**Ref: 001/24**

As of 1 October 2012, Edinburgh’s Telford College, Jewel & Esk College and Stevenson College

merged to create a single college called Edinburgh College.

We refer to your request for information dated 09 January 2024. The College has considered your request as a request for information under section 1 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (“FOISA”).

**001/24 (1):** I would like to request the following information: Edinburgh College progress visit report (30th November - 2nd December 2021) by Education Scotland for academic year 2021/22.

Please find attached.

Please note, personal data has been redacted from the attached information as this is exempt under Section 38(1)(b) of the FOI(S) Act 2002.

Edinburgh College is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOISA) 2002. If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may ask the college to review this decision. To do this, please contact the Director of Communications, Policy and Research at the postal address below or e-mail the Director of Communications, Policy and Research at [governance@edinburghcollege.ac.uk](mailto:governance@edinburghcollege.ac.uk) describing your original request and explaining your grounds for dissatisfaction. (Please include in your review request, your name and address (email or postal) for correspondence).

You have 40 working days from receipt of this letter to submit a review request to: Director of Communications, Policy and Research

4th Floor

Edinburgh College (Milton Road Campus) 24 Milton Road East

Edinburgh EH15 2PP

When the review process has been completed and if you are still dissatisfied, you may ask the Scottish Information Commissioner to intervene.

You can make an appeal to the Commissioner by email or post.

To appeal by email, send your application form or email to mail to: [enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info)

To appeal by post, send your application form or letter to:

Scottish Information Commissioner Kinburn Castle

Doubledykes Road St Andrews

KY16 9DS

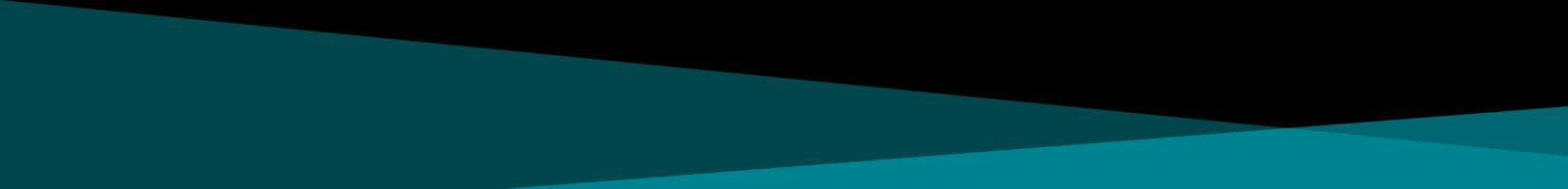
Full details on how to make an appeal to the Commissioner are available from their website: <http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal>

You must appeal to the Commissioner within six months of receiving the review decision.

You also have the right to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law following a decision of the Commissioner.

Regards FOI Team

College Progress Visit Report



**for Scotland’s learners with Scotland’s educators**

**do luchd-ionnsachaidh na h-Alba le luchd-foghlaim Alba**

**Edinburgh College**

# 8 February 2022

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **College Principal** | **Audrey Cumberford** |
| **Progress Visit (PV) Date** | **30 November 2021** |
| **College Nominee** |  |
| **Lead Inspector** | **Andrew Brawley** |
| **College HMI** |  |
| **Outcome of Progress Visit** | **Satisfactory Progress**  Overall, the college has made satisfactory progress in a number of areas. However, insufficient progress has been made in improving outcomes for learners. |

## Purpose of the progress visit

Progress Visits (PV) are planned collaboratively between the college, Education Scotland and Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The team carrying out the PV engages with staff, learners and other stakeholders and produce a summary report for each college, which will be shared with the principal, college Regional Board and/or college Board of Management.

## Overall judgement regarding progress

At the end of the PV, HM Inspectors of Education, Associate Assessors and Student Team Members review the evidence gathered during their discussions with college managers, staff, learners and stakeholders. They assess the progress that colleges have made against their Action Plans, taking account of any changes to local circumstances. Based on this evidence, the team will form a view as to whether the college has made satisfactory progress against its Action Plans or has not made satisfactory progress. This outcome is contained within this report with accompanying commentary to support the findings.

The PV for Edinburgh College explored five overarching themes linked to the college’s enhancement plan and priorities around COVID-19 recovery. The themes are:

* Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment;
* Services to support learning;
* Learner engagement;
* Evaluation to facilitate improvement; and
* Learner progress and outcomes.

# Background and context

## The college and its context

Edinburgh College is the largest college in Scotland delivering education, skills development and training to learners across Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian. Programmes are delivered from four campuses across the city; Granton, Midlothian, Milton Road and Sighthill, and a range of community venues. A significant number of learners travel to the college from Fife, the Scottish Borders and other parts of the country to access specialist provision.

The college delivers a wide range of further education (FE) and higher education (HE) programmes between levels 2-10 on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The range of provision offers progression from FE and HE level study through to degree provision delivered in partnership with universities. The college operates across three local authorities and collaborates with secondary schools to provide Senior Phase provision. The college delivers around 194,000 Scottish Funding Council (SFC) credits of activity each year.

# Findings from the progress visit

## Curriculum, learning and teaching and assessment

### Areas of positive progress

* Curriculum teams responded quickly to the challenges created by the pandemic. They carried out a substantial review of their programmes and drew on the findings to refresh the curriculum. Staff and learners benefitted from the accelerated pace of development, particularly in areas where refresh of the curriculum was overdue.
* Many teaching teams revised their curriculum to incorporate more project-based activities and implemented more holistic approaches to deliver learning, teaching and assessment. These approaches were welcomed by learners and strengthened and enhanced collaboration between vocational areas and core skills staff.
* Ongoing career long professional learning (CLPL) is valued highly by staff and lecturers were supported well to develop their digital skills quickly and effectively. The majority of teaching staff now have confidence to deliver learning and teaching through a blend of remote and face-to-face engagements.
* New arrangements for planning and delivering the curriculum take good account of the prominence of blended learning and teaching. Within programme areas, teaching teams have been enabled to apply approaches that best meet the needs of their learners. For example, since the start of the academic session, staff increased the frequency of on- campus delivery for FE learners on SCQF level 4-5 programmes.
* Learners welcome the ability to undertake learning in ways which best meet their needs and circumstances. Many learners enjoy the mix of activities that are accessible online alongside asynchronous sessions made available by lecturers. This is supplemented by staff providing good opportunities for learners to meet face-to-face, where it has been possible and safe to do so.
* Throughout the challenges of the pandemic period, programme teams worked well to respond to awarding body guidance. They reviewed approaches and conditions of assessment across programmes and made necessary and appropriate adjustments.
* Partnership working is strong and college staff work productively with external stakeholders to inform and enhance the curriculum. External stakeholders work very positively with staff and learners to enrich the college experience. Staff communicate effectively with employers to arrange work experience placements and a broad range of industry- specific events, including presentations by guest speakers.

### Areas for further progress and actions required

* The college does not establish the level of digital capability of some learners on entry to their programme. As a result, some new learners do not have a sufficient level of digital skill to be

able to engage fully in learning activities. There are no arrangements in place for pre-entry testing or other confirmation of skills prior to enrolment.

* Teaching staff use a variety of online platforms to deliver lessons. As a result, within programmes, some learners experience challenges in using multiple online platforms to engage in learning activities.
* For some learners, digital poverty including limited or no access to technology, is continuing to have an impact on their learning experience.

## Services to support learning

### Areas of positive progress

* Through the acceleration of the college’s Digital Strategy, learners can now access college services remotely. The introduction of the Virtual Student Services Hub has been very well received and achieved over 60,000 learner logins at the start of the academic year.
* Overall, a recently-introduced online system is resulting in additional support needs (ASN) being identified quickly and tailored support being coordinated promptly. Learners value the flexibility of remote one-to-one sessions. The learning support team has identified an increase in the number of learners attending appointments since moving to a remote delivery model. However, the increased demand has generated additional workload for the learning support team.
* The Wellbeing Team makes extensive use of the online appointment facility to provide individual learners with access to helpful, one-to-one support. The team also produces and distributes a fortnightly newsletter to raise staff and learners’ awareness and understanding of wellbeing themes. However, the team recognises that many learners continue to experience mental health-related issues.
* The impact of the pandemic has increased collaborative working amongst college service teams. Online meetings are enabling staff across campuses to routinely meet-up virtually. Staff value this approach and regard it as being more sustainable going forward.
* The role carried out by Learning Development Tutors (LDTs) to support full-time FE learners is valued highly by staff and learners. LDT interventions are particularly helpful in monitoring learners’ attendance, engagement and progression.
* Personal Learning Support Plans (PLSPs) have been re-designed to be accessible online. This change works well and is enabling college staff to access learner support records remotely.

### Areas for further progress and actions required

* The college has experienced increased demand for the services of LDTs and there are inconsistencies in the allocation of LDTs to class groups. As a result, a significant number of learners do not have access to, or benefit from LDT support services.

## Learner engagement

### Areas of positive progress

* *The Edinburgh College Student Association* (ECSA) has noted a significant increase in recruitment to class representative roles. ECSA makes good use of digital meetings to enable more efficient communication between learners and across campuses. As a result of a data-sharing agreement with the college, ECSA has increased the frequency of communication with learners and this has improved promotion of services.
* The introduction of a range of online apps for learners to use on their mobile devices has been well received and is helping learners to stay informed of programme and support- related issues.
* During the induction process, a number of college staff applied creative approaches to engage learners. When delivering activities online, these approaches helped to establish more cohesive and interactive class groups.
* In response to the prevalence of remote learning, curriculum areas developed a range of mechanisms to gauge learners’ understanding and elicit timely feedback from learners’ about the learning experience.
* Teaching staff are responsive to learner feedback and adjust teaching sessions to reduce difficulties and challenges identified by learners.

### Area for further progress and actions required

* Only 2,008 (17%) learners contributed to the 2020-21 national Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey hosted by SFC. This is one of the lowest participation rates in Scotland and most responses indicated a decline in satisfaction ratings.

## Evaluation to facilitate improvement

### Areas of positive progress

* Since the end of 2020, improvements made to self-evaluation processes have resulted in a more accessible and streamlined reporting mechanism that is appropriately aligned to the college’s strategic objectives. Overall, this development has been welcomed by managers.
* Throughout the pandemic, managers and staff balanced time pressures and conflicting priorities to concentrate on maintaining the aspects of quality arrangements that impact directly on learners.
* Class representatives have a central role within quality processes. The introduction of online meetings has made participation more accessible to the majority of class representatives and meetings have generally been well attended.
* Class representatives provide helpful feedback on behalf of their class groups. They convey the views of their peers through regular programme review discussions, or detailed conversations with managers in curriculum areas. Improvement actions are generated as a result.
* Since the start of the pandemic, closer collaboration between teaching staff has stimulated and increased sharing of learning and teaching approaches and effective practice. Regular team meetings and arrangements for cross-campus working have improved the efficiency of internal verification procedures.
* The college has worked well with awarding bodies and managers have valued support from the Quality Team to ensure that changes to qualification and assessment arrangements have been implemented effectively.

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### Areas for further progress and actions required

* Although the college’s self-evaluation reporting arrangements have been reviewed and refreshed, there is limited awareness amongst teaching staff of the revised process and the potential benefits are yet to be realised.
* Curriculum teams have limited awareness of the detailed data available to them to support improvement planning.
* In curriculum areas that have had persistently low rates of learner success since before the onset of the pandemic, staff do not have sufficient understanding of underlying causes of low learner outcomes.
* The college has yet to develop a systematic approach to fully evaluating learning and teaching practice, including remote delivery approaches.

## Learner progress and outcomes

### Areas of positive progress

* The majority of learners who enroll on a college programme are successful and attain a certificated award.
* In recognition of the need to improve PI outcomes, the college is currently introducing new additional management roles to help support line management responsibilities and bring about improvements in learner outcomes.
* Attainment rates for learners on full-time HE programmes have improved overall over the last three years from 71% in 2017-18 to 75% in 2019-20, and are now above the current national sector performance rate of 73%.
* Staff make good use of ‘Pro-Monitor’ to track learner progression, identify trends within programmes and record unit attainment. This helps inform where individuals require support to help them to achieve.
* Within a number of programmes, staff have made adjustments to programme design and/or assessment approaches, to bring about improvement in learner outcomes. In some instances these have been successful, and have resulted in additional learners attaining their qualifications. However, college attainment rates are not improving overall.

### Areas for further progress and actions required

* Attainment rates for learners on full-time FE programmes have declined overall over the last three years from 61% in 2017-18 to 59% achieved in 2019-20. This is significantly lower than the current national sector performance rate of 66%.
* Attainment rates for learners on part-time FE programmes have declined overall over the last three years from 71% in 2017-18 to 62% attained in 2019-20. This is considerably lower than the current national sector performance rate of 78%.
* Attainment rates for learners on part-time HE programmes have declined over the last three years from 84% in 2017-18 to 66% in 2019-20. This is considerably lower than the current national sector performance rate of 78%.
* Within some programme areas, the recruitment process does not provide learners with sufficient information about the demands of college programmes and potential career pathways. This has direct impact on learner outcomes.
* Despite a trend of low success rates across a number of curriculum areas including different levels and modes of attendance, many staff do not have a clear understanding of what action is needed to improve outcomes for learners.

### What happens next?

The progress visit report will be shared with SFC, the college Board (and in multi-college regions, the Regional Strategic Body).

As a result of this PV, the college will be required to develop an action plan to improve outcomes for learners. HM Inspectors will re-engage with the college within six months of this report to review the appropriateness of this plan and will continue to monitor progress on an ongoing basis.

### Andrew Brawley HM Inspector