



## **ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

### **APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 22 MAY 2020**

#### **14:00hrs, Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:** Audrey Cumberland; Laura Craig; Ethelinda Lashley-Scott; Neil Manning; Sandra Morrison; Fiona Riddoch (Chair); Judith Sischy; Jeanette Stevenson

**In attendance:** Jon Buglass; Janet Campbell (Education Scotland); Nick Croft; Kerry Heathcote; Monica Hoenigmann; Ann Landels; Heidi Vestri (ECSA); Marcus Walker (Clerk); Jordan Wylie (ECSA)

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

- 1.1 The Committee NOTED apologies from Iris Aitchison, Mike Cowley, Carla Ford, Seoras Hearnton, Julian Henderson, Steph Logan, Kevin Maloney, Ryan Quinn and Shannon Young.
- 1.2 The Committee NOTED that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the implementation of UK-wide social distancing measures introduced by the Government, the Board and its committees would hold virtual meetings until further notice.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed Janet Campbell, HM Inspector (Education Scotland), to the Academic Council as an observer.
- 1.4 The Chair welcomed Heidi Vestri, ECSA Representation and Impact Coordinator, to the meeting to present under Item 5.2.
- 1.5 The Chair welcomed Jordan Wylie, the incoming ECSA Student President, to the meeting as an observer. The Committee NOTED that Mr Wylie would officially become ECSA Student President as of 01 July 2020. Further to this, the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, wished to thank the incumbent ECSA Student President, Carla Ford, for her significant contribution to the Academic Council (and the wider student experience) over the past year.
- 1.6 The Chair, on behalf of the Academic Council, wished to convey her thanks to all staff and the Students' Association for the extraordinary efforts and dedication they had shown to deliver the best outcomes for students and the wider Edinburgh College community during an extremely challenging and uncertain period.

## **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 28 February 2020 as an accurate record of the meeting.

## **4. MATTERS ARISING**

### **4.1 MATTERS ARISING REPORT**

4.1.1 Actions from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda.

### **4.2 COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE UPDATE**

4.2.1 The Committee NOTED the five 'Response Phases': Resolve; Resilience; Return; Re-Imagine / Re-Invent; and, Reform, as outlined by the Principal to navigate the challenges facing the College in a post Covid-19 environment. The Principal advised the Committee that although the College remained in the 'Resolve' phase, a Strategic Response Group (led by the Vice Principal Corporate Development) had been set-up to engage with both academic and support staff, to consider the challenges facing the College going forward.

## **5. STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT**

### **5.1 STUDENT EXPERIENCE UPDATE**

5.1.1 The Committee NOTED that ongoing enhancements to improve support services and the experience of College student had been significantly impacted by the introduction of lockdown restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the subsequent closure of College campuses. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that the College continued to operate all its services remotely during the lockdown period, and that morale amongst the Student Experience Team remained positive.

5.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the College had received additional funding to support students suffering hardship during the Covid-19 crisis. The Head of Student Experience informed the Committee that student bursaries and childcare payments had been paid in full, and that an online platform had been developed to allow student funding applications for 2020/21 to be submitted via smartphone.

5.1.3 The Committee NOTED that Learning Development Tutors (LDTs) and guidance teams had been liaising with students and curriculum areas to provide laptops and IT support. The Head of Student Experience advised the

Committee that the College in association with the voluntary organisation *Pass It On* had provided over 50 students with laptops.

5.1.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the challenges for students who could not engage remotely with learning activities, either due to lack of access to a PC, laptop or tablet device and/or Wi-Fi. The Head of Student Experience highlighted to the Committee that the College did not currently have a record of students without appropriate IT access, however, going forward into the next academic year information on this matter would be collated to ensure that all students could access remote learning.

5.1.5 The Committee NOTED that although the Covid-19 crisis had severely disrupted learning, teaching and assessment at the College, students and staff has demonstrated a high degree of flexibility and commitment to work remotely. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, acknowledged the significant efforts of the Student Experience Team and academic staff to support students remotely, and hoped that the positive aspects of online learning and engagement could be embraced by staff and students going forward.

## 5.2 CLASS REP CONFERENCE REPORTS

5.2.1 The Committee NOTED that the third round of Class Reps Conferences had taken place across three campuses in February 2020. The ECSA Representation and Impact Coordinator advised the Committee that the theme for this series of conferences focussed on 'Belonging and Inclusion'.

5.2.2 The Committee NOTED that attendance at Class Reps Conferences in February were lower than in previous years. The ECSA Representation and Impact Coordinator advised the Committee that the reasons for a decrease in attendance were unknown, however, ECSA would consider post-conference feedback and consider how improved attendance could be supported going forward.

5.2.3 The Committee NOTED that Class Rep responses at 'Belonging and Inclusion' workshops were generally positive, with 68% of respondents rating their sense of belonging at the College as either 'Good' or 'Excellent'. The ECSA Representation and Impact Coordinator highlighted that although the scoring in this area had decreased from 84% last year, qualitative feedback illustrated that students were positive about their experience. Specific areas of feedback, relating to noisy communal areas and the lack of quiet rooms, were shown to have impacted on students overall scoring in relation to 'Belonging and Inclusion'.

5.3.4 The Committee NOTED that the vast majority of students, approximately 86%, said that they felt represented at Edinburgh College. The ECSA Representation and Impact Coordinator welcomed the positive response of students around representation, and highlighted to the Committee that there remained valuable conversations to be had with students in order to engage with all learners at the College.

5.2.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the findings of the report, and NOTED that belonging and inclusion would be a key issue for the College going forward now that College campuses had closed and learning was taking place remotely. The Chair commended the Class Reps Conference Report and

highlighted the importance of student feedback going forward in order to effectively respond to the challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 5.2.6 The Committee NOTED that, on 22 May 2020, the winners of the 2020 ECSA-Illence Awards had been announced live on Facebook. The ECSA Representation and Impact Coordinator informed the Committee the purpose of the Awards was to recognise lecturers, LDTs, support and class reps for their valuable contribution to the student learning experience.

## **6. COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS**

- 6.1 STUDENT SATISFACTION & ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS 2019/20
  - 6.1.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the 2019/20 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey, which was designed to assess levels of student satisfaction in relation to key aspects of their experience at College. Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that, as agreed by the Academic Council on 28 February 2020, the Survey has been reconfigured into a more student-friendly format - which could be completed through Moodle.
  - 6.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the Survey was carried out during the UK wide lockdown period, in March and April 2020, and as such data collection and analysis had been delayed. Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that although quantitative data from the survey had been analysed, and was presented to the Academic Council for information, a significant amount of qualitative feedback would not be processed until June 2020.
  - 6.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the initial quantitative analysis provided, and AGREED that full report on the outcomes of the 2019/20 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey should be presented to the next meeting of the Academic Council.
- 6.2 COLLEGE LEAVER DESTINATION SURVEY 2018/19 REPORT
  - 6.2.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the College Leaver Destination Survey carried out during February 2020. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance 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.
  - 6.2.2 The Committee NOTED that data had successfully been collated from 82% of leavers. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance highlighted that number of students achieving a positive destination stood at 98%, a 2% increase on the previous year.
  - 6.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the results of the College Leaver Destination Survey 2018/19. The Vice Principal Innovation Planning & Performance highlighted to the Committee that although 2% of College leavers had not achieved a 'positive destination' as defined by the SFC, a significant portion of those leavers had family circumstances and caring commitments that prevented them from seeking employment, or continuing their education.

- 6.2.4 The Committee DISCUSSED potential improvements in how College Leaver Destination Survey information was reported, and AGREED that the Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance should consider changes to the reporting format for 2020/21.
- 6.2.5 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.
- 6.3 INDUCTION SURVEY 2020/21
  - 6.3.1 The Committee NOTED the content and format of the draft Induction 2020/21, which would be made available to new and returning students in the next academic year.
  - 6.3.2 The Committee welcomed the clear and straightforward layout of the Induction Survey, and DISCUSSED the potential impact of social distancing guidance on new starters and returning students in the academic year 2020/21. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that although the College had developed a Response Plan (Paragraph 4.2.1 refers) there remained a significant amount of planning to be undertaken before the 'Return' phases was initiated.
  - 6.3.3 The Committee NOTED that the implementation of the 'Return' phase could affect the relevance of specific questions within the Induction Survey, and/or require the inclusion of additional questions based on the format of the induction process.
  - 6.3.3 The Committee APPROVED the Induction Survey 2020/21 in principle, but AGREED that any changes to the Survey implemented before its launch should be circulated to the Academic Council for consideration and (if appropriate) approval.

## **7. HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? REPORT**

- 7.1 HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? UPDATE
  - 7.1.1 The Committee NOTED the Edinburgh College Quality Enhancement Plan 2018-21 (QUEP), and reviewed progress against the areas of improvement highlighted within the Plan. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance outlined the primary drivers of the Enhancement Plan, which included: recruitment; retention; attainment; student satisfaction; learning, teaching and assessment; work-integrated learning; and, future proofing of the College curriculum.
  - 7.1.2 The Committee NOTED that Education Scotland were in the process of undertaking a series of meetings with the College, in order to consider evidence relating to specific actions within the QUEP, as part of the Progress Visit agenda. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance informed the Committee that the last of these visits took place on 23 April 2020, and the following points were highlighted:

- (i) The proposed October 2020 Evaluative Report Update would be postponed until at least January 2021, with the next iteration focussed upon student success in the context of Covid-19 Business Continuity Planning;
  - (ii) Proposed Safeguarding reviews in January 2021 would be held remotely;
  - (iii) The continued high level of confidence Education Scotland had in the ability of the College to support students in achieving successful outcomes, and in the delivery of services going forward.
- 7.1.3 The Committee NOTED an update on Moodle Learning, Teaching and Assessment Activity during the first 50 days of lockdown, in response to Covid-19. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance highlighted that during the period there had been 41,685 unique student access counts, and 4,532 unique staff access counts.
- 7.1.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the following in relation to Moodle activity during the lockdown period:
- (i) The need for further analysis and interrogation of the data to understand the impact of campus closures on learning, teaching and assessment;
  - (ii) the number of students not engaged with Moodle, and how the College would reach out to those individuals;
  - (iii) the need to develop more Moodle content, and support for students, prior to the start of the academic year;
  - (iv) the continued personal development of academic staff to use Moodle effectively for learning, teaching and assessment activities;
  - (v) the use of other online meeting platforms, including Zoom, and the recording of such activities by the College - for audit purposes.
- 7.1.5 The Committee NOTED that during the lockdown period the College had engaged positively with the SQA to ensure that appropriate assessment guidelines were implemented. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance commended the SQA on their engagement with the College and the wider sector around student assessment during a crucial period in the academic calendar.
- 7.2 REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT SELF-EVALUATION UPDATE
- 7.2.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update from the Vice Principal Innovation Planning & Performance on progress against key performance measures contained in the Edinburgh College Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) Self-Evaluation Report, and the associated Short-Term Action Plan. The Vice Principal advised the Committee that ROA targets for 2019/20 and 2020/21 has been suspended in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the College would continue to submit performance data to the SFC going forward.
- 7.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the College had performed positively in 2019/20 against its performance targets, prior to campus closures on 20 March 2020. The Vice Principal advised the Committee that going forward the College would consider continue to evaluate its curriculum offer and areas where over-assessment was taking place, to enhance the performance of the College against key measures.

## **8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

### **8.1 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE OPERATION**

- 8.1.1 The Committee NOTED that at the end of each academic year the Committee is required to review its annual activity. The Committee Chair 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.
- 8.1.2 The Committee AGREED that its operation was compliant with its terms of reference, as outlined in 'Part 1' of the evaluation form.
- 8.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED its performance over the academic year, and AGREED that members' feedback should be relayed directly to the Chair and the Clerk to the Board, prior to a finalised version of the report being recirculated to the Academic Council (outwith the meeting cycle) for approval.

## **9. FOR INFORMATION**

### **9.1 HORIZON SCANNING REPORT**

- 9.1.1 The Committee NOTED a Horizon Scanning Report which outlined major political, economic, social, technological, legal and/or environmental developments that could impact on the five strategic plan aims of the College. The Head of Communications, Policy and Research advised the Academic Council that the specific focus of this edition of the report was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **9.2 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2020/21**

- 9.2.1 The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the upcoming academic year

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 10.1 The next meeting of the Academic Council will take place on 11 September 2020.

***The meeting closed at 15:30***