Edinburgh College

Approved minutes of the Student Success Committee meeting held at 14:00 on Thursday 5 March 2026 in the Executive Meeting Room (M4-02) at Milton Road Campus.

Present:	Audrey Cumberford, Becky Duff, Alan Holligan, Adam Lowe, Mary O'Driscoll, Kate Signorini (Chair), Eleanor Sim, Andrew Youngson (Co-opted member)	
Apologies:	Gill Laird, Ian McLaughlan	
In attendance:	Jon Buglass	Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance
	Gail Graham	Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement
	Jonny Pearson	Vice Principal Education & Skills
	Fraser Rudge	Board Secretary
	Anna Vogt	Assistant Principal Student Experience

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members to the second meeting of the academic year. Apologies were received as noted above, and the meeting was confirmed as quorate.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest received.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee APPROVED the minutes of the Student Success Committee of 13 November 2025 (Paper A) as an accurate record of the meeting. There were two matters arising from the minutes that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

An update was sought on the project to improve way finder signage across the College. The Committee were advised that Midlothian campus had new signage installed and that other campuses would be upgraded on a campus-by-campus basis.

It was observed that there was a vacancy on the Committee for a non-executive Board member. The Committee were advised that the Governance and Nominations Committee had considered the vacancy at its February 2026 meeting, and had agreed to defer the decision on membership until after the conclusion of the upcoming recruitment round.

4 MATTERS ARISING REPORT

The Committee NOTED the updates contained within the Matters Arising Report (Paper B); and NOTED that actions from previous meetings were either complete or on the agenda. Members discussed the following actions:

4.1 Student Gym Membership Pricing

In response to a query, the Student President and Vice President commented that they had not received any recent feedback from students on access to the gym at The Club.

4.2 Withdrawal analysis

Members noted that the action was complete. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance advised that a new filter had been added to the Withdrawal Analysis – Dashboard which enabled analysis of withdrawal data by further education and by higher education.

The Committee NOTED the data provided as at 26 February 2026 and DISCUSSED briefly the differing factors affecting withdrawal amongst the College's further and higher education students.

5 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION REPORT

The Committee NOTED the Edinburgh College Students' Association Report (Paper C); which detailed recommendations from the Students' Association based on student feedback from class representative meetings held in November 2025 and February 2026.

The Students' Association President and Vice-President Activities introduced the report, and the Committee were advised that consideration had been given to how ECSA would report on class representative meetings. Having considered student feedback, five focused discussion points had been identified for consideration by the Committee. The Committee, and the Senior Management Team members in attendance, thanked the Students' Association for the report and for the clear recommendations. The Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement added that the report highlighted feedback that had also been identified as part of the Early Experience Survey, and which the College would seek to address.

5.1 Induction

The Committee NOTED the recommendation that a consistent and high-quality induction programme be offered across the College. It was added that a more centrally structured induction programme would enable the Students' Association to play a greater role in supporting students' induction.

Members were advised that the College had a template induction structure and associated guidance, but it was acknowledged that this was being applied inconsistently. It was observed that departments and curriculum teams were able to tailor induction activities to the needs of their subject areas and professional contexts, and that this contributed to variation in approach.

The Committee DISCUSSED whether a more singular College-wide approach to induction could help to foster a sense of belonging amongst students to the wider college community. It was observed that further guidance to staff on induction-related expectations was required, and the Vice Principal Education & Skills advised that the Senior Management Team were committed to improving thematic induction. Members were further advised that induction, course framework, and timetabling would feature as part of a development day session arranged for the new heads of department.

Members considered an example of an alternative induction programme being piloted at a college in London; which was reported to have led to a significant increase in student retention and improvement in course performance indicators. It was explained that, for the first few weeks of a course, staff and students would focus entirely on the development of students' study skills and confidence building. Teaching of course content would be introduced later than usual, at around week six. The Committee discussed briefly constraints around funding, the potential impacts on course teams and course structures, and the role of learning development tutors.

5.2 Learning Development Tutors

The Committee NOTED the recommendation that consideration be given to holding in-person Learning Development Tutor (LDT) drop-in sessions for students who do not have timetabled LDT support. It was explained that some of the challenges highlighted by class representatives related to support that was usually provided by LDTs, and that the recommendation had come from class representatives' suggestions.

The Assistant Principal Student Experience explained current challenges related to the resourcing and timetabling of LDTs, and acknowledged that online delivery of LDT support had not worked as expected. The Committee were advised that the College was now committed to providing in-person LDT support, although delivery would likely need to be prioritised through the curriculum and scheduled workshops rather than through drop-in sessions.

5.3 Student-Staff Meetings

The Committee NOTED the recommendation that curriculum staff be reminded of the expectation that they meet with class representatives once per semester.

The Senior Management Team members in attendance at the meeting confirmed the expectation that curriculum staff meet with class representatives once per semester; and confirmed their commitment to ensuring that the student voice was heard and acted upon across the College. Members of the Committee were advised that the expectation would be communicated at upcoming How Good is our Learning and Teaching (HGIOLT) meetings.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that responsibility for arranging class representative meetings sat within course teams. Although, it was acknowledged that arrangements within course teams would vary across the College and that the recent heads of department restructure may have disrupted the usual process for scheduling meetings.

Members were advised that the Students' Association had developed a Student Feedback and Engagement Procedure, which had been based on the Student Learning Experience Model produced by Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (SPARQS). The Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement explained that the procedure would provide a framework to support staff in seeking student feedback at the class-level. Members were advised that the Senior Management Team would be asked to consider approving the adoption of the Student Feedback and Engagement Procedure by the College. If approved, a communications plan would be developed to raise awareness amongst staff. The upcoming staff development day would also be used to promote the Model, and to encourage the sharing of good practice between colleagues across the College.

5.4 Online

The Committee NOTED the recommendation that online platforms be used consistently across all courses, with clear expectations set for students at the point of induction. It was noted that Digital Learning, Teaching and Skills: (Students and Staff) and Digital Platforms were areas of focus within the College's Digital Strategy. Secretary's Note: the Committee did not discuss this recommendation, and consideration will take place as part of an agenda item on the Digital Strategy at a future meeting.

5.5 Communicating staff absences

The Committee NOTED the recommendation that consideration be given to a college-level procedure which sets out how staff absences are communicated to students; and how any lost teaching time (if cover is not available) can be regained. Secretary's Note: the Committee did not discuss this recommendation, and consideration will take place at a future meeting.

6 STUDENT EXPERIENCE

6.1 Update on Recruitment and Retention

The Committee received a verbal update on student recruitment and retention from the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance.

The Committee NOTED that full-time and progression applications opened in January 2026 and that, as of 5 March 2026, 7144 applications had been received. It was explained this represented an increase of 476 on the previous year. Members also received an update on changes to the offer making process, and on the success of recent open days held at each campus. The Committee NOTED that student retention, at the time of the meeting, was at 95% for 2025/26.

6.2 Factors Affecting Student Recruitment

Following discussion at the previous meeting, the Committee received a presentation on factors affecting student recruitment from the Assistant Principal Student Experience.

The presentation provided information on key points within the recruitment cycle; information on the different modes of recruitment used across the College; indicative factors that can influence student demand; how external and internal data was used to shape the College's curriculum; and recent trends in student recruitment. The Chair thanked the Assistant Principal Student Experience for the informative and engaging presentation; and invited questions and comments from the Committee.

The Committee DISCUSSED the proportion of applications and enrolments by demographic, and whether the distribution was in alignment with the other colleges and with the local region. Members discussed briefly support for curriculum teams, outreach activity, and inclusive recruitment practices. Members also discussed the differences between the funding models used for further and higher education, and how potential future changes could affect college funding and student recruitment.

7 TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK

7.1 Deep Dive: Self-Evaluation & Action Plan

The Committee NOTED the Edinburgh College Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) December 2025 (Paper D, Appendix 1); and the Chair invited the Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement to facilitate a deep dive into the 2024/25 SEAP.

It was explained that the SEAP was completed annually by all colleges and universities for submission to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Members were informed that the SEAP set out the College's reflection on activity and developments over the previous year, including areas of positive practice and areas for development; and also set out key actions the College would take to enhance the provision of learning and support.

For context, the Committee received an update on the background and status of actions associated with the development of a single student record; work with ECSA to develop the Student Feedback and Engagement Procedure; and the development of the College's next strategy EC 2030+.
The Chair thanked the Senior Management Team for their updates, and reflected that the SEAP provided an honest assessment of the Colleges areas of good practice and areas for development.

The Committee were invited to consider the extent to which it should be involved in the development of future SEAPs. Following a brief discussion, the Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement and the Board Secretary agreed to consider ways that the Committee could contribute to the development of the College's SEAP, and how it could achieve an appropriate level of assurance prior to submission.

7.2 Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review

The Committee received a verbal update on the College's preparations for the upcoming Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review from the Vice Principal Education & Skills.

Members were informed that a productive scoping meeting had been held with QAA Scotland staff on 4 February 2026. Members considered an overview of key dates and activities within the review process; the evidence required for submission; and how the review panel would interact with staff and students. It was agreed that the review timescales be added to the Committee's section of the Board Portal. Members were also informed that the requirements of the TQER appeared to be more onerous than originally advised, and that concern had been raised at the college sector level on the associated administrative burden.

The Committee NOTED that, at its June 2026 meeting, it would be asked to consider and provide feedback on the College's draft Strategic Impact Analysis prior to its submission on 29 June 2026.

7.3 Early Experience Survey 2025/26

The Committee NOTED the findings of the 2025/26 Early Experience Survey (Paper E). Members were informed that 4,347 students had participated in the survey, which represented a response rate of 31.7% and a 5.6% increase in participation from AY 2024/25.

Members NOTED that the average score across the College and the 18 questions was: 4.24 (out of 5 stars), and that the 'Overall impression so far' scored 4.4. For comparison, it was noted that the average across the College for all questions in 2024/25 was 4.22, and for 'Overall impression so far' the score had been 4.3.

The Committee NOTED that, grouped into themes, the College-wide average scores were:

- website and application 4.09
- pre-entry information 4.18
- settling into College 4.16
- their course 4.41
- overall impression of the College 4.40

The Assistant Principal Quality and Improvement explained that a significant number of text responses were received, and had provided the College with detailed intelligence around what really mattered to students. It was reported that key themes arising from text responses included a desire for better communication; more guidance on assessments; and enhanced support. The Committee were advised that the responses had been shared with the relevant College teams for more detailed consideration. It was observed that the survey had highlighted issues that were consistent with the issues raised as part of the Students' Association's paper (minute 5 refers).

8 REPORTS FROM STANDING GROUPS

8.1 Access and Inclusion Strategy Group (AISG)

The Committee NOTED the minutes of the meeting of the Access and Inclusion Strategy Group held on 16 January 2026 (Paper F); and received a brief overview of activity associated with embedding the mainstreaming toolkit and a review of College facilities.

8.2 Learning Teaching and Quality Strategy Group

The Committee NOTED the minutes of the meeting of the Learning Teaching and Quality Strategy Group held on 10 February 2026 (Paper G); and received a brief overview of activity associated with the SEAP action plan, the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework, and work to develop the Student Feedback and Engagement Procedure.

Members were advised that the Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement and the Assistant Principal for Care, Health and Wellbeing would jointly chair the Group.

Members were invited to reflect on how they would like the Committee and the Group to interact, and whether there were any priority areas for the Group to consider. Reflecting on discussion at a recent meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, the Principal and Chief Executive Officer queried whether the Committee should consider the implications of AI for learning and teaching from both student and staff members' perspectives. The Committee DISCUSSED the suggestion, and members commented variously on potential AI-related topics for consideration.

9 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Members were informed that there were two items of other competent business.

9.1 QAA Targeted Peer Review of the University of Glasgow

The Chair highlighted the recent QAA Targeted Peer Review of the University of Glasgow, and the associated response from the Scottish Funding Council which had indicated that there would be a sectoral review of academic standards and assessment regulations.

The Chair sought clarification on the potential implications for the College arising from the report and the planned SFC review. Members were advised that sector-level discussion had indicated that the review would be of the higher education sector, although colleges may be engaged in the review process. Members noted that, unlike universities, colleges did not have the ability to confer awards and relied on external verification of learning. It was reported that the College had a good track record of working with awarding bodies, and were readily able to communicate issues and instances of malpractice. Members further noted ongoing review through the How Good is our Learning and Teaching mechanism.

9.2 Council Tax Exemption

The Committee NOTED an update from the Student President advising that the Students' Association had received several reports of full-time students being denied council tax exemption by the City of Edinburgh Council. The Student President explained that he had received contradictory information from Council staff, and advised that the Students' Association would be writing to local Councillors and Members of the Scottish Parliament.

The Principal and Chief Executive acknowledged the significant and financially detrimental impact that refusal of council tax exemption had on the College's students; and advised that she had written to the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Edinburgh Council asking that the matter be resolved as quickly as possible.

The Committee DISCUSSED the impact on students; the possible causes of the Council's apparent change in policy; and whether a joint College and Students' Association intervention would be required. The Chair requested that the Committee be kept informed of progress in resolving the issue.

10 FOR INFORMATION

10.1 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2025/26

The Committee NOTED the potential agenda items identified for the June 2026 meeting.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 04 JUNE 2026