



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

19 AUGUST 2020

SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

2:00pm

Present: Dr Caoímhe Archibald (Chairperson)
Ms Sinéad McLaughlin (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Gordon Dunne MBE
Mr Gary Middleton
Mr John O'Dowd
Mr John Stewart
Ms Claire Sugden

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Christopher Stalford

The meeting began at 2:05pm in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Oral Briefing from the Department for the Economy: Northern Ireland University Admissions 2020

The officials joined the meeting at 2.08pm

Members received a briefing from:

Heather Cousins	Head of Skills and Education Group, Department for the Economy
Jim Wilkinson	Apprenticeships, Careers & Vocational Education, Department for the Economy
Philip Cromie	Finance and Strategic Co-ordination, Department for the Economy

Key issues discussed included: the difficulty in creating additional places, the need to bid through the Executive for additional funding, the situation of more students wanting to stay local and the need to work with the Sector to ensure places are allocated.

The officials left the meeting at 3.04pm

Agreed: to invite the Minister to provide an update at next week's meeting regarding the impacts of the results situation on the Further and Higher Education sectors.

3. Oral Briefing from Queens University Belfast & Ulster University: Northern Ireland University Admissions 2020

The witnesses joined the meeting at 3.05pm

Members received a briefing from:

Mrs Jo Clague	Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, QUB
Prof Paul Bartholomew	Vice Chancellor, Ulster University

Key issues discussed included: the extra pressure the current situation will place on local Universities, the need to find solutions for all Students, the increase in offers made in 2020 and the extra funding that will be needed and the importance the HE sector has on the Northern Ireland Economy.

The witnesses left the meeting at 4.31pm

Agreed: to write to QUB seeking clarification on the impact of the loss of International Students, and details regarding the additional places the University has offered for 2020 above the number offered in 2019.

4. Any Other Business

Members discussed the issue of the forthcoming BTEC results.

Agreed: to write to the Department seeking an urgent update.

Members discussed the role of Invest NI during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Agreed: to write to Invest NI seeking an update on their Covid-19 response plan and the impact it has had on their programmes and the current situation regarding job losses.

Agreed: to invite the Minister to brief the Committee on the current situation regarding the Department's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and EU Exit.

5. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 26th August 2020 in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 4.48pm

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
26th August 2020