



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 04 NOVEMBER 2016

14:00hrs, Boardroom, Sighthill Campus

Present: C Arthur; N Black; A Bruton; A Clark; A Landels; J Harkin; E Lee (Acting Chair); N Manning; J Russell; J Sales; D Tait; C Turnbull.

In attendance: J Buglass; A Craig; P Davis; M Hoenigmann; S-J Linton; M Walker (Clerk)

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Committee NOTED apologies from Iris Aitchison and Adam Wilson.
- 1.2 The Acting Chair welcomed newly co-opted academic staff and student members to the meeting. The Committee NOTED that revisions to the Academic Council's membership would be considered under item 5.1.
- 1.3 The Acting Chair informed the Committee that Sandra Cairncross, Chair of the Academic Council since June 2015, had recently stepped down from the Board of Management. On behalf of Committee members, the Acting Chair thanked Dr Cairncross for convening the Academic Council and further refining its strategic function.
- 1.4 The Acting Chair also, on behalf of the Committee, wished to thank Kate Just, Jack Evans and Jakki Jeffrey who had all stepped down from their role as co-opted member in June 2016.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were received.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 The Committee APPROVED the minutes of the Academic Council from 03 June 2016 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 MATTERS ARISING REPORT

4.1.1 The Committee NOTED actions from the last meeting of the Academic Council were either marked complete or on the agenda, with the exception of:

4.1.2 Learning Engagement Framework (*Minute 4.1.1/03.06.16 refers*)

The Committee NOTED that representatives of the Students' Association would provide a presentation on the development of a Learning Engagement Framework at its next meeting on 20 January.

4.2 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE OPERATION

4.2.1 The Committee NOTED a finalised version of the Review of Committee Operation 2015/16, as agreed by Members outwith the meeting.

5 TERMS OF REFERENCE

5.1 The Committee NOTED a revised Academic Council terms of reference, as proposed by the former Chair of the Academic Council to realign its co-opted membership. The Acting Chair outlined amendments to increase academic staff representation, from six to eight members, and maintain student representation at its existing level.

5.2 The Committee NOTED that in order for revisions to the co-opted membership to be made in advance of the 04 November meeting, Board members had endorsed the proposal outwith the Board meeting cycle.

5.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the revised terms of reference and AGREED to endorse the amendments outlined.

6 COLLEGE GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW

6.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Governance Director on college governance and the role of the Academic Council.

6.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the Code of Good Governance Principles relating to the quality of the student experience, and the emphasis placed on student engagement, relevant and high quality learning, and monitoring/oversight of quality.

6.3 The Committee NOTED code of conduct principles concerning conflict of interest and confidentiality.

6.4 The Acting Chair thanked the Governance Director for her overview of governance, and the Committee AGREED that the presentation slides should be circulated to all Academic Council members for future reference.

The Governance Director left the meeting

7 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION PLAN

7.1 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION PLAN UPDATE

- 7.1.1 The Committee NOTED an update from the Principal on progress relating to the Business Transformation Plan. The Principal informed the Committee that the Strategic Programme Board, the executive body which oversee the day-to-day management of the plan, continued to meet every eight weeks and report to the Board through the Policy & Resources Committee.
- 7.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the Principal had undertaken a number of staff briefings on the weeks commencing 24 & 31 October, which aimed to provide staff at all four campuses with an update on key areas of the transformation plan, including: curriculum development; recruitment and retention; and finances. The Committee DISCUSSED staffs response to the briefing sessions, and acknowledged the efforts of the Principal to visit each campus and conduct multiple sessions.
- 7.1.3 The Committee NOTED that it would receive further updates on the transformation plan, relating to matters within its remit, at its meeting on 17 March 2017.

7.2 RECRUITMENT & RETENTION REPORT

- 7.2.1 The Committee NOTED an update on the College's performance against its 2016/17 credit targets, as of 21 October. The Assistant Principal Curriculum Design and Development informed the Committee of actions currently been undertaken by colleagues to ensure the College meets its semester 1 targets.
- 7.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the College's performance against it credits targets, and the Principal reassured members that significant efforts were being made to ensure their achievement.

The Principal left the meeting

- 7.2.3 The Committee NOTED early retention figures which had shown improvement on the previous academic year (to date), and DISCUSSED the work undertaken by the College to longitudinally improve retention. The Assistant Principal informed the Committee that as part of the transformation plan, ECSA had been leading an innovative collaborative approach ('Stay the Course') with senior management to identify students at risk of withdrawing from their course. The Committee AGREED that it would welcome a presentation on the 'Stay the Course' initiative at its next meeting.
- 7.2.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the process by which Learning Development Tutors (LDTs) and Curriculum Managers deal with withdrawing students. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance informed the Committee of Curriculum Managers roles in signing off student withdrawals, to ensure that all avenues were considered before a student's departure, and the delays that can arise from this additional level of process. The Committee AGREED that the Head of Policy, Planning & Performance and the Head of Support for

Learning should review the process to ensure that withdrawing students are dealt with in a timely manner, and report back to the next meeting of the Committee.

7.3 CURRICIULUM PROGRAMME REPORT

- 7.3.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Assistant Principal, Curriculum Design and Development, on curriculum planning and design. The presentation outlined the steps involved in building the curriculum, the shape of the college and the region going forward, and future opportunities and innovations within the curriculum.
- 7.3.2 The Committee NOTED the skills priorities within the region and areas of economic growth. The Assistant Principal highlighted that STEM and Financial Services were the key drivers of regional skills priorities. The Committee welcomed the inclusion of 'Arts' within STE(A)M, as it illustrated a wider recognition design and creativity within the STEM curriculum.
- 7.3.3 The Committee DISCUSSED links between curriculum development and the College's efforts to meeting its Regional Outcome Agreement and financial targets, including the expansion of apprenticeship provision in key areas.
- 7.3.4 On behalf of the Committee, the Acting Chair thanked the Assistant Principal for outlining the extensive work undertaken by the College to enhance its curriculum.

8 REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT (ROA)

8.1 ROA SELF-EVALUATION 2016

- 8.1.1 The Committee NOTED that in order for the ROA Self-Evaluation Report 2016 to be submitted to the SFC on 07 November, the Board had delegated the responsibility for its approval to the Academic Council.
- 8.1.2 The Committee NOTED the ROA Self-Evaluation Report and the College's under-performance against 2015/16 outturn. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance informed the Committee that, although the outturn figures were disappointing, the College would commence 2016/17 with a much more realistic and achievable outturn for the current academic year.
- 8.1.3 The Committee NOTED attainment and retention in 2015/16, in particularly a 5.6% increase in full-time FE student attainment, which was above both the College target and sector average. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance also highlighted that student achievement on full-time HE student attainment remained above the sector average.
- 8.1.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the ROA and its mapping to the Business Transformation Plan, along with initial feedback from the recent review of the plan by Scott-Moncrieff.
- 8.1.5 The Committee APPROVED the ROA Self-Evaluation Report 2016 for submission to the SFC. The Acting Chair thanked the Board and the SFC for providing the Academic Council with the opportunity to review the document before its submission.

8.2 SFC GUIDANCE ON COLLEGE QUALITY ARRANGEMENTS

- 8.2.1 The Committee NOTED an update on SFC Guidance on College Quality Arrangement for 2016/17. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance informed the Committee that Education Scotland and the SFC were working collaboratively to create a new model for Validated Self-Evaluation, which was in the process of being rolled out across the sector.
- 8.2.2 The Committee NOTED pre-emptive changes introduced by the College to meet the needs of the new self-evaluation requirements. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance advised the Committee that four of Education Scotland's key principles already matched with programmes within the Business Transformation Plan.
- 8.2.3 The Committee NOTED the efforts of the Executive Team to pull together recommendation from the ROA self-evaluation, Education Scotland AEV and the recent review of the transformation plan. The Acting Chair welcomed the consolidation of such recommendations, which would allow the College to move forward in a coherent manner.

9 EDUCATION SCOTLAND ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED the main findings of the Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit (AEV), as conducted on 15 & 16 May 2016, and the main points for action arising.
- 9.2 The Committee NOTED an action plan in response to the AEV main action points, which would remain in place and be monitored through ongoing engagement between the College and Education Scotland.
- 9.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the strategic links between the actions raised by Education Scotland and corresponding programmes/projects within the Business Transformation Plan. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the College's HMI, Gill Ritchie, would be meeting with appropriate members of senior management on 07 November to consider the proposed approach and seek support from Education Scotland.
- 9.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the relatively small number of observations of learning and teaching undertaken by Education Scotland, as part of the AEV process, and the appropriateness of drawing conclusions from such a small sample size.
- 9.5 The Committee NOTED that it would review the Education Scotland AEV action plan again at its next meeting on 20 January.

10 COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS

- 10.1 PRE-EXIT SURVEY RESULTS 2015/16

- 10.1.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the 2015/16 Pre-Exit Survey, which was designed to assess students' opinions regarding key aspects of their experience at the College.
- 10.1.2 The Committee NOTED the scope of the survey which was made available to 8,100 full-time and part-time students across all four campuses, via Moodle, during a five week period from April to May 2016. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance informed the Committee that the response rate was 29.2 percent overall, 2.1% less than the previous year's survey.
- 10.1.3 The Committee NOTED the key messages from the 2015/16 survey results, which showed that respondents overall satisfaction was 'high', with 84.4% of students stating that they enjoyed studying at the College, and 84.7% stating that they would recommend the College to a friend. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance advised the Committee that, with regard to Equality and Diversity aspects of the College environment, students reported 'high satisfaction' - with 88.6% of students reporting that they felt welcome and respected at the College.
- 10.1.4 The Committee NOTED that the College ranked in the lowest quartile for 22 of the 30 questions when compared with an external benchmark, which included UK-wide sixth forms and private colleges. The Committee DISCUSSED benchmarking and the need for Colleges Scotland to work towards a sector benchmark, whereby a relevant comparison could be made.
- 10.1.5 The Committee NOTED that funding continued to be the topic were students most often sought further guidance, with surveyed students indicating their content with the help and support they received from both ECSA and Student Services. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance informed the Committee that students had indicated that they would like to receive support on funding in timelier manner, and the College hoped to respond to this by bringing future student welcome events forward into June.
- 10.1.6 The Committee NOTED that the lowest satisfactions score (62.3%) related to the food and drink facilities at the College. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance highlighted that when asked what suggested changes could be made to the College students commented on food options, car park spaces, and better access to computers and printing capabilities. The Committee NOTED that the Head of Resources & Facilities was currently reviewing College provisions to support the needs of students.
- 10.1.7 The Committee DISCUSSED the areas of strength and improvements identified, and the recommendation put forward to enhance the student experience.
- 10.1.8 The Committee thanked the Head of Policy, Planning & Performance for providing an opportunity to review the results of the Learning and Teaching Survey 2015/16. The Committee NOTED that progress on recommendations arising from the survey would be considered at the next meeting of the Academic Council.
- 10.2 SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY
 - 10.2.1 The Committee NOTED a summary of satisfaction survey recommendations arising from the previous academic year.

10.2.2 The Committee NOTED progress to date and the timescales outlined for the completion of individual actions. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance informed the Committee that a further update on progress would be provided at the next meeting on 20 January.

10.3 LEARNING AND TEACHING SURVEY 2017

10.3.1 The Committee NOTED the content and format of the draft Learning and Teaching Survey 2017. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the survey would be conducted entirely online and, if required, drop-in sessions would be held to support student in completing the form.

10.3.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the Learning and Teaching Survey and were generally content with its format and presentation. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance recognised the need to keep the survey as concise as possible, but informed members of the necessity to collate monitoring information.

10.3.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the role of LDTs in supporting students' completion on the survey. The Head of Support for Learning advised the Committee that whilst LDTs were there to support students it was not their role to ensure that students completed the survey.

10.3.4 The Committee NOTED that data provided by the survey informs the self-evaluation activities of academic staff and, where possible, questions had been aligned with specific prompts contained within Education Scotland's External Review Quality Framework. The Committee DISCUSSED the use of survey data as part of the self-evaluation process and the need to ensure that information was presented to academic teams in functional format.

10.3.5 The Committee APPROVED the Learning and Teaching Survey 2017 for dissemination in January.

11 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

11.1 FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS

11.1.1 The Committee NOTED an overview of key items of Academic Council business which would be considered during the course of the year.

11.1.2 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to participate in the development of important strategic documents, including the Regional Outcome Agreement 2017-20 and the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Assistant Principal informed the Committee that in order to raise awareness of key initiatives relating to learning, teaching & assessment and Quality, heads of faculty would be invited to attend future meeting to present on a wide range of topics.

11.1.3 The Committee AGREED that the Acting Chair, Assistant Principal and the Committee Clerk should provide sufficient time for the consideration of substantial agenda items.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 The date of the next meeting is 20 January 2016 at 14:00, in the Boardroom, Sighthill Campus.

The meeting closed at 16:10