

A Registered Charity (No 275082)

*Promoting Quality in Teacher Education*

**Minutes of the meeting of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Liaison Group (NIHELG) held at 12 noon on Tuesday 11 January 2022 via Zoom**

Attendance:

David Barr (UU); Alan Boyd (DE): Kyle Crutchley (DE); Patricia Eaton (Stranmillis); Max Fincher (UCET); Johnathan Heggarty (Stranmillis); John Kennedy (ETI); Jackie Moses (UCET); James Noble-Rogers (UCET); Martin Hagan (St. Mary’s); Averil Morrow (EA); James Nelson (Queens, & Chair of meeting).

Apologies:

Roisin McPhilemy (OU).

Welcome & introductions

All were welcomed and apologies noted.

Minutes of the previous meeting & Matter Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2021 were agreed. On matters arising:

* There had not been any further actions in relation to the cross-recognition of teaching qualifications and the seeking of NI teaching qualifications by teachers in the Republic.
* Details of relevant sub-groups were still to be circulated.
* The recommendations of the Gillen Review were being taken forward by a newly established sub-group operating under the auspices of the Department for Justice, and ITE providers had been contacted. There were no plans to establish a separate group for the ITE sector.
* UCETNI reported that a sub-group to consider placement and other ITE coordination issues was to be established.

Matters arising from morning UCETNI meeting

These included:

* A report back from institutional reports received at the morning meeting.
* The Education Minister had that week made a statement confirming that, subject to a number of conditions, final year ITE students might be organised and deployed to help free-up teaching capacity in schools. This might, for example, involve them having unsupervised control of classes, thus freeing up the time of teachers who would otherwise be supporting and observing them. DE stressed that there was no expectation that student teachers would be expected to provide general cover or that their ITE would be adversely affected. While final year students might be asked to take on some modest additional responsibilities, the focus was on the freeing up of the time spent on observations by established teachers. Advice was being sought from lawyers about providing time-limited indemnity should any legal issues arise. It was agreed that UCETNI would invite its members to provide details of any indemnity issues they might face to share with DE colleagues.
* It had been agreed that CCEA would be invited to have representation on NIHELG in respect of its curriculum and teacher support (but not awarding institution) responsibilities.
* Workforce Planning: The issue had been discussed at a senior level within government and would be taken forward at a strategic level in due course.
* Teacher Professional Learning: The draft report was welcomed. UCETNI had agreed in principle to facilitate the proposed research project, the details of which would be discussed and agreed with DE colleagues.

Reports from partner organisations

The following reports were received:

* DE: In addition to the issues already covered, teacher registration functions of the GTCNI were continuing as before through continuation of the GTCNI Executive in absence of the GTCNI Council, which had been stood down. Consideration would be given to the continuation and development of GTCNI functions in the longer term, with options possibly including a re-structured GTCNI, the establishment of a new organisation and the subsuming of GTCNI functions within DE. Discussions about the potential role of ITE providers in the Connected Skills Strategy were continuing.
* ETI: Formal inspections of schools continued to be paused, although monitoring visits to particular schools have taken place. Other work, for example in relation to thematic evaluations, policy advice, capacity building and corporate development is continuing. Further information on ETI’s work is available on the ETI website.
* Education Authority: Representations had been received from industry about labour shortages in regards manufacturing and the shortage of design & technology teachers. The provision of lap tops, with appropriate training support, to teachers was continuing, as was the supply of laptops to younger children. The number of EA activities generally had been slowed down because of the current Covid situation, although support for early career teachers was continuing as before. An additional 9 staff were currently being appointed to support schools through current challenges.

Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting

3 May 2022 (format to be decided).