



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 20 NOVEMBER 2015

1400hrs, Boardroom, Sighthill Campus

Present: C Arthur; J Behan; A Bruton; S Cairncross (Chair); J Evans; J Jeffrey; E Lee; J Harkin; J Sales; A Wilson

In attendance: S Linton; R McCowan; J McCran; K McGlynn; I McKay; M Walker (Clerk)

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Committee Chair welcomed Members and Co-opted Members to the Academic Council.
- 1.2 The Committee NOTED that apologies had been received from Taylor Brown, Jeroen Van Herk, Kate Just and Arran McMillian.
- 1.3 The Committee NOTED the attendance of the newly appointed Head of Performance & Planning, Sarah-Jane Linton.

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 12 June 2015 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING

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

- 4.1.1 *IMAGINE TOMORROW REPORT (Minute 7.1.3/19.09.14 refers)*

The Committee NOTED that following the realignment of the senior management structure, this action now rested with the Head of Support for Learning. The Head of Support for Learning informed the Committee that actions arising from the *Imagine Tomorrow Report* had evolved over the past

year, and that the Support for Learning Team would continue to progress the matter with ECSA.

5 TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 5.1 The Committee NOTED its Terms of Reference, as approved by the Board on 22 September.
- 5.2 The Committee DISCUSSED its performance monitoring role, and whether data on applications and enrolments should be provided regularly for review. The Committee AGREED that, although it was vital for academic staff members and sabbatical officers present to feedback on their experiences of the recruitment system, it was the role of the Policy & Resources Committee to consider applications and enrolments data on behalf of the Board.
- 5.3 The Committee DISCUSSED its co-opted membership, which included six members of academic staff from each of the curriculum areas, and whether an additional representative from College-based ESOL should be co-opted. The Committee AGREED that the current level of faculty representation was appropriate, especially given the strong links between College Communities (currently represented on the Committee) and College-based ESOL. The Committee Chair welcomed the future involvement of representatives from College-based ESOL in appropriate sub-groups developed by the Academic Council.

6 REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT (ROA)

- 6.1 2014/15 ROA SELF-EVALUATION REPORT
 - 6.1.1 The Committee NOTED the first combined ROA and Institution-led Self-Evaluation Report, submitted to the SFC on 13 November.
 - 6.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the initial expectation was that the ROA Self-Evaluation Report would be presented to the Academic Council on 30 November for approval, however, the SFC requested the reports submission earlier than expected. The Head of Planning & Performance informed the Committee that as a vehicle for sign-off, the Chair and the Chairs of the Academic Council, Audit & Risk Assurance and Policy & Resources Committees had considered and approved the report.
 - 6.1.3 The Committee NOTED that feedback from the Chairs had indicated that the presentation of various metrics should be reconsidered to provide an overview of the three year ROA cycle and any trends that had arisen. The Head of Planning & Performance informed the Committee the appropriate feedback had been incorporated into the submitted report.
 - 6.1.4 The Committee NOTED that the Head of Planning & Performance welcomed Members feedback on the report, and the following matters were DISCUSSED:
 - (i) the significant amount of work undertaken to pull-together the SFC self-evaluation report, and the need to highlight evidence of good practice across the College;

- (ii) the self-evaluation reporting template, and whether it would be possible to include a summary section outlining the key messages and themes of the report;
 - (iii) the publication of the report, and the various ways to facilitate the dissemination of key information from the report to staff and students.
- 6.1.5 The Committee Chair thanked the Head of Performance & Planning for drafting and submitting the ROA Self-Evaluation Report, and hoped that the Committee's comments regarding the report's dissemination would be taken into account.
- 6.2 2015/16 ROA REVIEW PLAN
 - 6.2.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the planned review of the College's ROA, and its 'refresh' for AY 2016/17 (the final year of the College's current 2014/17 ROA).
 - 6.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the ROA review plan, approved by Senior Management, which aimed to ensure that all internal and (where appropriate) external stakeholders had the opportunity to review the outcome of the 2014/15 KPIs, the College's progress against the current 2015/16 KPIs, and to collectively agree a way forward to achieving the 2016/17 'refreshed' ROA.
 - 6.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the following aspects of the project plan presented by the Head of Performance & Planning:
 - (i) the changes to the timeline due to the Scottish Government's ongoing Comprehensive Spending Review;
 - (ii) consultation with Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), and the College's statutory obligations under the 'Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015';
 - (iii) the activity the ROA does not currently illustrate (as it is not funded by the SFC), including many aspects of the College's community engagement.
 - 6.2.4 The Committee DISCUSSED in further detail how staff might look to capture activity beyond that outlined in the ROA. The Committee AGREED that it would be beneficial to maintain a monthly consolidated record of activity (including events and awards) from across the College, which could be promoted to staff, students and the wider community.
 - 6.2.5 The Committee NOTED that the various 'consultation points' with appropriate committees of the Board, ECSA, EIS-FELA and CPPs. The Principal emphasised that the consultation process would offer an opportunity for stakeholders to propose targets for the College that were not currently recognised in the ROA.
 - 6.2.6 The Committee AGREED that the Executive should continue to 'push-back' on the Funding Council, with regards to the current funding mechanism, in a bid to increase the recognition of both creative and innovative activities with the college sector.

Sarah-Jane Linton left the meeting.

7 EDUCATION SCOTLAND ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT VISIT ACTION PLAN

- 7.1 The Committee NOTED a summary of the progress on the College's action plan in response to 'point for actions' raised in the Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit, which took place in May 2015.
- 7.2 The Committee NOTED that the College was currently on track to complete the 'points for actions'. The Head of Quality & Equalities informed the Academic Council that it would receive a more detailed action plan, illustrating the impact of key actions, at the next meeting on 22 January 2016.
- 7.3 The Committee DISCUSSED core skills provisions and the College's approach to reviewing this important area. The Head of Quality & Equalities informed the Committee that, following the reconfiguration of the senior management team, a root and branch approach would be taken to reviewing core skills provisions within the College. The Committee NOTED that this approach was welcomed by Education Scotland.

8 CURRICULUM HEALTHCHECK

- 8.1 The Committee NOTED an overview of the Curriculum Healthcheck, which evaluated the curriculum in six areas with regards to their contribution to the success of the College. The Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality, informed the Committee that workshops had subsequently been conducted with the Board, Senior Management and Curriculum Managers to ascertain their feedback.
- 8.2 The Committee NOTED a collated report on the key areas for action arising from the workshops, which included an outline implementation plan. The Vice Principal informed Members that the recommendations arising were broadly consistent with those in the Curriculum Strategy.
- 8.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the following matters in relation to feedback from internal stakeholders, and the proposed next steps for the Curriculum Healthcheck:
- (i) The internal benchmarking process, and the need to assess the impact of more recent curriculum changes within the College;
 - (ii) the impact of curriculum changes on student demographics, and the need for affective intelligence to monitor and analysis any movements;
 - (iii) the SFC's assistance in funding the Curriculum Healthcheck, and the similar processes taking place at other colleges within the sector;
 - (iv) the benefits of such a process in providing greater oversight of the current job market and future trends;
 - (v) the College's current curriculum offer, and the need for staff to continue to communicate with the SQA in-order to refine the qualifications on offer.
- 8.4 The Committee NOTED the comments of academic staff representative regarding the changes employer and student demands within their sectors. In particularly, emphasis was placed on employer engagement and clear guidance on the entry requirements to College courses.

- 8.5 The Committee NOTED that progress on actions arising from the Curriculum Healthcheck workshops would come back to future meetings of the Academic Council.

9 STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Jonny Pearson, Head of Health, Wellbeing & Social Sciences (HWSS), joined the meeting

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Head of HWSS, who had led the College's review of its student recruitment procedures. The presentation highlighted to the Committee the major changes to the recruitment process facilitated through a series of rapid improvement events, which included:
- (i) the establishment of an application window;
 - (ii) a limit of one course application per application form;
 - (iii) clearer data arising from the reduced number of applications;
 - (iv) a guaranteed positive destination for all school leavers.
- 9.2 The Committee NOTED progress to date on actions relating to the application process (internal and external), achieving positive destinations, improved communications, curriculum development and the College's welcome event.
- 9.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the following matters relating to the proposed changes in recruitment and the current status of progress:
- (i) the clearing process should an applicant be unsuccessful, and how this would be handled internally by the College;
 - (ii) the information provided to staff on the new procedures and the importance of providing uniformed guidance;
 - (iii) the role of 'Assessment' and 'Progress' Boards, and the importance of the Assessment Board in resolving application issues before the summer break;
 - (iv) the framework for dealing with conditional offers, and the flexibility granted to localised areas, for instance catering, engineering and construction;
 - (v) the support available to those undergoing the application process.
- 9.4 The Committee NOTED that appropriate members of staff would be briefed further on the student recruitment process in due course.
- 9.5 The Committee Chair, the Vice Principal (Student Experience) at Edinburgh Napier University, welcomed the more centralised approach to student recruitment, and informed Members of the benefits of such a system at her own University.

Jonny Pearson left the meeting

10 ECSA OPERATIONAL PLAN 2015/16

Conor Murray-Gauld, ECSA Engagements & Policy Coordinator, joined the meeting

- 10.1 The Committee NOTED the ECSA Operational Plan 2015/16, which had been developed in consultation with students and the College.
- 10.2 The Committee NOTED that the five central themes, agreed by sqarqs, NUS Scotland and the Scottish Government, as part of the Scottish Government's Framework for Students Association. The ECSA Engagements & Policy Coordinator provided an overview of the Student Association's key measures within each of the themes.
- 10.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the 95 key measures highlighted within the Operational Plan, and considered the following:
- (i) the overall number of key measures;
 - (ii) the ECSA's recording of individual task, including their time requirements and impact;
 - (iii) the staffing of the ECSA, and the level of support provided to sabbatical officers;
 - (iv) the importance of the College's CRM in providing effective student support, and limiting duplication of activity;
 - (v) the need to raise staffs awareness of the range of work ECSA does across the College, especially amongst curriculum teams;
 - (vi) the student representative system and its enhancement through appropriate training and partnership working.
- 10.4 The Committee commended the Operation Plan, as presented by the ECSA, and wished the team well in-achieving their targets for 2015/16. The Committee NOTED that an update on the ECSA's progress against its key indicators would be considered at the end of the academic year.

11 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

- 11.1 No other items of business were raised.
- 11.2 The Committee Chair asked Members to highlight any future items of competent business to the Clerk in-advance of future meetings.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.1 The date of the next meeting is 22 January 2016 at 14:00, in the Boardroom, Sighthill Campus.

The meeting closed at 16:15