

 A Registered Charity (No 275082)

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*Promoting Quality in Teacher Education*

**Minutes of the meeting of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Liaison Group meeting held at 12 noon on Monday 3 October at Queen’s University, University Road, Belfast, BT7 1NN**

Attendance

David Barr (Ulster)

Alan Boyd (DE)

Kyle Crutchley (DE)

Tricia Eaton (Stranmillis)

Ian Gallagher (GTCNI)

Martin Hagan (St. Mary’s)

Emma Hollis (NASBTT, observer)

Esther Martin (CCEA)

James Nelson (Queen’s, and Chair of meeting)

James Noble-Rogers (UCET)

Apologies

Roisin Mc Philemy (OU).

No representatives of the Department for the Economy were present.

Welcome & introductions

Colleagues were welcomed to the first meeting of the academic year.

Minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 May 2022 were agreed. There were no matters arising not already included on the agenda.

Matters arising from the morning UCETNI meeting

The following matters were raised:

* Institutions had been asked to respond individually to the DE request for contributions to the Equalities Report.
* Confirmation of when the new teacher competences would formally be introduced would, UCETNI colleagues felt, be welcomed. This might however prove to be difficult in the absence of a GTCNI Council to formally approve the new competences, although it was noted that they had previously been recommended to the Council and, to an extent, represented a re-framing and re-presentation of the existing competences rather than anything wholly new. DE colleagues stressed that, in suggesting to HEIs that they begin to consider how programmes might, if appropriate, be adjusted in the light of the new competences there were no implications for the current accreditation of programmes. The intention was more about signalling a general direction of travel. UCETNI colleagues felt however that using and referencing two sets of (albeit mappable) competences might confuse student teachers, and that the momentum behind the Learning Leaders project might be jeopardised. The key challenge was the application of the new competencies to qualified teachers rather than to ITE. The 3–4-year timescale was felt to be too long. DE and GTCNI agreed to discuss further and report back.
* It was reported that:
* Martin Hagan would become the UCETNI representative of EA’s PQH sub-group;
* Tricia Eaton would be the representative on the EA EDIS group;
* James Nelson would be the representative on the Learning Leaders communications group
* David Barr would be rep for the Learning Leaders Oversight Group
* It was agreed that the TPL consultant’s report could be shared with UCETNI members.
* Further information was requested about CCEA’s recent survey on newly qualified primary school teachers, and it was reported that the work related to the introduction of the new NI school curriculum and the extent to which new teachers were aware of it. There had been indications that some new teachers required additional support, although this did not imply any shortcomings in ITE. The informal information gathering that had taken place so far was a prelude to further work that might, subject to DE approval, be carried out. The importance of joining up support for new teachers offered by CCEA, EA, HEIs and others was noted, and it was suggested that NIHELG, possibly with an updated terms of reference and membership, might be the appropriate place to secure this.

ITE allocations for 2023/24

The importance of receiving timely notification of ITE allocations, and the impact that late notification could have on final levels of recruitment and the ability of HEIs to plan effectively, was stressed by HEI colleagues. DE said that it was trying to secure a view from relevant ministers, based on the results of Teacher Vacancy Survey, before 28 October, after which ministers might not be in place. A carrying forward of existing allocations was, subject to the views of the Department for the Economy, the preferred option. On teacher workforce planning more generally, an internal paper for discussion within DE had been drafted and was being discussed. Although significant additional resource to implement any changes might not be forthcoming, the need to address workforce planning at some stage might at least be acknowledged.

Lessons learnt from Covid

UCETNI reported that a summary of responses received from institutions was being prepared and would be circulated shortly.

Learning Leaders

The Learning Leaders Communications and Engagement sub-group had been reconvened and a meeting was scheduled to take place the following week.

Placements sub-group

UCETNI confirmed that the first meeting of the group was being arranged.

Partnership handbook

The partnership handbook, which had been published in 2010 and would be discussed at the following day’s working group meeting, was being revised and input from the HEIs was requested. Discussion took place about the relative merits of having separate contributions from each of the HEIs against one unified response.

Reports from partner organisations

The following reports were received:

* DE: Despite budgetary constraints, positive actions were being taken forward in respect of, for example, Fair Start. Ministerial decisions on key policy areas were where possible being sought from ministers before the end of October. Alan Boyd would transfer to working on work to reform/replace the GTCNI, and his responsibilities in respect of teacher education would be taken over by a new G7 (Alan was thanked for the contributions to NIHELG that he had made). Responses to the consultation on the GTCNI had been low in number, with most in favour of a new professional body of some kind. It was hoped to secure ‘in-principle’ ministerial agreement to a new policy before the end of October.
* GTCNI: Work was focussing on teacher registration and on Learning Leaders. 2022 registrations were nearly complete, with only 11% outstanding, two thirds of which had submitted registration forms but had yet to pay the fee. Post Brexit negotiations about the international recognition of professional qualifications, including teaching qualifications, would impact on the Council’s work. Northern Ireland would be subject to decisions about the recognition of overseas professional qualifications made by the Westminster parliament, which would be based on the negotiation of post-Brexit trade deals. This may require NI to recognise teaching qualifications that they might not have otherwise done.
* CCEA: Some 80 projects would be undertaken in the current year, for example in relation to Irish Medium, SEND etc. Scoping work was also being carried out to ensure that CCEA are ready to respond to emerging issues, for example on assessment, assessment design and new curriculum materials. Projects also included CPD relating to legislative changes, CPR training for teachers by the EA and the NI Ambulance service, resources on period dignity, modern languages, digital skills, climate change. The importance of coordinating with the work of HEIs was noted, and it was noted that there was already HE representation on some groups, including those relating to modern languages and digital skills.

Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 10 January 2023.