EDINBURGH COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Approved minutes of the meeting held at 14:00 on Tuesday 24 March 2026 in the Boardroom, Granton Campus.

Members: Audrey Cumberford; Stewart Darling; Fiona Doring; Judit Harangozo; Daniel Holland; Alan Holligan; Derek Hynds; Adam Lowe; Ian McLaughlan; Mary O'Driscoll; Nora Senior; Kate Signorini; Eleanor Sim; Paul Smart; Bill Troup; Bethany Winkler.

Apologies: Becky Duff, Alex Killick

In attendance:	Jon Buglass	Vice Principal, Innovation, Planning & Performance
	Mike Jeffrey	Vice Principal Corporate Development
	Jonny Pearson	Vice Principal, Education & Skills
	Fraser Rudge	Board Secretary
	Alan Williamson	Chief Operating Officer

Observer: Indleeb Walayat

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all to the third Board of Management meeting of the 2025/26 academic year; and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

A warm welcome was extended to Indleeb Walayat, who was observing the meeting. The Board were advised that Indleeb was part of the Edinburgh College BAME Network, and was contributing to the College's efforts to decolonise the curriculum.

The Board NOTED apologies from Becky Duff and Alex Killick.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Board APPROVED the minutes of 11 December 2025 (Paper A) as an accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING REPORT

The Board NOTED the status of actions as detailed in the Matters Arising Report (Paper B); and NOTED that actions from previous meetings were either complete, or that an update would be provided elsewhere on the agenda or at a future meeting.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair thanked Lynn Killick, of Leading Kind Ltd, for facilitating the pre-Board session to consider the outcome of the report on creating a high-performance Board culture at Edinburgh College. Members AGREED that the report should be considered as part of the next Board Development Day, which should also include members of the Senior Management Team.

Members were informed that the Chair would be attending the upcoming Colleges Scotland annual general meeting, and that the meeting agenda included discussion on a new subscription model. The Board were advised that the Scottish Government's appraisal of the Chair had gone well; and that she anticipated being reappointed for a further term. The Chair reported that discussion had focussed on the need for increased collaboration across the further and higher education sectors; and on the need for colleges to be responsive to changing demands.

6 PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Board NOTED an update from the Principal and Chief Executive on developments at Edinburgh College, and across the wider college sector, since its last meeting on 11 December 2025 (Paper C).

6.1 The Board NOTED that the Scottish Government's January 2026 budget announcement had included an increase of £70m for the college sector. The Principal acknowledged that the uplift was a welcome step in the right direction for college funding, but cautioned that there was still more to be done to ensure the college sector's financial sustainability. The Board were advised that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) was expected to publish funding allocations for colleges later in the week.

6.2 The Board NOTED that the Principal had attended the first SFC workshop arranged to facilitate the fundamental review of the funding model. It was explained that the workshop had focused on scoping the criteria for the review and determining the areas that should be explored with regard to options for a future funding model.

6.3 The Board NOTED that the Principal had attended the Scottish Freeports Ministerial Skills Roundtable. The session had been attended by Green Freeports along with national partners and stakeholders to examine the shared system constraints that were limiting collective ability to deliver the scale of workforce required to support shared ambitions and industry demand.

6.4 The Board NOTED that the Principal had attended a Morven Offshore Wind roundtable meeting to discuss the role of ports in delivering local value, skills, and job opportunities associated with offshore wind in Scotland. It was explained that part of the session had focused specifically on how the skills opportunities arising from offshore wind could be realised locally in Leith and the wider Edinburgh and Lothians.

6.5 The Board NOTED that three members of college staff had visited STC Rotterdam, alongside colleagues from other Scottish and UK colleges with Freeports in their geographical remits. The purpose of the visit was also to continue discussions on the UK wide College Freeports collaboration. The consortium is intended to co-develop curriculum and innovative skills solutions to support the development of UK freeports; to achieve economies of scale in delivery and digital innovation; and to strengthen the collective voice of colleges in engaging with government and other key stakeholders around the development of freeports nationally. The Principal advised that she was a member of the UK Steering Group responsible for driving this forward.

6.6 The Board NOTED that, as part of the visit to STC Rotterdam, College staff were introduced to the i-Immersive ClassView platform. It was explained that the platform enabled the creation of virtual classrooms with interactive 3D content, facilitated real-time collaboration, and provided information on student engagement and progress. Members were advised that the Executive Team had commissioned a business case relating to the installation of a classview facility at each campus, with the expectation that this would enhance the College's digital estate and would enable the connection of classroom facilities across the College and beyond.

6.7 The Board NOTED that Colleges Scotland had been in regular dialogue with officials from the UK Government's Ministry of Defence and Scotland Office regarding the Defence Growth Deals and the possibility of a Defence Technical Excellence College (DTEC) model in Scotland. It was reported that discussions were at an early stage, and that the Board would be kept updated on developments.

6.8 The Board DISCUSSED whether there were reputational issues that required further consideration on activity associated with freeports and national defence. Members of the Board offered alternative perspectives and insights into how such activity may be perceived by the College's stakeholders. Members received information on the College's pre-existing arrangements, including existing work with defence organisations; a brief overview of related activity within the further and higher education sectors; and anticipated benefits for the local community. It was also explained that the skills training that would be offered by the College, such as welding and electrical engineering, also applied beyond the freeport and defence sectors.

6.9 The Board NOTED that the Trustees of the Edinburgh College Development Trust had decided to wind down the Trust. Members were advised that the College was providing support to the Trust around closure arrangements. It was explained that the Trust's remaining unrestricted funds would be managed and allocated via the Edinburgh College Students' Association. The remaining restricted funds, received from the Thomas Telford Trust, would be used to support the ClassView project and to create a memorial room to the previous Telford College's first Principal. The Board thanked the Trustees for their commitment and support of the Trust and of Edinburgh College.

6.10 The Board NOTED that the Principal had attended the February 2026 meeting of Colleges Scotland's Chairs and Principal's Forum. It was reported that discussion had focused on the Scottish Parliament Elections manifesto; the Scottish Government budget; and the College Sector for the Future. The Board NOTED that Colleges Scotland had launched its 2026 Election Manifesto – *Opportunity That Works* , which urged all political parties to commit to long-term, sustainable investment in Scotland's colleges ahead of the Scottish Parliament election.

6.11 The Board NOTED that the Scottish Government had announced the launch of the 'Future of Colleges Workstream' to facilitate consideration on reform of the college sector. Members discussed representation on the Workstream; the outcomes that the workstream sought to achieve; and potential overlap with a similar working group established to consider the higher education sector. The Student President raised concern that there was no student representation on the proposed steering group, and noted that there was a 'learner advisory group'. The Chair and Principal agreed to raise the absence of student representation with Colleges Scotland as they work with the Scottish Government to finalise arrangements.

6.12 The Board NOTED that the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) (Scotland) Bill had been passed by the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday 20 January 2026; and that it would become an Act once it received Royal Assent.

6.13 The Board NOTED the publication of reports of relevance to the college sector from Scotland's Just Transition Commission and the Fraser of Allander Institute.

6.14 Board and Transformation Programme KPIs

The Board NOTED an update on Transformation Programme progress to date, and NOTED the key performance indicators (KPIs) identified for the Transformation Programme and its projects (Paper D).

The Vice Principal, Innovation, Planning & Performance provided a brief overview of the Transformation Programme, how it had evolved from the College's current strategic plan, and how it was informing the College's next strategic plan, EC2030+. Members were informed that it had proven challenging to satisfactorily align the College's strategic KPIs with the current strategy's themes around people, place, and performance. It was explained lessons had been learned, and that the development and launch EC2030+ provided an opportunity to ensure that there would be a coherent suite of aligned KPIs for the Board and its committees.

Members NOTED that an online Board session had been held on 25 February 2026 to update members on the Transformation Programme, and were advised that feedback from the online session on risk management had been referred to the Transformation Board's meeting of 4 March 2026, and had since been acted upon. Members also noted that the Transformation Board had agreed that it was satisfied with overall progress thus far.

The Vice Principal, Innovation, Planning & Performance added that clarification had also been sought on how the Transformation Programme contributed to the College's current strategy and KPIs. Members received an overview of the Transformation Programme core aims and the underlying themes. It was explained that each project within the Transformation Programme had specific KPIs of relevance to the project. The project level KPIs in turn contributed to one or more of the College's Strategic KPIs on financial resilience; staff and student satisfaction; diversity of delivery models; and improved outcomes / student success.

The Board DISCUSSED the alignment of the Transformation Programme and the strategic plan. To avoid confusion arising from separate reporting arrangements for the Transformation Programme and EC 2030+, members agreed that the College Executive should define a single set of priorities. Separately, it was suggested that further work was required to establish measures of performance; set performance baselines; and agree performance targets. It was suggested that further consideration be given to the format in which KPI-related information was presented to the Board; and that some Board papers would benefit from additional interpretation and contextual analysis by College staff. Members AGREED to discuss the suggestions outside of the meeting and to bring back a consolidated set of KPIs to future board meeting.

7 EC 2030+ progress

The Vice Principal, Innovation, Planning & Performance provided an update on the development of the College's new strategy, EC 2030+. Members were advised that a draft strategic plan had been developed based on contributions from focus groups of staff and Board members, and contributions from a survey of staff members. The Board NOTED the draft College vision, mission, ambitions, and strategic pillars. It was explained that the College's values would remain largely unchanged.

The Chair observed that the Board would be asked to approve the finalised version of EC 2030+ at its meeting of June 2026, and members were advised that a separate session would be arranged before the June Board meeting to enable Board members to contribute to the final draft version. The Chair invited the Board to provide feedback on the current version, and members commented appreciatively on the strategy's succinctness, and on the alignment of the strategic pillars with the Board's committee structure.

Members commented variously on how to further enhance the Strategy. It was suggested that the Strategy should be more explicitly related to Edinburgh College and should communicate why it was important to the College's future. Suggestions were also made on ensuring that the strategy was clear and concise; that it could state the impact that the College sought to achieve; and that supporting narrative could explain how it differed from previous strategies. Separately, it was queried whether the strategy would remain sufficiently stretching for the College beyond 2030.

Members were advised that further work would be undertaken to finalise supporting narrative, identify appropriate performance indicators, and to refresh the supporting pillar strategies. Updates would be provided at an online Board session to be arranged in May 2026.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal and colleagues for their work, and acknowledged that development of EC 2030+ had been a significant undertaking.

8 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION REPORT

The Board NOTED the Edinburgh College Students' Association Report (Paper E) which detailed activity since the Board of Management's last meeting on 11 December 2025. The Student President and Vice-President Welfare highlighted key aspects of the report as follows.

8.1 Members were informed that the Students' Association elections had taken place, and that the full-time officers for July 2026-June 2027 were as follows: President, Oksana Cherkas; Vice-President Activities, Oleksandr Shtepan; and Vice-President Welfare, Mary O'Driscoll. The Board congratulated the officers on their election for academic year 2026/27.

8.2 The Board were updated on activity associated with the College community, and were advised that there had been an increased sense of organic community building by students via the societies and clubs supported by the Students' Association. The Student President, on behalf of the Students' Association, commended all students involved in leading societies and clubs at Edinburgh College. The Board noted that the Students' Association had hosted several recent events and activities for students; and that the events and activities had often been focused on wellbeing and enrichment, and had involved fruitful partnerships with external charities.

8.3 Members were informed that the upcoming Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review had provided a welcome opportunity for increased collaboration between the Students' Association and the College's Quality and Improvement team; and that this had enabled student representation to be more thoroughly embedded across the College.

8.4 The Board NOTED that several full-time students had recently been charged Council Tax by the City of Edinburgh Council, despite normally being exempt. It was explained that removal of the exemption had a significant impact on the affected students' finances and wellbeing. Members of the Board were advised that the Students' Association and Edinburgh College's Principal had written to relevant Council staff and elected members for urgent support and resolution. Members were further advised that the issue appeared to have been resolved. The Board commended the Students' Association for its proactive communications with the council and with elected representatives.

8.5 In response to a query, the Board DISCUSSED briefly the extent to which the College's students were being affected by issues associated with the cost of living, youth unemployment, and mental health and wellbeing. Members received a brief update from the perspective of Student Support staff, and the Vice-President Welfare reported that there had been increased usage of the College's community fridges.

8.6 It was observed that the Scottish Government and the Students' Association had priorities associated with the alleviation of poverty and it was queried whether a related reference should be included within the EC 2030+ strategy. The Board were advised that the Scottish Governments budget for 2026/27 had included the RISE initiative (Raising Income through Skills and Education), which would give colleges access to a projected £9 million of funding to deliver new or expanded initiatives to help adult learners get the skills and qualifications needed to secure new employment opportunities.

8.7 The Chair of the Student Success Committee advised the Board that the Committee had considered the reasons for student withdrawal at last meeting, and had noted that the College's current retention rate of 93% compared favourably with the sector. The Chair added that the Committee had considered several recommendations made by the Students' Association, and that she had been reassured that the College Executive were acting on the recommendations.

9 GOVERNANCE REPORT

The Board NOTED the Governance Report (Paper F), which included an update to the terms of reference for the Board's Committees; the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for 2026; updates on the 2025/26 Board Improvement Plan; the outcome of a benchmarking exercise against the SFC's Expectations of Good Governance; updates on the re-appointment of non-executive members; updates on arrangements for the recruitment of non-executive members; and information on the Top-Level Risk Register.

9.1 The Board APPROVED the following addition to the terms of reference of all Board committees: "Undertake an annual review of the Committee's remit, effectiveness, and operating arrangements, and report any recommended changes to the Board of Management."

9.2 The Board APPROVED the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2026.

9.3 The Board NOTED the status of actions as detailed within the Board Improvement Plan 2025/26.

Members DISCUSSED an action associated with the provision of optional training opportunities associated with change leadership and educational futures. It was explained that there was no existing internal provision for such training, and members were invited to consider amending the action. It was queried whether a suitably experienced guest speaker could be identified and asked to discuss their experience of successful change leadership with the Board. Separately, it was suggested that the recommendations arising from the report on Creating a High-Performance Culture be included within the Board Improvement Plan for 2026/27.

Members also DISCUSSED an action to collate and publish Board diversity data, and it was commented that publication of Board diversity data would be beneficial for the upcoming non-executive Board member recruitment round. Members AGREED to prioritise completion of the action.

9.4 The Board NOTED the benchmarking document which assessed the College's compliance against the SFC's Expectations of Good Governance; and NOTED that the Governance & Nominations Committee, at its meeting of February 2026, had considered the College to be compliant with the SFC's expectations.

9.5 The Board NOTED that the reappointment of Eleanor Sim and Bill Troup, for a second term of three years as non-executive Board members, had been approved by the Scottish Ministers.

9.6 The Board NOTED an update on activity associated with the 2026 recruitment round for two new non-executive Board members and an update on actions to improve Board diversity. Members were asked to share the advert with suitable candidates in their networks.

9.7 The Board NOTED that the Risk Management and Assurance Group had met on 3 February 2026 and had considered the Top-Level Risk Register. Members were informed that a new template had been created, that risk leads had reviewed their respective entries, and that further work was ongoing to ensure that descriptions and internal controls were appropriate.

10 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

10.1 Finance, Business Development & Resources

The Board NOTED the minutes of the Finance, Business Development & Resources (FBDR) Committee's meeting of 10 March 2026. The Committee Chair reported that the Committee had:

- Considered the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts and the Business Development Mid-Year Report (25/26).

- Discussed the potential of achieving the end of year forecast of £480k deficit, and how greater assurance could be provided by ensuring alignment between the Management Accounts and the Business Development Reports.
- Considered the findings of the Internal Audit of Commercial Contracts Management, and the associated management response.
- Held a deep dive on the Estates Strategy, and received an update on the SFC's Infrastructure Delivery Group.
- Given consideration to the College's ability to respond to commercial opportunities in a timely manner; and the need to develop supporting structures and systems.

The Committee Chair reported that the Committee had considered updates to the FBDR terms of reference to confirm its role in providing oversight of environmental sustainability governance at the College; and had considered that approval of environmental sustainability-related strategies should be reserved to the Board of Management.

The Board were informed that the Committee had considered how changes resulting from the Transformation Programme should be reflected in the reporting of financial information to the Board. Members NOTED that an additional section had been added to the management accounts to track Transformation Programme related income and expenditure against forecasts, and to provide associated narrative.

10.1.1 Management Accounts

The Board NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to January 2026 (Paper G); and received a verbal update from the Chief Operating Officer on financial performance to February 2026.

The Board NOTED that the adjusted operating position deficit forecast for financial year 2025/26 had been increased from £480k to £630k. It was explained that adverse variances had been identified with regard to alternative income, unfunded voluntary severance payments, Transformation Programme-related staff costs, and adverse changes resulting from ongoing geopolitical events. Members DISCUSSED the interventions that the College would use to mitigate the adverse variances identified. To provide additional assurance to the Board, it was AGREED that an extraordinary meeting of the FBDR Committee be arranged in April 2026 to consider the College's financial performance as detailed within the March 2026 management accounts.

The Board NOTED that an additional £0.285m had been received from the SFC for emergency works to the fire lift at Sighthill and for fire suppression equipment; whilst a further £2.4m of emergency maintenance funding had been secured for Sighthill RAAC works.

The Board were advised that the SFC was expected to publish college funding allocations for 2026/27 later that week, and that Board members would receive an update and initial analysis shortly thereafter.

10.2 Governance and Nominations Committee

The Board NOTED the minutes of the Governance and Nominations Committee's meeting of 25 February 2026. The Committee Chair reported that the Committee had:

- Considered Arrangements for the 2026 non-executive member recruitment round, including: the Board's skills requirements, the recruitment pack and process, and the appointments panel.

  Board members were advised that the intention was to strengthen recruitment approaches to attract a more diverse and representative pool of candidates. This would be facilitated through targeted outreach activities and an inclusive application process.

- Considered a proposed addition to the terms of reference for all committees; and had noted that additional amendments were being considered.
- Considered actions associated with the Board Improvement Plan 2025/26, including: Board member training and development, the format of a public board meeting, and potential changes to the Board and Committee Paper Template.

The Board NOTED that the Committee had considered benchmarking against the SFC's Expectations of Good Governance and had agreed responses to aspects of two expectations related to the provision of regular updates, communications, and unbiased minutes; and overlapping attendance between finance and audit committees.

10.3 People and Remuneration Committee

The Board NOTED the minutes of the People and Remuneration Committee's meeting of 26 February 2026. The Committee Chair reported that the Committee had:

- Noted a presentation on progress against the People Strategy 2023-2026, and considered plans for the development of the next People Strategy.
- Received updates on the Transformation Programme; the 2026 HIVE Staff Survey; and the Head of Department restructure.
- Considered the Human Resources & Organisational Development report, and the benchmarking information provided on the topic of staff absence. Members were informed that the College's rate of staff absence compared favourably with other organisations, although the Committee did observe variation in absence rates across the College.
- Noted an update on the College's communications, marketing, research, and public relations activities.

Board members were informed that the People and Remuneration Committee had considered the Health and Safety Report for Quarter 2 2025/26, and had discussed members' queries relating to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) and recent media coverage relating to welding fumes. The Board were advised that Committee members had commented that they were reassured by the information provided by the Health and Safety Manager, and by the arrangements in place at the College.

10.4 Student Success Committee

The Board NOTED the minutes of the Student Success Committee's meeting of 5 March 2026. The Committee Chair reported that the Committee had:

- Considered recommendations from the Students' Association's based on student feedback from class representative meetings held in November 2025 and February 2026. Members were informed that discussion had focused on student induction arrangements, learning development tutor provision, and arrangements for student-staff meetings.
- Received an update on recruitment and retention; considered data on student withdrawals; and received a presentation on factors affecting student recruitment.
- Held a deep dive into the College's Self-Evaluation & Action Plan, and received an update on arrangements for the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER). Members were informed that the requirements of the TQER appeared to be more onerous than originally advised, and that concern had been raised at the sector level on the associated administrative burden.
- Noted updates from the Access and Inclusion Strategy Group and the Learning, Teaching and Quality Strategy Group

- Discussed the impact of AI on the student experience, and given consideration to scheduling a deep dive at a future meeting.

The Board NOTED that, in the Early Experience Survey 2025/26, the College had achieved:

- A score of 4.4 (out of 5) for ‘Overall impression so far’; compared to a score of 4.3 in 2024/25.
- An average score of 4.24 (across 18 questions); compared to an average score of 4.22 in 2024/25.

10.5 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

The Board NOTED the minutes of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee’s meeting of 4 March 2026. The Committee Chair reported that the Committee had:

- Approved the revised Business Continuity Framework and the revised Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedure.
- Considered the College’s Top-Level Risk Register and recently approved business continuity plans for ‘Adverse Weather’, ‘My EC’, ‘PECOS’, and ‘Moodle’.
- Considered items associated with Internal Audit, including: progress against audit recommendations and internal audit reports for payroll, staff recruitment, and commercial contracts management.
- Received updates on the College’s participation in the National Fraud Initiative, and activity associated with the Cyber Security Risk Control Matrix.

Members were advised that consideration was being given to how the value received from internal audit reports, and associated consideration by the Committee, could be better shared with the Board’s other committees.

10.5.1 Risk Management Overview

Members were reminded that a request had been made at the December 2025 meeting for an overview of how the Board of Management considered matters related to risk management.

The Board NOTED that a short explanatory document had been developed and shared on the Board Portal. Members were asked to review the document, and to inform the Board Secretary if any additional information or clarification was required.

11 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

11.1 Chief Operating Officer

The Board NOTED a brief verbal update on recruitment process for the Chief Operating Officer. Members were updated on the number of applications received, on arrangements for stakeholder and panel interviews, and key dates within the recruitment process.

11.2 EIS-FELA Report

The Board NOTED that the EIS-FELA report on the future of further education in Scotland, published in November 2025, had been circulated to members prior to the meeting for information. Members were advised that three questions had been submitted before the meeting, and that the questions sought an agreed Board position on propositions made within the report. The Chair acknowledged the perspectives of EIS-FELA as set out in the report, and advised the Board that the requested discussion points did not relate to the remit of the Board and would therefore not be discussed.

11.3 Closed Items of Business

Two items of business were considered by the Board as part of a closed session, and have been recorded under a separate minute.

12 FOR INFORMATION

12.1 Health & Safety Report: Q2 2025/26

The Board NOTED the Health & Safety Update for quarter two of the 2025/26 academic year; which included monthly reports for November and December 2025 and January 2026.

12.2 Top Level Risk Register – Summary

The Board NOTED the Top-Level Risk Register as reviewed by the February 2026 meeting of the Risk Management Action Group.

12.3 Board of Management: Agenda Planner 2025/26

The Board NOTED the agenda planner for the 2025/26 academic year, which detailed upcoming items of business.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 16 JUNE 2026