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*Promoting Quality in Teacher Education*

**UCET NI Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting of the UCET NI Committee held at10.00amon Tuesday 3 May 2022 at the Open University, 110 Victoria Street, Belfast BT1 3GN**

Attendance

David Barr (Ulster)

Tricia Eaton (Stranmillis)

Martin Hagan (St. Mary’s)

Roisin McPhilemy (OU, and Chair of meeting)

James Nelson (Queen’s)

James Noble-Rogers (UCET)

Apologies

Jonathan Heggarty (Stranmillis)

Welcome & introductions

Colleagues were welcomed to the final meeting of the academic year, and the first face to face meeting of the committee since January 2020.

Minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022 were agreed. On matters arising, it was confirmed that CCEA now had representation on NIHELG.

Institutional updates

The following updates were received:

* Ulster: Face to face sessions were continuing, and visits to schools were taking place where possible. The work of all but one of the external examiners was being carried out remotely. It was hoped to return fully to normal university activity in the next academic year, although some remote working would continue where it had been shown to work well. The university as a whole would seek to remove many of the remaining Covid related restrictions next month, albeit with some flexibilities that would allow staff to work from home where appropriate. The submission and assessment of student work would continue to be carried out on-line.
* Queen’s: School placements were going well. Most eligible final year students had led classes in school unsupervised in line with the temporary relaxations that had been introduced earlier in the academic year, and survey results had suggested that many had found it to be a positive experience, although a few individuals raised issues around support. The university did not feel that the relaxations should become the norm, but instead only use as a contingency measure as and when required. External examiners would attend the university in person. On recruitment to ITE programmes, a new health & social care option was proving popular. There was however some concern about the impact on RE recruitment of the temporary suspension of the undergraduate degree that supplied many of the ITE students. James Nelson would continue in his role as Programme Director for a further year. Concerns remained about the absence of any allocation of intake figures from the Department of the Economy, and it was agreed that this should be raised at the afternoon’s NIHELG.
* Stranmillis: The deployment of final year students to lead classes unsupervised appeared to have gone well, although no formal survey had been carried out. External examiners were carrying out their responsibilities both face to face and remotely. A degree of on-line and remote working for staff would continue, despite the misgivings of a minority of staff. The university intended to return for the most part to pre-covid ways of working in 2022/23.
* St. Mary’s: Placements had gone well. Many students had welcomed the opportunity to lead classes unsupervised. The use of on-line portfolios was now the norm and was felt to be consistent with the Learning Leaders strategy. First and second year students were using Fridays as ‘planning & reflection’ days. Staff had returned to campus the previous week. Examinations would now been conducted on site. External examiners would visit the university in person, although visits to schools would be carried our remotely.

There was a general discussion about the role of external examiners, where it was felt the emphasis should be on process rather than on the detail of how individual students are taught and how they work in schools. Issues about external examiners from other parts of the UK suggesting things that might not be appropriate in a NI context were also noted.

Independent Review of Education

Work was in hand to produce a report for the Independent Review following the evidence session attended by members of UCETNI on 23 March. It was agreed to request that the deadline for the submission of the report be extended until the end of May.

School Placements sub-group

It was agreed that action would be taken to formally establish the school-placements sub-group and that terms of reference would be agreed. The TORs would cover:

* The scope to coordinate the timings of placements across the four ITE providers.
* The collection of data on current and potential placement capacity, and the number of types of schools offering placement opportunities (including, if possible, the number of placements from ITE providers in other parts of the UK).
* The capacity of schools to support the training & development of mentors, and the potential role of UCETNI in recognising schools that offer placements and provide effective support to mentors.
* The scope for the HEIs involved in teacher education to co-operate on the development and delivery of training & development opportunities for mentors.

The potential roles of ETI, DE and others in supporting, encouraging and recognising school involvement in ITE was also discussed.

Representation on external groups

It was agreed that a survey would be carried out to identify which members of UCETNI institutions were members of relevant external groups.

UCET issues

The following were noted:

* The annual UCET conference would take place face to face in Stratford upon Avon on 1-2 November. Colleagues from UCETNI institutions could attend free of charge. Registrations van be made via the UCET website: [www.ucet/conference](http://www.ucet/conference).
* The Easter UCET newsletter was noted.

Arrangements for NIHELG

These were agreed.

Any other business

It was agreed that James Nelson, the current vice-chair, would serve as Chair for the 2022/23 academic year with a colleague from Stranmillis acting as Vice-Chair. Stranmillis would supply a Chair for the subsequent two years.

Roisin McPhilemy was thanked for her outstanding service of Chair for the previous three years, in particularly challenging circumstances.

Date of next meeting

To be confirmed.