For the future you want

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 19 FEBRUARY 2019

14:00hrs, Boardroom, Sighthill Campus

Present: Beth Anderson; Debbie Dow; Laura Craig; Audrey Cumberford; Sarah Hay; Julian Henderson; Ethelinda Lashley-Scott; Kevin Maloney; Sandra Morrison; Jeanette Stevenson; Fiona Riddoch (Chair); Shannon Young

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Nick Croft; Kerry Heathcote; Monica Hoenigmann; Marcus Walker (Clerk)

1   WELCOME & APOLOGIES

1.1   The Committee NOTED apologies from Iris Aitchison, Mike Cowley, Neil Manning, Ann Landels and Ryan Quinn.

2   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1   No declarations of interest were received.

3   MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1   The Committee APPROVED the minutes of the Academic Council from 16 November 2018 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4   MATTERS ARISING

4.1   MATTERS ARISING REPORT

4.1.1   Actions from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda.

5   STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT

5.1   STUDENT EXPERIENCE UPDATE

5.1.1   The Committee NOTED a report on developments to improve the experience and retention of students since the last meeting of the Academic Council in November 2018.

5.1.2   The Committee NOTED that the Assistant Principal (Recruitment & Retention) had established an Admission Group, which had approved the implementation of Enrolment Events in May and June for new and progressing students. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that the aim of such events was to ensure that student cards, funding and appropriate support were in place before students started their course.

5.1.3   The Committee NOTED that the Head of Student Experience and three colleagues had completed advanced Safeguarding training in line with the recommendations from a recent British Council Inspection. The Committee DISCUSSED the need to develop safeguarding capacity across the College and the potential for a full-time member of staff in this area. The Principal advised the Committee that the College would be meeting with the SFC to discuss additional support for safeguarding initiatives.

5.2   CLASS REP CONFERENCE: FOLLOW-UP

5.2.1   The Committee NOTED the response of the College to actions arising from the ECSA Class Rep Conferences held in October and November 2018, which considered matters relating to 'Induction and Retention'.

5.2.2   The Committee NOTED and DISCUSSED the following points in relation to the College's response:

(i)   the new processes implemented by the College to support greater flexibility with regards to 100% attendance and its impact on funding for FE students;
(ii)   the circulation of campus maps before enrolment for the 2019/20 academic year, and the inclusion of room numbers on maps;
(iii)   the limited control Edinburgh College has over the allocation of funding for transport, and its participation in a new lobbying group with HE institutions in the City to secure cheaper student travel; and
(iv)   the strategic priority to develop the College estate to include more social spaces for students.

5.2.3   The Committee welcome the College's response to the feedback provided by ECSA, and AGREED that more could be done to lobby the SFC and Scottish Government on the allocation of funding for transport. The Committee AGREED that the allocation of funding for transport in East Lothian and Midlothian should be incorporated into current discussions being held collectively with universities in the

City of Edinburgh region, and that an update on this matter would be provided to the next meeting of the Academic Council.

5.3   CLASS REP CONFERENCE REPORTS

5.3.1   The Committee NOTED that the second and third rounds of Class Reps Conferences had taken place across all four campuses between in December 2018 and February 2019. The ECSA Student President advised the Committee that the second conference focussed on 'Feedback and Self-Evaluation', whilst the third conference considered 'Belonging and Inclusion'.

5.3.2   The Committee NOTED that Class Rep responses at 'Feedback and Self-Evaluation' workshops were positive, with 80% of respondents rating their course 'Good' or 'Excellent'. The ECSA Student President advised the Committee that four areas of improvement had been highlighted through the Class Rep Conference, relating to: (i) flexible and varied learning styles; (ii) workspaces; (iii) course organisation; and, (iv) teaching staff feedback.

5.3.3   The Committee NOTED that Class Rep responses at 'Belonging and Inclusion' workshops were also positive, with 84% of respondents rating their sense of belonging at the College as either 'Good' or 'Excellent'. The ECSA Student President outlined to the Committee that four areas of improvement had been highlighted through the Class Rep Conference, relating to: (i) peer support; (ii) student activities; (iii) facilities; and, (iv) barriers to participation.

5.3.4   The Committee DISCUSSED the Class Rep Conference Feedback provided, and welcomed the reports as an excellent piece of learning / student experience research. The Committee AGREED that, as provided under Item 5.2, senior management should produce a follow-up report outlining what the College would do to address the areas of improvement highlighted in both reports.

5.3.5   The Committee DISCUSSED the opportunities of staff and students to be involved in research projects, and it was AGREED that the Principal would consider this matter further and report back to the Committee in due course.

5.4   STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

5.4.1   The Committee NOTED an update on the work of the Student Communications Group, established in May 2018 at the request of the Academic Council, to ensure that communications with students at Edinburgh College were carried out in a timely, consistent and effective manner. The Head of Corporate Development advised the Committee of a number of enhancements to student communications implemented by the Group over the past year.

5.4.2   The Committee welcomed the enhancements outlined and DISCUSSED ongoing work to develop the 'Job Zone' website, which was acknowledged as a key resource for students in finding employment. The Committee AGREED that a

verbal update on Job Zone website would be provided to the next meeting (under Matters Arising) to ensure that its development was satisfactorily completed.

5.4.3 The Committee AGREED that any further updates on the work of the Student Communication Group would be provided in the form of an exception report. The Committee Chair thanked the staff and student members of the Group for their contribution, and highlighted that enhancements in this area demonstrated a positive change initiated by the Academic Council.

6 COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS

6.1 INDUCTION SURVEY RESULTS 2018

6.1.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the 2018 Induction Survey, which was designed to assess students' opinions regarding key aspects of their experience before starting at the College, and during their first few weeks on campus.

6.1.2 The Committee NOTED the scope of the survey which was made available to 19,000 full-time and part-time students across all four campuses, via Moodle, during a six week period from September and November 2018. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance informed the Committee that the response rate was 24.1% overall.

6.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the low response rate outlined in the Induction Survey Results, and how students could be engaged further to complete surveys in their first weeks at the college. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the College (in 2018/19) had moved to two student satisfaction surveys per year, rather than three, in order to increase response rates.

6.1.4 The Committee NOTED that in the majority of surveyed questions the College had received higher levels of satisfaction than in previous years, particularly with regards to students' courses and their overall impression of the College. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance informed the Committee that the biggest improvement since last year was in relation to the question *'I was given good advice on the funding options available to me'*, which 87.2% of students responded to positively (an increase of 15.4% on the previous year).

6.1.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the lowest satisfaction rate recorded in the survey (59.6%) which related to students' ability to connect to the College WIFI. The Principal advised the Committee that internet access was essential to support the development of a high perfoming digital college, and that a case would be made to the SFC for greater digital and IT investment.

6.1.6 The Committee NOTED recommendations arising from the 2018 Induction Survey and the proposed actions (and completion dates) proposed by the Quality Team. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance informed the Committee that

progress on related actions would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Academic Council.

6.2   STUDENT SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2019

6.2.1   The Committee NOTED the Quality Team had condensed the annual student surveys from three to two, effectively merging the Learning & Teaching and Pre-Exit Surveys. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the new survey was called the *Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey*, in line with thee SFC's official guidance.

6.2.2   The Committee welcomed the new survey and DISCUSSED the following points:

(i)   the standardised and student friendly language used within the survey;
(ii)   the inclusion of a College contact telephone number, in relation to potentially sensitive questions around students' experiences of 'unfair treatment';
(iii)   the questions required by the SFC within the survey to allow benchmarking across the college sector; and
(iv)   the use of a raffle as an incentive to improve the overall student response rate.

6.2.3   The Committee APPROVED the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2019 for dissemination by the Quality Team, subject to the inclusion of a contact telephone number for specific questions (Minute 6.2.2(ii) refers).

7   HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? UPDATE

7.1   The Committee NOTED the Edinburgh College Enhancement Plan 2018-21, and reviewed progress against the areas of improvement highlighted within the Plan. The Assistant Principal (Curriculum Design & Development) outlined the primary drivers of the Enhancement Plan, which included: recruitment; retention; attainment; student satisfaction; learning, teaching and assessment; work-integrated learning; and, futureproofing of the College.

7.2   The Committee NOTED progress towards the delivery of 'Future Proof 2025' (Core, Essential & Digital Skills), a project to develop and roll-out vocationally relevant Moodle-based products, in line with the 'Industry 4.0' initiative. The Assistant Principal presented to the Committee a Centre for Work-based Learning Video entitled *Skill4.0: Work-based Learning for #AHumanFuture*.

7.3   The Committee NOTED that the College would be working with Bridge2Business and other partners to develop contextually relevant projects aimed at enhancing the data skills, technological literacy and work-readiness of students. The Committee DISCUSSED its initial thoughts on the delivery of 'Future Proof 2025' these included:

(i)   the need to support students in attaining at least one to two weeks work experience (minimum);

	(ii)	the need to review what the College is doing already in terms of work-readiness, to ensure appropriate buy-in from academic staff;
	(iii)	the role of CPD in preparing academic staff to develop and teach such projects;
	(iv)	the importance of the student voice in the project development process;
	(v)	the financial resources available to bring College facilities/equipment up-to-date, and the potential for sponsorship agreements; and
	(vi)	the need to work with the SQA to update assessment frameworks to complement vocationally relevant Moodle-based products.

7.4   The Committee NOTED an update on the development of Promonitor, a central student record system, which aimed to improve the timeliness of targeted student support. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance confirmed that to support the effective use of Promonitor every College student would have access to a Learning Development Tutor going forward.

7.5   The Committee NOTED that progress on the Enhancement Plan 2018-21 would continue to be monitored at each meeting of the Academic Council.

8   HORIZON SCANNING REPORT

8.1   The Committee NOTED a Horizon Scanning Report which outlined major political, economic, social, technological, legal and/or environmental developments that could impact on the five strategic plan aims of the college.

8.2   The Committee NOTED that the Chair of the Board, Professor Sir Ian Diamond, was to chair a new Association of College's led commission on the future of colleges. The Principal, who would be representing the Scottish Principal's Group on the commission, informed the Committee that a more detailed update would be provided at the next Board meeting.

8.3   The Committee AGREED that the Horizon Scanning Report would be placed higher on the agenda for the next meeting of the Academic Council, to allow for a more detailed discussion around key points of interest.

9   ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

9.1   None.

10   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1   The next meeting of the Academic Council will take place on 24 May 2019, in the Boardroom, Graton Campus.

Meeting closed at 16:05