



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 22 JANUARY 2016

1400hrs, Boardroom, Sighthill Campus

Present: C Arthur; J Behan; T Brown; A Bruton; S Cairncross (Chair); J Evans; J Harkin; J Jeffrey; K Just; E Lee; J Sales; J Van Herk; A Wilson

In attendance: J Buglass; R McCowan; J McCran; K McGlynn; M Walker (Clerk)

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Committee Chair welcomed Taylor Brown, ECSA Vice President (Women), and Kate Just, the representative of Health, Wellbeing and Social Sciences, to their first meeting.
- 1.2 The Committee NOTED that apologies had been received from Arran McMillian.

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 20 November 2016 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 the Imagine Tomorrow Report would be considered by the Head of Support for Learning and ECSA at their next scheduled meeting.

4.1.2 ACTIVITY RECORD: ROA REVIEW PLAN (*Minute 6.2.4/20.11.15 refers*)

The Committee NOTED the written response of the Head of Marketing, PR and Communications to this matter, which indicated that a monthly status report would be compiled to provide a consolidated record of activity. Further to this, the Committee were informed that at present news and successes are communicated regularly through the College intranet, website and social media.

5 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION PLAN

5.1 THE TRANSFORMATIONAL PLAN

5.1.1 The Committee NOTED that the Business Transformation Plan proposal, as approved by the Board of Management on 08 December. The Principal informed the Committee that the plan had been shared with staff, students and other stakeholders of the College.

5.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the Principal had conducted 11 staff briefing sessions across the four College campuses, to outline the key points of the Business Transformation Plan. The Committee welcomed the Principal's 'openness' with staff, and hoped that the senior management team would maintain the current level of stakeholder engagement.

5.1.3 The Committee NOTED that a Business Transformation Plan Working Group, which included representatives from the Executive, the Board and the SFC, had met to progress the plan. The Principal advised the Committee that the following four strands from the working group would also be considered by the Academic Council: The review of the curriculum; recruitment and enrolment; communications with staff and students; and, the blended learning strategy.

5.1.4 The Committee NOTED that to support the review of the curriculum and student recruitment activities, two Heads of Centre had been seconded to the post of Associate Principal to lead on both respective areas.

5.1.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the following aspects of the Business Transformation Plan and the wider context:

- (i) The national 2016-17 budget and the Scottish Government's flat cash settlement, and its potential breakdown of across FE and HE;
- (ii) the College moving forward on the basis that it will receive the same amount of funding as the previous year;
- (iii) the potential for student engagement with the plan, and ECSA's willingness to support senior management with student communications.

5.1.6 The Chair of the Academic Council thanked the Principal for her update, and reinforced the Committee's role in considering key strands of the Business Transformation Plan.

5.2 CURRICULUM PLANNING UPDATE

5.2.1 The Committee NOTED that the Curriculum Healthcheck process had been superseded by a new curriculum planning process. This new process consisted

of initial short-term measures to improve the College's curriculum offer and its efficiency, and longer term developments which would be part of the College's transformational plan.

- 5.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the two stages of the curriculum planning process, which focussed on planning for the '2016/17 curriculum' and the '2017-19 curriculum'. The Associate Principal, Jon Buglass, informed the Committee that the first stage had been to pull together information into one easily accessible area (for Curriculum Managers and Heads of Centre) to support decision-making based on LIVE and Intelligent data, which had previously only been available in a variety of disparate locations.
- 5.2.3 The Committee NOTED that since consolidated data had been provided to curriculum teams a number of significant changes had been implemented before the applications system was opened on 11 January. For example, one significant piece of work highlighted was the implementation of a consistent measure to project the College's credits following early withdrawals (the figure which the College can claim funding for). The Committee NOTED that a number of curriculum changes had been progressed based on the consolidated data, in order to refresh and modernise the College's curriculum offer.
- 5.2.4 The Committee NOTED that stage two of the curriculum planning process would take a long-term view to mapping the curriculum planning project into the Business Transformation Plan's priorities, scope and interdependencies. The Associate Principal in-attendance highlighted to the Committee that this stage would also provide an opportunity to refine the College's planning tools and the consult further with course teams, managers and students.
- 5.2.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the short and long-term curriculum planning processes outlined, including the following:
- (i) the need to keep students appropriately informed of changes to courses;
 - (ii) the support available to staff (including CPD) to effectively implement changes to the curriculum;
 - (iii) the importance of accurately tracking and synthesising information on a weekly, monthly and annual basis;
 - (iv) the current concerns around what happens to students who unsuccessfully apply for a course;
 - (v) the student data captured following the movement of curriculum provisions from one campus to another.
- 5.2.6 The Committee AGREED that a report on the impact of curriculum changes (for instance, the moving of courses between campuses) would be presented to the Academic Council at the end of the academic year.

6 REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2016/17 REVIEW

- 6.1 The Committee NOTED a paper outlining six refreshed Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) 'priority measures' for consideration by the Academic Council as part of the ongoing consultation process. The Vice Principal advised the Committee that each of the six measures had been reconfigured to align with the Business Transformation Plan.

- 6.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the following in-relation to each of the six ROA measures:
- (i) the requirements of the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce recommendations, with regards to 'Target 3';
 - (ii) the differences between apprenticeships and modern apprenticeships, in-relation to 'Target 6' and the bidding process undertaken to recruit in these areas;
 - (iii) the terminology relating to 'successful' completions, and the difference between those student who failed to complete a course (i.e. a partially completed student who could return to their studies) and a student who has failed a course.
- 6.3 The Committee NOTED that the Principal had liaised with Education Scotland regarding the need to convert more 'partial completions' to 'complete', and that the College's HMI Inspector, Gill Ritchie, had shown interest in visiting the College to speak with staff on this matter.
- 6.4 The Committee AGREED that at a future meeting it would welcome an overview of the various apprenticeship models in-place at the College.

Jenni Behan left the meeting.

7 EDUCATION SCOTLAND ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT VISIT ACTION PLAN

Mike Jeffrey, Head of Engineering, joined the meeting.

- 7.1 The Committee NOTED a summary of progress against the Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit (AEV) action plan.
- 7.2 The Committee NOTED that core skills achievement for 2014/15 had decreased by 0.8% on the previous year, and as such a significant amount work had been conducted to establish current practice, risk and areas of improvement. The Head of Quality & Equalities informed the Committee that a Core & Essential Skills Strategy had been developed to clarify the approach and implementation in these areas, and resolve issues around certification and non-delivery of units (as experienced in 2014/15).
- 7.3 The Committee NOTED that for academic year 2015/16 a number of developments to LDT provisions were been implemented in Semester 2, including a College wide ILP and formal student progression review points. The Head of Support for Learning advised the Committee that these developments would be evaluated in April 2016.
- 7.4 The Committee NOTED that to ensure all course teams engage effectively with the College's quality processes, self-evaluation sessions had commenced on 18 January. The Committee welcomed comments from co-opted members which highlighted that the newly developed self-evaluation model had been of benefit to academic staff.

8 CORE & ESSENTIAL SKILLS STRATEGY

- 8.1 The Committee NOTED a final draft of the Core & Essential Skills Strategy, which aimed to ensure that core and essential skills were given the level of priority required by the AEV action plan. The Head of Engineering, who had led the development of the Strategy, highlighted the importance of students' core and essential skills development for lifelong learning and employability – the backbone of Curriculum for Excellence.
- 8.2 The Committee NOTED that the Core & Essential Skills Strategy outlined current practice (in most instances) and standardised processes/procedures for all staff undertaking the delivery of core skills specific units. The Head of Engineering advised the Committee that the standardisation process would begin in Semester 2 of 2015/16, with full implementation for 2016/17.
- 8.3 The Committee NOTED key aspects of the Strategy included the number/breakdown of contact hours and the key responsibilities of staff at various levels of the College. The Head of Engineering also clarified the circumstances where Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) would be applied, as in the past guidance to students and staff had been inadequate.
- 8.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the following matters relating to the draft Core & Essential Skills Strategy:
- (i) the assignment of core skills teams, and the need to contextualise the teaching of core skills and its delivery;
 - (ii) the timetabling of core and essential skills;
 - (iii) the need for a section within the Strategy to support Curriculum Managers;
 - (iv) the core skills Moodle page, which provides staff will access to all the agreed units of delivery;
 - (v) the use of 'bridging units' and the appropriate advancement of students and mixed groups;
 - (vi) the teaching of core skills to part-time students;
 - (vii) the benefits the Strategy will provide to students with low literacy and numeracy scores.
- 8.5 The Committee commended the development of the Core & Essential Strategy, and welcomed the opportunity to review a final draft before the Education Scotland AEV in April 2016.

Mike Jeffrey left the meeting.

9 LEARNING & TEACHING SURVEY 2016

Lea Ozuna, Quality Enhancement Officer, joined the meeting.

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED the Learning & Teaching Survey 2016, which had been developed to ascertain students' opinion on key themes relating to the learning and teaching processes, and its content and assessment for learning. The Quality Enhancement Officer outlined the scope of the survey, the methodology used to implement it, and the proposed approach to reporting the survey results in June 2016.

- 9.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the following aspects of the Learning & Teaching Survey:
- (i) the fact the survey included no mandatory questions;
 - (ii) the number of demographical questions posed in the survey, due to its anonymous nature;
 - (iii) the wording of individual questions and whether this could affect a respondents answer(s);
 - (iv) the mechanism for students to complete and submit the survey with the support of an LDT, and the issues arising for students without LDTs (e.g. apprentices);
 - (v) the utilisation and presentation of survey data to course teams.
- 9.3 The Committee NOTED that the participation of specific groups of students, such as those on apprenticeships, may be negatively affected by the survey methodology used. The Committee AGREED that the Head of Quality & Equalities and the Quality Enhancement Officer should liaise with appropriate Curriculum Managers to consider how best to resolve this issue.
- 9.4 The Committee APPROVED the Learning and Teaching Survey 2016, subject to further consideration of matters arising under minute 9.3.
- 9.5 The Committee NOTED that students were required to complete and submit an Induction Survey, a Learning & Teaching Survey and a Student Satisfaction Survey during their time at the College. The Committee AGREED that the Academic Council should review, in a holistic manner, the range of surveys used by the College at a future meeting.

10 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

- 10.1 None.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.1 The date of the next meeting is 11 March 2016 at 14:00, in the Boardroom, Sighthill Campus.

The meeting closed at 16:05.