SOUTH WEST COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of a meeting of the **Education, Quality & Performance Committee**
held on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 5.00 pm
via Microsoft Teams

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PRESENT:	Mr Peter Archdale
	Ms Siobhan Breen
	Mrs Deborah Brown
	Mrs Margaret Martin
	Mr Michael McAlister (Chief Executive)
	Mr Michael McGuckin
	Mrs Joanne Moore (Committee Chair)
	Miss Clara Jane Whitley

IN ATTENDANCE:	Dr Jill Cush, Deputy Chief Executive
	Mrs Fiona McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body
	Mr Ciaran McManus, Assistant Chief Executive (Industry Partnerships & Centres for Excellence)
	Mr Padraig McNamee, Head of Faculty (Automotive, Computing & Engineering) (*Item 6.0 only*)
	Dr Nicholas O'Shiel, Chair of the Governing Body

1.0 PRELIMINARIES AND APOLOGIES

Mrs Moore opened the meeting by welcoming Miss Whitley, Student Governor, to the Committee and by welcoming Mrs McCauley, Secretary to the Governing Body, back from leave.

It was noted that all members were present.

2.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No conflict of interest declarations were made.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

▪ Paper 03   Minutes of the Education, Quality & Performance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 21 October 2020.

A spelling error in the minutes was highlighted.

4.0   KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 04.01   Key Strategic Issues
- Paper 04.02   Key Strategic Issues Management Update.

4.1   Covid-19 Recovery & Resilience

Mr McAlister reported that 18 staff and 46 learners had been diagnosed with Covid-19 in the 1st September 2020 to 20th November 2020 period. He added that this relatively low infection rate can be attributed to the work of the Covid Supervisors and the adherence by staff and students to the systems and protocols in place. Mr McAlister also reported that an updated sectoral Framework for the Safe Resumption of Onsite Educational Provision and Related Activity will be released by the Department for the Economy (DfE) shortly.

Members commented on the intrinsic role played by staff and students in limiting the spread of the disease in college and asked that the Committee's appreciation and congratulations are conveyed to them.

4.2   The Student

Mr McAlister explained that delivery is still on a continuum from fully face-to-face to fully remote and noted that the period between the circuit breakers had been used to undertake on-site practical training where relevant.

He drew attention to the data provided on the response of Higher Education students to the questions asked in the National Student Survey. He acknowledged the slight dip in satisfaction rates but expressed his contentment with performance overall in the context of the unexpected in-year transition to remote delivery. Members commented on the value of further analysis of this data and potential marketing opportunities arising out of this. It was noted that further information would be provided by the Quality Assurance Manager at the next meeting.

Mr McAlister also expressed his satisfaction with the outcome of the Further Education Leavers Survey as detailed in paper 04.02; reported the launch of a pilot of the Student Voice App; and quantified the volume of helpdesk calls answered in October in relation to online learning.

4.3   The Quality of Teaching and Learning

Mr McAlister advised that a workshop has been held to review the findings of the Level 3 Inspections which took place in four colleges in 2019/20 and that actions have been agreed to be implemented across the sector in 2020/21.

He then made the Committee aware of training provided by SWC managers to Education & Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspectors on The Principles of Effective Online Pedagogy as well as a presentation provided to the sector on best practice in construction education.

Mr McAlister also informed the meeting of the enhanced focus group survey being undertaken to measure the effectiveness of remote learning in the College and noted that curriculum delivery may be refined based on the findings emerging.

4.4   Curriculum

Mr McAlister apprised the meeting of sectoral concerns regarding the lack of clarification on assessment methodologies from awarding organisations and the potential impact of this on students. Members then discussed the role of the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), as NI qualifications regulator, in progressing this issue. It was noted that communication will be made with senior DfE executives and it was suggested that the issue could be raised with the CCEA Council.

He went on to inform the Committee of the proposal of Ulster University to award Associate Bachelor degrees to furloughed Foundation Degree students due to their inability to complete the work based learning element of their course. Members discussed the implications of this approach on students' progression opportunities and access to student finance.

Mr McAlister also explained that a claim has been submitted to the Department of Education (DE) for reimbursement of additional costs incurred in the delivery of the Entitlement Framework; provided details of the virtual Graduation Ceremony scheduled to take place on 9th December 2020; reported positive engagement with and feedback on the virtual Curriculum Conference which took place on Monday 26th October 2020; and noted the planned relaunch of traineeships in 2021 as well as the development of an associated marketing and communications plan.

Mr Archdale expressed his interest in the College's plans for the embedding of fit-for-purpose sustainability principles in future curriculum and requested details of this for the next meeting.

4.5   Safeguarding

Mr McAlister provided statistics and analysis of student uptake of counselling services through Inspire, the College's wellbeing support partner, in 2019/20. He also quantified referrals to Safeguarding Assistants and Social Services in September and October 2020.

5.0   MANAGEMENT REPORT

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 05   Management Report
- Paper 05.01   Centres for Excellence Report
- Paper 05.01b   FE L3 Curriculum Planning ETI Evaluation Key Findings
- Paper 05.02   Safeguarding Report
- Paper 05.03   Report on Externally Funded Projects
- Paper 05.04   Student Charter
- Paper 05.05   Quality Assurance & Improvement Policy.

5.1   Higher Education

Ref: Management Report Section 1.0 and Paper 05.01

Mr McManus reported on the professional development undertaken by staff delivering Higher Education programmes as well as on the establishment of a Governance & Research Committee to ensure that dissertation proposals meet ethical standards.

5.2   Further Education

Ref: Management Report Section 2.0 and Papers 05.01 and 05.01b

Mr McManus provided an overview of the scope of a review of FE Level 3 provision as well as an overview of the scope of a review of admissions and enrolment processes.

5.3   Work Based Learning

Ref: Management Report Section 3.0 and Paper 05.01

Mr McManus made the Committee aware of the effectiveness of Training Support Officers' engagement with employers in reducing the number of furloughed apprentices and securing employment for redundant apprentices. He also apprised it of the applications made to DfE's Apprenticeship Challenge Fund. Members welcomed the Apprenticeship Mentoring Programme funded under the Apprenticeship Challenge Fund in providing support to workplace supervisors in mentoring apprentices.

5.4   Digital Learning

Ref: Management Report Section 4.0 and Paper 05.01

Mr McManus highlighted the focus on Digital Learning and the continued support provided to staff and students to enhance the effectiveness of online teaching, learning and assessment.

The Committee Chair reflected on the previous years' target of 10% of curriculum to be delivered virtually and sought views from Management on the future target for virtual curriculum delivery. Dr Cush informed the meeting of the work underway to ascertain the optimum level of virtual delivery to provide the best learning experience for students. She explained that quality of teaching and learning will be the key driver in ascertaining optimum delivery modes and acknowledged that different student groups will require different approaches. Members welcomed the focus on quality and the recognition of the value of classroom interaction.

5.5   Social Inclusion

Ref: Management Report Section 5.0 and Paper 05.01

Mr McManus reported on the current trajectory of the College's social inclusion programmes to meet or exceed recruitment targets by the year end (31 March 2021). He also noted the submission of a number of additional funding applications.

5.6   Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Ref: Management Report Section 6.0

Mr McManus detailed early findings of the enhanced focus group survey referred to earlier in the meeting and explained that a report on the findings will be available in December.

5.7   Economic Engagement

Ref: Management Report Section 7.0

Mr McManus provided an overview of the Future Leaders and Digital Futures Graduate Academies designed to provide upskilling opportunities for graduates impacted by Covid-19.

5.8   Safeguarding

Ref: Management Report Section 11.0 and Paper 05.02

Mr McManus apprised the meeting of the importance of the wraparound support provided by Student Services and of the value of the Learning Mentors in identifying and supporting students showing early signs of non-engagement.

5.9   Update on Implementation of the 2020/21 Annual Development Plan / Report Cards

Ref: Management Report Section 12.0

With reference to the enrolment statistics provided in the Management Report, Mr McManus highlighted increased enrolments to Higher Level Apprenticeships, Training for Success and Apprenticeship NI Programmes from 2019/20 figures. He went on to comment on the challenge in recruiting to Part-Time Further Education courses due to the circuit breakers and expressed his satisfaction with enrolment performance to date.

5.10   Policy Reviews

Ref: Management Report Section 14.0 and Papers 05.04 & 05.05

Mr McManus noted that minor changes are proposed to the Quality Assurance & Improvement Policy. He also requested a deferral of the reviews of the Excellence in Teaching Framework and the Student Charter until January 2021 and May 2021 respectively and drew attention to an appendix to the Student Charter to include a Code of Conduct incorporating Covid-19 protocols.

AGREED: that the Quality Assurance & Improvement Policy recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

5.11 **Other**

Ref: Management Report Sections 8.0, 9.0, 10.0 & 13.0 and Paper 05.03

The updates and additional information provided in the Management Report and associated paper on Internationalisation, the Engineering and Manufacturing Hub, the Erne Project and Externally Funded Projects were noted by the Committee.

6.0 **REPORT ON THE PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGIC PLANS OF THE AUTOMOTIVE, COMPUTING AND ENGINEERING FACULTY**

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 06.01   Performance & Strategic Plans of the Automotive, Computing and Engineering Faculty.
- Paper 06.02   Engineering Development Strategy.

Mr Padraig McNamee, Head of Faculty (Automotive, Computing and Engineering), joined the meeting for this item.

Mr McNamee began his presentation by listing the medium and long term objectives for his faculty including improving the perception of the quality of the College's provision amongst local stakeholders, differentiating provision from that of competitors, ensuring progression opportunities for all levels at all campuses, enhanced staff development and support, continued investment in equipment, and reviewing and rebranding the Engineering offering. He went on to detail the projects and initiatives in place to deliver on these objectives and explain how performance against objectives will be measured.

In response to questions and comments following his presentation, Mr McNamee spoke of the College's excellent reputation in industry and of the challenge in marketing college services and resources in the local community; undertook to explore CAFRE's incubation hubs as a resource for students interested in self-employment; apprised members of the world-class equipment held by the College and of the need to continually invest in up-to-date technology; made the Committee aware of a more strategic recruitment approach adopted in light of the difficulty faced in recruiting academic staff to certain positions due to external competition; and highlighted the exceptional pastoral care provided to students by staff.

The Committee Chair thanked Mr McNamee for his presentation and commended faculty staff for their efforts and achievements.

Mr McNamee withdrew from the meeting at this juncture.

7.0 **ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

Assurance was sought from a member on the implementation of strategies approved by the Governing Body. In response, Dr Cush took the Committee through the strategy development and implementation processes highlighting the Management Team's role in

reviewing strategies coming forward for approval as well as its role in scrutinising progress made in implementing associated action plans.

8.0   REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

PREVIOUSLY ISSUED to all members:

- Paper 08   Outstanding Actions.

It was noted that the Sustainability Strategy had been presented to the Governing Body at its November 2020 meeting and that the updated Communications & Engagement Strategy would be presented to the Committee at its March 2021 meeting. An overview of the content of the proposed Digital Skills training for Governors was also provided. It was agreed that a preview of the Erne Campus Marketing Strategy would be presented at the January 2021 meeting and a discussion held on the 'College of the Future' concept.

A list of outstanding actions is provided in Appendix A.

9.0   REFLECTION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING

Members conveyed their satisfaction with the proceedings of the meeting.

The meeting went into confidential session and ended at 7:20 pm.

CONFIRMED AND ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BODY AT A MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY 2021.

CHAIRMAN   _____   **DATE** 13/01/2021

SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

#	Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Action
1	21/10/2020	5.4	Mr McManus to arrange digital skills training for Governors.
	25/11/2020	8.0	Updated provided. Arrangements ongoing.
2	21/10/2020	5.0a	Update on the communication and engagement strategy to be provided to the Committee.
	25/11/2020	8.0	Updated Communications & Engagement Strategy to be provided in March 2021. Preview of Erne Campus Marketing Strategy to be provided in January 2021.
3	25/11/2020	4.4	Plans for embedding fit-for-purpose sustainability principles into future curriculum to be provided at the January 2021 meeting.
4	25/11/2020	8.0	Discussion on the 'College of the Future' concept to be discussed at the January 2021 meeting.