

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 21 May 2025 on MS Teams at 10.00am.

Present: Dr P Graham (Chair), Ms J Hemphill, Mr M Higgins, Mr A Hoey, Mr G McAllister, Mr B Patterson, Mr S Shevlin, Mr D Small

In Attendance: Mr A Ballantyne (72.7), Mrs C Brown, Mr C Fairless (72.7), Ms H Hampsey, Mr M Murray (72.7), Mr K Nelson, Mr S Price (72.7)

Secretary: Mrs K Wallace

72.1 Apologies/Welcome

KN was welcomed to the meeting as an observer.

Apologies were noted for SL, LM and LS.

72.2 Declaration of Interests

PG declared his connection to the Chief Inspector of ETI.

72.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

On the proposal of DS and seconded by SS, the draft minutes of 03.03.25 were approved.

72.4 Matters Arising

Actions on community engagement and QIP would be covered under agenda items.

72.5 Chair's Communication/Correspondence

CDP 2024/25 and 2025/26: CB presented the progress report executive summary noting that overall target for 2024/25 enrolments had been exceeded. Committee noted that the Draft CDP 2025/26 would be submitted on 23.05.25, as per the Commissioning Letter provided. MH advised that the format for the draft CDP would be shared with KN after the meeting and HH would give an update to GB on 28.05.25.

ETI Step Up Project: Members noted the composite evaluation report which has also been published on the ETI website. CB highlighted the strong validation for the need and value of the programme evidenced in the report, findings from which would be taken account of in the QIP 2025/26.

DS welcomed the report and asked if the College was one referred to in respect of Departmental target for progression to employment and FE or training which CB would come back on.

Action: The Secretary would circulate the report to GB for information.

Action: CB would reconcile the sector report against the College evaluation and report back.

RSM Safeguarding Report: Committee noted Satisfactory Assurance with 1 medium and 4 low priority findings. SMC will report fully in his end of year report in September/October 2025. The RSM report would also be taken to A&R later in the day.

Members were content that the report highlighted good processes and outlined how committees work overall. MH confirmed that the training aspect, which was now integrated into an automated performance review system, had been implemented and would be picked up at Resources Committee.

72.6 Curriculum Director Summary Report

The former VP T&L's change of title to Curriculum Director was noted and the report was taken as read.

CB welcomed acceptance of a pay award by lecturers' unions and cessation of action short of strike. MH agreed and advised that a business case had been submitted and work on parity and transformation would commence shortly. Members noted the advisability of colleges commencing negotiations on future pay straight away.

GMA joined the meeting at 10.20am.

CB highlighted a number of key areas in the report including: continued focus on KPIs and retention; strategic issues around change in ES equivalencies; quality standards and quality improvement; and good news stories.

PG emphasised the need to be clear on the College's offering for 25/26. BP agreed and noted implications of a reduction in L2 courses from a community perspective.

PG proposed that Committee's focus for a deep dive in 25/26 would be development of a paper on ES in the FE sector, which could also be submitted to the Department. It was noted that the sectoral ES Working Group had also been asked to collate the implications of change.

Action: An in-depth review of ES would be put on the Committee agenda for 25/26.

MH advised that, in the light of information in the report, the focus for GCSE delivery for the coming academic year should be reviewed, along with the impact on staff.

A request for detailed QIP information to be shared with QIT was debated by members.

Action: Share the requested information alongside a cover letter highlighting duplication of information provision.

72.7 Curriculum Provision 2025/26

AB, CF, MM and SP joined the meeting at 10.49am.

The Curriculum Operational Plan 2025-26 was taken as read.

HH introduced the Community Plan presentation and updated Committee on current and evolving enrolment figures, which would be updated in the draft CDP 25/26 before submission on 23.05.25. She noted that this information is being used to inform early decision on course viability.

Advanced Technologies: MM presented new and extended provision in advanced technologies. MH noted a focus on green skills and sustainability. MM reported on a positive meeting with Invest NI and highlighted that programmes are being developed targeting in-demand skills.

DS sought and received clarity on College commitments in relation to sustainability and the green agenda. CB reported finalisation of non-accredited half-day session for all FT students as part of the induction programme.

Creative, Computing, Professional Industries: SP detailed PT, FT and HE provision programmes, noting planned reintroduction of tourism provision at the Ballymena campus and introduction of new HE courses in cloud computing and hospitality and event management. PG noted recent positive engagement with OU, who had been very impressed by the new Causeway campus.

Health, Sport and Care: In the absence of LS, HH presented traineeship and apprenticeship, and FE provision for the new academic year. She noted high employer demand for dental nursing and HSC apprenticeship.

Science, Inclusion, Hair and Beauty: AB outlined the current situation and proposed delivery moving forward, noting that 2 members of hair and beauty staff had now been trained to deliver a sports massage programme, as well as recent engagement with UU in respect of animal care/management provision.

Community Provision: CF outlined proposed programmes for 25/26, subject to confirmation of funding. Members noted that no funding had been allocated for Skill Up to date, and maintenance of Entitlement Framework was a challenge. Collaboration on provision with

schools and community groups was being investigated. A sustainability module would be available to all FT students.

PG noted the usefulness of taster courses for gauging interest and attracting external funding.

DS sought and received clarity on what constituted unregulated enrolments (with integrity).

MH stated that the College's 3.1% budget reduction had included loss of 1,000 enrolments from Multiply funding being cut. However, work done by the team had shown how cuts to enrolment could be replaced and enhanced if all funding streams are confirmed.

PG congratulated the team on development of the provision on offer.

Action: On the proposal of GM and seconded by DS, the Curriculum Plan proposals were recommended for formal sign-off by the GB.

72.8 Traineeship Evaluation and Action Planning

CB reported that the sectoral composite report and the college specific report had now been received by colleges for fact checking. In the context of the presentation provided, prepared in advance of the reports being received and representing a fluid situation, she noted an alignment between the key areas for improvement /review and the report.

Members noted that sector representatives would meet with the lead Principal for traineeship, Celine McCartan, later in the day.

Action: Given the delay in receipt of reports for this programme, it was proposed to put it back on the agenda in the autumn.

PG noted that verbal feedback on direction had been received from ETI in November and the long delay on provision of the report had been fed back to ETI, who intended to allow action based on verbal response in future. He noted a low success rate for the overall traineeship programme to date and the need to keep this under review.

72.9 Quality: QIP Progress Review and Malpractice/Maladministration Log

In the absence of LM, CB presented the status update to April 2025, which now included alignment of RAG status to target achievement dates. She reported on progress with amber risks, noting the intention to have a relaunch for AFI 7, Improve Student Voice and Experience, ready for September 2025. Work on AF3, Promote Innovation and AI Integration, was continuing through the Digital/IT Curriculum Hub in the absence of specific funding availability.

Information requested by DfE relating to presentation of QIP updates to Committee was discussed. CB suggested that the current update be shared with the Department, with follow-up discussion at next partnership meeting.

PG was content with the registers and reporting.

Members noted 2 compliance issues which had been resolved with no penalties. Adherence to AO timelines would be reinforced going forward.

72.10 Any Other Business

AH reflected on his time as student governor, highlighting work with students and experience gained from sitting on the GB as highlights. He noted his willingness to have a handover with his successor and thanked the GB Chair and governors for their advice and support.

Members thanked AH for his work and diligence during the year. PG invited him to stay in touch on any issues and offered to sit in on a future meeting with the new student governor, which JH had offered to help arrange.

72.11 Date of next meeting to be arranged.

PG thanked all members for their attendance. KN noted a stimulating and encouraging meeting and added his thanks to AH.

The meeting closed at 11.51am.

Dr P Graham, Chair 

Date 18.08.2025

Mrs K Wallace, Secretary 