

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON TUESDAY 30 MAY 2023 AT 18.30 IN THE ORACLE RESTAURANT, PORTADOWN AND VIA TEAMS.

Present:

Mr Aidan McCormick (Chair)
Mr Brian Doran (Chief Executive)
Miss Daniela Sanches Egas
Mr Stuart Harper
Dr Laura Milner
Dr Thomas Moore (via TEAMS)
Prof. Gregory O'Hare (via TEAMS)
Mrs Hilary Singleton
Mrs Judith Thompson
Mr Matthew Turner

In Attendance:

Ms Libby Shackels, Director of Curriculum
Mrs Carolyn Davison, AD HE & Quality Improvement
Mrs Fiona Bradley, AD FE & Training
Mrs Lorraine McKeown, AD Student Service & Marketing
Mrs Elaine Nesbitt, Head of Faculty PRSE
Mr Gary Mackin, Head of Faculty BUTE
Mrs Carmel Murray, Head of Faculty HESC
Mr Stephen Rogan, Head of Faculty CDAC
Miss Lindsay Armstrong, Secretary to the Governing Body

The meeting convened at 18.33.

A01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Miss Clodagh Palmer, Boardroom Apprentice.

A02. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Chair reminded those present to declare at the commencement of the meeting interests held in any matter to be discussed. No interests were declared.

A03. MINUTES OF THE MEETING 7 MARCH 2023

The Chair referred Members to the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2023. These were checked for accuracy and unanimously approved on proposal from Mr Harper and seconded by Dr Milner.

A04. MATTERS ARISING

Members noted that all actions arising are being addressed.

A05. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

Mr McCormick acknowledged that it is his last meeting Chairing Southern Regional College's Education Committee as his tenure is due to expire during the summer. He advised that he will greatly miss working with colleagues.

ACTION BY WHOM

Mr McCormick spoke to the success of SRC being the number 1 College in the UK, remarking on the success of the WorldSkills event, Certificate of Achievement awards and the Early Years conference 'Promoting Resilience in Children.'

Prof O'Hare arrived at the meeting at 18.39.

Mr McCormick remarked on an enjoyable evening 'Southern Nights: An Evening with James Conor Patterson' and other areas of success as detailed in the SRCzine.

He advised that the work of the Education Committee is a critical aspect of the College and wished the student governor, Miss Daniela Sanches Egos all the best for future endeavours.

A06. STUDENT COUNCIL SUMMARY REPORT 2022-2023

Mrs McKeown introduced herself as the Assistant Director for Student Services and Marketing and advised on her annual attendance at the Education Committee to present the Student Council Summary Report.

She advised on the various ways the student voice is heard and actions progressed, and informed that as with previous years, concerns mainly relate to estates, food options, hygiene and parking facilities.

Mrs Singleton spoke to a positive report and enquired about any unease relating to anti-social behaviour on one campus. Mr Doran advised that such incidents are rare and that decisive action was taken to address these matters.

Mrs Bradley advised that the College is working with Mount Charles to extend food options.

In response to a query from Miss Sanches Egos, Mrs McKeown committed to checking on the availability of microwaves at the Armagh campus.

Mrs McKeown

A11. POLICY APPROVAL

- **Student Charter**

Mrs McKeown advised on a minor recommended update to the Student Charter policy to clarify the College's position on the clothing policy.

She informed that Evie Martin has been elected by her peers to be the student governor 2023-2024.

Mrs McKeown left the meeting at 18.50.

A07. ENROLMENT POSITION 2022-2023

Mr Doran referred Members to the in-year College Development Plan update and advised on the in-year submission and the three reporting periods of November, March and July. He advised that the report is one of a number of in-year updates provided to DfE against CDP targets.

Mr Doran remarked on the new reporting format and informed that Essential Skills is unlikely to meet target, part-time further education is largely on target and full-time further education is slightly below target.

He advised that Training for Success is being wound down and transitioning to Traineeship and Apprenticeship which are increasing year on year.

Mr Doran informed that FT higher education has achieved 270 enrolments against a target of 322 and PT HE is slightly below target. He advised that Higher Level Apprenticeships are performing well.

Mr Doran referred Members to the Employers Report Card detailing achievement against the differing funding streams and bids made for InnovateUS and Skills Focus. He informed on different reporting periods for qualifications reported on in-year and referred Members to the Social Inclusion Report Card.

Ms Shackels advised on the School Partnership Provision and the challenges on Year 2 of Level 3 FT FE retention. She informed that CAMS are to introduce measures to contest withdrawals.

In response to a query from Mrs Thompson on fiscal obstacles, Ms Shackels advised that the Heads of Faculty are reviewing curriculum plans for 2023-2024.

Mr Doran advised that the indicative budget has just been released and management are looking at costs savings aimed at protecting the curriculum offer where we can but recognising that the College cannot no longer carry inefficient provision.

Ms Shackels informed on the overall strategy that no student will be disadvantaged or turned away and more innovative ideas will be developed around course delivery.

Mr Doran cautioned that plans for one-off cost savings cannot be repeated in future years and the fiscal challenges are likely to continue into 2024.

Mrs Bradley advised on plans to assist the economically inactive and informed on the 'Step Up to Education' initiative and projects in partnership with Clanrye.

Mr McCormick confirmed that he attended the student engagement event with the Chair, Dr Moore wherein learners advised they were pleased with College courses, opportunities and support.

A08. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN 2022-2023

Mrs Davison presented the Quality Improvement Plan and advised on comprehensive data collated on projected enrolments and achievements. She spoke to the challenge of in-year retention, the work of the Quality and Pedagogy Unit, the success of Higher Education validation and re-validations and advised that the Quality Improvement Plan mirrors the Heads of Faculty Action Plans and recruitment strategy.

Mrs Davison advised that areas of student activities are being monitored in all aspects of curriculum and support.

Mrs Singleton raised a number of enquiries, regarding 28% of Essential Skills students not attending exams, the challenging environment marketing robustly within community areas post Covid and granular information on retention.

Ms Shackels advised on the key issues being considered by the sector working group. Mrs Nesbitt advised that some learners post Covid are experiencing anxiety during examinations and informed on measures taken to strengthen pastoral support and offer of re-sits. Mrs Bradley advised on scheduling issues which can arise with those learners

employed through apprenticeships. Members were informed that management retain granular information on all levels of curriculum.

Ms Shackels confirmed that many students are still adapting to life post Covid which has impacted motivation levels.

Mrs Bradley advised that the College has over recruited in community outreach programs.

Prof O'Hare spoke to the diverse nature of Further Education Colleges and speculated that learners may prefer to move away from their hometown to immerse themselves in the student experience.

Ms Shackels advised that curriculum managers are looking at provision to align with the 10x programme and skills barometer, the need to be economically relevant and respond appropriately as a community college.

Mrs Bradley advised that HLAs appear to be the student selective of choice and have outperformed on target levels.

The Committee noted the report.

A09. FACULTY ACTION PLANS 2022-2023 update

- **Faculty of Building, Technology and Engineering (BUTE)**

Mr Mackin presented the BUTE Faculty update report and in respond to a query from Mr Harper advised that the Faculty is committed to meeting the needs of the employer and predicated on demand. He advised on a number of new Traineeships introduced from September 2023, the introduction of a new HLA L6 BEng in Engineering, successful L4/5 validation in Construction and Engineering and success at the SkillsBuild competition.

Mr Mackin provided detail on the future two-year plans within the Faculty.

- **Faculty of Computing, Design and Academic Studies (CDAC)**

Mr Rogan provided an update on the in-year position within the CDAC Faculty, detail on enrolment and successful validation. He advised that modules have been developed to be reactive to industry needs and in a response to a query from Mrs Thompson, advised on a focus on recruiting women returners onto the IT curriculum provision.

- **Faculty of Health and Science (HESC)**

Mrs Murray reported on the enrolment position within the Faculty of HESC, advising on planned student trips and the success of the Early Years conference, the Literary Festival and ICAS Conference.

She spoke to a desire to broaden science placements and retention issues impacted by elevated grades.

- **Faculty of Professional Services (PRSE)**

Mr Turner highlighted concerns with withdrawals and retention within the PRSE Faculty. He advised on successful validation in Accounting Technology in partnership with TU Shannon and two other regional colleges and advised on competition success.

Mr Turner advised that the Belfast City Marathon was completed by six members of staff and raised £8,550.60 for Cancer Focus and Newry Hospice and advised on a three-year plan to develop the Sports Academies.

A10. HE updated – NEW VALIDATED PROGRAMMES

Members noted the Faculty reports on newly validated programmes.

Mrs Thompson thanked the Heads of Faculty for their presentation remarking on it being her last meeting of the Education Committee as her tenure comes to an end. She expressed her gratitude to the HOFs for the valuable insight they have provided over the years.

Mr Mackin, Mr Rogan and Mrs Murray left the meeting at 20.20.

A11. POLICY APPROVAL

- **Admissions Criteria**
- **Admissions policy**
- **Student Charter**

Members noted minimal recommended changes to the three presented policies. These were approved on proposal from Mr Turner and seconded by Dr Milner.

A12. CURRICULUM DIRECTORS' WORKING GROUP

Ms Shackels advised that the next meeting of the Curriculum Directors' Working Group is scheduled for 1 June and advised that a new Chair is to be appointed for 2023-24.

Members noted the report.

A13. CIRCULARS

- **InnovateUs FE 02/23**
- **Skills Focus FE 01/23**

Members were referred to the two circulars.

A14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr McCormick individually thanked all attendees noting that it is his last meeting as Chair, and Prof O'Hare and Mrs Thompson's last meeting of the Southern Regional College's Education Committee. He paid tribute to Mr Doran for his unfaltering leadership and wished him and the incoming Governors all the best in their new endeavours.

Mrs Thompson remarked that the success of the College is in no small part due to its strong management.

Mr Doran thanked the departing Members for their challenge and support and commended Mr McCormick for his unfaltering support of staff and interest in SRC accomplishments.

Prof O'Hare expressed his personal pleasure to have been a Member of SRC's Governing Body for the last eight years, commenting that Mr Doran has been steadfast in his control position and the College will be less rich in his absence.

Dr Moore thanked all parties for their support and diligence over the years.

A15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 19 September 2023 at 18.30 in the Portadown campus.

The meeting concluded at 20.35.

signature redacted

