



## SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Education Committee of the Governing Body (the “Committee”)

held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 17:30, in LRC, Lisburn Campus

### 1. Chairs Business

#### a) Attendance and apologies

**Present:** Mr John Nugent (Chair of the Governing Body) Mr Tommy Martin (Principal & CEO) Mr Samuel Hagen Items 1-6 only, Mrs Carolyn King, Mr Alan McCrum, Ms Majella Corrigan, Mr Derek Wilson, Dr Danny McConnell, Mr Steven Lee, Mrs Nuala Reid, Mrs Nicola Wilson, Mrs Pauline Leeson, Ms Catherine McKay, Ms Grainne McVeigh

**In attendance:** Mrs Heather McKee (Deputy Principal Planning Performance and Engagement) Claire Williamson (Secretary to the Governing Body), Mr Gary Ritchie (Deputy Principal Curriculum) Items 6-10 only , Mrs Emma Carson (Acting Director of HR & Facilities), Mr Andrew Emmett (Acting Director of IT & Finance), Mr Noel O’Hare (Head of Quality, Excellence and Development), Mr Stuart Senior Rankin (Head of Higher Education) Items 1-3 only , Mrs Elaine McKeown (Senior International Development Manager) Items 1-4 only

**Apologies:** Mr Michael McQuillan, Mr Darren Stewart, Mr Chris Bruton

**In the Chair:** Mr Nugent (Item 1 Only), Ms Corrigan Items 2-10

#### b) Declarations of Conflict of Interests

The following conflict were declared:

- Ms Corrigan declared she is employed by CCMS whose sponsor department is DENI. She is a current member of the Governing Body of Stranmillis College.
- The Principal & CEO declared his daughter was a part time lecturer at the College.

No action was taken in relation to any of the declared conflicts or with regard to the presented agenda.

c) Minutes of Education Committee meeting, held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024

*Minutes previously issued to all members.*

The committee reviewed the minutes from the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> November and agreed they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting. The minutes were agreed on the proposal of Nuala Reid and seconded by Derek Wilson.

d) Matters Arising

The Secretary highlighted there were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

e) Chair of the Education Committee

The Secretary informed the committee that Ms Corrigan was the only expression of interest received for the role of the Chair of the Education Committee. Ms Corrigan was duly elected as Committee Chair with immediate effect on the proposal of Danny McConnell and seconded by Nicola Wilson.

f) Safeguarding Governor

The Secretary advised that Mrs Reid was the only expression of interest of received for the role of Safeguarding Governor. Mrs Reid was appointed as Safeguarding Governor on the proposal of Nicola Wilson and seconded by Carolyn King. The Secretary advised that training for Mrs Reid would be arranged as soon as possible.

*From this juncture Ms Corrigan chaired the meeting.*

## 2) Correspondence

Nothing to note.

## 3) Update on UCAS Pilot

On the invitation of the Chair the Head of Higher Education presented an update on the UCAS pilot to members. Members noted the intended outcomes of the pilot and the applications to date and SERC have received 57 applications through UCAS. In response to questions from members the Head of HE advised that SERC were funded £44k by DfE for the pilot, only SERC and Belfast Met have been

onboarded. He highlighted that SERC have all programmes live on UCAS and so there is dual entry choice for applicants through UCAS or directly through the college website.

Members noted that there is a dedicated UCAS admissions officer employed at the College, they are responsible for managing communications and making an offer to students through UCAS. The admissions officer will also monitor dual applications to ensure there is no duplication.

In discussion members noted that SERC do have unique curriculum offerings from Belfast Met and so there is not direct competition for applications.

The Head of Higher Education set out the financial cost to the College in using UCAS and advised that £35 per learner needs to be paid to UCAS and this will equate to approximately £8/9k per year. Students that are in receipt of free school meals do not have to pay for their UCAS application.

The Principal added that the UCAS pilot has been very encouraging so far and it will be interesting to see if the applications translate into enrolments.

*At this juncture the Head of Higher Education left the meeting.*

#### 4) International Work

On the invitation of the Chair the Senior International Development Manager presented an overview of the work within her team. She highlighted the current Turing projects, international students at SERC and plans for 25/26.

In response to a question on Brexit she advised that in terms of students wanting to come to SERC there has been little impact as those students still want a 'UK' experience. The Principal added that Brexit has had a negative impact in terms of mobilities as what is currently being done is a fraction of what could have been done under Erasmus and so this has impacted the student experience.

Members noted that 20 Brazilian students will be attending SERC in February 2025 and this has been a successful new venture.

A member enquired if the college offer any welfare packages for students that come to the country alone. The SIDM advised that students generally come here because they have family here and seem to have a good support network already in place, however support for anyone that needs it is offered.

*At this juncture the Senior International Development Manager left the meeting.*

#### 5) Strategy Day Planning

*Papers previously issued to all members.*

The Deputy Principal Planning, Performance and Engagement talked to the written report provided. She highlighted that in terms of the methodology staff will be asked to provide input and a series of focus groups will run alongside a survey to ensure that there is robust engagement with staff on the proposals.

In response to a comment from the Chair of the Governing Body to include targets within the strategy the DPPPE advised against setting rigid targets in a strategic document and advised that success is measured across a range of measures in the College such as the CDP and QIP.

Members noted that the main stakeholder for the College to engage with is the sponsor department and the FE Director and Deputy Secretary will be in attendance at the Strategy day in May.

The DPPPE advised members that during the workshop with CMT a robust discussion on the development of AI and the ongoing curriculum took place, the intention is to have a longer-term view of curriculum and this will sit alongside the new strategy.

## 6) College Development Plan

*Papers previously issued to all members.*

### A) CDP 24/25

Members noted the progress report, and the Deputy Principal PPE advised that the HE Masn target is red as we haven't reached this target. She highlighted that as the letter of offer from SEUPB has not been received for Peace Plus this target is now amber and the College has advised the councils we will have to reprofile.

### B) Applications and Enrolments

The Deputy Principal Curriculum talked to the written report provided at 006B, which provided an update on the College applications and enrolment figures, the Deputy Principal Curriculum highlighted the variances in the report and the current enrolment figures.

Full-time enrolments have remained very strong and are currently 4882. This is a marginal increase of 3% on the previous academic year.

The DPC went on to set out how SERC will capitalize on unique programme offerings and reviewing the curriculum offering. Members noted that courses will be retained to ensure that there is a much more efficient offering for staff and students.

In response to a member's question the DPC advised that there is potential for sustainability and construction to grow; in order to get the sustainability provision in place an off the shelf package was

used and this will be used a building block to continue to grow an offer a unique provision across the College.

c) WCSER/QIP 22/24 Update

d) WCSER/QIP 24/25

The Head of Quality, Excellence and Development presented the reports and began by summarising how the quality processes are managed in the College, he advised that ideally this report would be made to committee in November but there had been two ETI inspections in October and therefore there was a delay.

Members noted that the 22-24 targets were largely met and the Head of QED talked through each of the targets that were not achieved. In response to a question on who the learners are the Head of QED confirmed the college use every metric available in order to compile a comprehensive date review.

The Head of QED talked to the 24/25 submission and the Principal highlighted this is a very useful document to map across and use in the development of the strategy.

The Head of QED highlighted that reporting duplication remains as some of the same information from this report appears in the CDP reporting however this new template should reduce it down.

e) Assurance Statement

**Agreed:** The Assurance Statement was recommended to the Governing Body for adoption on the proposal of Carolyn King and seconded by Catherine McKay.

## 7) Higher Education/Further Education

*Papers previously issued to all members.*

a) HERB Minutes 14.11.24

The minutes from the recent HERB meeting were reviewed and approved on the proposal of Danny McConnell and seconded by Carolyn King.

b) QAA Workshop Slides

The Deputy Principal PPE provided members with an overview of the meeting and the QAA presentation.

## 8) Items for Information

*Papers previously issued to all members.*

a) Safeguarding report

Members noted the report at 008A. The Deputy Principal PPE began by advising there has been an increase this year in cause for concerns and added that staff are doing well in providing support to those students. She highlighted that there is some variances between campuses and schools but that is not unusual. Further training is planned for staff on how to detect any issues at any early stage.

b) Engagement Report

Members noted the update report at 008B.

9) Policies for review

a) Safeguarding and Welfare Policy

Members noted the policy had been reviewed and there were no substantive changes recommended.

10) Any other business

a) NIAO report 'Developing the Skills Of Northern Ireland'.

The Chair advised that the audit committee had recommended education committee review this report and invited the Principal to provide an overview of the relevance to the sector.

The Principal advised that there is some criticism of how the sector are funded within the report and noted that this is encouraged by this report as ring fenced funding is not helpful. He advised that the public accounts committee have reviewed the report and a report from them is expected to be issued in the coming months.

**No other business was discussed, and the Chair closed the meeting at 7.35pm**