

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON TUESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 17.30 VIA TEAMS.

Present:

Mr Stuart Harper (Chair)
Mrs Lee Campbell (Interim Principal / Chief Executive)
Dr Liz Finnigan
Miss Evie Martin
Dr Laura Milner
Dr Thomas Moore
Mrs Hilary Singleton
Mrs Angela Whiteside

In Attendance:

Ms Libby Shackels, Director of Curriculum
Mrs Elaine Nesbitt, Acting AD Apprenticeships & Essential Skills
Mr Gary Mackin, Head of Faculty BUTE
Mrs Carmel Murray, Head of Faculty HESC
Mr Stephen Rogan, Head of Faculty CDAC
Mrs Sinead Lavery, Boardroom Apprentice
Miss Lindsay Armstrong, Secretary to the Governing Body

The meeting convened at 17.30.

Mr Harper welcomed Mrs Campbell to her first meeting of SRC's Education Committee.

A01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Carolyn Davison and Mr Matthew Turner.

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 EXTRAORDINARY MEETING 18 JANUARY 2024

The Chair referred Members to the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 18 January 2024. These were checked for accuracy and unanimously approved on proposal from Dr Moore and seconded by Mrs Singleton.

Miss Martin arrived at the meeting at 17.33.

A04. MATTERS ARISING

Members reviewed outstanding business on the action sheet. Mrs Singleton requested formal reporting of the Hardship Fund to the Education Committee on an annual basis. The Committee agreed to extend an invite to the nominated Hardship Fund Governor, Mr McMurray to present.

Ms Shackels informed that the College has taken steps to develop a digital plan relating to artificial intelligence. She advised that colleges are working together to produce a sectoral policy and advice has been taken from Queens and Ulster University.

ACTION BY WHOM

Mr Harper /
Miss Armstrong

Ms Shackels advised that academic staff are being tasked to consider how AI can be implemented within their area of expertise, address plagiarism concerns and advised that progression reports will be presented to the Members of the Education Committee.

Ms Shackels

A05. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

The Chair advised that Ms Joanne McGuigan has been appointed Interim Director of Finance and Planning and wished her well in her new role.

Mr Harper advised that he is looking forward to attending the WorldSkills celebration event on 26 March 2024 honouring SRC being awarded the top performing College in the UK. Dr Moore remarked on great opportunity to thank staff and note the positive benefits for citizenship, empowerment and neighbourhoods.

A06. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

- **Report Cards and Targets**
- **Faculty of Building, Technology & Engineering BUTE**

Mr Mackin presented the enrolment situation within the BUTE faculty and advised on a healthy position, remarking on significant growth in Advanced Technicals. He informed Members on developments in Quantity Surveying, Welding and Plumbing.

The Committee were advised on the AMTCE initiative and use of 3D printers. Mr Mackin reported on competition success and in response to a query from Mrs Whiteside, advised that the increase in Essential Skills is being managed by utilising part-time lecturers.

In response to a query from Dr Moore, Mrs Campbell confirmed that Members of the Assembly have been invited to the WorldSkills celebration event.

The Committee discussed the increasing attractiveness of HLAs with learners showing preference for the employed route of education. Members were advised on collaboration with employers and the role of the Business Support Unit.

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

Mr Rogan advised on recruitment challenges within the CDAC faculty, staff shortages and planned part-time courses. He informed on Peace bids and plans to increase the footfall at the Banbridge campus. Members were advised that Level 3 Games students participated in a weeklong 'Game Jam' event linked to the gaming industry.

Dr Finnegan spoke to the popularity of upskilling staff through AI.

Dr Moore enquired about external funding schemes specifically for staff training. Ms Shackels informed on staff moving to schools for salary uplifts. Mrs McMurray advised on staff sharing knowledge for upskilling. Mrs Campbell informed on the College's discretion to utilise investment pots for staff training.

Ms Shackels informed on engagement with Kaseya in Dundalk for the potential roll out of accredited programmes and spoke to a unique area for students not availing of placements.

Miss Martin left the meeting at 18.31.

- **Faculty of Health & Science HESC**

Mrs McMurray spoke to the enrolment position within the faculty of HESC and informed on challenges in getting employers to commit to placements for HLAs. She advised that sustainability goals are embedded across all project based learning.

In response to a query from Dr Moore, Mrs McMurray advised that approximately 26 learners have been recruited to RCN cadets. She informed on a targeted approach to provide nursing skills in other areas of learning.

Mrs McMurray advised on the Early Years 'STEAM' conference scheduled for 21 May 2024. Mrs Singleton advised on the excellent work being carried out by Dr Siobhan Fitzpatrick in this field.

- **Faculty of Professional Services PRSE**

Mrs Nesbitt informed on successful validation with Ulster University for a L5 foundation degree in Hospitality, Tourism and Events and advised on enrolment targets and faculty success.

Mrs Singleton recommended that faculty reports include common themes of emerging issues going forward. Mr Harper reflected on the findings of the Independent Review of Education in NI and recommended organising future meetings of the Education Committee to focus on thematic topics such as virtual learning and digital strategies, collaboration and innovation, enrolment and retention and an emphasis on the clarity of the curriculum offering.

Mr Harper /
Mrs Campbell

Mr Harper thanked the Heads of Faculty for their presentation.

Mr Mackin, Mr Rogan and Mrs McMurray left the meeting at 18.59.

A07. SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

Dr Milner in her role as designated Safeguarding Governor, advised on regular engagement with the College Safeguarding Officer, Mrs McKeown. She reported on a high level of assurance regarding safeguarding practices within the College.

Dr Milner reported on an increased use of Inspire Student Counselling, Cause for Concern recording and referrals through Operation Encompass.

- **Safeguarding policy**

Mrs Campbell advised that the sector Safeguarding policy has been signed off by Principals and is being presented to the Committee for adoption.

Dr Milner committed to directing recommendations to the policy through the office of the Secretary for future consideration.

The sector Safeguarding policy was adopted by Members of the Education Committee.

Dr Milner

A09. POLICY APPROVAL

- **Student Charter**

Members noted no changes to the Student Charter following cyclical review.

- **HE Course Closure, Suspension & Substantial Change**

The Committee noted the inclusion of a Higher Education Advisory Board responsible for overseeing the internal management of higher education in SRC and distinction of Awarding Bodies and Awarding Organisations within the HE Course Closure, Suspension and Substantial Change policy.

- **Careers**

Members noted minor amendment to the Careers policy.

The three policies were approved without comment on proposal from Dr Moore and seconded by Mrs Singleton.

A08. LEARNING SUPPORT EFFECTIVENESS

Ms Shackels presented the Learning Support Effectiveness report advising on the types of support available, the referral process, number of students currently in receipt of learning support, funding streams and feedback.

Mrs Singleton spoke to a valuable insight.

Ms Shackels commented on robust processes in place.

A10. WHOLE COLLEGE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Ms Shackels informed that the WCQIP was been submitted to the Department on 22 January 2024 following ratification at the extraordinary meeting of 18 January 2024. She advised that feedback from the District Inspector is expected early March and ETI will thereafter moderate the findings and benchmark against the sector.

- **Peer Support and Development Conference 7 March 2024**

Ms Shackels referred Members to the agenda for the Peer Support and Development conference on 7 March 2024.

A11. CURRICULUM DIRECTORS WORKING GROUP

- **Level 2 Traineeship update**

Ms Shackels informed Members from September 2024 all remaining Level 2 FE provision will move to Traineeship provision. She informed that currently 4 in 5 trainees are men and that this will change following an increase in the breadth of occupational areas.

- **ETBI/FET Conference Athlone 21 & 22 February 2024**

Ms Shackels spoke to a worthwhile conference fostering inclusion, building skills and discussing pathways to FET.

- **QAA Sector Event 29 February 2024**

Ms Shackels advised on the QAA sector event scheduled for 29 February 2024.

- **WorldSkills UK update – NI bid**

Ms Shackels advised on the six college NI WorldSkills bid and advised that SRC have signed up to the Educator Programme.

A12. NSS SURVEY UPDATE

Ms Shackels advised on a 13% response rate in the student survey and informed that it closes in April 2024.

Members noted the report.

A13. FE SECTOR ACTIVITY BULLETIN

Members noted the FE bulletin on sector activity in Northern Ireland 2018-2019 to 2022-2023.

A14. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF EDUCATION NI – summary report

The Committee noted the summary report in relation to FE findings contained within the three volume reports an Independent Review of Education in Northern Ireland.

Members discussed the need for FE colleges to market themselves better.

Dr Moore recommended increasing focus on scholarship and research and commented that teaching and learning should feature in Education Committee papers going forward.

Mr Harper commented that the findings of the independent review may feed into FE Delivery Review discussions.

A15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members agreed on actions to be taken forward.

A16. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 28 May 2024 at 18.30 in the Boardroom, Newry West campus.

The meeting concluded at 19.42.


CHAIR

18th June 2024
DATE



