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*Promoting Quality in Teacher Education*

**UCET NI Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting of the UCET NI Committee held at 10.00am on Tuesday 10 January at Queen’s University, University Road, Belfast, BT7 1NN**

Attendance

David Barr (Ulster)

Tricia Eaton (Stranmillis)

Martin Hagan (St. Mary’s)

Kevin Mattinson (UCET, via Teams)

Daniel Muijs (Queen’s)

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

James Noble-Rogers (UCET, via Teams))

Apologies

Jonathan Heggarty (Stranmillis)

Roisin McPhilemy (Open University in Ireland)

Welcome & introductions

Colleagues were welcomed to the second meeting of the academic year. Kevin Mattinson from Birmingham City University was welcomed in his capacity as Chair of UCET.

Minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2022 were, subject to the correction of some typographical errors, agreed. On matters arising: a summary of responses on lessons learnt by ITE providers in response to Covid had been submitted to the ITE Working Group; feedback from the UCET conference, which had been attended by several UCETNI members, has been positive; and appeals by English ITE providers against non-accreditation following the ITE Market Review had all been unsuccessful.

Members of UCETNI asked that their congratulations to former UCETNI Vice Chair Anne Heaslett on her appointment in the new year honours list as an MBE be recorded in the minutes.

Institutional updates

The following updates were received:

* St. Mary’s: School placements have been secured for all students.
* Open University: Work focussed on the provision of CPD opportunities for teachers, although ITE provision continued in Wales.
* Stranmillis: Good progress is being made in regards to placements. Interviews for 2023/24 students will begin soon.
* Queen’s: ITE staff are visiting students in school. The first year of the new health & social care programme is progressing well, with students being welcomed by schools. Meetings have taken place with other ITE providers to discuss various issues of joint concern. Recruitment in 2023 shows a drop in applications in some subjects which have been struggling to recruit to their target number in recent years. The context remains challenging as a result of bursaries for ITE in England, more lucrative careers for STEM graduates in other employment routes. The situation is also being made more difficult because of the late notification of ITE intake numbers.
* Ulster: Recruitment to programmes for 2023/24 has begun slowly.

Independent Review of Education

The interim report of the review was noted. Although it said little about ITE, it did include references to the importance of CPD. The direction of travel in regards to a single education system, and issues that would have implications for ITE such as SEND, was however clear. A number of ITE providers already had, it was noted, SEND placement opportunities for student teachers.

ITE allocations

There were continued concerns about the delays in allocating ITE intake numbers for 2023/24, and about the possible implications for allocations of budgetary constraints. It was however pointed out that in the absence of ministers it would be difficult for officials to impose any cuts in numbers. Delays in making firm offers because of the absence of allocations had led to some potential ITE recruits being lost. Rather than reducing numbers, it was felt by some that there was a case for increasing numbers, particularly in some subject areas. The number of teachers training outside Northern Ireland and registering with GTCNI (some 40% of the total number of graduating ITE students) was felt to be an issue, suggesting an over-reliance on teachers trained elsewhere. The implications of the UK government’s overseas qualifications recognition scheme, particularly in regards to teachers from West African countries, was also noted.

Teacher competencies

Proposals from DE that providers gradually reflect the new teacher competencies in ITE programmes had been resisted on the grounds that having two sets of competencies would be confusing for students and would exacerbate the lack of synergy between ITE and professional development carried out in schools. The competencies might also be changed in the light of consultation and legislative processes. The principles and intention of the new slimmed down competencies were however to be welcomed and UCETNI would seek to work in tandem with DE. Funding to support the introduction of the new competencies across the education sector was likely to be required.

Reports from sub-groups

The following reports were received:

* Placements: The inaugural meeting took place on 9 December. There was support for greater co-ordination by HEIs of mentoring support, and for an annual DE event celebrating the involvement of schools in ITE. The geographical spread of placements was felt to be a reflection of market demand. Any responsibility for coordinating the timing of placement activity should, it was felt, be led by DE rather than the placements group. Following the report, there was some discussion about the merits of funding schools to offer placement opportunities.
* PQH: The group met 3 times before Christmas and is now chaired by John Unsworth. There was a consensus that the existing NPQ was too operationally focussed and that more criticality is required. A master’s level four module programme is one possible option, with DE potentially providing funding for the more operationally-focussed modules. Head teachers should, it was suggested, as a matter of principle have a Master’s level leadership qualification. Access to, and the interrelationship between, modules offered by different organisations should be considered. It was agreed that Martin Hagan would co-ordinate an audit of Master’s level leadership programmes offered by HEIs in Northern Ireland to inform further discussions.
* EDIS: Discussions had covered the development of a replacement for NISTR; the shortcomings of the transition to the new substitute teacher register; the replacement of C2K contracts and the provision of ICT support for schools.
* DE ITE Working Group: Key issues covered at the 4 October meeting included: the work of the UCETNI placements sub-group and options for coordinating student placements; the draft teacher education partnership handbook; the request by some partner schools for feedback on the performance of students in previous placements and the difficulties associated with this; the new teacher competencies; and the consultation on the future of the GTCNI.
* Learning Leaders Communications: Terms of Reference for the group have been agreed and a detailed communications plan has been submitted by DE colleagues. Discussion has taken place about what the key messages should be. The plan and associated messages would be submitted to the Oversight Group for approval. There were concerns that too few teachers are aware of Learning Leaders, and that in any case the strategy (as published in 2016) had been to an extent overtaken by events. For example, the original strategy was almost entirely aspirational, and there had been a number of subsequent developments that could be linked to the strategy and add flesh to its bones. It was suggested that the strategy be refreshed and relaunched with fewer key messages. Funding for implementation would it was felt be required.

UCET issues

The December 2022 UCET newsletter was noted.

Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting

12 May 2023 (Senate room, Queen’s University).