

Belfast Metropolitan College Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

3.00pm 3 March 2026 at Titanic Quarter Board Room and via Microsoft Teams

Minutes

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

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

Auditors: Caroline Laird, NIAO (online); and David Archibald, HLCA (online)

Observers: Pauline Wilson, DfE (online)

Secretary to the Governing Body: Jim Woods

**AC32
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: None

Welcome: A welcome was extended to Hadessa McCusker Deputy Head of Finance.

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.

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

AC33 25-26	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2025</p> <p>The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held 25 November 2025 were agreed as a true record.</p>
AC34 25-26	<p>Matters Arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2025</p> <p>There were no matters arising that are not on the agenda of this governance meeting.</p>
AC35 25-26	<p>Governance Guidance and Information</p> <p>Four matters of guidance had been presented as part of the packs.</p> <p>In relation to the BMC 2025-26 Final Report, members were assured that the fixed assets are being reviewed, and a sector-wide paper on depreciation policy will be presented to NIFON this week to agree the way forward aligned to NIAO feedback to the sector.</p> <p>In relation to the reporting instructions 2025-26, there are a number of key deadlines for the 12- and 8-month accounting periods pertaining to the new statutory year-end date of 31st March.</p> <p>In relation to the NIAO Accounts 2025-26, NIAO informed the committee that groundwork is scheduled for August 2026.</p>
AC36 25-26	<p>Notification of change to the internal control environment under Section 12d of Governing Body Standing Orders.</p> <p>There were no notifications to changes in the control environment.</p>
AC37 25-26	<p>Chair's Business</p> <p>There was no Chair's business.</p>
AC38 25-26	<p>Summary Financial Report for period 9 - 31 December 2025</p> <p>COO presented the report which confirmed the College is in a strong financial position, forecasting a balanced budget to 31 March 2026. Members sought an explanation for variance analysis in some areas of expenditure. Members were advised that the variance has been tracked from period 1.</p> <p>The committee noted the report and update provided by management.</p>
AC39 25-26	<p>Northern Ireland Audit Office</p>

	<p>The Committee was advised that the NIAO would be committing to meet the agreed deadlines.</p> <p>The Committee noted the update from NIAO.</p>
AC40 25-26	<p>Internal Audit Business</p> <p>The internal Auditor advised that three reviews have commenced. The Annual Strategic plan was also presented which detailed reporting areas that would comprise college specific reports and composite reports. All work related to the current year is scheduled to be completed by May 2026. The committee was assured that priorities will be reviewed when the first reports are received.</p> <p>The Committee noted the information provided by Henderson Loggie.</p>
AC41 25-26	<p>Compliance Reporting Q2 2025-26</p> <p>HCD took members through the report in detail. The Committee focused on losses and special payments and noted that an additional layer of control has been built into the process for such circumstances.</p> <p>The Committee drilled down into data breaches which had increased when compared to last year. HCD explained that all had been dealt within 72 hours and that none had met the threshold to be reported to the Information Commissioner. Members were assured that training is ongoing to address the root causes.</p> <p>The Committee approved the report provided and the follow up action taken to be taken by Management.</p>
AC42 25-26	<p>Status of Outstanding Audit Recommendations</p> <p>HCD took members through the outstanding recommendations explaining that three outstanding recommendations, are being actively addressed.</p> <p>The Committee <u>noted</u> the progress the approved the outstanding audit recommendations and the actions taken by Management.</p>
AC43 25-26	<p>Risk Management Report Q2</p> <p>HCD reported that the corporate Risk Register has been reviewed by the executive team. Accordingly, one risk in relation to the Juniper HR system reaching end of life in November 2025 has been added. The Committee were advised that this was a sector issue and was being addressed accordingly.</p> <p>One risk, the failure to meet enrolment targets has been reduced in light of 92% of the target having been achieved at this stage.</p>

	<p>One risk in relation to mainstream SEN support has been increased due to demand, 6-week turnround of the process and increasing expenditure over and above that allocated in ring fenced funding.</p> <p>The Committee approved the Corporate Risk Register Q2 2025-26 and recommended that it be presented to the Governing Body. One risk in relation to Cybersecurity has been retained as a black risk.</p>
AC44 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 AC32 25-26 above. • The meeting ended at 4:10
AC30 24/25	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Governance Programme 2025-26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 June 2026

Governing Body Attendance Report and Governing Body Member Assessment 2025-26	
Participation at AC17 25-26 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Meeting 3 March 2026	
In-person at TQ Boardroom	via MS Teams
Bill Montgomery	Maurice Keedy
William Buckley	Sinead Sharpe
	Rose Byrne

Signed: _____

Dated : 2 June 2026

Mr Bill Montgomery, Chair.