

813 PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS

813.1 Attendance, Apologies for Absence & Chairing

Membership: Nick Buckland (Chair)

Gareth Dace
Paula Davis
Leah Markee
John McNamara
Tony Medhurst
Mary Pooley
Anatoliy Strembitskyy

In Attendance: Sabrina Ahmed-Qureshi, Director of Quality & Learning Innovation
Jayne Chaplin, Clerk to the Corporation
Katrina Dougherty, Vice Principal Enterprise & Innovation
Angela McLean, Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality
Henry Simmons, Curriculum Coordinator, Media, Music & Performing Arts

Apologies: Mia Young

All were welcomed to the meeting

813.2 Declarations of Interest & Confidential Items

There were no Declarations of Interest or confidential items.

813.3 Briefing: WorldSkills and Competitions

In the context of the development of workplace skills and preparation for work, a briefing was provided giving an overview of the College promotion of learner participation in industry recognised competitions, explaining:

- a. The benefits to learners of competition activity notably in increasing engagement, the promotion of active learning, encouraging reflection, confidence and independence as well as providing purpose and context in the development of workplace skills
- b. WorldSkills UK and Learning Lab, highlighting competitions entries during 2024/25 and the recent success in the SkillsBuild competition
- c. Next steps, noted to include more locally designed competitions and embedding into pedagogy and increased entry numbers

Questioning and discussion included:

- d. The likelihood of learner drop-out observing the time period over which the WorldSkills competitions were held. Whilst acknowledged to represent a risk, members were advised how as an employer-led competition, learner participation was encouraged with the benefits highlighted of not only the opportunities for engagement with employers but also in the development of a mind-set of continuous improvement that such competitions embodied

- e. The most likely reasons for inhibiting learner participation, noted to be time with focus on studies prioritised and whilst recognised, the value of the wider advantages of such competitions in the development of skills were emphasised
- f. The credibility and recognition of such competitions in showcasing skills acquired, highlighting the skills to be of industry quality with the competitions developed and based on co-design and criteria set and judged by employers

The Curriculum Coordinator, Media, Music & Performing Arts was thanked for an interesting and informative presentation.

The Curriculum Coordinator, Media, Music & Performing Arts left the meeting.

813.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting & Matters Arising

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record and the application of the Chair's signature was authorised.

It was confirmed that there were no matters arising or outstanding actions on which to report.

814 2025-26 – In Year Performance Monitoring

814.1 Quality Monitoring & Improvement

After observing those items covered elsewhere on the Agenda (Minutes 813.3 and 814.3 refer) an overview was provided of quality monitoring, improvements and developments.

Focused on the measures and activities for further developing the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and learner skills the report was considered. Questioning and discussion included:

- a. Progress with the Quality Improvement Plan, welcoming the clarity of the report. After acknowledging the areas of clear emerging impact and those where enhanced focus remained due to some inconsistencies across curriculum areas:
 - It was observed how numbers to support the current position in the context of baseline data would facilitate more scrutiny and discussion of progress and impact, requesting the inclusion of such information in future reports
 - Member queried further the ways in which progress was measured, recorded and triangulated to also allow comparison to national sector benchmarks including engagement with employers, to inform the priorities for those skills learners would require and need to develop. Explaining how the data recorded was not all numerical, highlighting the value in the capturing of detail to evidence the quality of the experience, members then were referred to other metrics of performance reported elsewhere on the agenda. Acknowledging members' observations however, it was agreed that whilst avoiding duplication of information, further consideration would be given to data for inclusion in future reports to facilitate members' review this regard
- b. In the context of earlier discussions of the WorldSkills Competition, the College's further activities, highlighting the launch of the College Skills for Success framework, notably the Award Ceremonies that had taken place across the campuses demonstrating increased visibility and parental engagement, reporting on positive feedback from learners and families; and the College's recent work with media students and marketing.

Following discussion, the activity and developments were noted.

814.2 Enrolment Update

After summarising the current position for enrolment, application and progression numbers into 2026/27, for all College provision, discussion focused:

- a. On the increases in 2026/27 applications for 16-18 Study Programmes compared to the same time last year then questioning:
 - Any particular factors underlying the increase in numbers, noting to be not solely attributed to demographics with analysis highlighting a combination of reasons, including the College's positive reputation and the inclusivity and nature of its curriculum offer meeting student needs, notably at lower level provision, indicating growth at those levels. Members then explored and reflected on the experience of neighbouring colleges, noting whilst similar it was not necessarily as positive.
 - The decrease in offers and acceptance compared with the same period in the previous year and as the predominant provision, the importance of conversion to enrolments observing the 64% conversion rate for 25/26. After recognising it potentially to be a timing issue, the action being taken to be able to proceed to directly to the making of an offer was explored, noting plans to simplify the process after review highlighted where applicants either were not booking interview slots available on the College website or not always attending once booked, which it was observed may also have a positive impact on conversion rates.
- b. On the reasons for and impact on Adult full-time enrolment of funding changes and the move to T Levels explaining how alternative options were being considered in line with curriculum reforms.
- c. More generally on entry routes, growth, interest and investment in the context of the College responding to stakeholder and local community need:
 - Noting after an initial reluctance, how schools were engaging positively
 - Highlighting for learners that otherwise would be disengaged with education, 14-16 provision providing successful pathways into further education with the College, and as a lesser known area of College activity, proposing for this to form the subject of a Committee briefing at a future meeting
 - Discussing the nature of the interaction of the Chamber with colleges regarding the skills agenda more widely and Local Skills Improvement Plan in particular

The update was noted.

814.3 Strategic Objectives & Business Planning

The current position for performance to date was summarised, particularly highlighting:

- a. The 96.4% Retention rate for all funded Education and Training learners, comparable with the rate recorded at the same point in the previous year
- b. The 87.3% Attendance rate, noting whilst below College 95% aspirational target the rate was a 2.4% improvement on the overall rate recorded in the same period in 24/25 attributed to an increase in vocational and English and maths combined attendance
- c. Of curriculum developments and activity, the feedback from the strategy sessions at the Corporation Conference in January 2026 and the planning underway for 2026/27

Discussion focused on:

- d. Attendance as a national issue, experience of approaches elsewhere and Ofsted's focus on context and the need to demonstrate inclusion. Recognising the improved College rate and the positive impact of the remedial targeted interventions in those areas of traditionally lower rates members then queried what further action could be taken, especially to improve attendance at English and maths. Recognising the position was not as desired and after highlighting the particular factors impacting on attendance, members were advised of the focus on ongoing challenge and swift intervention and action, including via:
 - Targeted texting and liaison with parents and focus on addressing negative perceptions through reinforcement of the benefits of English and maths
 - Collaboration between departments and timetabling to encourage attendance
- e. The in year retention rate for Apprenticeships below that recorded for the same period in the previous year, particularly highlighting the impact of loss of employment mid programme and some previous staffing issues. It was confirmed however that focus remained on delivery
- f. The 2024/25 Destinations data which at 94.6% showed improvement on 23/24 and 22/23 and how the dominant destination remained further education (FE). Observing how such information would be useful for all Board members in the context of focus in this regard in the College Accountability Agreement and the Government Industrial Strategy, and by Ofsted during inspections, it was agreed that this would be recommended for the Julu 2026 Board meeting

Following review, year to date performance was noted.

815 Regulatory & Compliance

811.1 Policies: Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)

An existing policy, it was noted that a recommendation of Board for approval was proposed, based on the nature of national changes, to ensure all members remained up-to date and knowledgeable about and had confidence in College SEND provision and its arrangements.

Highlighting that with SEND now the subject of particular focus in Ofsted inspections, amendments were proposed focused on enhancing the Policy through the inclusion of clear processes for EHCP reviews, transition arrangements, and multi-agency working and the expansion of the Learning Support Manager responsibilities to strengthen quality assurance and data tracking.

After minor suggestions for consideration to the sections on General Data Protection Regulations and role of the Board and Senior Leadership Team, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- a. **RECOMMEND** Board **APPROVAL** of the updated SEND Policy

816 OTHER BUSINESS & NEXT MEETING

816.1 Any Other business

None reported

816.2 Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 10 June 2026, 5.30pm