Edinburgh College

For the future you want

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF 23 FEBRUARY 2018**

**14:00hrs, Boardroom, Sighthill Campus**

**Present**:  I Aitchison; B Anderson; N Black; C Connor; T Cotton; M Cowley; N Manning; R Quinn; F Riddoch (Chair); J Stevenson

**In attendance**:  J Buglass; L Bryne (Skills Development Scotland); N Croft; L Lyall; J Pearson; M Walker (Clerk)

## 1   WELCOME & APOLOGIES

1.1     The Committee NOTED apologies from Annette Bruton; Valerie Jackman; Ann Landels; Jennifer Russell; Ethelinda Lashley-Scott; Kevin Maloney and Christopher Turnbull.

1.2     The Committee Chair welcomed the newly elected Teaching (Academic) Staff Board Member, Mike Cowley, to his first meeting of the Academic Council.

1.3     The Committee Chair welcomed the Assistant Principal (Recruitment & Retention), to the meeting as a representative from the Executive Team. The Assistant Principal informed the Committee that the Principal could not be present due to her attendance at the Times Education Supplement (TES) FE Awards.

1.4     The Committee Chair welcomed the Head of Corporate Development, Nick Croft, to the meeting as part of his induction to the role of Board Secretary.

1.5     The Committee Chair welcomed the National Skills Planning Lead at Skills Development Scotland, Liz Byrne, to the meeting for Item 3.

## 2   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1     No declarations of interest were received.

**3    SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SCOTLAND: REGIONAL SKILLS PLANNING**

3.1    The Committee NOTED that, at its September 2017 meeting, the Academic Council had welcomed an opportunity to consider matters relating to employability and employer engagement going forward. The Committee Chair introduced the National Skills Planning Lead at Skills Development Scotland, who provided a presentation on regional skills planning in Edinburgh and South East Scotland.

3.2    The Committee NOTED the links between regional skills planning and the development of the Edinburgh College curriculum. The Assistant Principal (Curriculum Design & Development) advised the Committee that the Assistant Principals, Heads of Faculty and Curriculum Managers reviewed skills planning data and made informed decisions relating to what learners in the region wanted and what skills the region required.

3.3    The Committee DISCUSSED, in small groups, the skills information received by the college for the purposes of curriculum planning. The following points were fed back to the Committee:

(i)    While the general projections for growth in the College catchment are potential good considerable inequalities exist within the region. This should be kept in mind in the use and interpretation of the data to address areas where growth had stalled;

(ii)    the need to maintain excellent transport links to the college to encourage continued engagement and growth in the region;

(iii)    unemployment for 16-24 years olds increasing in the Scottish Borders, City of Edinburgh and East Lothian, and although its origins were unclear its possible link to student gap years;

(iv)    there is a  skills gap in construction. How can this be communicated to students and to schools;

(v)    the responsibility of the college to all its local, diverse,  communities and the positive impact of guaranteeing a place for all school leavers.

3.4    The Committee AGREED that the SDS presentation on regional skills planning should be circulated to members, along with links to further information on the SDS website. The Committee Chair thanked the National Skills Planning Lead at Skills Development Scotland for providing context on current/future skills and employability in the region.

*The National Skills Planning Lead for Skills Development Scotland left the meeting*


**4    MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1    The Committee APPROVED the minutes of the Academic Council from 10 November 2017 as an accurate record of the meeting.

**5    MATTERS ARISING**

5.1       Actions from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda, with the exception of the following:

5.2       *Student Communications (Minute 10.1.1/10.11.17 refers)*

          The Committee NOTED an update on progress relating to development of student communications at the college. The Head of Corporate Development advised the Committee that a working group, consisting of various senior and middle managers and appropriate ECSA representatives, had been set-up to holistically consider student communications, and would update the Academic Council on progress at its next meeting.

          The Committee NOTED suggestions from ECSA for the improvement of student communications, including a 'you said, we did' communication from the Depute Principal.

**6    EDINBURGH COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-22**

6.1       The Committee NOTED a verbal update on the development of the Edinburgh College Blueprint, following the approval of the Strategic Plan 2017-22 by the Board on 19 September 2017.

6.2       The Committee NOTED that during March 2018, Blueprint project concepts would be refined further and governance systems would be formally developed with appropriate terms of reference. The Head of Corporate Development advised the Committee that a number of Blueprint projects were student centered, and that further updates on these key projects would be presented to the Academic Council in due course.

**7    HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? UPDATE**

7.1       The Committee NOTED that the Edinburgh Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan (EREP) 2016/17 had been submitted to Education Scotland and the SFC on 30 October 2017. The Assistant Principal (Curriculum Design & Development) advised the Committee that following minor amendments, in relation to Community Planning Partnerships and corporate parenting, the EREP 2016/17 had been published on the Education Scotland website.

7.2       The Committee NOTED that the college had graded itself as 'Good', following debate on all aspects of the rating system at senior management level. The Assistant Principal informed the Committee that although the college had performed well in a number of areas, there was the potential for greater consistency across the college going forward

7.3       The Committee NOTED that the Quality Team at the college continued to monitor progress against the Enhancement Plan and would provide appropriate

evidence to Education Scotland during their campus visits on 21 & 22 March 2018.

## 8    KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW UPDATE

8.1    The Committee NOTED the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) finalised key performance indicator (KPI) figures for Edinburgh College in 2016/17, which were published on 13 February 2018.

8.2    The Committee NOTED that following data cleansing the SFC had made some adjustments, including a correction of coding surrounding the calculation and categorisation of partial success and part-time students on Employability Funded courses. The Assistant Principal (Curriculum Design & Development) advised the Committee that such adjustments had resulted in a mismatch between the college's Further Education Statistical Return (FES) output and performance indicators previously reviewed by the Academic Council.

8.3    The Committee NOTED that, in terms of KPIs, a key focus of the college would be towards improving its 'completion / partial completion' success rates. The Assistant Principal (Curriculum Design & Development) informed the Committee that the college had performed disappointingly in this area during 2016/17 and would aim for significant improvements going forward. The Committee NOTED that actions were in place to assess causes and implement and monitor improvements.

8.4    The Committee DISCUSSED that a number of students were failing to complete their studies due to mental health issues. Committee members also drew attention to the possible impacts on a class of students where one had serious mental health issues. The Assistant Principal (Recruitment & Retention) advised the Committee that senior management were cognisant of such issues, and their impact, and had agreed to introduce a counselling service for students in the new academic year.

8.5    The Committee AGREED that it would welcome a more focused discussion on students' mental wellbeing and the support in place from the college and ECSA to assist students and staff. The Committee Chair confirmed that a standalone item on mental wellbeing would be added to the agenda for the next meeting of the Academic Council.

## 9    COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS

9.1    INDUCTION SURVEY RESULTS 2017

9.1.1    The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the 2017 Induction Survey, which was designed to assess students' opinions regarding key aspects of their experience at the college during their first weeks on campus.

9.1.2    The Committee NOTED the scope of the survey which was made available to 11,500 full-time and part-time students across all four campuses, via Moodle,

during a six week period from September and November 2017. The Interim Head of Policy, Planning & Performance informed the Committee that the response rate was 37.2% overall.

9.1.3    The Committee DISCUSSED the low response rate outlined in the Induction Survey Results and how students could be engaged further to complete surveys in their first weeks at the college. The Interim Head of Policy, Planning & Performance advised the Committee that although the response was low, it was higher than the last college-wide survey (2017 Pre-Exit Survey) which had a response rate of 23%.

9.1.4    The Committee AGREED that in order to ensure better response rates in future, and to illustrate that survey information was valuable to the college, the Quality Team should seek to ensure that the feedback loop from student satisfaction surveys was closed. Further to this, the Committee AGREED that the working group created to improve student communications (minute 5.2 refers) should be asked to look at how surveys and their outcomes for students can be appropriately promoted across the college.

9.2    SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

9.2.1    The Committee NOTED that there were currently no outstanding recommendations from previous satisfaction surveys.

9.2.2    The Committee NOTED that no further recommendations for improvement would be available until the Induction Survey 2018 and the Pre-Exit Survey 2018 were published, and appropriate comparisons and recommendations outlined.

9.3    PRE-EXIT SURVEY 2018

9.3.1    The Committee NOTED the content and format of the draft Pre-Exit Survey 2018. The Interim Head of Policy, Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the survey had remained unchanged from the previous year to support continued benchmarking.

9.3.2    The Committee DISCUSSED the means by which the Pre-Exit Survey was distributed to students at the college, and the difficulties of reaching part-time students. The Committee AGREED that (further to minute 9.1.4) the student communications working group should be asked to consider solutions to improving the dissemination and completion of student satisfaction surveys across the college.

9.3.3    The Committee APPROVED the Pre-Exit Survey 2018 for dissemination by the Quality Team.


**10    ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

10.1    None.

**11    DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

11.1    The date of the next meeting is 25 May 2018 at 14:00, in the Boardroom, Granton Campus.


*The meeting closed at 16:00*