



## **ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING OF 20 JANUARY 2017**

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

**Present:** I Aitchison; C Arthur; N Black; A Bruton; A Landels; J Harkin; N Manning; F Riddoch (Chair); J Russell; D Tait; C Turnbull

**In attendance:** J Buglass; P Davis; M Hoenigmann; S-J Linton; I McKay; M Walker (Clerk); C Murray-Gauld

#### **1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 The new Committee Chair, Dr Fiona Riddoch<sup>1</sup>, introduced herself to the Academic Council.
- 1.2 The Committee Chair welcomed co-opted academic staff member Iris Aitchison to her first meeting.
- 1.3 The Committee NOTED apologies from Amanda Clark and Justin Sales.
- 1.4 The Committee NOTED that Elaine Lee, a former non-executive member of the Academic Council, had stepped down from the Board of Management in early January. On behalf of Committee members, the Committee Chair thanked Ms Lee for her contribution to the Academic Council over the past 18 months.
- 1.5 The Committee NOTED that Adam Wilson the academic staff representative for Engineering had stepped down from the Academic Council, due to other work commitments. The Committee Chair thanked Mr Wilson for his service to the Academic Council, and informed members that the Clerk was currently working to fill co-opted vacancies on the Committee.
- 1.6 The Committee NOTED that due to the need to consider a number of key items of business at the meeting, a planned presentation from the Head of Creatives Industries on best practice within the curriculum area had been removed from the agenda. The Committee Chair informed members that at its next meeting the Academic Council would recommit to its intention of

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<sup>1</sup>Dr Fiona Riddoch was confirmed as Chair of the Academic Council by the Board of Management on 13 December 2016.

receiving a presentation from heads of faculty on best practice with their areas.

## **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 04 November 2016 as an accurate record of the meeting.

## **4 MATTERS ARISING**

4.1 STUDENT WITHDRAWALS

4.1.1 The Committee NOTED an update from the Head of Policy, Planning & Performance and the Head of Student Experience on the processes in place to ensure that withdrawing students are dealt with in a timely manner. The Head of Policy, Planning & Performance informed the Committee that identified areas of inconsistency and low levels of student satisfaction were currently being actioned through the Education Scotland AEV Action Plan, where significant progress had been made to improve register marking by staff.

## **5 LEARNING ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW**

5.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation from Conor Murray-Gauld, ECSA Engagement & Policy Coordinator, on the Learning Engagement Framework (LEF), an ECSA led framework developed with students to create a process to improve the learner experience.

5.2 The Committee NOTED the five key components of the LEF, which included: Course Team Self-Evaluation Days; ECSA-Ilence Awards; Class Rep Campus Conferences; Student Executive; and, a casework system.

5.3 The Committee welcomed the presentation from the ECSA Engagement & Policy Coordinator and DISCUSSED the following:

- (i) The need to promote the value of the initiative amongst students and staff, and the potential benefits of incorporate the presentation into the induction programme of Curriculum Leaders;
- (ii) the communications strategy around the LEF, to ensure a consistent College-wide approach;
- (iii) the need for more volunteers to support the core ECSA Team during busy periods, for instance the Fresher's Fairs, and the scope for providing volunteers with some form of accreditation;
- (iv) the significant number of students acting as Class Reps, and the potential to utilise these volunteers in other initiatives, such as mental health peer-to-peer training;

- (v) the development of ECSA's strategic approach to Quality and student engagement;
- 5.4 The Committee AGREED that the Head of Policy, Performance & Planning should liaise with ECSA to ensure the appropriate promotion of the LEF initiative, and report back to the Committee on progress.
- 5.5 The Committee Chair, on behalf of members, thanked the ECSA Engagement & Policy Coordinator for his presentation. The Committee AGREED that the presentation slides and associated documentation should be circulated to members following the meeting.

***The ECSA Engagement & Policy Coordinator left the meeting***

**6 LEARNING, TEACHING & ASSESSMENT STRATEGY**

- 6.1 The Committee NOTED a first draft of the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy (LTAS). The Assistant Principal, Curriculum Planning, provided an overview of the Strategy and informed the Committee that the LTAS would place high-quality learning and teaching at the forefront of the College's curriculum delivery.
- 6.2 The Committee NOTED a summary of the following five strategic themes of the LTAS: Staff skills; Evaluation of Learning, Teaching and Assessment; Core and essential skills; Blended learning; and, Support for learning.
- 6.3 The Committee NOTED that an extensive consultation had been conducted with staff from support and curriculum areas across the College. The Assistant Principal informed Committee that he hoped to elicit further feedback from the Academic Council, and asked members to consider the following questions in small groups:
- (i) How is the LTAS different from current practice?
  - (ii) Are the five strategic theme the ones that will drive our goal?
  - (iii) Will the LTAS have the desired impact on innovation in learning, teaching and assessment?
- 6.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the LTAS and provided feedback on the following themes:
- (i) The importance of staff inductions and the sharing of good practice, and the need to create appropriate resources to access such materials;
  - (ii) maintaining the motivation of lecturers and the potential for mentoring schemes to support less experienced staff;
  - (iii) the need to communicate the strategy effectively across the College;
  - (iv) the financial resources in place to support the implementation of the Strategy, and the need to prioritise funds towards IT support;
  - (v) the LTAS as a means to drive the development of the College estate and enhance the student experience;
  - (vi) the need to develop an inclusive culture around learning, teaching and assessment, where teaching practices can be openly discussed.

- 6.5 The Committee AGREED that feedback from the session should be considered by the Assistant Principal, when preparing the final draft of the LTAS. The Assistant Principal asked members of the Academic Council to provide any further comments they might have to the Clerk by Friday, 27 January.
- 6.6 The Committee Chair informed members that a final draft of the LTAS would be presented to the Academic Council for approval at its next meeting.

## **7 DRAFT REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2017-20**

- 7.1 The Committee NOTED the first draft of the College's Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) 2017-20. The Head of Policy, Performance & Planning informed the Committee that the initial draft was currently with the SFC for comment and a further draft would be considered by the Academic Council prior to its sign-off by the Board in June.
- 7.2 The Committee NOTED the limited growth forecast and in credit-based delivery as a prudent, strategic move to ensure that the Business Transformation Plan delivery created a solid platform for growth in 2020-23. Further to this, the Head of Policy, Performance & Planning informed the Committee of progress and planning around individual priority measures within the extant ROA.
- 7.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the priority measures and the College's underperformance in relation to direct contracted apprenticeships. The Head of Policy, Performance & Planning clarified that whilst the original bid for apprenticeships had been higher, based on early projections, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) had not granted the requested allocation of places.
- 7.4 The Committee Chair welcomed the opportunity to consider the first draft of the ROA 2017-20, and informed the Academic Council that a final draft would be reviewed at a future meeting of the Committee.

## **8 EDUCATION SCOTLAND ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN**

- 8.1 The Committee NOTED a summary of recommendations arising as a result of the Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit (AEV) conducted in May 2016. The Head of Policy, Performance & Planning advised the Committee that all AEV actions had been directly linked to the Business Transformation Plan, in order to consolidate workstreams going forward.
- 8.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the arrangements in place to ensure the appropriate planning and delivery of cores skills classes. The Committee AGREED that it would welcome an update, at a future meeting, from the Head of Policy, Performance & Planning on the work being done to embed core skills within courses.
- 8.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the role of the Academic Council in reviewing the AEV action plan, and its wider engagement with Education Scotland. The Head of Policy, Performance & Planning informed the Committee that under new annual engagement arrangements, Education Scotland could observe

Committee meetings as part of its evaluation process. The Committee AGREED that the Assistant Principal, the Head of Policy, Performance & Planning and the Clerk should consider current governance arrangements and how the Academic Council interacts with Education Scotland.

## **9 COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS**

### **9.1 INDUCTION SURVEY RESULTS 2016**

- 9.1.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the 2016 Induction Survey, which was designed to collate students' opinions on key aspects of their experience before starting at the College and during their first weeks as enrolled students.
- 9.1.2 The Committee NOTED that over 8500 full-time and part-time students were targeted for the survey, across all four campuses, for a six week period from October to November 2016. The Head of Policy, Performance & Planning advised the Committee that through a survey website posted on Moodle approximately 53% of students targeted completed the survey, an increase of over 11% on last year's survey.
- 9.1.3 The Committee NOTED that satisfaction with the College was high, with 96.6% of students stating that overall, they were satisfied with the College, and 96% stating that they enjoyed coming to College. The Head of Policy, Performance & Planning informed the Committee that high satisfaction was also indicated in a number of other areas, including; 'feeling welcome at Edinburgh College' (98.6%); 'finding the College website informative about the choice of course available' (96.6%); and, 'feeling that they are on the right course' (94.7%).
- 9.1.4 The Committee NOTED one area for review, as indicated by the survey, with only 65.8% to respondents stating that the financial support they were entitled to was in place at the start of the course. The Principal informed the Committee that, although was a student funding and financial support was an issue nationally, the College had been working hard to speed up internal processes to improve the support it provides.
- 9.1.5 The Committee welcome the very encouraging results indicated through the survey, and DISCUSSED the following points:
- (i) The evidence that the positive induction survey results correlate with the improved early withdrawal rate;
  - (ii) the improvements in student experience seen across the College;
  - (iii) the process by which curriculum teams utilised the feedback provided;
  - (iv) the need to promote positive survey results to staff and students through the College newsletter.
- 9.1.6 The Committee AGREED that it would welcome the opportunity to review comparable survey data from across the college sector, although it was recognised that only learning and teaching surveys were currently benchmarked nationally.
- 9.1.7 The Committee AGREED that future reporting of survey results would express data in both student numbers and percentage terms.

9.2 SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

9.2.1 The Committee NOTED a summary of satisfaction survey recommendations arising over 2015/16 and 2016/17.

9.2.2 The Committee NOTED that it was content with progress outlined on each of the recommendation, many of which had been discussed in detail under previous items of business.

9.3 COLLEGE LEAVERS DESTINATION GUIDANCE

9.3.1 The Committee NOTED new guidance released by the SFC on college satisfaction surveys. The Head of Policy, Performance & Planning advised the Committee of the College's response to the changes and their embedding in the updated survey.

**10 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

10.1 None.

**11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

11.1 The date of the next meeting is 17 March 2017 at 14:00, in the Boardroom, Sighthill Campus.

***The meeting closed at 16:00***