

Belfast Metropolitan College Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

3.00pm 25 November 2025 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, Interim Principal & Chief Executive (PCE) (online); Aidan Sloane, Chief Operating Officer (COO); Laura Allen, Head of Finance (HoF); Lisa McCartney, Head of Corporate Development (HCD).

Auditors: Cathy Doey, NIAO; and David Archibald, HLCA

Observers: Heather Sampson, DfE

Secretary to the Governing Body: Jim Woods

**AC17
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 William Buckley a new GB & ARAC Committee member and David Archibald, Internal Auditors, Henderson Loggie

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

AC18 25-26	Minutes of the meeting held on 9 Sept 2025 The Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held 9 Sept were agreed as a true record.
AC19 25-26	Matters Arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 9 Sept 2025 There were no matters arising that are not on the agenda of this governance meeting.
AC20 25-26	Governance Guidance and Information The Secretary advised that an initial meeting had taken place with the new Internal Auditors Henderson Loggie following their appointment as internal auditors for the FE sector. The ARAC TOR have been updated in terms of membership and the new internal auditors. The updated TOR was approved subject to aligning the scheduling of the various business responsibilities of the ARAC.
AC21 25-26	Notification of change to the internal control environment under Section 12d of Governing Body Standing Orders. The latest communication on the change in financial year was circulated to members. The College is gearing up to a 31 March 2026 year end.
AC22 25-26	Chair's Business The Chair welcomed the new internal auditors and William Buckley who was attending his first meeting as a co-opted Governor.
AC23 25-26	NIAO opinion on the Financial Accounts 2024-25 Kathy Doey took members through NIAO report which provided that the accounts are certified with an unqualified audit opinion without modification. She wished to record her thanks to the work of the finance team which had been very supportive throughout the process. There is one priority one recommendation to finalise and review fully depreciated assets in consideration if appropriate useful economic life of non-property assets. Management will work with the sector and DFE to review depreciation policy by 31 March 2026 ARAC reviewed the findings set out in the report including the draft letter of representation and audit certificate. The Committee noted that the College has planned to address the treatment of assets prior to the accounts being produced to 31 March 2026. The College will continue to work with DfE and other Colleges to review the FE sector depreciation policy.

	<p>The Committee noted that the incorreced misstatement set out in the Misstatement and irregular expenditure are not material and have no impact on the Annual Report and Accounts. The Committee were content to endorse management actions.</p> <p>The Committee approved the accounts and recommended them to the Governing Body.</p>
AC24 25-26	<p>Internal Auditors – Henderson Loggie</p> <p>David Archibald, the audit partner with Henderson Loggie formally introduction and provide an overview of his company which has considerable experience in Further and Higher Education. He provided a detailed overview of service including three-year plan which is compiled utilising Global Internal Audit Standards and College strategic risks. He assured the Committee that although there was a three-year plan it was subject to an annual review and apply flexibility to changing circumstances.</p> <p>The Committee approved the Internal Audit plan and agreed to review progress with HL during March/April.</p>
AC25 25-26	<p>Financial Results to 30 September 2025 Accounting Period 6 and NDPB Month 6</p> <p>COO presented the statements which he explained has been subject to a deep dive at the Resources Committee. The statements presented a positive picture and forecast the College coming in on budget at year end.</p> <p>The Committee noted the positive information provided by Management.</p>
AC26 25-26	<p>Compliance Reporting Q1 2025-26</p> <p>HCD took members through the report in detail. A focus on data breaches provided analysis in the context of the 2024-25 year. In response to questions, HCD outlined the robust process used to treat FOI requests with her team and the College.</p> <p>The Committee approved the report_provided and the follow up action taken to be taken by Management.</p>
AC27 25-26	<p>Status of Outstanding Audit Recommendations</p> <p>HCD took members through the outstanding recommendations explaining that at the end of 2024-25 six recommendations were carried forward with two successfully completed. 4 recommendations will be closed in the second quarter.</p> <p>The Committee <u>noted</u> the information provided on outstanding audit recommendations and the actions taken by Management.</p>
AC28 25-26	<p>Risk Management Report</p> <p>HCD reported that the corporate Risk Register identifies nine high level risks, including new risks relating to failure to capitalise on the potential of AI, climate reporting effective delivery</p>

	<p>of agreed sustainability and climate action framework and failure to deliver quality outcomes. As part of an annual review by the ELT one risk was closed and several were revised. The Committee were assured that all risk were actively managed by ELT/SLT with controls in place to support strategic objectives.</p> <p>The Committee approved the Corporate Risk Register Q1 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>
AC29 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 AC18 25-26 above.
AC30 24/25	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Governance Programme 2025-26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 March 2026

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