



Belfast Metropolitan College Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

3.00pm 9 Sept 2025 at Titanic Quarter Board Room and via Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Committee Members: Bill Montgomery (Chair); Sinead Sharpe (online), and Maurice Keedy (online).

Management: Damian Duffy, Interim Principal & Chief Executive (PCE); Aidan Sloane, Chief Operating Officer (COO); Laura Allen, Head of Finance (HoF); Lisa McCartney, Head of Corporate Development (HCD).

Auditors: Joanne Lipton, NIAO (on-line) Barney Doyle, RSM UK; and Pauline Wilson DfE

Observers: None

Secretary to the Governing Body: Jim Woods

**AC01
25-26**

Quorum: The meeting was quorate under the terms of Section 2 of Belfast Metropolitan College Audit and Risk Assurance Committee: Terms of Reference approved 11 December 2024 (3 governors).

Apologies: Apologies received from Ian McCartney.

Welcome: To Mr Barney Doyle RSM who is deputising for I McCartney

Conflicts of Interest: There were no conflicts of interest declared under the terms of Section 8.1 of the Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body Standing Orders V5 dated June 2022 (GB81a 21/22 22 June 2022).

Leadership Culture – Those present were asked to conduct the meeting via Creative and Courageous Conversation in an ‘atmosphere’ OR ‘culture’ of challenge and respect in line with our Code of Conduct

AC02 25-26	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025</p> <p>The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meetings a true record.</p>
AC03 25-26	<p>Matters Arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025</p> <p>There were no matters arising that are not on the agenda of this governance meeting.</p>
AC04 25-26	<p>Governance Guidance and Information</p> <p>A circular had been issued with the papers in respect of preparing accounts for 2024/25.</p> <p>The Committee noted receipt of the information.</p>
AC05 25-26	<p>Notification of change to the internal control environment under Section 12d of Governing Body Standing Orders V5 22 June 2022.</p> <p>No Update was provided under this section.</p>
AC06 25-26	<p>Chair's Business</p> <p>Bill Montgomery as Interim Chair asked COO to introduce the item on Fraud Risk Assessment which had been issued with the papers and was in line with best practice. HoF then stepped members through the approach which highlighted potential for risks and fraud. Members were assured that added control processes had been introduced prior to bank accounts being introduced. Members approved the process that was to be reviewed every two years noting that a live risk register is maintained.</p> <p>This afternoon a letter had been received from DfE outlining that the minister had approved a change which will see the financial year end move from 31 July to 31 March. P Wilson outline that should DfE received the necessary assurances from colleges that 2005-26 would be a transition year. Members noted the potential alignment of financial years.</p>
AC07 25-26	<p>Summary Financial Report for 2024/25</p> <p>The HoF took members through the report which was a substantive item at the Resources Committee. The report relayed that the College ended the year in a strong financial position, specifically when compared to the previous financial year. COO thanked HoF and her team who had worked tirelessly with NIAO to complete the financial statements.</p> <p>The Committee noted the information provided and action taken by Management.</p>
AC08 25-26	<p>NIAO Office</p> <p>NIAO outlined a timetable in which the audit of accounts will be conducted; work is commencing at the end of September.</p> <p>The Committee noted the Audit commitment provided by NIAO.</p>

<p>AC09 25-26</p>	<p>RSM Internal Audit Business</p> <p>B Doyle presented the Annual Internal Audit Report, 25 August 2025, assuring members that overall, there is a satisfactory system of governance and risk management and control. He added that any residual risk does not impact on the achievement of system objectives.</p> <p>In relation to follow up on audits, RSM are of the opinion that Belfast Metropolitan College has demonstrated good progress in implementing agreed management actions.</p> <p>The Committee noted the positive information provided by Internal Audit.</p>
<p>AC10 25-26</p>	<p>Compliance Reporting Q4 2024/25</p> <p>COO reported that no losses, special payments or new whistleblowing disclosures were reported in Q4 2024/25. The committee was asked to note a direct award contract (DAC) in relation to Unit 4 Business World, the finance system for the NI FE sector. A contract with Intersect supported by Hennessy IT had been approved by DfE and is currently being processed through Central Procurement Directorate.</p> <p>Nine data breaches were confirmed, mainly due to misdirected communications and software issues. None had warranted reporting to the ICO. Eight have been resolved one is still open. Management committed to presenting the information in a more readable format by merging some of the data for the report.</p> <p>Members sought trend analysis for the next meeting and categorisation of the breaches to assess areas for improvement. Members advised that consideration should be given to conducting a future internal audit.</p> <p>The Committee to approve the report provided and the follow up action taken to be taken by Management.</p>
<p>AC11 25-26</p>	<p>Status of Outstanding Audit Recommendations Q3</p> <p>At the end of Q4 2024/25 six audit recommendations are still outstanding, with three new IT recommendations added and three recommendations successfully closed out this quarter. Management continues to prioritise prompt resolution and progressed will be reported to the committee on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>The Committee <u>noted</u> the information provided on outstanding audit recommendations and the actions taken by Management.</p>
<p>AC12 25-26</p>	<p>Risk Management Report</p> <p>Status of Corporate Risk Register Report 2024/25.</p> <p>HCD presented the risk register to members, reporting that ELT had recently undertaken a review of corporate risk at the end of Q4.</p>

	The Committee approved the Corporate Risk Register Q4 2024/25 and recommended that it be presented to the Governing Body. One risk has been downgraded from black to amber considering the lecturer dispute being resolved, while others stayed the same.
AC13 25-26	<p>Meeting Feedback</p> <p>Committee members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members concluded that the meeting had been conducted in line with the responsibilities of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee; and Members agreed that the conduct of this governance meeting provided evidence of good challenging conversation aligned to the Governing Body’s commitments as set out at AC01 25-26 above.
AC14 24/25	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>No other notified business had been received.</p> <p>Meeting end at around 4.35pm</p>
AC15 24/25	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Governance Programme 2025-26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25 November 2025

Governing Body Attendance Report and Governing Body Member Assessment 2025-26	
Participation at AC01 25-26 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Meeting 9 September 2025	
In-person at TQ Boardroom	via MS Teams
Bill Montgomery	Maurice Keady
	Sinead Sharpe

Date 25 November 2025

Bill Montgomery