Edinburgh College

For the future you want

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 13 SEPTEMBER 2019

14:00hrs, Boardroom, Sighthill Campus

Present: Julian Henderson; Carla Ford; Seoras Hearton; Ethelinda Lashley-Scott; Neil Manning; Sandra Morrison; Judith Sischy; Jeanette Stevenson; Fiona Riddoch (Chair)

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, Laura Craig, Mike Cowley, Audrey Cumberford, Kevin Maloney, Ryan Quinn and Shannon Young.

1.2 The Chair welcomed Carla Ford (ECSA Student President) and Seoras Hearton (ECSA Vice President Welfare Officer) to their first meeting of the Academic Council, following their appointment to the Board on 01 July.

1.3 The Committee NOTED that a fourth student representative would be confirmed by ECSA once its new Executive Group had been established. The Chair advised the Committee that it was hoped that a fourth student representative would be present at its next meeting of the Committee.

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 24 May 2019 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, with the exception of the following:

4.1.2   *STUDENT PARENTS / NURSERY PROVISION (Minute 5.2.6/ 16.11.18 refers)*

The Committee NOTED that a strategic review of nursery provisions would be undertaken by the College and a report presented to the Policy & Resources Committee in February 2020. The Chair advised the Committee that the outcome of the review would be reported to the Board at its meeting on 24 March 2020.

4.1.3   *STAFF RESEARCH (Minute 5.3.5/ 22.02.19 refers)*

The Committee NOTED that a new Edinburgh College Research Forum had been developed. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the first meeting of the Research Forum would take place next month, and was an open cross-college event for staff, students and external stakeholders.

4.1.4   CLASS REPS (Minute 6.2.3/ 24.05.19 refers)

The Committee NOTED that once class reps had been appointed, and had attending the Class Rep Conference, the Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance would oversee the coordination of events where lecturers and class reps could be introduced. This aimed to ensure that class reps for each course were clearly identified and appropriate feedback arrangements were in place.

4.2   REVIEW OF COMMITTEE OPERATION 2018/19

4.2.1   The Committee NOTED a finalised version of the Review of Committee Operation 2019/20, as agreed by Members outwith the meeting.

4.3   STAFF APPRAISAL ARRANGEMENTS

4.3.1   The Committee NOTED that the Board, on 18 June, had held a discussion relating to the current academic staff appraisal mechanisms in place at the College - in response to a recent internal audit report. Further to this, it was agreed by the Board that (in advance of its next meeting) the Academic Council should receive an update on the current procedures in place at the College.

4.3.2   The Committee NOTED an overview of current arrangements, including:

(i)   Enhance, the College's staff development process;
(ii)   operational planning and agreement of CPD priorities;
(iii)   Education Scotland Subject Reviews;
(iv)   SQA External Verification;

(v) and, the annual self-evaluation process.

Further to this, the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance advised the Committee that inline with a recent agreement through National Bargaining there would be new proposal implemented around lecturer observations.

4.3.3 The Committee welcomed the update provided by the Vice Principal, and NOTED that the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee would be reviewing the current staff appraisal framework at its next meeting on 09 October.

4.3.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the use of Enhance as a staff development tool for lecturers, and the current levels of engagement across the College. The Committee AGREED that the College, through the Head of HR & OD and Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance, should consider the relaunch and promotion of Enhance to academic staff.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

5.1 The Committee NOTED its Terms of Reference as previously agreed in September 2018. The Chair advised the Academic Council that the Code of Good Governance dictated that committees of the Board should regularly review their terms of reference to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

5.2 The Committee DISCUSSED its Terms of Reference and AGREED that its current purpose, remit and membership remained appropriate. Further to this, the Committee AGREED that the job titles of the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance and the Heads of Communication, Policy & Research; Student Experience; and, Curriculum Planning and Performance should be updated to reflect changes following a recent review of the senior management.

6 STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT

6.1 STUDENT EXPERIENCE UPDATE

6.1.1 The Committee NOTED a report on developments to improve the experience and retention of students, since the last meeting of the Academic Council in May.

6.1.2 The Committee NOTED that Registration Events had taken place on the week commencing 12 & 19 August. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that such events enabled students to enrol, log-in to Moodle, receive an introductory welcome from ECSA and a curriculum presentation. The Committee NOTED that the development of a home enrolment process had also been a success, with over 4,000 students self-enrolled from home prior to the Registration Events. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked all staff involved in the 2019/20 Registration Events for supporting students as they arrived at the College on their first day, and for making the events a success.

6.1.3 The Committee NOTED that the Scottish Government had confirmed that there would be funding available to help support Scottish colleges provide student counselling services. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that the details of funding had not yet been disclosed, however, a pilot service led by the Health Opportunities Team was in place to ensure appropriate counselling provisions were provided. The Committee NOTED that the pilot service employed one full-time equivalent staff member to support students across all campuses, and enhanced the work of the Student Experience Team.

6.1.4 The Committee NOTED that Safeguarding remained a high priority for the College, and existing resources had been identified from Student Experience to pay for a full-time Safeguarding and Wellbeing Coordinator until June 2020. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that this decision had provided the College with more time to identify funding for a permanent solution.

6.1.5 The Committee NOTED that the Student Experience Team continued to be challenged with the volume and complexity of students' additional learning support requirements, mental health and wellbeing concerns. The Head of Student Experience informed the Committee that for academic session 2019/20 the number of students declaring support needs was approximately 2,000 full-time and 400 part-time learners.

6.1.6 The Committee DISCUSSED current arrangements relating to counselling and safeguarding. The Committee AGREED that a presentation should be provided to a future meeting of the Board to highlight the positive work being done to support students, and the significant pressures placed on resources in this important area.

6.2 ECSA ANNUAL LEARNING & TEACHING REPORT 2018/19

6.2.1 The Committee NOTED a report from ECSA which accumulated information from the 2018/19 academic year's Class Reps Conference Reports, and highlighted various areas of good practice within learning and teaching at Edinburgh College. The Student President advised the Committee that the report was produced in a way that linked directly with other Quality and Governance structures, and specifically aligned with 'How Good is Our College?'.

6.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the report and NOTED the importance of first impressions to new students arriving at the College. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that timetabling issues highlighted within the report had now been resolved, and a full audit of timetables for the academic year had taken place.

6.2.3 The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, commended the report and the efforts of the ECSA Team to progress with its ECSA-llence Awards, despite it not being feasible to hold its annual awards event due to industrial action.

7   STUDENT SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS 2018/19

7.1   The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the 2018/19 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey, which was designed to assess levels of student satisfaction in relation to key aspects of their experience.

7.2   The Committee NOTED that the survey was originally carried out in March/April 2019, however, following an initially poor response the deadline was extended to 10 May. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the extension of the deadline and the promotion of the survey through Moodle had significantly increased the number of respondents, and therefore gave a broader representation of the College.

7.3   The Committee NOTED that overall satisfaction with the student experience of Edinburgh College saw 89% of respondents stating that they were satisfied with their course. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that this was down 2% on the previous year, however, student complaints had decreased by 40.1% during the same period.

7.4   The Committee NOTED that the College had introduced a 'BRAG' ratings system, with 'Blue' highlighting an improvement of 20% or over. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance informed the Committee that in response to the question; *'My Performance Development Review has been useful in support my learning'*, there had be 24% increase in responds agreeing with the statement - since last year. Further to this, it was NOTED that such results would be used to identify and share good practice from across the College to academic staff.

7.5   The Committee NOTED an equality analysis of the Student Satisfaction Survey 2018-19, which considered responses to survey questions broken down by various protect characteristics. The Committee DISCUSSED the equality analysis provided, and welcomed the opportunity to consider survey data against the College's current equality outcomes.

8   HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? REPORT

8.1   HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? UPDATE

8.1.1   The Committee NOTED the Edinburgh College Quality Enhancement Plan 2018-21 (QUEP), and reviewed progress against the areas of improvement highlighted within the Plan. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance outlined the primary drivers of the Enhancement Plan, which included: recruitment; retention; attainment; student satisfaction; learning, teaching and assessment; work-integrated learning; and, future proofing of the College curriculum.

8.1.2   The Committee NOTED that the only 'Area of Improvement' highlighted in the Enhancement Plan which had undergone 'little or no improvement' related to Student Satisfaction Outcomes. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance informed the Committee that this was due to the publication of the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2018/19 being delayed. It was NOTED that now that the Survey had been published action points could now be taken forward.

8.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED progress related to School College Partnerships (SCP) and the proposed review of the 2019/20 offer, to further improve access. The Chair informed the Committee that it was extremely important to provide schools/students with a positive first impression of the College, to ensure that perspective students consider college as an option going forward.

8.2 A COLLEGE WITH A CURRICULUM FOR THE FUTURE: META-SKILLS UPDATE

8.2.1 The Committee NOTED that in November 2018 it had considered the important role that meta-skills can play in the enhancement of students' resilience, and discussed how meta-skills were currently being incorporated into the College curriculum. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance updated the Committee on the continued progress of the College in implementing meta-skills through the QUEP.

8.2.2 The Committee NOTED that every student attending the College would engage with a programme that provides the best learning experience and affords them the opportunity to gain a set of futureproof skills ready for Industry 4.0, including: Meta-skills; data skills; entrepreneurial skills; and, creative thinking and problem-solving. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance advised the Committee that all full-time students would achieve this through the 'Future Proof 2025' Project, which linked with both the QUEP and the College's strategic ambitions to be 'A *College with a curriculum for the future'* and *'A high performing digital College'*.

8.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the integration of meta-skills through project-based and work integrated learning. The Committee NOTED that the implementation of 'Future Proof 2025' Project would be phased, with the aim for every student at the College to be participating in a project-based approach by 2025. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance advised the Academic Council that 10 pilots of the Project were currently taking place and it was hoped that participation would be widened in due course.

Ethelinda Lashley Scott left the meeting

9 SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT 15-24 LEARNER JOURNEY REVIEW: PROGRESS REPORT

9.1 The Committee NOTED a report on progress in relation to the recommendations from the Scottish Government's '15-24 Learner Journey Review' which was published in May 2018. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance outlined to the Academic Council the response, and key role, the College was taking as a result of the review recommendations.

9.2 The Committee NOTED that the College had created an app designed by students for used by students and their advisors to signpost and promote all pathways between colleges and universities in the Regional Learner Passport Partnership (RLPP). The Committee DISCUSSED significant work done by the College in developing the app, which the College was currently leading on for the region, and the fact that no additional financial support for its development had been received.

9.3 The Committee NOTED two projects that the College was involved in relating to Admissions and Referrals. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance advised the Committee that both projects provided an opportunity for colleges to focus on areas which have lower progression to university, and (if appropriate) determine where expansion could be achieved.

9.4 The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed the progress made by the RLPP and the College to implement recommendations from the Learner Journey Review. The Committee NOTED that the developments outlined by the Vice Principal would provide students (and prospective students) with a clear view of the College as a route to university and/or employment, and as such help them plan their learner journey accordingly.

The Head of Student Experience left the meeting

10 HORIZON SCANNING REPORT

10.1 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. The Head of Communications, Policy and Research advised the Committee that further to this, the report also indicated what the College was doing to address these impacts.

The Student President and the Student Vice President (Welfare) left the meeting

11 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

11.1 ACADEMIC COUNCIL AGENDA PLANNER 2019/20

11.1.1 The Committee NOTED an agenda planner for the academic year, which aimed to provide members with an opportunity to review upcoming items of business. The Chair advised the Committee that it was important to follow an appropriate plan of work in order to ensure that future agendas cover all areas within the remit of the Committee.

11.1.2 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to consider future agenda, and DISCUSSED potential items of business not already included. The Committee participated in an exercise to consider what individual members would 'like, wish and wonder' when considering future agenda items for the Academic Council. It was AGREED that the Clerk to the Board would consolidate members' responses into a report prior to the next meeting of the Academic Council.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 The next meeting of the Academic Council will take place on 15 November 2019, in the Boardroom, Graton Campus.

The meeting closed at 15:55