

A Registered Charity (No 275082)

*Promoting Quality in Teacher Education*

**Minutes of the meeting of the UCET Northern Ireland Committee held at 10am on Tuesday 4 May 2021 via Zoom**

Attendance:

David Barr (UU); Linda Clarke (UU, LLOG item); Anne Heaslett (Stranmillis); Max Fincher (UCET); James Noble-Rogers (UCET); Max Fincher (UCET); Martin Hagan (St. Mary’s); Roisin R.McPhilemy (OU, Chair); James Nelson (Queens).

Apologies:

Jackie Moses (UCET).

Welcome & introductions

All were welcomed and apologies noted.

The Chair noted that this would be the last meeting attended by UCETNI Vice-Chair Anne Heaslett. Anne was thanked for her outstanding contribution to the work of UCETNI over a14 year period and for her service to teacher education. Anne was wished well for her ongoing research interests and for the future.

Minutes of the previous meeting & Matter Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021 were agreed. On matters arising, it was reported that the generic response to Assembly Questions discussed at the last meeting had been agreed and was now in use.

Covid 19 contingency plans and reports from member institutions

Member institutions reported that most students had received appropriate placement experiences and were progressing well, although some might require additional support in respect of things like classroom management. ITE tutors were increasingly being allowed back into schools, although some schools remained reluctant and remote lesson observations and student assessments were continuing. Blended on-line and face to face delivery was continuing, and many new approaches in respect of assessment, on-line learning and e-portfolios would continue post-pandemic. Plans were being made for a return to normal processes in 2021/22, although contingency plans would be made in case this did not prove possible. Increased attention was being given to the mental health and well-being of student teachers (e.g. by building in breaks prior to placements) and to how students might support the well-being of pupils. Graduation ceremonies would be conducted on-line in 2020/21, with plans to return to face to face ceremonies in 2021/22. Many meetings, e.g. those for external examiners and exam boards, would continue to be conducted on-line into the future.

The collaborative approach between ITE institutions, and between the ITE sector, the Department of Education and other bodies (e.g. though the Covid placement working group), was welcomed and should be continued and further developed. There might be scope to, for example, to develop common approaches to different aspects of ITE.

It was agreed that institutions would be invited to provide summaries and reflections on what had been learned during the pandemic.

SCoTENs

An encouraging meeting had taken place with the Education minister to discuss a possible reinstatement of DE funding for SCoTENs. JR also reported that he had attended, and spoken at, the recent launch of the SCoTENs annual report.

UCETNI on-line event

The possibility off UCET holding an on-line event to demonstrate the contribution made by teacher education institutions was discussed. Many of the intended audience had been shown the invaluable contribution of HEIs through the Covid 19 placement working group, and that a greater audience might be reached by contributing to other events, for example any planned by DE for a re-launch of Learning Leaders.

It was agreed that: (i) a plenary symposium for UCETNI members to discuss and share what they had learnt from the Covid pandemic would be included in the 2-3 November UCET conference programme; and (ii) DE would be asked during the afternoon meeting about options for including a UCETNI contribution to any events that it was planning.

UCETNI meetings in 2021/22

The dates of meetings in the next academic year were confirmed as: 5 October 2021; 11 January 2022; and 3 May 2022. The 5 October meeting would be conducted on-line. Consideration would be given to having a mixture of face to face and on-line meetings each year.

Chair and Vice-Chair of UCETNI

It was agreed that Roisin McPhilemy would continue as Chair for a further year and that either James Nelson or a colleague from Queen’s would serve as Vice Chair[[1]](#footnote-1). Colleagues from St Mary’s and Stranmillis would be likely to be next in line for these positions.

Learning Leaders Oversight Group

Linda Clarke briefed the group on Learning Leaders. The most recent document from DE still included the core principles identified by UCETNI. It would be discussed by focus groups, including a group of student teachers, after which it would be discussed with the unions. Discussions had focussed on references to ‘balance’ and ‘choice’, as well as the need for resources to fund Learning Leader activities which would, if the initiative was to be a success, be required.

Linda Clarke was thanked for her work representing UCETNI on the oversight group and on her invaluable contribution to UCETNI and to teacher education.

UCET issues

*(i): ITE Market Review in England*

JNR briefed the group on the review of the ITE Market that was taking place in England, including its possible implications for Northern Ireland.

*(ii): 2021 UCET conference*

The 2021 UCET conference would take place on line on 2-3 November and was free for people from UCETNI member institutions.

*(iii): UCET Easter Newsletter*

The Easter newsletter was noted.

Date of next meeting

5 October 2021

1. Institutions supply the Chair and Vice Chair are entitled to an additional representative on UCETNI. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)