



For the future you want

EDINBURGH COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 22 MARCH 2022

Meeting held in the Boardroom, Granton Campus

Start time: 14:00

Present: Bruce Cassidy; Audrey Cumberland; Stewart Darling; Rose Dodgson; Lesley Drummond; Alex Killick; Ross Laird; Ann Landels (Chair); Kerry McCormack; Gwen Raez; Fiona Riddoch; Jeanette Stevenson; Richard Swan; Jordan Wyllie

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Nick Croft; Michael Jeffrey; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

Observers: Kevin Dixon; Don Gluckstein

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 No apologies were received.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed members to the first face-to-face meeting of the Board since December 2019, following the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic in March 2020. The Board NOTED that, in alignment with changes to its Standing Orders agreed on 29 September 2021, the Board was holding its first hybrid meeting - with five attendees choosing to attend remotely.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed Stewart Darling and Kerry McCormack to their first meeting as Board members, following their appointment as non-executive members on 15 December 2021.
- 1.4 The Board NOTED that, in line with governance arrangements agreed at the previous meeting of the Board, Fiona Riddoch had assumed the role of Interim Vice Chair of the Board on 2 March 2022. The Chair advised the Board that this change followed the departure of Nigel Paul, a long serving Non-Executive Member, from the Board on 1 March 2022.
- 1.5 The Chair welcomed EIS-FELA and UNISON representatives, Donny Gluckstein and Kevin Dixon, 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 Chair, on behalf of the Board, acknowledged national awards won by the College, and its student successes, since the last meeting of the Board. The Board NOTED and commended the following award winners:

- (i) The College, in partnership with ECSA, was named winner of the first ever Net Zero Award at the eleventh annual Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce Business Awards. The Chair advised the Board that the win followed the renewed focus of the College to become carbon neutral by 2030, having already achieved a 57% reduction in its operational carbon footprint from 2013/14 to 2019/20.
- (ii) The College received a commendation from the awarding body, Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), for excellent performance during the September 2021 assessment session. The Chair highlighted that the commendation was in recognition of the excellent standard of exam results for the Applied Marketing unit, a module on the College's Certificate in Professional Digital Marketing.

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 14 December 2021 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.

5. PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

5.1 The Board NOTED an update on recent developments and items of note, including the continued impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Principal updated the Board on activities undertaken by the College since its last meeting on 14 December 2021, and progress against its strategic key performance indicators.

5.2 The Board NOTED that, in collaboration with the City of Edinburgh Council and the Granton Waterfront Development Project, the College lit up the Granton Gas Tower in the colours of the Ukrainian flag on 9 March 2022. The Principal advised the Board that the event was attended by representatives of the Ukrainian Consulate as well as Ukrainian and local community groups.

5.3 The Board NOTED that the College was in discussions with Dnipro Kids, a charity created by members of the Hibernian Community to support orphanages in Dnipro (central Ukraine), to temporarily accommodate Ukrainian orphans displaced by the Russia-Ukraine war. The Principal informed the Board that the College would

continue to support activities across the community to help those impacted by the ongoing conflict.

- 5.4 The Board NOTED that, following the announcement of the Scottish Government Draft Budget, the Principal had held one of her regular briefing sessions with local politicians to highlight the serious implications facing Edinburgh College. The Principal informed the Board that she had followed up the briefings by submitting a formal letter to MPs and MSPs for the Edinburgh and the Lothians region.
- 5.5 The Board NOTED that a business case had been developed to move the Employers' Association towards a more effective, sustainable, and impactful business model, which was fully resourced and fit-for-purpose. The Principal outlined the recommendations contained within the business case and the benefits of a more professional and adequately resourced operation.
- 5.6 The Board NOTED updates on both the Support Side and Lecturing 2021/22 Pay Claims following recent National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) meetings in December 2021. The Principal advised the Board that whilst the Support Side discussions were ongoing, a formal dispute letter had been submitted by EIS-FELA regarding the Lecturing Pay Claim and potential ballot for strike action.

Alex Killick joined the meeting

6. STRATEGIC DISCUSSION: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 6.1 The Board NOTED a financial forecast presentation, based on the most up-to-date assumptions, from the Chief Operating Officer.
- 6.2 The Board NOTED the disparity between Grant-in-Aid and staff costs from 2010/11 to present. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the forecast highlighted the gap between staff costs and Grant-in-Aid and increasing supplies costs which was currently expected to increase to almost £3.4m in 2022/23, therefore placing significant financial pressures on the College.
- 6.3 The Board NOTED the historical financial challenges for the College, including the detrimental impact of the credit pricing differences across the sector. The Chief Operating Officer highlighted that the longstanding anomalies in credit pricing significantly disadvantaged the College, in comparison to other Scottish colleges.
- 6.4 The Board NOTED that, based on current financial forecasting undertaken by the Finance Team, the cumulative total savings required from 2022/23 equated to £3.4m, increasing to almost £5m by 2024/25. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the forecast was based on the flat-cash position outlined in the Scottish Government's Draft Budget, which had yet to be approved by the Scottish Parliament.
- 6.5 The Board NOTED the financial impact on Edinburgh College of increased recurring staff costs, based on the management offer for Support and Lecturing staff Pay Awards, and upcoming changes to National Insurance contributions of 1.25%. The Board DISCUSSED the financial pressure placed upon the College and the need to communicate its long-term implications in terms of tackling both regional poverty and post pandemic economic recovery and growth to the Scottish Government. Further to this, the Board NOTED that an updated financial forecast

would be prepared once the SFC indicative funding allocations were known and internal budget discussions had been completed.

6.6 The Board DISCUSSED the following points in relation to the financial sustainability of the College:

- (i) Increasing staff costs across the college sector as a percentage of Grant-in-Aid.
- (ii) Scottish lecturers' pay in comparison to the rest of the UK, and the recognised difficulties drawing direct comparisons.
- (iii) The constraints placed on commercial activity and the opportunities available to the College to increase its profit margins.
- (iv) The credit pricing anomalies highlighted in Paragraph 6.3 and the awareness of the SFC, and the sector, of the disparity.
- (v) The use of voluntary severance, in line with the requirements of the new Curriculum Strategy, as a mechanism to ease the financial pressures on the College.

6.7 The Board NOTED an update from the ECSA Student President on student poverty and the demands made by the National Union of Students for further support by the Scottish Government - as outlined in a recently published report. The ECSA Student President advised the Board that students were facing significant financial pressures which could hinder individuals' ability to successfully complete their course.

6.8 The Board NOTED that scenario planning by the Senior Management Team would inform savings plans when the annual funding allocation for the College had been confirmed in writing by the SFC. The Principal advised the Board that the funding allocation was expected to be known by the end of March, prior to the Board holding its strategy session on 26 April 2022. The Board NOTED that the Executive did not anticipate any material movements within the SFC directed assumptions and Government budget allocations.

6.9 The Board NOTED that financial sustainability would be a key consideration at the Board Strategy Session on 26 April 2022. The Chair advised the Board that further details on the Strategy Session would be circulated in due course.

7. EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION REPORT

7.1 The Board NOTED a report from ECSA covering a range of activities at the College since its last meeting on 14 December 2021.

7.2 The Board NOTED that ECSA had held its student elections to elect its full-time officers for the academic year 2022/23, with online voting taking place on the week commencing 14 March 2022. The Student President informed the Board of the outcome of the election, as follows:

- (i) David Elder, ECSA Student President
- (ii) Luna Morrison, Vice President (Activities)
- (iii) Skye Marriner, Vice President (Welfare)

7.3 The Board NOTED that newly appointed officers would come into post on 1 July 2022, and a decision was to be taken as to which two officers would join the Board as members. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, congratulated the newly appointed

officers and invited all incoming sabbatical officers to attend the next meeting of the Board, as observers.

- 7.4 The Board NOTED that in light of the increased cost of living and the existing challenges students faced, including reduced funding and welfare support, NUS Scotland had organised an event outside the Scottish Parliament on 23 March 2022 to highlight these issues. The ECSA Vice President Welfare advised the Board that he would be speaking at the event to raise the concerns of Edinburgh College students.
- 7.5 The Board DISCUSSED feedback from the ECSA Class Reps Meetings held in November and December 2021. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Board that feedback relating to timetabling issues was taken seriously by the College, as it directly related to the retention of students, and asked ECSA (and students directly) to report known incidents where timetabling required students to be on campus for short periods of time.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

8.1 POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

8.1.1 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION DASHBOARD

The Board NOTED an overview of the performance of the College against its 2021/22 activity targets. The Vice Principal Education & Skills reminded the Board that the SFC had set the College a total activity target of 192,349 for the academic year.

The Board NOTED that, as of 22 March 2022, the College had accumulated 188,554 core credits. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Board that whilst the 2021/22 core activity target had been achieved, performance against additional funding targets, including ESF and Foundation Apprenticeships credits, remained challenging.

The Board NOTED that full-time courses for the academic year 2022/23 opened for applications on 1 February 2022. The Vice Principal Education & Skills informed the Board that (to date) 1,180 full-time applications had been received, 17% fewer than at the same point last year. The Board DISCUSSED contributing factors to the drop in recruitment, including the buoyant job marketing in the Edinburgh and Lothians region.

The Board NOTED that the issues highlighted around enrolments and credits were sector-wide, and that the College continued to work closely with the SFC to mitigate the drop in full-time enrolments to safeguard credit funding. The Vice Principal reiterated to the Board that the average combined credit price differential between the College and other Scottish colleges was financially significant, and although this had been raised again with the SFC there was unlikely to be a major shift in the national funding model due to the potential financial impact on other colleges.

8.1.2 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS SUMMARY TO JANUARY 2022

The Board NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to January 2022.

The Board DISCUSSED the challenges of managing cash through periods in the year, which has often been as low 4 days cash due to timing of SFC funding and other income streams. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that since ONS reclassification the issue of liquidity had remained a concern for several Scottish colleges.

8.2 LEARNING, TEACHING & STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

8.2.1 LEARNING, TEACHING & STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Board NOTED an annual report from the Learning, Teaching & Student Experience (LTSE) Committee, which highlighted activities over the past 12 months and its future direction in the new academic year.

The Board NOTED the following matters raised by the Chair of the LTSE Committee:

- (i) The response demonstrated by College staff to the challenges and uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, including the college-wide transition to digital learning and student support.
- (ii) The need for further progress to improve outcomes for learners, as highlighted in the Education Scotland Progress Visit Report.
- (iii) The continued challenges surrounding the funding of student counselling and wellbeing activities, especially given the discontinuation of the SFC Wellbeing Fund beyond 2021/22.
- (iv) The work conducted to align and triangulate feedback / data from ECSA and other channels to ensure that the student voice is heard - and central to decision-making processes across the College.
- (v) The development of a new Edinburgh College Curriculum Strategy, which aims to provide institutional coherence, oversight, and leadership in relation to learning, teaching, assessment, and outcomes.

The Board DISCUSSED the accompanying Education Scotland Progress Visit Report and the recommendation highlighted within. The Chair of the LTSE Committee advised the Board that, whilst the report was largely positive, the Committee would regularly review progress against recommendations arising within the report at its future meetings.

9. GOVERNANCE REPORT

- 9.1 The Board NOTED a Governance Report highlighting developments related to internal and external governance matters, and the proposed actions within the 2021/22 Board Improvement Plan.
- 9.2 The Board NOTED a Top-Level Risk Register (TLRR) Summary graphic included within the Governance Report, which included a link to the main TLRR. The Board Secretary advised the Board that there were no changes to the Top Risks outlined

within the report, although residual scores related to '*National bargaining impact on college operations*' and '*Financial sustainability*' had increased.

- 9.3 The Board NOTED that, on 5 January 2022, the Director for Local Government and Communities wrote to all college chairs regarding revisions to the Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies which were came into effect on 7 December 2021. The Board Secretary advised the Board that as Regional College Boards are listed in Schedule 3 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000, Edinburgh College was required to review its Code of Conduct to ensure it aligns with the Model Code.
- 9.4 The Board DISCUSSED the changes to the Code of Conduct for Members of the Edinburgh College Board of Management and APPROVED the document. The Board Secretary informed the Board that the approved Code of Conduct would be submitted to the Scottish Government in due course.
- 9.5 The Board NOTED that, from 23 March 2022 onwards, the role of Board Secretary would pass from the Director of Communications, Policy & Research to the Clerk to the Board. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Director of Communications, Policy & Research for his service to the Board over the past four years.

10. NATIONAL REPORT

- 10.1 The Board NOTED a verbal update from the Chair on national development in the College sector related to her role as a member of the Colleges Scotland Board.
- 10.2 The Board NOTED that Edinburgh College recently became the first college in Scotland to join the Black FE Leadership Group (BFELG). The Chair advised the Board that, as part of the College's induction, College staff (including the Chair, and members of the Executive and Senior Management Team) had attended a one-day training event facilitated by BFELG and its Director, Amarjit Basi.
- 10.3 The Board NOTED that the BFELG event introduced research, tools and conceptual frameworks that would assist the College in identifying what constitutes best anti-racist action and behaviour. The Chair highlighted to the Board three priorities for the College, which included the need to articulate its key strategic commitments to anti-racism by reviewing its values and behaviours.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

11.1 HYBRID BOARD MEETING FORMAT

- 11.1.1 The Board NOTED its thanks to the Clerk to the Board and the IT Team for supporting members in conducting an effective hybrid Board meeting. The Chair informed the Board that feedback on the meeting format was welcomed to support the future use of hybrid meetings for Board and committee events.

12. FOR INFORMATION

12.1 POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES 22.02.22

12.1.1 The Board NOTED the Policy & Resources Committee minutes from the meeting held on 22 February 2022.

12.2 AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES 01.03.22

12.2.1 The Board NOTED the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 23 February 2022.

12.3 CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES 01.03.22

12.3.1 The Board NOTED the Corporate Development Committee minutes from the meeting held on 1 March 2022.

12.4 LEARNING, TEACHING & STUDENT EXPERIENCE MINUTES 04.03.22

12.4.1 The Board NOTED the Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee minutes from the meeting held on 4 March 2022.

12.5 RIDDOR REPORT

12.5.1 The Board NOTED a RIDDOR Report for the second Quarter of 2021/22.

12.6 BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AGENDA PLANNER 2022/23

12.6.1 The Board NOTED draft agendas for its next three meeting over the course of the academic year 2022/23.

Kevin Dixon and Donny Gluckstein left the meeting

13. CLOSED ITEMS OF BUSINESS

13.1 Items of business were considered by the Board as part of a closed session. Closed items were recorded under a separate minute (Closed Minutes 13/29.09.21 refers).

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14.1 The next meeting of the Board of Management shall take place on 14 June 2022.

Meeting closed at 16:20