

 A Registered Charity (No 275082)

*Promoting Quality in Teacher Education*

**Minutes of the meeting of the UCET Northern Ireland Higher Education Liaison Group held at 12noon on Tuesday 12 January 2021 via Zoom**

Attendance:

John Anderson (ETI); Alan Boyd (DE); Gerry Devlin (GTCNI); Anne Heaslett (Stranmillis); James Noble-Rogers (UCET); Max Fincher (UCET); Martin Hagan (St. Mary’s); Anne McGaffin (DE): Roisin R.McPhilemy (OU, Chair); James Nelson (Queens); John Unsworth (EA).

Apologies:

Jackie Moses (UCET).

Welcome & introductions

All were welcomed and apologies noted.

Minutes of the previous meeting & Matter Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2020 were (subject to minor amendments suggested earlier by DE) agreed. There were no matters arising that were not already included on the agenda.

Issues arising from morning UCETNI meeting

The following issues were raised following discussions at that morning’s UCETNI meeting:

* Consideration was being given to holding a UCETNI event during the next academic year to reflect on what had been learned as a result of Covid 19 and how positive changes in programme design and delivery might be consolidated and developed.
* In answer to a question, DE colleagues confirmed that a submission to ministers on ITE quotas for 2021/22 should be made soon. Requests from UCETNI for allocations covering more than one year were noted. On workforce planning more generally, information about the review of the current planning model would be provided. It was confirmed that the existing coverage of post-primary subjects could be usefully reviewed and input from UCETNI would be welcomed. It was noted that ETI had already identified the post primary subject mix as something that needed to be considered.

Covid 19 and contingency plans from HEIs

Current plans by HEIs to secure school placements were working well, although back-up plan-Bs would need to be kept under review in case Covid restrictions and school closures be extended or increased. The way all parts of the sector, as evidenced through the Covid 19 Working Group, had worked together during the pandemic was agreed to represent a model of collegiality that should be continued in the future.

AQ requests on ITE programme details

Answering questions from assembly members and others about the detailed coverage of ITE programmes could be time consuming and often betrayed a lack of knowledge about how ITE was structured and delivered. It was agreed that JNR would draft a generic response, referencing the GTCNI competencies and the role of CPD that could be used to respond to such questions.

Independent Review of Education

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The Independent Review of Education in Northern Ireland had been announced on 15 December 2020 as part of the ‘New decade, New approach’ initiative. The Review Panel will be led by an external independent Chair, appointed by the Minister supported by a Vice Chair and three additional panel members. All appointments will be made through an open recruitment process. Its work would take at least 18 months. Care should, it was noted, be taken to ensure that the work of the group did not become open ended, and that end goals were kept in view. The input of UCETNI would have to be considered and it was agreed that Alan Boyd would contact the responsible civil servant about this. Any UCETNI members interested in contributing should contact JNR.

Reports from partner organisations

The following reports were received:

* DE: A further letter to school principals about the value in offering ITE placements had been agreed and would be issued soon; Covid 19 contingency plans were operating well but would be kept under review; the Education Authority would be convening a working group to discuss the induction/EPD/teacher training schedule for 2021 (Action: JNR to circulate invitation for volunteers); funding letters linked to the allocation of additional ITE places to reflect shortages in some areas had been issued; meetings had taken place in respect of Learning Leaders to discuss the consolidation of reports into one document, and work on LL would be reinvigorated (the contribution of JA, MH, GD and others to this work was acknowledged); discussion had taken place with DfE in England about their new Apply system for postgraduate ITE applications; and the minister had held a meeting about the re-instigation of funding for SCoTENs and a business case was being prepared.
* ETI: Inspections, other than some minor exceptions, remained paused; the new Chief Inspector was settling in well; and the Engage Programme was being used to address learning shortfalls experienced by pupils as a result of the Covid pandemic.
* GTCNI: the process for registering the current cohort of ITE students was continuing.
* EA: Teacher Professional Learning was being delivered exclusively on-line, with excellent contributions from partner organisations; details of cost-free programmes offered by other organisations could be disseminated through the TPL gateway site; and on-line programmes had increased take-up of programmes and led to more effective levels of engagement.

Any other business

John Anderson was thanked for his excellent contribution to education in Northern Ireland, including teacher education, over the years. His collegiality, professionalism, humour and integrity were singled out. He was wished well in his retirement and was encouraged to remain in touch.

Date of next meeting

4 May 2021