



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 16 NOVEMBER 2018

14:00hrs, Boardroom, Granton Campus

Present: Beth Anderson; Debbie Dow; Mike Cowley; Audrey Cumberland; Sarah Hay; Ann Landels; Ethelinda Lashley-Scott; Sandra Morrison; Ryan Quinn; Fiona Riddoch (Chair);

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Kerry Heathcote; David Hiddleston; Marcus Walker (Clerk)

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Committee NOTED apologies from Iris Aitchison, Laura Craig, Julian Henderson, Neil Manning, Kevin Maloney, Jeanette Stevenson and Shannon Young.
- 1.2 The Committee Chair welcomed Debbie Dow to the Committee as co-opted student members.
- 1.3 The Committee Chair welcomed Sandra Morrison to the Committee as co-opted teaching staff member representing the Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Business.
- 1.4 The Committee Chair welcomed the Student Experience Manager, David Hiddleston, to the meeting for Item 5, in the absence of the Head of Student Experience.

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 07 September 2018 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 MATTERS ARISING REPORT

- 4.1.1 Actions from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda.

5 STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT

5.1 STUDENT EXPERIENCE UPDATE

- 5.1.1 The Committee NOTED a report on developments to improve the experience and retention of students since the last meeting of the Academic Council in September.
- 5.1.2 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Student Experience Manager on the impact of recent developments to student funding. The Student Experience Manager informed the Committee that all students had received their funding within the 28 day turnaround period, and attributed this to improved marketing, information and the use of a more targeted approach by the college.
- 5.1.3 The Committee welcomed the marked improvement in 2018/19 around student funding and DISCUSSED how further enhancement could be made going forward. The Committee NOTED that discussions were now taking place with the SFC on the 100% attendance rule for FE Student bursary payments, with a view to the college reviewing its procedure for January 2019.
- 5.1.4 The Committee Chair, on behalf of the Academic Council, commended the work of the Student Experience Team in working to address the key issue of student funding, which strongly correlated to student retention and overall satisfaction.
- 5.1.5 The Committee NOTED that a Health & Wellbeing Team had now been established by the college. The Student Experience Manager advised the Committee that a self-referral service had now been set-up, and had proved so popular that all allocated places were filled within two weeks.
- 5.1.6 The Committee DISCUSSED the current capacity of the college to deal with matters relating to students' health and wellbeing, and the benefits of developing the theme of 'positive education' more widely. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that the college was currently engaged in a pilot scheme, with Children's Services at City of Edinburgh Council, to enhance students' resilience at schools to support a smoother transition to college.
- 5.1.7 The Committee NOTED the important role that meta-skills can play in the enhancement of students' resilience, and DISCUSSED how meta-skills were currently being incorporated into the college curriculum. The Committee AGREED

that it would welcome a presentation on the ongoing efforts to integrate positive education and meta-skills into the curriculum at a future meeting.

5.2 ECSA CLASS REPS CONFERENCE REPORT

- 5.2.1 The Committee NOTED that the first round of Class Reps Conferences had taken place across all four campuses between 23 October and 01 November. The ECSA Student President presented a report to the Academic Council which allowed members to reflect on the outcomes of each conference and gain insight into the experiences of students throughout their induction and their first weeks of term.
- 5.2.2 The Committee NOTED that as with previous years the 'big five' issues raised by students in relation to induction and retention were: (i) funding; (ii) transport; (iii) course organisation; (iv) mental health; and, (v) facilities.
- 5.2.3 The Committee NOTED that improvements to funding by the Student Experience Team had been received positively by students, however, concerns had been raised regarding whether current levels of funding were sufficient to cover the costs of attending college. The ECSA Student President advised the Committee that a number of students had highlighted travel costs and unexpected expenditures, such as class trips outside Edinburgh and the Lothians, as potential financial issues.
- 5.2.4 The Committee NOTED issues highlighted by students relating to course-related stress and anxiety, and the proposals put forward by Class Reps regarding timetabling and assessment planning. The Committee DISCUSSED the need for consistency around assessment planning across the college, but also recognised that scheduling could also be used by lecturing staff to challenge students and develop their resilience for future employment.
- 5.2.5 The Committee DISCUSSED a number of suggested solutions put forward by ECSA to help students' orientation at the college in the first weeks of their course. The ECSA Student President advised the Committee that the printing of student ID cards at welcome events, the availability of online/printed campus maps and improved signposting would all help students at the start of their studies.
- 5.2.6 The Committee DISCUSSED the Granton Nursery and how it could support student parents further by changing its opening hours to allow service users to access the facilities and travel to other campuses. The Committee AGREED that such consideration should be considered by the Executive during its review of nursery provisions.
- 5.2.7 The Committee welcomed the valuable feedback provided by ESCA, and NOTED that the Senior Management Team had considered the report and were working with ECSA to act upon a number of the issues identified.

5.3 STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

- 5.3.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update from the Clerk on progress relating to the continued development of student communications at the college. The Clerk advised the Committee that the Student Communications Working Group had

overseen a number of operational improvements to ensure greater coordination across the college in the contact, and information, received by applicants and students.

- 5.3.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the positive progress made by the Working Group since its formation in February 2018, including the development of a new monthly all student email and improved marketing and 'keep warm' campaigns for college applicants. The Committee AGREED that the Head of Corporate Development should provide a final Student Communications Report on the achievements of the group, and its aims going forward, to the next meeting of the Academic Council.

6 COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS

6.1 PRE-EXIT SURVEY RESULTS 2017/18

- 6.1.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the 2017/18 Pre-Exit Survey, which was designed to assess students' opinions regarding key aspects of their experience at the college.
- 6.1.2 The Committee NOTED the scope of the survey which was made available to 7,800 full-time and part-time students across all four campuses, via Moodle, during a four week period from April to May 2018. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance informed the Committee that the response rate was 28% overall, 5% more than the previous year's survey.
- 6.1.3 The Committee NOTED the key messages from the 2017/18 survey results, which showed that respondents overall satisfaction was high, with 92% of students stating that they enjoyed studying at the college, and 91% stating that they would recommend the college to a friend. In terms of learning experience, the Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that 83% of student regularly discussed their progress with staff, and that 86% believed they received useful feedback. Furthermore, 91% of respondents felt that their time at the college had helped them develop appropriate knowledge and skills for the workplace.
- 6.1.4 The Committee NOTED that areas for improvement highlighted by the survey mainly related to facilities, with 74% of student finding social spaces at the college satisfactory and only 65% finding food and drink facilities satisfactory. The Principal advised the Committee that it would be interesting to see whether satisfaction scores relating to facilities were decreasing across the college sector - as a whole - following a significant reduction in capital maintenance funding across Scotland.
- 6.1.5 The Committee NOTED that the lowest satisfaction score on the survey related to sports and recreation facilities (31%). The ECSA Student President advised the Academic Council that at present there were no spaces for sports activities at the Milton Road and Midlothian campuses. The Committee AGREED that it was essential that students had an opportunity to access sports and recreation facilities and hoped that this would be considered as part of the Estates Development Project within the Strategic Blueprint 2017-22.

- 6.1.6 The Committee NOTED that 49% of students were pleased with the help and support provided by ECSA, whilst only 50% of students stated that the ECSA influenced change for the better. The ECSA Student President advised the Committee that not all students required representation throughout their period at college, however, it was recognised that more could be done by the Students' Association to promote its role in improving the student experience.
- 6.1.7 The Committee DISCUSSED the areas of strength and improvements identified, and the recommendations put forward to enhance the student experience. The Committee AGREED that progress on recommendations for further action should be reviewed at future meetings as part of the Survey Recommendation Summary.

7 HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? UPDATE

- 7.1 The Committee NOTED that following its approval by the Executive and the Board on 25 October, the college's 2017/18 Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan (EREP) had been submitted to the SFC on 31 October.
- 7.2 The Committee NOTED the submitted EREP and the following key points outlined by the Assistant Principal:
- (i) Edinburgh College exceeding its Regional Outcome Agreement credit target of 178,742 for the 2017/18 session by 5,150 credits;
 - (ii) in the context of the inclusive growth strategy, an increased credit delivery for students with a known disability, BME learners and those with care experience;
 - (iii) an increase in the number of MD10 students enrolments by 233, to a total of 1,969;
 - (iv) the number of Completed Success outcomes increased by 2.37%.
- 7.3 The Committee NOTED that although Completed Success had increased for full-time FE students it remained low at 62%. The Assistant Principal advised the Academic Council that Partial Completed Success figures had been one of the Executive Team's main focuses in 2017/18, and a positive reduction had been observed from 14% to 10.5%.
- 7.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the positive impact made by curriculum managers, lecturers and students to improve Completed Success. The Committee Chair advised the Academic Council that, although further improvements were required in this area, appropriate processes and procedures were now in place for the college to build upon.
- 7.5 The Committee DISCUSSED a range of internal and external factors influencing students' ability to successfully complete their courses, including:
- (i) the qualifications that students want as part of the curriculum for the future, and whether HNCs and HNDs remained sustainable ;
 - (ii) the restrictions placed on the current curriculum through SQA credits, and how pinch points could be removed;
 - (iii) the benefits associated with interviewing students prior to their acceptance

- (iv) on a course, and the current resources constraints preventing this; the need for students, lecturers and employers to work together in curriculum design;
- (v) the CPD provision available to teaching staff in order to effectively shape their courses.

7.6 The Committee welcomed the achievements of the college illustrated in the EREP, and looked forward to receiving an update on progress against the Enhancement Plan at its next meeting.

8 BLUEPRINT 2017-22 UPDATE

8.1 The Committee NOTED that, in light of significant changes in external drivers and discussions at the Board Development Day on 30 October, the Principal and Executive Team would be reshaping the Blueprint to ensure it future-proofed the college going forward. The Principal advised the Committee that a written report on developments to the Blueprint would be brought forward to the next meeting of the Academic Council, following its consideration by the Policy & Resources Committee on 27 November.

9 HORIZON SCANNING REPORT

9.1 The Committee NOTED a Horizon Scanning Report which outlined major political, economic, social, technological, legal and/or environmental developments that could impact on the five strategic plan aims of the college.

9.2 The Committee Chair advised members that any additions to the Horizon Scanning Report should be submitted to the Head of Corporate Development outwith the meeting.

10 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

10.1 SCOTTISH COLLEGES FORUM FOR LEARNING & TEACHING COMMITTEES

10.1 The Committee NOTED that the first Scottish Colleges Forum for Learning & Teaching Committees had taken place on 13 November 2018, in Stirling. The Committee Chair informed members that the forum, attended by chairs of learning & teaching committees at colleges across Scotland, would provide an appropriate exchange for best practice and support the development of strategic thinking around learning, teaching and curriculum.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 The next meeting of the Academic Council will take place on 22 February 2019, in the Boardroom, Sighthill Campus.

Meeting closed at 15:45