



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 11 MARCH 2016

1400hrs, Boardroom, Sighthill Campus

Present: J Behan; T Brown; A Bruton; S Cairncross (Chair); J Evans; J Harkin; J Jeffrey; K Just; A Landels; A McMillian; J Sales; A Wilson

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

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Committee Chair welcomed Ann Landels, a new Non-Executive Board member, to her first meeting of the Academic Council.
- 1.2 The Committee NOTED that apologies had been received from Colin Arthur, Elaine Lee and Jeroen Van Herk.

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 22 January 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 an update on the Imagine Tomorrow Report, and AGREED that the Head of Support for Learning would provide a final update to the next meeting of the Academic Council - outlining the key points which would be progressed in collaboration with ECSA.

4.1.2 REVIEW OF COLLEGE SURVEYS (*Minute 9.5/22.01.16 refers*)

The Committee NOTED that the Head of Quality & Equalities would be conducting a review of College surveys and was seeking for volunteers to contribute to the review process. The Committee Chair encouraged members to contact the Head of Quality & Equalities if they wished to be involved further in the holistic review of surveys.

5 EDUCATION SCOTLAND ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT VISIT

- 5.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update from the Head of Quality & Equalities on an upcoming Annual Engagement Visit by Education Scotland, which would take place on 09 & 10 May 2016 (between the scheduled meetings of the Academic Council in March and June).
- 5.2 The Committee NOTED that preparatory work for the visits had commenced, and that a report on the outcomes from the Annual Engagement Visit would be presented to the next meeting of the Academic Council on 03 June. The Principal advised the Committee that the visit would be the last of its type, with Education Scotland and the SFC moving towards a new self-evaluation model in September.
- 5.3 The Committee NOTED that, outwith the upcoming Annual Engagement Visit, the College had engaged in an active dialogue with Education Scotland to support a number of initiatives to enhance learning and teaching. The Head of Quality & Equalities informed the Committee that the College's HMI Inspector, Gill Ritchie, would meet with members of the Senior Management Team to provide feedback on quality enhancement proposals within the Business Transformational Plan.

6 STUDENT SURVEYS

- 6.1 INDUCTION SURVEY RESULTS 2015/16
 - 6.1.1 The Committee NOTED the results of the 2015 Student Induction Survey, including the key themes, areas of improvement and recommendations. The Head of Quality & Equalities informed the Committee that the survey results had been utilised as part of the course self-evaluation sessions in February.
 - 6.1.2 The Committee NOTED a response rate of 47.2% overall, a 5% decrease on the previous year. Overall satisfaction within the College was shown to be 'moderately high', with 88.9% of respondents stating that they 'enjoyed coming to the College' and 87.8% 'satisfied with the College'. The Head of Quality & Equalities reported that survey respondents reported 'high satisfaction' with their courses, with 90% of students stating that they believed they were 'on the right course'.
 - 6.1.3 The Committee NOTED that external benchmarking (against 109 'providers' in the UK) had taken place for 26 of the 37 survey questions where satisfaction rates could be calculated. The Head of Quality & Equalities informed the Committee that the College did not rank in the upper quartile for any question, and ranked in the lowest quartile for 15 questions.

- 6.1.4 The Committee NOTED that when compared to the 'Scottish-only' benchmark, the College achieved improved results in all but one category. The Head of Quality & Equalities advised the Committee that the College's benchmark scores, in almost all areas, had stayed the same or improved on the 2014 induction survey results.
- 6.1.5 The Committee NOTED the key messages and areas of concern highlighted within the survey results, including the recommendations for further actions on the following areas:
- (i) Financial support, and the information available to guide students;
 - (ii) the organisation and timetabling of courses;
 - (iii) students' awareness of further opportunities and work experience, and the need for further information on courses and progression routes before a course commences.
- 6.1.6 The Committee DISCUSSED the following points relating to the results of the 2015 Induction Survey:
- (i) the future benefits of bringing forward the application and enrolment process to help students get a better start at the College;
 - (ii) the 'bedding down' of the new recruitment process, and how improved intelligence could support new starters in their induction;
 - (iii) the positive feedback received regarding the student 'welcome event', and the need to assess its impact through future induction survey questions;
 - (iv) the potential for the welcome event to become a mandatory event in 2016.
- 6.1.7 The Committee DISCUSSED benchmarking within the sector, and the potential shift towards a Scottish benchmark rather than the current UK wide comparison. The Principal advised the Committee that the current benchmarking process included a number of sixth form schools and private colleges.
- 6.1.8 The Committee AGREED that, in future, it would be appropriate to see further comparison with previous year's survey results, to provide greater analysis of trends within the data.
- 6.2 PRE-EXIT SURVEY 2016
- 6.2.1 The Committee NOTED the contents of the 2016 Pre-Exit Survey, which included 10 mandatory questions from the SFC's *National Survey of Student Satisfaction and Engagement*. The Head of Quality & Equalities informed the Committee that all students in their final year of study would be asked to complete the survey, which would be administered electronically with the support of LDTs.
- 6.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the following matters relating to the 2016 Pre-Exit Survey and its dissemination to students:
- (i) the time required to complete the survey (estimated at on average 10 minutes) and the general response rate;
 - (ii) the development of the survey and the need to ensure that staff and students are involved in the process;

- (iii) the number of questions within the survey and whether it was possible to emphasize the key questions further;
 - (iv) the completion rates in various areas of the College, and the barriers facing some student completion of the survey.
 - (v) the use of wireless devices to assist students' completion of the survey, and means to combat poor Wi-Fi connectivity in specific areas.
- 6.2.3 The Committee APPROVED the 2016 Pre-Exit Survey for dissemination to all final year students at the College.
- 6.2.4 The Committee Chair, with reference to Minute 4.1.2, reminded the Committee of the ongoing review of College surveys and encouraged members to engage in the process.

7 APPRENTICESHIP MODELS

Mike Jeffrey, Head of Engineering, and Jan Thomson, Head of Business Development, joined the meeting.

- 7.1 The Committee NOTED a briefing on apprenticeship models at the College, from the Head of Engineering and the Head of Business Development, in response to queries raised around the reporting of apprenticeship numbers at the Academic Council's last meeting.
- 7.2 The Committee NOTED an overview of Modern Apprenticeships (MA), including their benefits for both young people and employers. The Head of Business Development outlined the College's MA targets for 2015/16 as agreed with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), and the expansion of the College's provision in terms of numbers and sectors for 2016/17.
- 7.3 The Committee NOTED that the College delivers MA for a number of employers who, although having their own MA contracts, require training and qualification to be delivered by the College. The Head of Business Development reported on the current scope and value of these 'managing agent' contracts within the Engineering and Construction Departments.
- 7.4 The Committee NOTED the expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships (FA), a new SDS apprenticeship delivered to 5th and 6th year pupils, which offer young people the opportunity to undertake the equivalent of two Highers (SCQF level 6) over a period of two years. The Head of Engineering advised the Committee that FA provided an alternative pathway for young people leaving school to enter into an MA, college/university or employment.
- 7.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the following points in relation to MA and FA provisions:
- (i) the oversight of FA apprentices through an assigned project manager, as the apprenticeship has touchpoints across school, college and external employers;
 - (ii) the dynamic between MA and FA, as latter offers the potential for 'overachievement' directly into a university course;
 - (iii) the development of new apprenticeship sectors, the trajectory of growth in these areas, and the sharing of information within the College to support effective development/implementation;

- (iv) the process of identifying and recruiting appropriate assessors for the various apprenticeships.

7.6 The Committee Chair thanked the Head of Engineering and the Head of Business Development for their overview of apprenticeship models, and strongly supported the sharing of information across the College as new apprenticeships developed.

Jenni Behan and Jan Thomson left the meeting.

8 STEM ASSURED STATUS

8.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Head of Engineering on STEM Assured, a recruitment and marketing tool for educational establishments to maintain the 'vibrancy' of their curriculum offering. The Head of Engineering informed the Committee that, as of 18 February, the Senior Management Group had agreed a project plan for the College to work towards STEM Assured status.

8.2 The Committee NOTED that STEM Assured was the only standard, in a competitive education and training market, that provided independent industry-backed validation of an institutions science, technology, engineering and mathematics provision. The Head of Engineering advised the Committee of the requirements necessary to achieve STEM Assured status for a three year period, and the subsequent review process.

8.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the proposed project plan to achieve STEM Assured status and its benefits for the College, including the following:

- (i) the initiative as a catalyst to support the forging of new partnerships and create new revenue stream opportunities;
- (ii) the development of a STEM Strategy through the initiative, and the support provided by NEF to publish a STEM Manifesto;
- (iii) the benefits for the College curriculum beyond STEM specific courses, as STEM the initiative encourages the implementation of STEM skills in the wider curriculum;
- (iv) the response to STEM Assured across the sector, and the other colleges aiming to achieve the set standard.

8.4 The Committee Chaired thanked the Head of Engineering for his presentation, and welcomed the College's commitment to achieving STEM Assured status.

Mike Jeffrey and Arran McMillan left the meeting.

9 SCHOOL COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP AND DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE

Jane Handley, Head of College Communities, joined the meeting.

9.1 SCHOOL COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

9.1.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation on the School College Partnership (SCP), an agreement between local authorities and the College for the

provision of educational services to school pupils, from the Head of College Communities.

9.1.2 The Committee NOTED the range of courses, additional support needs and Academy programmes the College offers to schools, which aimed to improve the transition between school, college, university and employment. The Head of College Communities provided the Committee with a '[College Courses for Senior Phase Pupils \(S4-S6\) 2016/17](#)' booklet, as provided electronically to all local authority schools, with details of all the provisions available across the College.

9.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the scope and promotion of the SCP, and AGREED that the Head of College Communities should continue to promote the well-received '*College Courses*' booklet to all staff.

9.2 DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE

9.2.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation on Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), a Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy with the aim of reducing youth unemployment by 40% with five years.

9.2.2 The Committee NOTED the key themes and milestones as set out in the Youth Employment Strategy¹. The Head of College Communities informed the Committee that in response to the Strategy the College had taken the following actions:

- (i) Set-up a College Steering Group;
- (ii) developed Employer Councils for each curriculum area;
- (iii) ensured College staff representation on Local Authorities' DYW Groups and the Regional DYW Group;
- (iv) held events for schools to inform and promote the College;
- (v) improved its digital platforms to attract and track schools.

9.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the potential impact of the Youth Employment Strategy, and the College's wider engagement with schools, on gender imbalances within specific course areas. The Head of Quality & Equalities informed the Committee that the College was analysing gender balance across courses as part of its curriculum planning work.

9.2.4 The Committee Chair welcomed the opportunity for the Academic Council to review the various ways the College engages with schools.

10 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

10.1 None.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 The date of the next meeting is 03 June 2016 at 13:30, in the Boardroom, Sighthill Campus.

¹ Developing the Young Workforce, Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy:
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0046/00466012.pdf>

The meeting closed at 16:05