

Action Point: The Director of SPQ&S to circulate the next update to the 2019/2020 CDP Progress Update to the Committee by email.

c) Update on College Development Plan 2020/2021

The Director of SPQ&S noted that the DfE had postponed the final date for submission of College Development Plans to 31st August 2020. She noted that there were still a significant number of unknowns in relation to the next academic year, in light of likely requirements for social distancing, and that SERC was continuing to explore various options in relation to the virtual operations of the College. She informed the meeting that the DfE had circulated draft CDP guidance for the sector, which covered the background and looked at the agility of the sector in terms of keeping the economy afloat. She indicated that the guidance included guiding principles for CDP approaches, including numbers of students on campus, as well as referencing immediate-term challenges. She remarked that, following the easing of lockdown restrictions and in light of the impact on the economy, inequality was likely to increase and that FE colleges would be best placed to provide support in the changing environment.

d) Applications and Enrolments

The Director of C&IS reported that the total head count was 600 below the level at the same point in 2019 and that this would continue to increase. He observed that the other charts were relatively unchanged, with the exception of Figure 7, in relation to the Educational Report Card, where both full-time and part-time figures were ahead of the targets set and funded by the DfE. He remarked that there was a positive variance of 400 for Essential Skills and that Applications were 250 ahead of the same point for the previous year. He noted that there had been significant concerns in the preceding months as students could not attend open days in the College, and that the virtual open day had been developed as a means to make people aware of what the curriculum model would look like.

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday, 26th May 2020 at 17:30
via Skype teleconference**

The Director of C&IS noted the desire to differentiate the colleges from universities, particularly from the Open University, which was one of the reasons why the virtual open day was an important piece of work; to inform parents and students what to expect. He commented that the College could only make assumptions, based on current information and projections, and needed to remain flexible in order to respond. The Temporary Chair remarked that, while the pandemic and lockdown had been exceptional and unexpected, expectations would be much higher in relation to curriculum delivery for the next academic year. The Director of C&IS noted that the only area of concern for the College had been in relation to the awarding of qualifications, which was a sectoral issue, but that the move online had been completed effectively and efficiently.

e) Planning for September 2020: Covid Considerations

The Principal observed that significant work was taking place in relation to planning for the next academic year, with specific reference to both online and face-to-face classes and social distancing requirements which would need to be put in place. He highlighted that this would also impact on non-teaching staff. He noted that the exact nature of restrictions for the coming academic year were not yet clear and there was the possibility that a 2nd wave could force a further lockdown.

The Principal noted the difference in social distancing measures in different countries, ranging from 1 metre to 2 metres. He informed the Committee that this would have a significant impact in terms of the number of students and staff that would be able to access the College, and that significant work was being undertaken in relation to modelling. He observed that the first priority was to ensure that students would have safe access to complete practical work and that it was likely only half of the College’s students would be on campus at any one time. He noted that there were potential issues in relation to Project Based Learning, as this work was done in teams. He remarked that work was ongoing to allow students to complete any outstanding practical work before the start of the new academic year, noting that any overrun into the next year for current students would impact on the number of students the College could take on. He observed that consideration was being given to starting the next academic year on Monday, 7th September 2020, rather than the originally scheduled date of Tuesday, 2nd September 2020.

Referring back to social distancing matters, the Principal noted that audits of rooms, zones and routes through campuses had been carried out and that SERC was looking at installation of screens, changes to cleaning routines and other relevant matters. He remarked that it had been made clear to non-teaching staff also that there would be changes to their work environment. He informed the Committee that the virtual open days were also being used as a trial, in the event that restrictions were such that it would not be possible to hold enrolment days at the College campuses.

f) Student Survey

At the Chair’s invitation, the Head of PT provided the Committee with an overview of the Student Survey. He commenced by noting that the survey was carried out on an annual basis and that it was an important

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday, 26th May 2020 at 17:30
via Skype teleconference**

	<p>tool to allow the College to improve learner outcomes. He observed that the survey covered a number of areas, which provided valuable information regarding student views and which facilitated benchmarking. He remarked that the survey was anonymised and that no students could be identified through feedback or the survey itself, and he observed that the results of the survey were distributed to staff.</p> <p>The Head of TP noted that the number of participants had decreased from the previous year but that the results remained positive, with the College as a whole scoring 90% over all the areas surveyed. He observed that scores had been particularly high regarding encouragement from tutors, satisfaction with courses, and equality and inclusion.</p> <p><i>At this juncture, Mr O’Hare left the meeting.</i></p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Higher Education-For Information:</p> <p>a) HE Review Board Meetings The Committee noted that no meetings of the HE Board had been held since March 2020.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Policies Review Schedule:</p> <p>a) Work Placement Policy The Director of SPQ&S indicated that no significant changes had been made to the policy, which was duly noted by the Committee.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Items for Information:</p> <p>a) Safeguarding, Care and Wellbeing Report The Director of SPQ&S noted that there were a number of different issues raised in the report, primarily due to the pandemic and lockdown, and that students were experiencing additional financial issues, and caring for family members. She observed that work was being carried out to refer students for additional support wherever possible.</p> <p>In response to a point raised by Mr Pollard, the Director of SPQ&S remarked that inequality had been exacerbated during the pandemic and that the College had spoken to a number of organisations such as NICVA to ascertain how to implement additional services. She commented that, for example, the College might apply to the Big Lottery for support for adult learners. The Principal indicated that assessment of need in relation to additional educational support, IT and other matters would be incorporated into the enrolment process.</p>

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday, 26th May 2020 at 17:30
via Skype teleconference**

	<p>b) Student Governor Update on Student Union Activities to Support Students Mr Stanley provided the Committee with an overview of the activities being undertaken by the Students’ Union during lockdown. He noted that a weekly quiz had been set up and that there was also a games club online via Facebook. He indicated that Microsoft Teams was being used for meetings and chats and that students had the opportunity to discuss issues such as mental health. He noted that the Students’ Union had been involved in the provision of food parcels through Lisburn Foodbank and that the Students’ Union officers were providing support in relation to the College’s planned virtual Open Day.</p> <p>c) Update regarding Annual Provider Review 2019/2020: Outcomes The Director of SPQ&S indicated that the retention rate was up and that most issues had been resolved. She noted that it had not been possible to complete the HLA survey due to the pandemic.</p> <p>d) Update regarding Response to Annual Submission: Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Quality Improvement Planning 2019/2020 The Director of SPQ&S noted that this matter had been covered by the ETI Inspectorate Evaluation which had taken place in March and that the findings had been reported to the Committee at the previous meeting.</p> <p>e) Progress Update on Quality Improvement Plans 2019/2020 The Director of SPQ&S noted the report which had been circulated as part of the meeting papers. The report was duly noted by the Committee.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Meeting Schedule and Plan of Work 2020/2021:</p> <p>a) Proposed Meeting Schedule for the 2020/2021 Academic Year The Committee noted the draft Schedule of Meetings for the 2020/2021, which had been previously circulated. The Chair noted that CMT and the Committee members had been invited to comment on the proposed dates and that a request had been made by CMT to move the November meeting to a later date, to facilitate inclusion of figures, which would not be made available by the DfE until late October or early November. The Chair recommended that the proposed meeting dates be accepted, with the exception of the November meeting, and that work would continue to identify a suitable alternative for that date, if possible.</p> <p>b) Proposed Plan of Work for the 2020/2021 Academic Year The Committee noted the draft Plan of Work for the 2020/2021 academic year, which had been previously circulated. The Chair invited the Committee members to contribute any additional items they would wish to see included on the Plan of Work for the coming year. No further items were identified. Mr Corbett noted that requirements could change, in light of the changing landscape.</p>

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday, 26th May 2020 at 17:30
via Skype teleconference**

11.	Any Other Business: It was noted that there were no further items of business for discussion outside the confidential session of the meeting. <i>At this juncture, Messrs Corbett, Lee, Stanley and Parfitt and Mrs McKee left the meeting. [19:40]</i>
12.	Confidential Matters: a) Correspondence from UCU and Temporary Chair’s Response A separate note was taken for this item.
	Date and time of next meeting: It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 22 nd September 2020, at 17:30 via Skype Teleconference or, subject to lifting of government restrictions, at the Bangor College Campus.

The meeting concluded at 20:07