

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday 16th September 2021 at 17:30, Hybrid meeting held in the Bangor Campus and
via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

Item No	Item
1.	<p>Chair’s Business:</p> <p>a) Attendance and Apologies</p> <p>Present: Mr K Webb (Principal/CEO), Mr G Hetherington (Temporary Chair of the Governing Body), Mr J Mackell, Mrs K Fraser, Mr A Corbett (Items 1D-10), Mr J Lee, Mr S Pollard, Mrs D O’Hare, Mr M Huddleston, Mr A McCrum, Mr D Stewart, Mr D Wilson, Dr D McConnell, Ms M Corrigan, Mr S Hagen, Mr M McQuillan, Ms G Diamond</p> <p>In Attendance: Mrs H McKee (Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support (the “Director of SPQ&S”)), Dr M Malone (Director of Curriculum & Information Services ((the “Director of C&IS”)), Mrs C Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Ms A Frazer (Boardroom Apprentice) Mr Paul Walsh (Head of Pastoral Care) Item 5 only, Mr Stuart Rankin (Head of Higher Education), Ms Elaine Bradley and Mr Chis Mohan (Deputy Heads of School, School of Health, Early Years and Adult Education) Items 1-4 only, Mrs Siobhan Fearon (Head of Engagement and Admissions) Items 1-4 only</p> <p>Apologies: None</p> <p>In the Chair: Mrs O’Hare</p> <p>Mrs O’Hare chaired the meeting in her capacity as Vice Chair at the request of Mr Pollard.</p> <p>b) Declarations of Conflict of Interest</p> <p>The Chair invited members to declare any known or perceived conflicts of interests, none where declared.</p> <p>c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21st September 2021.</p> <p>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>

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday 16th September 2021 at 17:30, Hybrid meeting held in the Bangor Campus and
via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

Agreed: That the Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2021, and that the minutes be tabled for approval at the next meeting of the Governing Body.

Proposer: Gareth Hetherington

Seconder: Mark Huddleston

d) Q&A Session with CMT re Covid-19 Activities and Student Support

On the invitation of the Chair the Director of Strategic, Planning, Quality and Support provided members with an update on Covid 19 activities and student support. The Chair asked for specific updates on onsite testing and the 50/50 approach on a return to campus. She began by advising that onsite testing has not progressed, however the College has agreement on the terms and conditions for the next 6 months on testing as they had previously been renewed monthly.

The Director of C&IS advised that in terms of the 50/50 approach, management have been assessing each school to find out what the needs are within each, there has been a move to more onsite teaching with less on each campus to balance out the average population onsite. The Director advised that for example traineeship students will have more time onsite as they have planned practicals and time to bond with their teachers is critical, and level 1 students will be onsite completely. However, every programme will have a blended approach as it is critical for students to move with technical advance and be able to adapt to online teaching if a class has to be flipped in response to the pandemic.

The committee noted that in terms of a comparison with last year’s figures there seem to be the same pattern of decreasing cases and referrals for this time of year.

2. Matters Arising:

a) Action Points from the meeting held on 21st September 2021

The Chair advised that there were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

At this juncture the Principal provided members with a brief update on the recent ETI review of the Construction hub, he advised that no written feedback had been received yet, but the verbal feedback was extremely positive, the evaluation identified a number of strengths including:

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday 16th September 2021 at 17:30, Hybrid meeting held in the Bangor Campus and
via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

1. The strategic leadership and commitment of the College in supporting the work of the Construction Hub
2. The highly effective leadership of the Construction Hub (John Nixon – Hub Manager)
3. The highly effective upskilling, retraining and innovation support to construction businesses with over 1,700 unique companies supported
4. The significantly improved communication across all six Colleges through the work of the Construction Hub
5. The significant curriculum development work undertaken in:
 - a. Traineeships
 - b. Review of Level 2 and Level 3 Apprenticeships
 - c. Level 3 Advanced Tech in Construction
 - d. Deep reform
 - e. Approval for New Apprenticeships (Fire and Security, Automated Entrance Systems and Glass)
6. The well-planned CDP
 - a. Vocational (Sketchup, CNC, Surveying and Levelling, Passivhaus)
 - b. T Skills
 - c. Digital skills (MS Teams and e-Portfolio solutions)

In concluding the update, the Principal emphasized the requirement for many industries to upskill as technology moves on, he advised that the Department have advised that foundation degrees should be offered in this instance, however there are no degrees offered to move onto. He advised that it is also critical that as these industries become more technical investment in teaching staff and curriculum development is a key priority.

The Chair thanked the Principal for the important update and asked that the committee’s thanks were passed to John Nixon and his team as it has been clearly demonstrated their work is very effective.

3. Correspondence:

a) 2021/22 Draft College Development Plan (CDP) feedback October 2021

With the agreement of the members the Chair advised this item would be discussed under agenda item 6a.

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday 16th September 2021 at 17:30, Hybrid meeting held in the Bangor Campus and
via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

4. Update on Marketing & Prospectus and Community Engagement

a) Marketing & Prospectus update

The Director of Strategic Planning, Quality and Support advised members that the College have been reviewing the marketing activity and making some subtle changes that are very much around the customer’s journey especially in light of the pandemic. The Director gave members an overview of how the College uses social media in its marketing activity and that the team will be trialing TikTok soon to try and reach out to the target demographics. In concluding the update, the Director advised members that the new ‘dynamic’ online prospectus has been created where course descriptors are directly linked to the course description on the website which will help streamline the process for updating course descriptors and ensuring CMA compliance.

b) Community Engagement Update Report and Presentation

On the invitation of the Chair the Head of Engagement and Admissions and the Deputy Heads of School, School of Health, Early Years and Adult Education presented an overview of the community engagement work the team carry out, the committee noted that the team are the only sole adult education team in the Sector. The Head of E&A advised that in terms of the team’s approach there is no blueprint for how the work should be carried out, she highlighted that the team’s strength is a long-term view and the team’s willingness to go out and meet people.

The team moved on to highlight the qualifications offered to adult returners and the pathway in progressing to Higher Education, they advised that the Restart course is unique in that it can be adapted and delivered differently to be tailored to SERC students.

Moving on the team went through some of the challenges both they and students face in returning to education, for example, there are well known issues with the benefits system that can often hinder someone when they want to return to study, they may lose their benefits and so the College has engaged both with DfE and the Department for Communities to address this issue.

In a brief discussion with members following the presentation, the following points were noted:

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday 16th September 2021 at 17:30, Hybrid meeting held in the Bangor Campus and
via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

- The Principal advised that in terms of the benefits system it does work against the College in this area, he highlighted that people return to Education to try and get a better job and get out of poverty, but they cannot lose their financial support system whilst doing so. He further advised that the team have been lobbying the jobs and benefits office and the College will be meeting with the Welfare Mitigations Review Advisory Panel in early December.
- Mr Mackell advised that he was delighted to see the work in Newcastle particularly the creche facilities, he enquired if there are challenges reaching out to the immigrant population? Ms Bradley advised that she was been working with a group of Syrian refugees Conway Mill and one of the main challenges they face is that they have a very good standard of education, but they are unable to provide any proof of this. She advised that some of these students have been able to join the Restart programme and start to build basic English skills to aid them in their studies.
- Mr Mohan further added that training for lecturers with linguistic phonics is being sought and the College is able to change the Restart programme with OCN to build this into the course for these students.
- Mr Pollard suggested that some of the challenges discussed are structural and present opportunities to build a case for reform, he suggested that a reshuffling of different agencies may enable a solution to be found. Mr Mohan agreed that these issues deserve more attention and a more joined up approach would certainly help to progress some of the issues.
- In response to a query from Mr McCrum Ms Bradley went on to highlight some of the issues they face in retaining males and attracting them into the College. Mr Mohan advised that the team are currently looking at alterative providers to put pathways into place to address this challenge, he advised that for males there is no natural break for them to come back to education.

The Chair thanked the team for the informative presentation and advised that whilst the committee have noted the challenges the success of the team have been recognised.

At this juncture the Head of Engagement and Admissions and the Deputy Heads of School left the meeting.

5.	Review of Mental Health Strategy
-----------	---

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday 16th September 2021 at 17:30, Hybrid meeting held in the Bangor Campus and
via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

At this juncture the Head of Pastoral Care joined the meeting.

The Head of Pastoral Care addressed the committee and gave a brief overview of the Mental Health Strategy for students. He advised that the College are doing a significant amount of work in this area and this strategy draws that altogether and allows everyone to make a contribution.

The Temporary Chair of the GB noted that this is important work and the Governing Body have had strong prioritisation around this area for some time and it was useful to see the work come to fruition in the strategy.

The Chair thanked the Head of Pastoral Care for his presentation and noted it was a very positive piece of work.

At this juncture the Head of Pastoral Care left the meeting.

6. College Development Plan

a) Amended Draft CDP 2021-22

In beginning the update, the Director of SPQ&S asked members to note the correspondence under agenda item 3, she reminded members of the process for the CDP this year and advised that the draft has now been reviewed by the Department, they have updated the ERC and asked for the MASN numbers for Higher Education to be included. She advised that the Department have requested the reference to the College seeking Awarding Body Status is removed, she informed members that she has replied to the Department that this was a strategic priority set by the Governing Body and is still awaiting a further response. The Chair agreed that this was a sensible approach.

In a further discussion the Principal provided members with an update of the Tertiary Education Group, he advised that discussions continue on the HE offer as a whole in Northern Ireland. He noted discussions on the number of years required to ‘top up’ to degree for foundation degree students as needing addressed to reduce the numbers choosing to go to England.

b) Applications and Enrolments

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday 16th September 2021 at 17:30, Hybrid meeting held in the Bangor Campus and
via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

The Director of Curriculum & Information Services presented the latest report to the committee, he highlighted the following points:

- There have been significant challenges to recruitment this year for the whole FE sector which centre around the grade inflation on general qualifications delivered by post primary school
 - Schools holding onto students in sixth form because more of them are meeting the entry criteria post GCSE
 - Universities offering unconditional offers to GCE students and the impact of grade inflation on entrants gaining their first-choice programmes

Three colleges SERC, SWC and SRC have had FT enrolment reductions of around 6% from 2019/20.

The other three colleges have seen BMC, NWRC and NRC have had reductions of 16%.

HE in FE enrolments have been particularly challenging. SERC is the best performing at 81% of its MaSN allocation, one college is as low as 58%.

- The number of individuals attending the College is just over 10k. FT programmes have decreased from 228 on last year which is a good result considering the significant challenges facing the College since the beginning of the pandemic.
- The Director highlighted that a number of areas (for example gas and automotive) still have no progression to a degree and there is a need for technical Higher Education. On this point, Mr Huddleston enquired if there is a need for an alternative to a HND?
- The Director advised that the College want to deliver a different product to what the universities are offering, and the T Skills blueprint is critical to this offer, employers are seeking students that have a multiplicity of skills. He advised that the previous HND model is being reviewed but a collaborative approach would also be useful.
- The Principal highlighted that the products offered In the College are not widely known as there are so many labels that are talked about, he noted that there is a view that HE Is a progression route into a degree. The College are pushing work based learning and Transversal Skills as part of these programmes to ensure there is a distinct element offered which cannot be offered in schools. The overall aim is to develop the Tech HE brand.

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
 held on Tuesday 16th September 2021 at 17:30, Hybrid meeting held in the Bangor Campus and
 via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

<p>7.</p>	<p>Higher Education:</p> <p>a) Update HE in FE</p> <p>The Principal began by advising members that the review by the Department of HE in FE is progressing and it is anticipated the outcome will be completed by April 2022. He moved on to introduce Stuart Rankin, the newly appointed Head of Higher Education and invited him to present an update of HE to members.</p> <p>The Head of HE thanked the Principal for the introduction and began by providing members with a brief overview of future scoping of HE, an update on the Open University work and a summary of the National Students survey.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Head of HE for the presentation and noted he had tied together a number of points that the committee had discussed earlier in the meeting which had been very helpful, and the forward planning for September was of benefit to members also.</p> <p>b) HERB Minutes</p> <p>The Director of SPQ&S asked members to review the Higher Education Review Board minutes from the meeting held on 20th October along with the amended terms of reference that have been agreed for the Board. She advised that the board would continue to meet on a quarterly basis and updates will be remain as a standing item on this committee’s agenda.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px;"> <p>Agreed: The committee reviewed and approved the HERB minutes from 20th October 2021 Proposer: Gareth Hetherington Seconder: Deborah O’Hare</p> </div>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Items for Information:</p> <p>a) Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Report</p> <p>The Director of SPQ&S directed members to the written report and highlighted that following a substantial review of pastoral care a new app has been launched to record cause for concerns.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Policies for Review/Approval:</p>

**Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)
held on Tuesday 16th September 2021 at 17:30, Hybrid meeting held in the Bangor Campus and
via Microsoft Teams Videoconference**

	<p>a) Curriculum Policy</p> <p>The Director of C&IS presented the policy and advised changes have been made to include new areas such as traineeships and Advanced Techs.</p> <p>Agreed: The committee reviewed and approved the changes to the Curriculum policy. Proposer: Majella Corrigan Seconder: Gareth Hetherington</p> <p>b) Complaints and Compliments Policy</p> <p>The Director of SPQ&S presented the policy and advised minor changes have been made to include the use of online forms.</p> <p>Agreed: The committee reviewed and approved the changes to the Complaints and Compliments policy Proposer: Alan McCrum Seconder: Daniel McConell</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Any Other Business:</p> <p>No other business was discussed.</p>
	<p>Date and time of next meeting:</p> <p>It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 1st February 2022, at 17:30, venue TBC.</p>

The meeting was concluded at 7.50pm