



For the future you want

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 25 MAY 2018

14:00hrs, Boardroom, Granton Campus

Present: B Anderson; N Black; C Connor;; V Jackman; A Landels; N Manning; R Quinn; F Riddoch (Chair); J Russell; J Stevenson; C Turnbull

In attendance: J Buglass; G Coutts; K Heathcote; M Hoenigmann; M Walker (Clerk)

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Committee NOTED apologies from Iris Aitchison, Annette Bruton; Tia Cotton, Mike Cowley, Ethelinda Lashley-Scott and Kevin Maloney.
- 1.2 The Committee Chair welcomed the new Head of Curriculum Performance & Planning, Kerry Heathcote, to her first meeting of the Academic Council.
- 1.3 The Committee Chair welcomed the Communications & Social Media Manager, Gordon Coutts, to the meeting for Item 4.2.

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 23 February 2018 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING

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

4.2 *STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS (MINUTE 10.1.1/10.11.17 REFERS)*

The Committee NOTED an update on progress relating to the development of student communications at the college. The Communications & Social Media Manager advised the Committee that a working group, consisting of appropriate senior and middle managers and ECSA representatives, has been set-up to holistically consider student communications.

The Committee NOTED that the working group had agreed to develop a student communication plan for implementation at the start of the new academic year. The Communications & Social Media Manager advised the Committee that an overview of the plan and its implementation would come forward to the next meeting of the Academic Council.

The Committee DISCUSSED the current methods of communication with students, from the initial application process through to the end of year assessment survey, including the suggestion that the college consider the development of its own mobile app. The Communications & Social Media Manager confirmed that the working group would consider ideas put forward by members of the Academic Council in further detail.

The Communications & Social Media Manager left the meeting

5 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-22 AND BLUEPRINT

5.1 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.

5.2 The Committee NOTED that 14 Blueprint project concepts had now been progressed to business case stage, with the core concepts of the remaining five projects undergoing further refinement.

5.3 The Committee NOTED a project example, relating to the Student Experience Programme, which included an innovative learning analytics software package produced by Civitas Learning. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that the package allowed the college to track the progress of students through predictive data in order to identify points where disengagement may occur, potentially leading to poor attainment or course dropout.

5.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the development of learning analytics at the college and AGREED that a report on the package, and its implementation, should come forward to the next meeting of the Academic Council.

6 HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? UPDATE

6.1 The Committee NOTED that the college was currently reviewing its progress toward its 2017/18 Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan (EREP), and had

RAG rated outcomes and their impact. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that a draft EREP would be submitted to Education Scotland in July 2018, and that early indications had shown the EREP was on track - with most areas RAG rated 'Green'.

- 6.2 The Committee NOTED that, in April 2018, a team of Education Scotland Associate Assessors had visited the college to observe learning and teaching in all Faculty areas to support the college's internal review process, and provide an evidence base for the EREP. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that Quality Managers were now working with Curriculum Managers and Curriculum Leaders to begin a self-evaluation process, to reflect on the continued enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment through these observations.
- 6.3 The Committee NOTED that a new EREP would be submitted in October 2018, following consideration by the Academic Council. The Assistant Principal informed the Committee that the updated EREP would include outcomes from the best practice presentations received by the Academic Council throughout the academic year.
- 6.4 The Committee welcomed and DISCUSSED the identification and recording of best practice as part of the EREP process. Further to this, the Committee AGREED that it would welcome an opportunity, at a meeting in the new academic year, to consider how best practice is disseminated across the college.

7 STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT

7.1 IMPROVEMENTS IN STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- 7.1.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Head of Student Experience on improvements made by her Department over the past year. The Head of Student Experience outlined key development to the student funding process, mental health & wellbeing, corporate parenting, student support/guidance and front line services.
- 7.1.2 The Committee welcomed the presentation and DISCUSSED the following matters:
- (i) Communications with students through social media, and the positive reception towards online guidance videos relating to student funding;
 - (ii) the resources and support available to faculties through the Student Experience Department and the effective promotion of their use;
 - (iii) the partnership working taking place with ECSA to enhance the student experience;
 - (iv) recent positive development in the approach of the SFC to student funding and the requirements placed on 100% attendance;
 - (v) development around the holding of student data in relation to GDPR compliance.
- 7.1.3 The Committee Chair congratulated the Head of Student Experience and her team on the improvements made to key areas of the student experience over the

academic year. The Committee AGREED that the presentation slides presented by the Head of Student Experience should be circulated to members of the Academic Council

7.2 STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING REPORT

- 7.2.1 The Committee NOTED a standalone report, as requested at its last meeting, on the work currently being undertaken across the college to promote and support positive student mental health and wellbeing. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that mental health related referrals at the college had increased year on year, with 11% of full time students with mental health issues withdrawing or failing to successfully complete their course in 2016/17.
- 7.2.2 The Committee NOTED that, in 2017/18, the college had undertaken a number of new approaches to supporting students with mental health issues, including; the introduction of two new posts to support students and help train staff, the delivery of accredited training to staff and the development of a cross-college health & wellbeing service within the Student Experience Team.
- 7.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the following points in relation to student mental health and wellbeing:
- (i) The financial resources available to provide support to students with mental health needs, and the potential to share resources with ECSA and external partners;
 - (ii) the need to be proactive towards tackling and supporting health and wellbeing issues at the college;
 - (iii) a new student and staff mental health policy which was being development for approval in the new academic year;
 - (iv) the potential benefits of a learning analytics system to identify issues and support students more effectively;
 - (v) mental health resilience, and the need to support students and staff in developing their understanding of mental health and wellbeing.
- 7.2.4 The Committee AGREED that the Executive should consider, as part of the Blueprint, the incorporation of a 'wellbeing module' into college courses - in the same way as other study skills modules.
- 7.2.5 The Committee AGREED that the Head of Student Experience should present a follow-up report to the Academic Council in the new academic year, outlining the impact of new approaches introduced by the College in 2017/18 to improve mental health and wellbeing.

8 COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS

The Quality Enhancement Manager joined the meeting

- 8.1 LEARNING AND TEACHING SURVEY 2017/18
- 8.1.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the 2017/18 Learning and Teaching Survey, which was designed to assess students' opinions regarding key aspects of their experience at the college. The Quality Enhancement Manager advised the Committee that where possible survey questions had been aligned with specific prompts contained within Education Scotland's *How Good is Our College* framework.
- 9.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the survey was made available to over 12,000 students, of which 25.1% responded. Quality Enhancement Manager informed the Committee that participation levels were down on the previous year's Learning and Teaching Survey, and the last induction survey carried out in December 2017, which targeted a similar number of students.
- 9.1.3 The Committee NOTED that in comparison with last year's results, the college-wide satisfaction rates had increased marginally across 11 of 20 comparable questions. The Quality Enhancement Manager advised the Committee that overall satisfaction with courses at the college was high, with 91% of respondents stating that they were satisfied with their course. The Committee NOTED that 94% of students stated that they had greatly developed their knowledge and skills during their course.
- 9.1.4 The Committee NOTED that whilst rates of satisfaction rates were generally positive, satisfaction was still low in relation to: learner influence in planning and delivery of course content (68%); suitable arrangements being made when lecturers were away (69%); and, assessment-spacing (77%). The Quality Enhancement Manager informed the Committee that whilst scores in these areas were only adequate, improvements of up to 6% were noted against the previous year's results.
- 9.1.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the following matters related to the Learning and Teaching Survey results:
- (i) The response rate, which whilst still of numerical significant, was lower than received for previous years Learning & Teaching Surveys;
 - (ii) the two areas relating to support for learning which scored the lowest satisfaction ratings, and which would be areas of review for the Quality Team;
 - (iii) ways in which students could influence course content, and an example used in Management Studies where a student designed module was piloted and led to improved engagement and support in the cohort.
- 9.1.6 The Committee NOTED that progress against recommendations arising from the Learning & Teaching Survey would be considered at future meetings of the Academic Council, through its Summary Recommendations Report.

- 9.1.7 The Committee welcomed the positive survey results and AGREED that the Quality Team should consider further the constructive example (Minute 9.1.5 refers) discussed by members.
- 9.2 COLLEGE LEAVER DESTINATION SURVEY 2016/17 REPORT
- 9.2.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the College Leaver Destination survey carried out during February 2018. The Quality Enhancement Manager advised the Committee that the SFC required all colleges to carry out the survey, with information being gathered from a range of sources including internal college data, UCAS and feedback from a telephone survey.
- 9.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the number of students surveyed increased by 1% compared to AY 2015/16, with the number of positive destinations decreasing slightly from 98% to 96%. The Quality Enhancement Manager informed the Committee that the 2% decrease in positive destinations was attributed to a greater number of respondent (6%) and more detailed information being collated on known destination.
- 9.2.3 The Committee NOTED a number of positive trends relating to further and higher education student destination, including the number of FE students engaged in further study increasing by 25% since 2014/15, and the number of HE students progressing to university had increased 32% since 2014/15. The Quality Enhancement Manager highlighted that only 2% of students leaving the college in 2016/17 were currently unemployed and looking for work. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that the college would continue to find ways to support students seek a positive destination going forward.
- 9.2.4 The Committee Chair welcomed the report and highlighted the positive impact of the college in preparing students for their next step in life, whether it be continued education or employment.
- 9.3 SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY
- 9.3.1 The Committee NOTED that further recommendations for improvement would be highlighted when the Induction Survey 2018 and the Pre-Exit Survey 2018 are published, and appropriate comparisons and recommendations outlined.
- 9.4 INDUCTION SURVEY 2018/19
- 9.4.1 The Committee NOTED the content and format of the draft Student Induction Survey 2018/19, which would be made available to new students in the next academic year.
- 9.4.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the Induction Survey 2018/19 and were content to APPROVE the survey for dissemination.
- 9.4.3 The Committee NOTED that as agreed by the Academic Council in September 2017, the Quality Team would be reviewing their approach to student surveys in the new academic year. The Quality Enhancement Manager advised the

Committee that a further update on these development would be provided in due course.

Ryan Quinn left the meeting

10 MOODLE USAGE UPDATE

The Learning Technology and Resources Manager joined the meeting

- 10.1 The Committee NOTED a statistical overview of usage, access and engagement with Moodle, the Edinburgh College virtual learning environment (VLE), in 2017/18. The Learning Technology and Resources Manager advised the Committee that the VLE provided an online education platform which could be used to create lessons, manage courses, upload material, host assessments, and as a communication medium.
- 10.2 The Committee NOTED a significant increase in the number of timetabled staff and students using Moodle between 2016/17 and 2017/18, as well as an increase in the duration of individual student/staff Moodle sessions. The Learning Technology and Resources Manager advised the Committee that these increases indicated that staff were becoming more comfortable using the VLE as a pedagogical tool. This was also indicated by the diverse range of activities now used regularly on the platform.
- 10.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the following in relation to Moodle and its usage across the college:
- (i) Improvements to the hosting of the VLE and the confidence this had given staff and students in the platform;
 - (ii) the increase in VLE access through smartphones, with over half of all page views taking place through an iPhone or Android device;
 - (iii) the extent to which Moodle usage can continue to grow, and ways best practice could be encouraged through the VLE.
- 10.4 The Committee welcomed the update provided and AGREED that it would welcome the opportunity to review an annual report on Moodle usage across the college.

The Learning Technology and Resources Manager left the meeting

11 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE OPERATION 2017/18

- 11.1 The Committee NOTED that at the end of each academic year the Committee is required to review its annual activity. The Clerk advised the Academic Council that the same evaluation form, which asked members to consider the committee's operation and its performance monitoring and strategic roles, would be completed by all committees of the Board.

- 11.2 The Committee NOTED that its operation was compliant with its terms of reference, and DISCUSSED matters in relation to its performance monitoring, strategic role and decision-making.
- 11.3 The Committee AGREED that the Committee Chair should work with the Clerk to finalise the review of committee operation checklist, prior to its recirculation to the Committee for additional comments.

12 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

12.1 DEPARTURE OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

- 12.1.1 The Committee NOTED that the Student President and ECSA Vice President (Activities & Sport) would be stepping down from their roles on 01 July. The Committee Chair, on behalf of members, thanked both student representatives for their contribution to the Academic Council over the past year.
- 12.1.2 The Committee NOTED that Valerie Jackman and Christopher Turnbull, Co-opted Academic Staff Members, would be stepping down from their roles at the end of the academic year. The Committee Chair, on behalf of members, thanked both lecturers for their contribution to the Academic Council over the course of their tenures.
- 12.1.3 The Committee NOTED that the Clerk to the Board would contact all co-opted members of the Academic Council in June to confirm tenure details for the new academic year.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 To be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 16:05