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## **EDINBURGH COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

### **APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 16 JUNE 2020**

#### **Meeting held remotely via Microsoft Teams**

**Start time: 14:45**

**Present:** Bruce Cassidy; Mike Cowley; Audrey Cumberland; Lesley Drummond; Carla Ford; Ross Laird; Ann Landels (Chair); Niki McKenzie; Nigel Paul; Gwen Raez; Azra Sharif-Qayyum; Fiona Riddoch; Judith Sischy; Jeanette Stevenson

**In attendance:** Jon Buglass; Nick Croft; Michael Jeffrey; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson; Al Wilson (ECSA).

**Observers:** Don Gluckstein; Peter Sharma; Jordan Wylie (ECSA)

## **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Seoras Hearton.
- 1.2 The Board 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. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, acknowledged the significant impact of the Pandemic on College students and staff, and thanked all staff for their efforts to move operations online following the closure of College campuses. The Board NOTED that prior to its meeting members had received a presentation on online curriculum delivery, from the Learning Technology & Resources Manager and Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance, which outlined the immediate response of the College to the Pandemic and the approach going forward to support a blended learning environment once College campuses had re-opened.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed Jordan Wylie, the incoming ECSA Student President, to the meeting as an observer. The Board NOTED that Mr Wylie would officially become ECSA Student President as of 01 July 2020.
- 1.4 The Chair welcomed the ECSA Director, Al Wilson, to the meeting to present Item 5.2.

- 1.5 The Chair welcomed EIS-FELA and UNISON representatives, Donny Gluckstein and Peter Sharma, to the meeting as observers. The Board NOTED that both trade union representatives would remain as observers until the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges had been updated to confirm legislative changes to Board membership arrangements.
- 1.6 The Board NOTED that Sam Hogrefe, a Non-Executive Board Member had resigned from the Board on 08 May 2020, with immediate effect. The Chair, on behalf of members, thanked Mr Hogrefe for his contribution to the Board over the past two years.
- 1.7 The Board NOTED that the Chair, on behalf of the Board, had disseminated a statement on racial equality through College media channels in response to the death of George Floyd and the subsequent conversations taking place across the UK and around the world. The Chair advised the Board that a further update on the actions agreed by the College in response to this matter would be outlined in further detail under Item 7.2.
- 1.8 The Board NOTED that the process to appoint a new Regional Chair to the Edinburgh College Board of Management had been postponed until further notice. The Chair advised the Board that (at present) no timescale for the appointment process to resume had been confirmed by Scottish Government. The Board DISCUSSED the interim governance arrangements approved by the Board on 24 September 2019, and AGREED that these should continue until a Regional Chair appointment is confirmed by Scottish Government.
- 1.9 The Board NOTED that the tenure of the Interim Vice Chair, Nigel Paul, as a Non-Executive Board Member, would end on 01 March 2021. The Board DISCUSSED the indefinite delay to the appointment of a Regional Chair and the need for robust interim governance arrangements in response to the current Covid-19 crisis. The Board AGREED that, to ensure governance continuity in the academic year 2020/21 and to support the induction of a new Regional Chair, the Interim Chair of the Board should seek a one-year extension to the tenure of the Interim Vice Chair.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 2.1 The Board NOTED declarations of interest from Ann Landels Item 6, in light of her position as a member of the Edinburgh College Development Trust (ECDT). The Chair advised members that the Interim Vice Chair would act as Chair for this item of business.
- 2.2 The Board NOTED that the Interim Chair of the Board would leave the meeting for Item 8.2; Evaluation of the Chair of the Board 2018/19, if required. The Chair advised members that the Interim Vice Chair would act as Chair for this item of business.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

- 3.1 The Board NOTED that its scheduled meeting on 24 March 2020 had been cancelled at short notice due to the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the subsequent national lockdown measure. The Chair advised members that, on 30 March 2020, the Board confirmed its approval of the following four items of business via correspondence:
- i) Board of Management Draft Open/Closed Minutes 10.12.19;
  - ii) Regional Outcome Agreement 2020/21;
  - iii) Strategic KPI Monitoring Dashboard;
  - iv) Board Effectiveness Review and Accompanying Improvement Plan.
- 3.2 The Board NOTED that actions from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda, with the exception of the proposed *Staff Survey (Minute 5.3/11.12.18 refers)* and the *Strategic Plan Refresh (Minute 5.5/10.12.19 refers)*. The Chair advised the Board that, due to the postponement of the Board Strategy Day on 28 April, the process of testing the current strategic priorities of the College against the rapidly changing external environment would not be reviewed until the start of the next academic year.

### **4. PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

- 4.1 The Board NOTED an update on developments related to the delivery of a 'Future Proofed College' and the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Principal updated the Board on the actions taken by the College since the closure of all campuses on 20 March 2020, and ongoing activities across the college sector.
- 4.2 The Board NOTED that 'Briefing Sessions' had been held on 18 May and 08 June 2020, to keep members of the Board up-to-date with the response of the College to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, commended the Executive and Senior Management Team on the implementation of a comprehensive communications and engagement plan to keep the Board and other key stakeholders informed during an unprecedented period of campus closures.
- 4.3 The Board NOTED the Principal's 5R Plan: which had been developed to enable the College to address the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Principal advised the Board that although the College largely remained in the 'Response' phase, a Strategic Steering Group (led by the Vice Principal Corporate Development) had been set-up to move the College forward through the Resilience and Return phases, and thereafter, the Re-imagine / Reinvent and Reform phases.
- 4.4 The Board NOTED that the Scottish Government had established an Advisory Group on Economic Recovery, led by senior businessman and government strategic advisor Benny Higgins. The Principal advised the Board that she had been asked by the Chair of the Advisory Group to bring forward the recommendations of the Cumberford-Little Report (published on 13 February 2020) in light of the Covid-19 Pandemic, for consideration by the Group. Further to this, the Board NOTED the engagement of the

Executive Team with a number of national groups created by Colleges Scotland to consider and respond to the challenges faced by the college sector going forward.

4.5 The Board DISCUSSED the following points in response to the update provided by the Principal:

- (i) The speed at which the response to the Covid-19 Pandemic was moving at a national and regional level;
- (ii) the impact of the crisis on poverty and deprivation in the region, and the role of the College in meeting these challenges;
- (iii) the role of colleges in addressing the financial shock experienced by the Scottish economy, and supporting the transition out of the recovery phase;
- (iv) the importance of partnership working across the college and university sectors to respond to the crisis;
- (v) the recommendations of the Cumberford-Little Report that may be taken forward by the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery;
- (vi) the role of the college sector in rebooting / reskilling the regional workforce to meet the demands of the future job market;
- (vii) the concerns of academic staff that the curriculum may be narrowed in response to the demands of the future job market;
- (viii) the opportunities presented by the changing landscape to push forward positive changes across the college sector, specifically relating to sustainability, and the digital and emerging technologies sectors;
- (ix) the student experience, and need to find the right balance of blended learning once College campuses could re-open.

4.6 The Board NOTED that, in terms of 2020/21 full-time recruitment, applications were down slightly on the previous year, however, the College had seen almost a 40% increase in the number of offers made / accepted when compared year-to-date against 2019/20. The Vice Principal, Education & Skills advised the Board that whilst initial signs had been positive, the college and university sectors remained cautious about the potential impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on student recruitment.

4.7 The Board NOTED that the Colleges Scotland Chairs' Group had been meeting regularly over recent weeks, to consider the college sectors response to the crisis. The Chair advised the Board that she had agreed to act as chair of a 'Community and Inclusion' Sub-Group, and would keep the Board up-to-date with further developments as meetings continued over the summer period.

4.8 The Board AGREED that, in response to the rapidly changing external environment, members would hold an informal 'strategic conversation' event before the end of June 2020 - to consider the immediate and short-term strategic priorities of the College. Further to this, the Board AGREED that its postponed Board Strategy Day (Paragraph 3.2 refers) should be reconvened as a half-day session in August 2020.

## **5. EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ECSA)**

### **5.1 ECSA END OF YEAR 2019/20 REPORT**

5.1.1 The Board NOTED an overview of activities conducted by ECSA in the 2019/20 academic year. The ECSA Student President advised the Board that the Covid-19 Pandemic had posed significant challenges for the Students' Association, with some operational plans being adapted and others replaced with new priorities.

5.1.2 The Board NOTED ECSA's achievements over the year, including the record recruitment of Class Reps and the continued development of the Students' Association's Advice & Support Service. The ECSA Student President advised the Board that a new sabbatical team would take up their roles from 01 July 2020, and consider the development of a refreshed ECSA Strategic Plan for presentation to the Board at its next meeting.

5.1.3 The Board welcomed the detailed end of year report provided by ECSA, and DISCUSSED its successes and the support provided to students in light of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The ECSA Director advised the Board that a survey had been circulated to students to assess the impact of the closure of College campuses on their learning experience and, while a full analysis of the data had not yet been completed, results showed that 70% of student believed they had missed out on learning due to lockdown restrictions. Further to this, the Board DISCUSSED the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on student accommodation and private rentals. The Board AGREED that the Interim Chair and Interim Vice Chair, given their expertise in this area, should consider this matter further with ECSA at their induction meeting with new sabbatical officers.

5.1.4 The Board NOTED that the tenure of ECSA Student President and Student Board Member, Carla Ford, would end on 30 June, following a year as a sabbatical officer. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Ms Ford for her significant contribution to the development of key aspects of the student experience during her tenure as Student President, and the considerable work she (and the ECSA Team) had done during a challenging period for the College.

### **5.2 ECSA STRATEGIC PLANNING & FUNDING 2020/21**

5.2.1 The Board NOTED a 2020/21 ECSA Funding Bid, which included an overview of the Students' Association's broad strategic aims for the coming academic year.

5.2.2 The Board NOTED its thanks to the entire ECSA Team for delivering an extensive programme of work to benefit all students at Edinburgh College, and looked forward to reviewing a new ECSA Strategic Plan on 22 September 2020.

## **6. BUSINESS CASE TO SUPPORT EDINBURGH COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT TRUST**

### ***The Interim Vice Chair, Nigel Paul, assumed the role of Chair***

- 6.1 The Board NOTED that in light of the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic a decision had been taken not to put forward a Business Case to support the Edinburgh College Development Trust (ECDT) at the present time. The Principal advised the Board that the alumni function of the Development Trust would be absorbed within the Communications, Policy and Research Team, of the College, however, there were no plans to pursue a fundraising element as an immediate priority under the current circumstances. The Board NOTED that the employment of a fundraiser would require additional resources and this was not a priority for the College in the short to medium term.
- 6.2 The Board NOTED that the ECDT were broadly supportive of the decision, which did not impact on the Trust's operations with regards to distributing the funds it currently had.
- 6.3 The Board DISCUSSED the development of a new Memorandum of Understanding between the College and the Trust to ensure appropriate governance arrangements remained in place during 2020/21.
- 6.4 The Board NOTED that historically two of its non-executive members had assumed positions on the ECDT. The Interim Vice Chair informed the Board that since March 2019 only one member of the Board had acted as a Trustee. The Board DISCUSSED the existing vacancy, and AGREED that Judith Sischy, a Non-Executive Board Member, would join the ECDT as a Trustee.

### ***The Interim Chair reassumed the role of Chair***

## **7. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **7.1 POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

#### **7.1.1 MINUTES 19.05.20**

The Board NOTED the Nominations Committee minutes from the meeting held on 19 May 2020.

#### **7.1.1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO APRIL 2020**

The Board NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to April 2020.

The Board NOTED that following the closure of College campuses the Finance Team had undertaken a financial review of the immediate impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on its financial forecasting. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the Management Accounts illustrated reduced income and expenditure related to Covid-19, that showed a net deficit position and adverse impact on cash.

The Board NOTED that the financial impact on the College, and the sector as a whole, was considerable, particularly for those colleges, like Edinburgh College, with high-levels of international and commercial exposure. The Chief Operating Officer outlined the increased underlying operating deficit for the College in light of substantial reductions in income, but highlighted that this had been partially offset with savings associated with closure of campuses.

#### 7.1.2 INDICATIVE COLLEGE BUDGET 2020/21

The Board NOTED an Indicative College Budget 2020/21 as put forward by the Executive, which outlined the budgeting process, budgeting pressures, additional costs, budget reductions, savings, impact on cash-flow, risks and mitigations, and sensitivity analysis.

The Board NOTED the discussions taking place at a national level regarding budget assumptions for the college sector. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Committee that he was a member of the Colleges Scotland Finance Group tasked by the SFC to consider, and put forward, underlying assumptions to allow colleges to show their financial forecast positions using the same base assumptions from 2020/21.

The Board DISCUSSED the Indicative College Budget 2020/21, and AGREED that - once underlying assumptions had been confirmed - a final Draft College Budget would be circulated to the Board outwith the meeting for approval.

#### 7.1.3 FINANCIAL FORECAST 2020/21 TO 2023/24

The Board NOTED a five-year financial forecast aligned with the 2019/20 Indicative College Budget, to help members assess the future financial position of the College. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the financial forecast was based against assumptions outlined by the SFC for 2019/20, and highlighted the savings/budget reductions required in order to achieve a break-even underlying operating position.

The Board DISCUSSED the five-year financial forecast provided, and NOTED once underlying budgeting assumptions were confirmed (Paragraph 7.1.2 refers) further updates would be to the financial forecast.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Chief Operating Officer for the opportunity to review the financial forecast information and sensitivity analysis provided.

### 7.2 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

#### 7.2.1 MINUTES 03.06.20

The Board NOTED the Nominations Committee minutes from the meeting held on 03 June 2020.

The Board NOTED that the Committee had confirmed a recruitment process, in line with previously agreed guidelines, to recruit up to two new non-executive

members to the Board by 22 September 2020. The Chair advised the Board of the proposed recruitment panel for the recruitment round which included Hugh Hall, Principal & Chief Executive of Fife College (as an independent panel member). The Board DISCUSSED the proposed recruitment round and AGREED to endorse the approach outlined by the Committee.

The Board NOTED that the Nominations Committee would meet again in August/September 2020 (date to be confirmed) to consider Board appointments, induction and development procedures and guidance in the context of embedding cognitive diversity. The Chair advised the Board that the Committee would also invite members of the Board and college staff with appropriate equality/diversity expertise to join the meeting.

The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to cognitive diversity and the wider national conversation taking place in relation to racial equality (Paragraph 1.7 refers):

- i) The diversity of the Board and its need to reflect the local community;
- ii) the Edinburgh College Statement on Racial Equality published by the College in advance of the Board meeting;
- iii) actions put forward by the College to develop staffs' knowledge of racial equality and diversity issues, identifying systemic inequalities and amplifying BAME voices, and improving engagement with our staff, students, trade unions and other partners [*Full list of actions provided under Appendix 1*];
- iv) the frustration of the BAME community at the speed of cultural change around racial equality issues.

The Board DISCUSSED ongoing campaigns to revisit school, college and university curriculums to address Britain's colonial past and its role in the slave trade. Further to a proposal by the Principal, the Board AGREED that issues should be addressed at the next meeting of the Principal with her compatriots from all four universities across Edinburgh and an update provided to the next meeting of the Board.

The Board DISCUSSED the information and reportage it received on equality and diversity matters, and AGREED that the Interim Chair, Board Secretary and Clerk to the Board should consider enhancements going forward.

## **8. GOVERNANCE REPORT**

### **8.1 BOARD EVALUATION REPORT 2019/20**

- 8.1.1 The Board NOTED feedback and actions arising from the 2020 Self-Evaluation Survey completed by members of the Board. The Chair advised the Board that the questionnaire results indicated the members were broadly content with governance arrangements at the College, with the Board agreeing with all 34 statements put forward in the Survey.

- 8.1.2 The Board NOTED that the Interim Chair had held one-to-one meetings with members of the Board during May and June 2020. Further to the results of the Survey, the Chair highlighted two main themes from her discussion with members, which related to the need to finesse Board 'deep dives' further and the engagement of Board members in external engagement activities.
- 8.1.3 The Board DISCUSSED the feedback from the Self-Evaluation Survey and the one-to-one Board evaluations, and AGREED that actions arising should be included in the 2020 Board Improvement Plan.

***The Interim Vice Chair, Nigel Paul, assumed the role of Chair***

8.2 EVALUATION OF THE CHAIR 2019/20

- 8.2.1 The Board NOTED that in accordance with good practice, and as part of the overall evaluation of the Board, an evaluation of the Interim Chair was conducted by the Interim Vice Chair. The Interim Vice Chair outlined to the Board the methodology used and a summary of the results.
- 8.2.2 The Board DISCUSSED the written report provided by the Interim Vice Chair and were content with its positive and constructive findings. The Board welcomed the formal process of evaluation conducted by the Interim Vice Chair, which was considered in line with best practice.

***The Interim Chair reassumed the role of Chair***

**9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

9.1 EDINBURGH COLLEGE AMBASSADOR AWARD 2020

- 9.1.1 The Board NOTED that on an annual basis the Edinburgh College Ambassador Award was bestowed upon an individual who had through direct involvement with the College made a significant and sustained contribution to the student experience, or through direct involvement with the organisation enable significant organisational transformation. The Chair advised the Board that the Award was a gift of the Chair of the Board, with nominations invited from the Board and the Executive Team.
- 9.1.2 The Board NOTED that the 2020 Graduation had been rescheduled to take place on 01 & 02 March 2021, and it was expected the Ambassador Award be presented at the event. The Chair informed the Board that she would welcome nominations for the 2020 Ambassador Award from members prior to the next meeting of the Board on 22 September 2020.

**10. FOR INFORMATION**

10.1 POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

#### 10.1.1 *MINUTES 19.05.20*

The Board NOTED the Policy & Resources Committee minutes from the meeting held on 19 May 2020.

### 10.2 AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

#### 10.2.1 *MINUTES 27.05.20*

The Board NOTED the Policy & Resources Committee minutes from the meeting held on 27 May 2020.

#### 10.2.2 *RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT*

The Board NOTED a Risk Management Report, as reviewed by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 27 May 2020, which highlighted progress in relation to risk management and reporting to May 2020.

### 10.3 ACADEMIC COUNCIL

#### 10.3.1 *MINUTES 22.05.20*

The Board NOTED the Academic Council minutes from the meeting held on 22 May 2020.

### 10.4 CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

#### 10.4.1 *MINUTES 26.05.20*

The Board NOTED the Corporate Development Committee minutes from the meeting held on 26 May 2020.

### 10.5 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

#### 10.5.1 *MINUTES 04.06.20*

The Board NOTED that the Remuneration Committee had met on 04 June 2020 to consider the Annual Appraisal of the Principal & Chief Executive. The Chair advised the Committee that the draft minute of the Remuneration Committee would be circulated to the Board following the meeting.

### 10.6 GOVERNANCE UPDATE

The Board NOTED an update on matters of governance since the last updated circulated to the Board in March 2020. The Chair highlighted to the Board progress against the 2020 Board Improvement Plan, and the agreed Board and committee meeting dates for the academic year 2020/21.

### 10.7 AGENDA PLANNER 2020/21

The Board NOTED an agenda planner for the 2020/21 academic year, which aimed to provide members with an opportunity to review upcoming items of business.

#### 10.8 RIDDOR REPORT

The Board NOTED RIDDOR reportable incidents in Quarter 3 of the academic year 2019/20.

### 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 The next meeting of the Board of Management shall take place on 22 September 2020.

***Meeting closed at 17:20***

## Race Equality at Edinburgh College

In response to the death of George Floyd and the subsequent conversation about racial inequality in the UK and around the world, a set of specific actions have been agreed to. These actions will educate members of the College, identify systemic inequalities, and amplify BAME voices, doing so in discussion with our staff, students, trade unions, and other partners. Some of these actions are new and some build on work already taking place in the College.

- Edinburgh College Board of Managers to commit to better BAME representation and further engagement with BAME communities, both by inviting groups and partners in and by going out into communities.
- Organisation Development (OD) and Equality Officer (EO) to procure further training for staff on white privilege and unconscious bias.
- HR to investigate active recruitment and retention strategies to encourage BAME applications, and to evaluate any statistical inequalities in the journey from application to shortlisting to recruitment.
- Communications Team, HR, and EO to consult staff on climate for BAME staff through techniques such as all-staff surveys, focus groups, and engagement with the trade unions, EIS and Unison.
- HR and EO to perform race pay gap reporting, similar in methodology to gender pay gap reporting, to identify any structural inequalities in employment for BAME staff at Edinburgh College.
- EO to work with Curriculum staff to investigate outcomes data for BAME students to identify any structural inequalities in achievement for BAME students, with a view to setting specific targets in the next set of Equality Outcomes.
- ECSA to engage with BAME students through digital organising to identify BAME student leaders to co-design events or initiatives.
- Curriculum areas to review of relevant curriculum materials, in partnership with awarding bodies, to ensure they reflect black history, and challenge colonial histories.
- Communications Team to amplify BAME voices by calling for BAME staff and student stories for #ProudtobeEC.
- Communications Team to publish statement on Edinburgh College's commitment to anti-racism on social media channels.

A progress report on these actions will be presented to the Board of Management on 22 September 2020 as part of the Principal & Chief Executive Report. Further reporting will take place in the next Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report in 2021, and the outcomes of these actions will inform the development of the next set of Equalities Outcomes.