EDINBURGH COLLEGE ACADEMIC COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING ON 21 NOVEMBER 2014
14.00, BOARDROOM, SIGHTHILL CAMPUS

Present: Colin Arthur; Jenni Behan; Fiona Candlish; Moira Frizzell; Nigel Kennington; Ray McCowan; Julie McCran; Richard Morris; Nigel Paul (Chair); and Graham Skirving

In attendance: P MacPherson (Clerk)

By invitation: Jon Buglass; Gordon McBride; Myra McCabe; Kevin McGlynn; Lea Ozuna; Ken Rutherford

1   APOLOGIES

1.1   Apologies had been received from Zoe Croy, Diane Erasmuson, Jeroen van Herk, Elaine McMahon, Sharon McCue-Livingstone, Ian McKay and Jane Richardson

2   WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2.1   The Committee Chair welcomed Richard Morris, Nigel Kennington and Jenni Behan to their first meeting of the Academic Council.

The Committee Chair also welcomed Jon Buglass, Gordon McBride (SFC) and Ken Rutherford (SFC) to the meeting.

3   MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1   Staff Member, Lecturer Institute of Construction & Building Crafts advised that there was no record of his question about the progression route from instructor to lecturer. He added that the college employs a lot of instructors and we need to be able to see the progression route from instructor to lecturer in the CPD route map. Vice Principal, Educational Leadership informed Members that this was being picked up in the instructor review and Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience agreed that this would be included in the CPD road map when it was presented to the Committee in February.

3.2   The Committee APPROVED the minutes of 19 September 2014 as an accurate record of the meeting with the above amendment.

4   MATTERS ARISING

The Committee NOTED that all actions were either carried over or covered in the agenda items.

4.1   Staff Member, Quality Support Officer reported that the Quality and Equality sub-group had put forward a recommendation to the Academic Council to approve the publication of a quality bulletin. Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience advised that a bulletin was created as part of the Education Scotland review and should be continued as part of the Education Scotland action plan. She asked for the Committee's approval to publish a monthly bulletin that provided updates on the Education Scotland action plan.

    4.1.1   The Committee APPROVED the use of the bulletin in principle but NOTED that Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience needed to work out the best way to communicate information about the Education Scotland action plan to the rest of the college.

4.2   The Committee NOTED that the intranet still says that the college will aim to achieve 100% positive destinations for full-time students. It was AGREED that this would be removed from the intranet.

4.3   Staff Member, Food and Hospitality advised that he had just completed the TQFE. He thought it was an excellent course and asked if there had been any development of next steps for lecturers who had completed this course. Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience agreed to feed this back into the CPD road map. The Committee Chair added that he was keen to see support included for ongoing personal development of lecturers after the completion of the TQFE qualification.

5   DEVELOPMENT PROJECT WORKING GROUP

5.1   The Committee Chair noted that the College has achieved a lot since the merger in October 2012, albeit there had been challenges, and strains and stresses. The College now needed to focus on its development over the next few years. Although unable to guarantee additional funds, the Funding Council are open to discussions about the development of the College and the funding required for the College to implement its next stage of development and achieve a sustainable financial position.

5.2   The Committee Chair advised Members that the project discussions were at a formative stage and he had been asked by the Chair of the Board of Management to chair the steering board. The Committee Chair has had discussions with the interim Principal who hopes to get the project moving over the next 2 – 3 weeks.

6 DEMOGRAPHIC PLACES MODEL

6.1 SFC Outcome Agreement Manager informed Members that the SFC have been working on the new credits system as part of the Outcome Agreement process. The SFC view the change from WSUMs to credits as a priority and want to see discussions held around the College so that all members of staff are aware of this change. He added that the demographic model will help the College to plan its future curriculum.

6.2 SFC Assistant Director, Funding Policy advised that the new credit system would be much easier to understand as the current WSUM system can make it difficult to predict how many places can be offered. The demographic model will also help colleges to identify the demand for student places in any area.

   6.2.1 The model removes those who are already in positive destinations and apportions places according to specific criteria.

   6.2.2 SFC Assistant Director, Funding Policy reported that the SFC does not have an infinite amount of money but there are dialogues to be had over allocation of funds due to demographic demand.

   6.2.3 SFC Assistant Director, Funding Policy noted that in 2015/16 no college will lose out in the transfer over to the credit system.

   6.2.4 SFC Assistant Director, Funding Policy confirmed that both FE and HE provision is based on 15 credits per full time course.

   6.2.5 SFC Outcome Agreement Manager added that there were 5 different pricing groups across the sector and that all courses would be paid the same across the sector.

6.3 The Committee Chair asked the College to check if the funding received from the Funding Council and the SDS are the same and if they will fully fund the College's curriculum activities.

6.4 SFC Outcome Agreement Manager advised that he was happy to help get the message out to all teaching staff about the change to credits.

6.5 The Committee Chair thanked the SFC Outcome Agreement Manager and the SFC Assistant Director, Funding Policy for their presentation. He noted that the move to the credit system and its impact on the 2015/16 curriculum should be communicated to all staff.

[SFC Outcome Agreement Manager and SFC Assistant Director, Funding Policy left the meeting].

7   CURRICULUM AWARENESS RAISING SESSION (Creative Industries)

Head of Creative Industries gave a presentation to the Committee Members on the Creative Industries curriculum.

7.1   Creative Industries offer degrees in music, dance and photography and they currently run 185 courses with around 3,000 students.

7.2   The vision for the department is sustainable growth through collaboration and they achieve this through their work with external partners (arts organisations; employers; universities).

7.3   Head of Creative Industries described some of the other main areas of development for Creative Industries:

-    Creatives connect
     Collaborative working on projects across all curriculum areas.

-    Lets Glow Festival
     The festival showcases all of the learning that takes place within Creative Industries and will be expanded in 2014/15 through industry sponsorship to make it an Edinburgh-wide festival.

-    CAPE
     Creative Industries now have 335 actively engaged employers in the curriculum. The CAPE newsletter was produced to help employers spread the word about the Creative Industries employability day on the 3rd February 2015. There are lots of activities for employers to get involved in on the employability day (guest speaker; workshops; student mentoring programme).

-    Memorandum of Understanding with schools and the community
     Creative Industries have already hit a target of 3 additional MOUs and are developing more school to college partnership routes.

-    Creative Industries already have articulation and are looking to create new routes through all of their HND courses.

-    Creative Industries have 120 students involved in the Academies Programme and this number should increase by a further 80 students next year.

-    Creative Business is a new strategy that sees students combining relevant industry employment with their studies.

7.4   Head of Creative Industries advised that the main challenges facing Creative Industries is a lack of time and human resources to build up business relationships. He added that they also require continual investment in IT technology to help up-skill students – digital skills investment plan; CISCO and networking.

7.5   Head of Creative Industries informed Members that Creatives Connect can be accessed through Moodle and anyone in the college can offer / request a service through it.

7.6   Head of Creative Industries noted that lecturers are passionate about collaborative events. This can be seen in the range of music and dance performances produced for the recent black history month.

7.7   The Committee Chair thanked Head of Creative Industries for his presentation and added that it was really good to see how this curriculum area was being taken forward.

[Head of Creative Industries left the meeting].

8   WOOD COMMISSION EVENT

8.1   Vice Principal Educational Leadership advised that, due to the success of the College's Academy model, they were asked to host an event on the Wood Commission Report. The event was attended by Regional Chairs, Scottish Government delegates and members of the SFC.

8.2   Vice Principal Educational Leadership reported that the Academy model has now grown to include 4 local authorities and 30 different schools. They are now looking to develop a STEM Academy to provide a new model of delivery for STEM based subjects. The STEM Academy will allow those interested in STEM subjects to focus their learning experience around STEM and fit core subjects around that.

8.2.1   The College have been working on the STEM Academy with the Funding Council and employers over the past 6 months. The STEM Academy will focus on 4 specific areas – mini science; tech; engineering; maths – and each mini Academy will be sponsored by employers. They are looking for large organisations that have a significant skills gap (either now or in future years) to sponsor the mini Academies as the focus of the STEM academy is on employability.

8.3   Vice Principal Educational Leadership advised that the challenge for the College was to replicate the Academy experience in other areas. They are looking to create a construction Academy in partnership with East Lothian council that is geared towards the pre-HN level.

8.3.1 Staff Member, Lecturer Institute of Construction & Building Crafts advised that a lot of construction work comes from small sub-contractors and that the College should focus on large construction projects that are happening in Midlothian, East Lothian and the Edinburgh area as a basis for the Construction Academy. Vice Principal Educational Leadership informed Members that the College was looking for sponsor employers who could provide job opportunities for students

9 CURRICULUM REVIEW

9.1 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience reported that the Curriculum Review was started at the beginning of October and is split into 3 phases – review; modelling; planning for 15/16.

9.1.1 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience informed Members that each course is analysed using a number of evidence criteria and is a very detailed process. She added that she is working with Heads and Curriculum Managers to look at the data to produce the 2015/16 curriculum.

9.1.2 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience advised Members that she will discuss the data with the Executive Team next week and noted that the 2015/16 curriculum will be ready for 3rd February 2015.

9.1.3 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience agreed that there was a need to identify why 35% of students failed FE and provide support / training for staff to reduce this percentage.

9.2 Vice Principal Educational Leadership agreed to provide an overview of the curriculum offer for 2015/16 at the next Committee meeting.

9.2.1 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience agreed to confirm with the Governance Director if the curriculum offer for 2015/16 needs to be signed off by the Committee.

9.3 The Committee Chair informed Members that there may be more reshaping of the curriculum required over the next 3-5 years to align to local economic and employment demands.

9.4 Staff Member, Food and Hospitality advised that food, hospitality and events are keen to know the curriculum for 2015/16 as this will allow them to market their courses.

9.5 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience informed Members that the 3rd February 2015 was chosen as a result of the RIE process.

9.5.1 Head of Student Services advised that this was the earliest possible date we could open the 2015/16 curriculum to prospective students. She confirmed that, going forward, this date will be in December.

10 CURRICULUM STRATEGY

10.1 Vice Principal Educational Leadership advised that Members were being asked to approve a slightly amended Curriculum Strategy and thanked ECSA for their help in producing this document.

10.1.1 Vice Principal Educational Leadership informed Members that the revised Curriculum Strategy also includes details of the engagement process with staff, students and external stakeholders.

10.2 The Committee APPROVED the Curriculum Strategy.

11 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

11.1 Head of Student Services advised that the Student Engagement Strategy affects all of the College and they have made very good progress on all of the points identified in the strategy.

11.1.1 Head of Student Services informed Members that there is still work to be done in learning and teaching and ECSA are working with Head of Quality & Equalities to take that forward.

11.1.2 The Committee Chair asked the Head of Student Services if she was happy with the progress made against the deficiencies shown up by the student surveys. Head of Student Services advised that the College is making good progress in relation to the class rep system and confirmed that ECSA now train the associate trainers.

11.1.3 ECSA VP Welfare informed Members that more lecturers are now seeing the positive benefits of the class rep system.

11.1.4 Head of Student Services advised that the next step is to get class reps fully involved in course team meetings.

11.1.5 ECSA VP Welfare reported that ECSA speak to the LDTs to find out the best way to engage with individual classes. She noted that 2nd year HN students do not have LDTs and ECSA are not able to promote the class rep system to this group of students through LDTs. However, she added that ECSA are now receiving more feedback from this group than in the previous year.

11.1.6 Head of Student Services noted that all staff need to promote the class rep system to students.

11.2   Rapid Improvement Event (RIE) Update

11.2.1 Head of Student Services advised that the RIE project lead is the Head of Health, Wellbeing & Social Sciences. The RIE event ran from 29th September – 3rd October and was tasked with developing ways to improve the enquiry-to-enrolment process for students. Representatives from across the college took part in this event.

11.2.2 The RIE action plan was produced as a result of this event and looks to provide clear information to both staff and prospective students about the enquiry-to-enrolment process. The Head of Health, Wellbeing & Social Sciences meets with the RIE team every Friday afternoon to check the progress made against the RIE actions.

11.2.3 The Committee Chair noted that it was good that the actions were being monitored and added that the RIE team should also ensure that the actions are delivering what the College needs them to deliver.

11.2.4 Head of Student Services informed Members that the College will now clearly state specific entry requirements for all courses.

11.2.5 Staff Member, Lecturer Institute of Construction & Building Crafts advised that the Learning & Teaching & CPD sub-group had discussed MIS and thought that students should be given 5 attempts to apply for a course instead of just 3. Head of Student Services informed Members that applicants can apply for further courses if they are unsuccessful after 3 attempts. However, in order to track an applicant's status it was decided to limit them to 3 attempts at any one time.

11.2.6 Staff Member, Lecturer: Creative Industries, Design Media and Computing informed Members that students could apply for more courses if the tracking system is set up correctly in the database.

11.2.7 ECSA VP Welfare advised that we need to make sure that people are applying for the right course and it is not productive for someone to apply for 4-5 different courses. Head of Student Services agreed to continue this discussions with the sub-groups.

11.2.8 Lecturing Staff Board Member asked why the closing date for courses had been given as 15th April. Head of Student Services stated that all decisions were made on feedback received from the RIE consultation. A deadline date has been set so that applicants know when they need to apply for their course. ECSA VP Welfare thought there was the possibility of opening up the courses to applicants if they were not full.

Head of Student Services agreed to check if the same deadline applied for part-time courses.

12   FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

12.1   Equality Outcomes Update

12.1.1 Head of Quality & Equalities advsied that his team have worked with ECSA throughout the year to deliver positive outcomes for students. His team have also progressed well in some areas with under-represented groups. However, one area that is still showing as red is mental health groups and they will be looking to increase both satisfaction and success rates over the next year.

12.1.2 Head of Quality & Equalities informed Members that 600 members of staff have not completed their mandatory equality training.

12.1.3 Head of Quality & Equalities informed Members that in the last week the unions have stated that it is entirely voluntary if lecturers allow assessed reasonable adjustment in their classes. He added that the college risks legal action due to this and it impacts on the learning of the students. Head of Quality & Equalities advised Members that his team are looking to resolve these issues.

12.1.4 Lecturing Staff Board Member stated that in some other organisations they have agreed to record lectures but need the agreement of all students before they can record interactive teaching methods.

12.1.5 Vice Principal Educational Leadership advised that the College is due to write up guidance notes on this issue and circulate to the unions.

12.2   Essential Skills Support Pilot (Update)

12.2.1 The Committee NOTED that Head of Centre for Learning and Teaching was currently off ill and unable to present her paper. The Committee AGREED that the paper should be read for information today and then Head of Centre for Learning and Teaching can provide an update at the next meeting.

13   PERFORMANCE UPDATES

13.1   Education Scotland Action Plan

13.1.1 Head of Quality & Equalities agreed to add a progress report to the action plan and present this at the next Committee meeting.

13.2   Monitoring Our Performance

13.2.1 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience advised Members that the final MOP was signed off at the last Board Meeting. She was unable to report on the purple targets at the last meeting as she was waiting on final data from the Funding Council. This paper provides a final update on these targets.

13.2.2 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience agreed that the MOP summary could be released to the sub-groups.

13.3   SFC Annual Quality Report

13.3.1 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience advised that the SFC Annual Quality Report is produced every year for the Funding Council.

13.3.2 Head of Quality & Equalities informed Members that he is currently looking into the 7% drop in part-time HE achievement and agreed to provide an update at the next meeting.

13.3.3 The Committee APPROVED the SFC Annual Quality Report.

[Quality Enhancement Officer entered the meeting].

13.4   Learning & Teaching Survey 2014-15

13.4.1 The Committee NOTED that the sub-groups had discussed the surveys and had concerns regarding the timing, wording and delivery method. The Committee Chair stated that the surveys need to take on board the feedback from both students and the sub-groups. He recommended that a review be undertaken of the surveys, including taking into account the proposal for a National Approach to Monitoring Student Satisfaction and Engagement and added that it would be good practice to trial updated surveys before being used across the College. The Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience agreed to take this forward.

13.4.2 Staff Member, Lecturer: Creative Industries, Design Media and Computing advised that the essential skills questions are entirely subjective and many students are not equipped to answer them.

13.4.3 ECSA VP Welfare advised that the question 'has ECSA helped improve their learning' should be changed to 'did you go to ECSA with a learning problem and did they help'.

13.4.4 Head of Quality & Equalities agreed that questions 27-34 should be removed and should be discussed further at the meeting of the sub-group chairs next week.

13.4.5 ECSA VP Welfare advised that some students are scared to answer the questionnaire electronically as they think their responses will be logged and recorded. The Committee Chair NOTED that students need to understand that their responses are completely anonymous.

13.4.6 The Committee NOTED that students may need LDT support to complete these surveys.

13.4.7 Head of Quality & Equalities reported that some of the questions are aligned to the Scottish Funding framework but agreed that questions need to be clearer and easier to understand. He added that the survey is not sent out until February so there is still an opportunity to amend some of the questions.

13.7.8 Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience stated that, if the questions are changed, it is very important that we can still compare the responses with previous versions.

13.7.9 The Committee APPROVED the survey and AGREED that the wording of the questions should be reviewed at the meeting of the sub-group chairs. The Committee were happy for the sub-group chairs to make logical changes to the questions in the survey.

[Quality Enhancement Officer left the meeting].

14   UPDATES

14.1   ECSA Update

14.1.1 ECSA VP Welfare advised that class registers are still not being completed properly. Vice Principal Educational Leadership agreed to pick this up as a matter of urgency and will check the overall register statistics.

14.2   Sub Group Reports

14.2.1 Staff Member, Quality Support Officer advised that more members had been added to the Quality & Equality sub-group. They had discussed the surveys, and suggested putting it onto Moodle. However, she was advised that putting the survey onto Moodle would stop it being an anonymous survey. Staff Member, Lecturer: Creative Industries, Design Media and Computing noted that it would still be possible to create an anonymous survey online and it was AGREED that this would

be discussed further at the meeting of the sub-group chairs. Staff Member, Quality Support Officer reported that there were still no female toilets in Engineering at Sighthill.

14.2.2 Staff Member, Lecturer: Creative Industries, Design Media and Computing advised that the Curriculum Management sub-group had asked to see Academic Council papers before they were discussed at the Academic Council. The Committee AGREED that all relevant topics could be discussed by the sub-groups but it would need to be decided on an item by item basis.

14.2.3 Staff Member, Food and Hospitality reported that the Student Experience & Engagement sub-group had felt that the College should put on a cultural event as there are 94 different cultures represented at the College. ECSA VP Welfare advised that ECSA are currently organising a World Culture Day. Staff Member, Food and Hospitality stated that a better IT infrastructure needs to be in place for both staff and students and would discuss this further at the meeting of the sub-group chairs next week. He also noted that more information about the job zone should be communicated to students.

14.2.4 Staff Member, Lecturer Institute of Construction & Building Crafts advised that the Learning & Teaching and CPD sub-group discussed the Education Scotland Review at their last meeting and they looked at the inefficiency of students to self-learn. They thought that one of the best ways for students to self-learn was through Moodle and were concerned that Moodle was not working properly at the Forthside Campus.

14.2.5 Staff Member, Lecturer Institute of Construction & Building Crafts advised that there is a problem with some students not getting enough tuition on essential skills. He added that a lot of courses integrate core skills but that this does not suit many students. There is a lack of adequate tutoring in ICT, mathematics and numeracy.

14.2.6 Vice Principal Educational Leadership and Vice Principal, Quality, Performance & Student Experience agreed to look into the issue of providing adequate essential skills for students. It was also AGREED that this issue would be discussed at the meeting of the sub-group chairs.

15 FOR INFORMATION

15.1 ECSA Engagement Minute
None.

15.2 SFC's Consultation on a National Approach to Monitoring Student Satisfaction and Engagement

None.

15.3 Outcome Agreement 2014-17 (Staff Version)

None.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is now scheduled for **Friday 27 February 2015** at 2pm in the Boardroom, Granton Campus.

The meeting closed at 1650 hrs.