EDINBURGH COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 08 DECEMBER 2020

Meeting held remotely via Microsoft Teams

Start time: 14:00

Present: Bruce Cassidy; Mike Cowley; Audrey Cumberford; Lesley Drummond; Rose Dodgson; Alex Killick; Ross Laird; Ann Landels (Chair); Toni McAlindin; Niki McKenzie; Nigel Paul; Gwen Raez; Azra Sharif-Qayyum; Judith Sischy; Jeanette Stevenson; Jordan Wyllie

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Nick Croft; Michael Jeffrey; Ursula Lodge (Audit Scotland) Jonny Pearson; Gordon Smail (Audit Scotland); Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

Observers: Don Gluckstein; Peter Sharma

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Fiona Riddoch.

1.2 The Chair welcomed Bruce Cassidy, the re-elected Support Staff Board Member, following the announcement of the Support Staff Election results on 02 December 2020.

1.3 The Chair welcomed Gordon Smail (Audit Director) and Ursula Lodge (Senior Audit Manager) from Audit Scotland to the meeting to present the External Auditor's 2019/20 Annual Report under Item 9.1.2. The Board NOTED that *Item 9.1; Audit & Risk Assurance Committee* would be considered following *Item 4; Matter Arising Report*, to allow for the Annual Accounts and Financial Statements to be signed by the Chair and the Principal in a timely manner.

1.4 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.

1.5 The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Allan Glen (Curriculum Leader, Music & Sound Production) for his presentation prior to the Board meeting on the innovative use of technology to support Music & Sound Production students working remotely. The Board NOTED the collaborative effort of the Curriculum Team, which included Steve Galbraith, Richie Harrison Jane Datony, George

Mikrogiannakis and Bruce Cassidy, to create an innovative approach to learning and assessment, which had been shown to impact positively on student attainment and retention.

1.6   The Chair, on behalf of the Board, acknowledged the national awards won by the College, and its student successes, during a challenging year. The Board NOTED and commended the following award winners and nominees:

(i)   Graphic Design lecturer, Helena Good, was named teacher of the year at the TES FE Awards. Helena for her major role in the creation of the Daydream Believers programme.

(ii)   The Automotive Engineering team was shortlisted in the best teaching and learning initiative category at the TES FE Awards following the team's successful partnership with the Scottish Motor Racing Club and Knockhill Racing Circuit.

(iii)   The Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) team was also named as a finalist in the apprenticeship programme of the year TES FE Award category for the team's work in boosting the number of FA enrolments.

(iv)   The College was recognised at the Virtual College Development Network (CDN) Awards, where its work in Sustainability was highly commended in the Climate Emergency Action category, while Social Services student Roseanna Campbell was commended in the Student of the Year category following her outstanding achievements during the 2019/20 session.

(v)   Graphic Design student Balazs Hirth was named Star Creative Student at the Marketing Society Star Awards.

(vi)   HND Sound Production student, Shaheeda Sinckler, known as Nova Scotia The Truth, won Scottish Album of the Year 2020 for her debut album Re-Up which she self-released in January 2020.

(vii)   Automotive Engineering student, James Kennedy-Pratt, was awarded a Gold medal at the UK-wide Institute of Motor Industry Skills Competition in the Light Vehicle Technology category.

(viii) HND Graphic Design student Pavils Vorobjovs was awarded Student of the Year at the annual You Can Now (YCN) Student Awards for the outstanding work he produced in response to a live brief set by clients - Fedrigoni x Oliver Bonas.

(ix)   HND Computer Game Development students won the inaugural Esports Scottish College Cup, held by CDN and the British Esports Association.

1.7   The Board AGREED that a message on its behalf should circulated to all staff and students, wishing them a happy festive period, and thanking them for their work during an exceptionally challenging year for the College.

2.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1   No declarations of interest were received.

3.   MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1   The Board APPROVED the minutes from 22 September 2020 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING REPORT

4.1 MATTERS ARISING UPDATE

4.1.1 The Board NOTED that actions from its previous meeting(s) were complete, overtaken or on the agenda.

4.1.2 The Board NOTED that an unconscious bias training session had been held for Board members on 28 October 2020. The Chair advised the Board that such training events would be included as part of the Board induction programme, and refresher sessions for continuing members would be held annually.

4.1.3 The Board DISCUSSED workforce planning and AGREED that, the Board would continue to be updated on the details of the workforce plan as it continues to evolve as SFC funding allocations are confirmed and impacts of the Voluntary Severance Scheme (*Minute 6.5 refers*) are realised.

4.2 EDINBURGH COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT TRUST MEMBERSHIP

4.2.1 The Board NOTED that Interim Chair and Non-Executive Board Member, Ann Landels, had stepped down from the Edinburgh College Development Trust on 01 November 2020. The Chair advised the Board that Non-Executive Board Member, Ross Laird, had been nominated by the Board to fill the vacancy, and had attended his first meeting of the Trust on 26 November 2020.

4.3 SUPPORT STAFF BOARD ELECTIONS

4.3.1 The Board NOTED the result of the 2020 Support Staff Board Elections, which had seen Bruce Cassidy re-elected to the role by his peers. The Board Secretary, as Returning Officer, advised the Board that there were eight candidates for the role, and that 33.8% of eligible staff had voted in the elections.

4.3.2 The Board DISCUSSED staff board elections, and AGREED that the Election Rules (previously agreed by the Board in October 2016) should be reviewed by the Nominations Committee in advance of the Academic Staff Board Elections in December 2021 - to ensure they remained compliant with current guidance and best practice.

5. BOARD STRATEGY DAY 27.10.20 REPORT

5.1 The Board NOTED an overview of matters considered at the Board Strategy Day on 27 October 2020, and actions arising from the discussions held. The Chair highlighted that the main purpose of the day was to consider the current tertiary education landscape and to commence the development of a new strategic plan for the College, to replace the Edinburgh College Strategic Plan 2017-22.

5.2 The Board NOTED that the current high-level strategic aims and ambitions of the College remained largely valid, however, it was accepted that the rate of change - due to external drivers - meant the College should be more ambitious in its strategic ambitions.

5.3 The Board DISCUSSED the development of a framework and timetable for the drafting and approval of a new strategic plan. The Principal advised the Board that a framework for the development of the strategic plan would be presented to the Policy & Resources Committee on 23 February 2021.

5.4 The Board AGREED that an initial draft strategic plan should be presented to the Board on 15 June 2021. The Principal advised members that a final version of the new strategic plan would then be presented to the Board for approval at its first meeting on the academic year 2021/22.

5.5 The Board NOTED that feedback from the Board Strategy Day would be reviewed by the Chair, the Principal and the Board Secretary in due course, to support the enhancement of future board strategic discussions and events.

6. **PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

6.1 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 activities undertaken by the College since its last meeting on 22 September 2020, and progress against its strategic key performance indicators.

6.2 The Board NOTED that, as a result of Scottish Government guidance, the College had ceased face-to-face teaching on 04 December 2020, with students moving to online learning for the remaining two weeks of teaching prior to the start of the festive break following 18 December 2020. The Principal advised the Board that such measures would reduce the opportunity for further positive cases at the College.

6.3 The Board DISCUSSED the measures taken by the College to reduce Covid-19 transmission in advance of the festive break, and the plans for students returning to the College in the New Year. The EIS-FELA Representative present welcomed the steps taken by the College around Covid-19 restrictions and remote working, and the continued close working relationship between the College and recognised trade unions on such matters.

6.4 The Board NOTED that the Principal would be holding an online Q&A event with College staff on 09 December 2020. The Principal informed the Board that a similar event, hosted by ECSA, had been successfully held with students on 19 November 2020 - to address topics such as; funding, online teaching, student devices and the commencement of Semester 2.

6.5 The Board NOTED that a Voluntary Severance (VS) Scheme had been launched on 16 November 2020, and had closed on 07 December 2020. The Principal advised the Board that a number of applications had been received, and the Executive Team would conduct an initial sift on 09 December 2020, to consider which applications could be supported. The Board DISCUSSED the VS Scheme and AGREED that the Principal should update members of the Board - once all applications had been processed and outcomes confirmed.

6.6 The Committee NOTED a Colleges Scotland Draft Budget Submission for 2021/22. The Committee DISCUSSED financial sustainability within the college sector, and the liquidity issues faced by a number of colleges. The Principal advised the Committee that the SFC Phase 2 Report would be published in March

2021, and would outline proposal for the tertiary sector to address the financial challenges it faced.

7. STRATEGIC DISCUSSION: INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON THE COLLEGE OF THE FUTURE - FINAL REPORT

7.1 The Board NOTED that the Independent Commission on the College of the Future - UK-Wide Final Report had been published in October 2020. The Principal advised the Board that, in addition to the UK-Wide Final Report, each of the four nations would produce a report setting out nation-specific recommendations in further detail.

7.2 The Board NOTED that the Scotland-specific final report would be launched at a virtual event on 14 December 2020, with guest speakers including the Principal and other leaders in the education and business sectors. The Principal outlined the central recommendations of the Commission's vision for the Scottish college of the future, which included:

(i)   Ensuring that Scotland's post-16 education is genuinely there for everyone, whatever their age, ability or circumstance;
(ii)   Increasing the impact of the post-16 education and skills system by driving further integration across tertiary provision;
(iii)   Unlock the potential of colleges to drive innovation by deepening links with employers and industry.

7.3 The Board welcomed the publication of the UK-Wide Final Report and the proposed Scottish specific recommendations, and DISCUSSED the following:

(i)   The need to ensure that the recommendations do not get lost in the upcoming 2021 Scottish Parliamentary election in May 2021, by ensuring that all political parties are supportive of the proposed ideas;
(ii)   The opportunity to progress recommendations from the Report in response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic;
(iii)   The need to recognise the value of college education, and for future funding awards to match the sector's ambitions.

7.4 The Board NOTED that, following the launch of Scotland specific recommendation, members would have a further opportunity to consider the outcomes of the national report as part of the College's own strategic planning.

8. EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION REPORT

8.1 The Board NOTED a report from ECSA covering a range of activities at the College since its last meeting on 22 September 2020. The ECSA Vice President (Welfare) advised the Board that the Students' Association had successfully embraced livestreaming as a way to engage with students, including an induction event ('ECSA Goes Live'), activities for Black History Month, and a live Q&A session with the Principal (*Minute 6.4 refer*).

8.2 The Board NOTED that the ECSA continued to work closely with the Student Experience Team to resolve issues related to student bursaries, which had been

highlighted at both the Academic Council and the Corporate Development Committee in November 2020. The ECSA Student President advised the Board that issues relating to student funding had now been progressed satisfactorily, following the processing of a backlog of claims.

8.3 The Board DISCUSSED the issues raised around student bursaries, and AGREED that the Academic Council should continue to review this matter and feedback to the Board on any lessons learned by the College.

8.4 The Board NOTED a preliminary report from the ECSA 'Your Experience Survey', which provided feedback from 765 students on their experiences during the welcome and induction period at the start of the academic year. The ECSA Student President advised the Board that students were generally positive about the information they received before starting their courses, however, (as noted under *Minute 8.2*) satisfaction around student funding was rated lower than other areas in this category.

8.5 The Board DISCUSSED the results highlighted in the preliminary report, and NOTED that a full report on the 'Your Experience Survey' would be presented to the next meeting of the Academic Council on 26 February 2020.

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

9.1 AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

9.1.1 MINUTES 25.11.20

The Board NOTED the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 25 November 2020. The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee highlighted to the Board that the Committee had considered matters relating to the end of year Annual Account and Financial Statements, as outlined under *Minute 9.1.2*.

9.1.2 ANNUAL REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD TO JULY 2020

The Board NOTED an annual report from the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, which highlighted areas of activity undertaken by the Committee for the period of 01 August 2019 to 31 July 2020. The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee informed the Board that members wished to highlight the following challenges:

(i) The significant disruptions caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the substantial efforts of the College to support students learning remotely;
(ii) The significant financial uncertainty over the next year as the College navigates its way through Covid-19 restrictions, and the impact of EU withdrawal;
(iii) Financial sustainability and the ability of the College to manage its activities and deliver its outcome within its funding levels;
(iv) Ongoing vigilance and investment in cyber security, information security and data protection, given the growing reliance of the College on the effective operation of its digital systems.

The Board NOTED the Edinburgh College Annual Report and Financial Statements for the 12-month period ended 31 July 2020.

The Board NOTED an External Audit Annual Report for the financial accounting period. The Auditor Director informed the Board that Audit Scotland were content to sign-off the financial accounts - subject to their approval by the Board.

The Board DISCUSSED the following matters in relation to the Annual Report and Financial Statements:

v)   The positive narrative within the annual accounts and the need to communicate the document to stakeholders;
vi)   The excellent stewardship provided by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, which was commended by Board members;
vii) The cyber resilience position of the College and the progress against actions arising from a recent internal audit and an external penetration test in May 2020;
viii) The challenging cash position of the College, and other colleges in the sector;
ix)   The plans implemented by the College to ensure its financial sustainability going forward, in light of both the Covid-19 Pandemic and EU withdrawal.

The Board NOTED that Audit Scotland were content with the College preparing the financial statements on a going concern basis. The Audit Director advised the Board that financial sustainability remained a major challenge for the college sector, but Audit Scotland had received reassurances through its annual audit that the College had arrangements in place to meet these challenges over the next financial year.

The Board APPROVED the Annual Report and Financial Statements to 31 July 2020 and the letter of representation, as endorsed by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, for sign-off by the Chair and the Principal.

The Board NOTED the commendations of the Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and the Audit Director for the work of both the Edinburgh College Finance Team, and the Audit Scotland Team, in presenting the Annual Accounts and Financial Statements for approval in a timely matter.

The Audit Director and the Senior Audit Manager (Audit Scotland) left the meeting

The Board took a scheduled break for the Chair and the Principal to sign the Annual Accounts and Financial Statement to 31 July 2020

9.2   POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9.2.1 MINUTES 10.12.20

The Board NOTED the Policy & Resources Committee minutes from the meeting held on 10 November 2020. The Chair advised the Board that the Policy & Resources Committee had considered the details of the Voluntary Severance Scheme (*Minute 6.5 refers*), prior to its launch to College staff.

9.2.2 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION DASHBOARD

The Board NOTED an overview, from the Vice Principal, Education & Skills, of the performance of the College against its 2020/21 activity targets. The Vice Principal informed the Board that the SFC had set the College an activity target of 187,869 for the 2020/21 academic year.

The Board NOTED that recruitment and retention figures for the 2020/21 academic year - to date, had been positive with an increase in the number of full-time FE students. The Vice Principal advised the Board that a shift in the mode of study from part-time to full-time, combined with a reduction in Early Withdrawals by 0.6%, had increased credit activity at the start of the academic year.

The Board DISCUSSED the factors contributing to more students enrolling on full-time courses, and improved retention figures. The Vice Principal advised the Board that initiatives implemented by curriculum teams, as highlighted under *Minute 1.5*, to reduce and stagger assessment loads had impacted positively on the student experience, and supported improved retention rates.

9.2.3 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO OCTOBER 2020

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

The Board DISCUSSED the current liquidity of the College, and NOTED that the SFC had indicated that it would continue to support colleges with liquidity issues. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the College provided monthly returns to the SFC, and maintained a regular dialogue with colleagues at the Funding Council.

Lesley Drummond, Donny Gluckstein and Peter Sharma left the meeting

9.3 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

9.3.1 MINUTES 04.11.20

The Board NOTED the Nominations Committee minutes from the meeting held on 04 November 2020.

The Board NOTED a Committee Membership Proposal as endorsed by the Nominations Committee. The Board DISCUSSED committee membership and APPROVED the proposed amendments.

The Board NOTED that the Nominations Committee had agreed that a round of non-executive recruitment should commencing in December 2020, to seek a new Board member with professionally qualified financial expertise. The Chair outlined the recruitment panel, and the appointments procedure, as endorsed by the Nominations Committee.

10. GOVERNANCE REPORT

10.1 The Board NOTED a Governance Report highlighting development related to internal and external governance matters, and progress against the 2020/21 Board Improvement Plan.

10.2 The Board NOTED that a scheduled training event for members would be held on 17 February 2021. The Board Secretary advised the Board that suggestions on potential topics for consideration at the event should be submitted to the Chair, Board Secretary and the Clerk to the Board, prior to an agenda for the session being finalised in early February 2021.

10.3 The Board NOTED that CDN had published a report on virtual governance on 08 December 2020. The Board AGREED that the Board Secretary should present the report to the next meeting of the Board, and consider how best practice recommendation could be integrated into future meetings of the Board and its committees.

11. NATIONAL REPORT

11.1 The Board NOTED a verbal update from the Chair on national developments in the college sector and the work of the Colleges Scotland Board, of which the Chair is a member.

11.2 The Board NOTED that the Chair had met with the Chair of the Edinburgh College Development Trust (ECDT) and the ECSA Student President to consider ways to maximise their joint impact. The Chair advised the Board that meetings would continue to be held with the ECDT and ECSA to consider their alignment further.

12. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

12.1 BOARD BRIEFING SESSION

12.1.1 The Board NOTED that prior to the Board and its committees meeting in February and March 2021, an optional Board Briefing Session (led by the Principal) would be held in early February 2021. The Chair advised the Board that proposed dates for the session would be circulated in due course.

12.2 DEPARTURE OF NON-EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER

12.2.1 The Board NOTED that the tenure of Non-Executive Board Member, Niki McKenzie, would end on 01 March 2021. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Ms McKenzie for her significant contribution to the Board and both its Remuneration and Policy & Resources Committees.

12.2.2 The Board NOTED that Ms McKenzie would remain a Non-Executive Board Member for a further three months, and there would be further opportunities to offer thanks at the upcoming Board Briefing Session (*Minute 12.1.1 refers).*

12.3   EDINBURGH COLLEGE AMBASSADOR AWARD 2020

12.3.1   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.

12.3.2   The Board NOTED that a virtual Graduation, for students who completed their studies in the 2019/20 academic year, had been scheduled to take place online. The Board DISCUSSED the Award, and AGREED that due to current circumstances the Ambassador Award would not be presented at the online ceremony.

13.   FOR INFORMATION

13.1   AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES 07.10.20

13.1.1 The Board NOTED the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 07 October 2020.

13.2   RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

13.2.1 The Board NOTED a Risk Management Report, which included a Top-Level Risk Register to November 2020.

13.3   ACADEMIC COUNCIL MINUTES 13.11.20

13.3.1 The Board NOTED the Academic Council minutes from the meeting held on 13 November 2020.

13.4   CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES 17.11.20

13.4.1 The Board NOTED the Corporate Development Committee minutes from the meeting held on 17 November 2020.

13.5   RIDDOR REPORT

13.5.1 The Board NOTED a RIDDOR Report for the first Quarter of 2020/21.

13.6   BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AGENDA PLANNER 2020/21

13.6.1 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.

14.   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14.1   The next meeting of the Board of Management shall take place on 23 March 2021.

Meeting closed at 16:25