

EDINBURGH COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 10 JUNE 2025

Meeting held in the Boardroom, Milton Road

Start time: 14:00



Present: Audrey Cumberland; Stewart Darling; Fiona Doring; Becky Duff; Daniel Holland; Alan Holligan; Alex Killick; Gillian Laird; Adam Lowe; Ian McLaughlan; Nora Senior (Chair); Mark Sheridan; Kate Signorini; Eleanor Sim*; Paul Smart; Bill Troup; Charlie Whitson; Bethany Winkler

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Mike Jeffrey; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson; Al Wilson

**Joined via Microsoft Team*

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies were NOTED from Judit Harangozo and Derek Hynds.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Mark Sheridan, Kate Signorini, and Paul Smart to their first meeting of the Board, as Non-Executive Members, following their appointment on 6 May 2025.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed Gillian Laird, a Learning Development Tutor, to her first meeting as the Nominated UNISON Board Member. The Board NOTED that Ms Laird had been appointed to the Board of Management following a nominations process conducted by UNISON Scotland.
- 1.4 The Board NOTED that Al Wilson (ECSA Director), would join the meeting for Item 8.1, ECSA Report.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 The Board NOTED that the Chair of the Board would leave the meeting for *Item 8.3.3 Evaluation of the Chair of the Board 2024/25*. The Chair advised members that the Vice Chair would act as Chair for this item of business.
- 2.2 The Board NOTED that the Executive Team would be asked to leave the meeting for *Item 10, Closed Items of Business*.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SCHEDULED MEETING

- 3.1 The Board APPROVED the minutes from 26 March 2025 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING REPORT

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

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

- 5.1 The Board NOTED an update from the Chair on developments across the further education (FE) sector since its last meeting on 26 March 2025. The Chair informed the Committee that Gavin Donoghue had been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of Colleges Scotland from 1 June 2025 onwards.
- 5.2 The Board NOTED that following the appointments outlined under Minutes 1.2 and 1.3, the Edinburgh College Board of Management was now at its full capacity of 20 members. The Chair advised the Board that, to support greater Board cohesion, a development session for Members would be held in September 2025.
- 5.3 The Board NOTED that Kate Signorini, a new Non-Executive Board Member with a background in tertiary education, would assume the role of Chair of the Student Success Committee from 1 July 2025. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Alex Killick for acting as Interim Chair of the Committee over the past 6-months.
- 5.4 The Board NOTED that, on 5 June 2025, the College had celebrated the achievements of its FE students at its annual Prizegiving ceremony held in the Hub at Granton Campus. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, commended all staff and students involved in the Prizegiving event which celebrated the achievements of FE students at the College.
- 5.5 The Chair, on behalf of the Board, acknowledged recent national awards won by the College since its last meeting. The Board NOTED and commended the recent award winners and nominees at the Herald Higher Education (HE) Awards 2024.
- (i) Professional Cookery students Robin Shanks, Yessica Roca and Yevheniia Holub competed in the finals of Zest Quest Asia at University West London, earning a special mention from judges for being the only Level 1 students to make it to that stage of the competition.
 - (ii) Edinburgh College Men's and Women's football teams brought home gold medals after beating off competition from colleges across Scotland at the annual Scottish Student Sports College National Finals.
 - (iii) The Modern Languages department won the Partnership with Schools Award at the Herald HE Awards in recognition of their work in collaborating with schools the length and breadth of the country to deliver National Qualifications in Modern Languages to young people through an innovative online model.
 - (iv) The College was also a finalist in three other categories: *Innovative Use of Technology*, *Outstanding Business Engagement*, and the *Outstanding Contribution by a Staff Member* award.

6. PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

- 6.1 The Board NOTED an update from the Principal on developments across both the College and the wider sector since its last meeting on 26 March 2025.
- 6.2 The Board NOTED that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) had now launched the College Transformation Framework, a key mechanism to drive financial sustainability within the sector. The Principal advised the Board that the College had submitted an Expression of Interest to the SFC on 30 May 2025 and was awaiting a response.
- 6.3 The Board NOTED that, as agreed at its last meeting, the Chair, the Vice Chair and the Committee Chairs would meet to consider a final version of the Transformation Plan, prior to its submission to the SFC. The Board DISCUSSED the Transformation Plan and AGREED that the Principal should continue to provide updates on progress over the summer. Further to this, the Board AGREED that at its next meeting the Executive Team should clearly outline the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) associated with the Plan.
- 6.7 The Board NOTED that, on 16 April 2025, the Supreme Court clarified how the terms “man”, “woman” and “sex” should be interpreted legally. The Principal advised the Board that in light of the recent ruling, that the Executive Team was establishing a working group to review current policies to ensure they were legally compliant. The Principal also advised that while further guidance was expected from the EHRC in due course, the College would act expeditiously.
- 6.8 The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance advised that the working group would work proactively to review the implications of the ruling through a lens of dignity and respect and fostering good relations. The Board NOTED that it would receive an update when this work was completed.
- 6.9 The Board welcomed the assurances provided by the Principal and DISCUSSED the College’s intention to create a working group to review current College policies. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance advised the Board that the working group would work proactively to review the implications of the ruling through a lens of dignity and respect.

7. FOR APPROVAL

7.1 INDICATIVE COLLEGE BUDGET 2025/26

- 7.1.1 The Board NOTED an Indicative College Budget 2025/26, and a supporting presentation by the Chief Operating Officer, which outlined the budgeting process, budgeting pressures, additional costs, budget reductions, savings, impact on cash-flow, risks and mitigations, and sensitivity analysis.
- 7.1.2 The Board NOTED the *SFC Indicative Funding Allocation for Colleges in the 2025/26 Academic Year* and its impact on the College. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the College had received an extra £512k through changes to the funding methodology, although this was less than anticipated.

- 7.1.3 The Board DISCUSSED the Indicative College Budget 2025/26 and NOTED that the College faced a £550k financial gap to achieve a break-even Adjusted Operating Position. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the limited uplift in core funding, the 50% funding of the Employers NI cost increase, and inflationary pressures were all contributing factors to the financial gap.
- 7.1.4 The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to the deficit Budget presented:
- (i) The concerns of the Finance, Business Development & Resources (FBDR) Committee around the agreement of a deficit budget and its impact on the College's cash position.
 - (ii) The high staff costs (78%) at the College and across the sector, in comparison to expected levels in higher education and the private sector (55-60%).
 - (iii) Whether the Budget met the ambitions set out in the College's Transformation Plan.
 - (iv) The need to demonstrate both the direction of travel, and trajectory, of the College through the Budget and longer-term financial planning.
 - (v) The assurances received from the Scottish Government around Job Evaluation backpay.
 - (vi) The political implications of Scottish colleges approving deficit budgets, further highlighting the sector's underfunding.
- 7.1.5 The Board NOTED that the Indicative College Budget 2025/26 would be developed further over the coming weeks, prior to a budget document being circulated – for approval - in late July 2025. The Board DISCUSSED the Indicative College Budget and AGREED that the final draft Budget should include further narrative around financial assumptions, which would be clearly shown across costs and revenue breakdowns.
- 7.1.6 The Board AGREED the direction of travel outlined within the Indicative College Budget and welcomed the opportunity to review, and approve, a 2025/26 College Budget prior to the end of the financial year.

8. FOR DISCUSSION

The ECSA Director joined the meeting

8.1 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ECSA) REPORT

8.1.1 ECSA IMPACT REPORT 2024/25

The Board NOTED an overview of activities conducted by ECSA in the 2024/25 academic year. The ECSA Student President outlined to the Board the breadth of work carried out by the ECSA, which was structured around the five following strategic pillars: Represent, Connect, Support, Include, and Help the Planet.

8.1.2 The Board NOTED the 'Top 10 Achievements' of ECSA, as highlighted within the Report, and DISCUSSED the following:

- (i) The continued success of the Reverse Shadowing Scheme introduced by ECSA for Board Members, and its extension to include Senior Managers and other staff.
- (ii) The record annual engagement of 677 Class Reps and the introduction of the Lead Reps system.
- (iii) The highest level of engagement with the annual Student Life Survey (900+ respondents).
- (iv) The Student President's efforts to raise awareness of the ongoing housing crisis and its impact on students across Edinburgh and the Lothians.
- (v) The 15 metric tons of food saved from landfill through various student-led initiative, including community fridges.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, commended the ECSA Team for their ECSA Impact Report 2024/25.

8.1.2 ECSA BUDGET & PLANNING REPORT 2025/26

The Board NOTED a 2025/26 ECSA Budget & Planning Report, which included an overview of the Students' Association's 2025-28 Strategic Plan entitled '*Buzzin' for the Future*'.

The Board welcomed the opportunity to consider the 2025/26 ECSA Budget and DISCUSSED the following:

- (i) The flat cash 2025/26 ECSA Budget and its impact on spending related to student activities.
- (ii) The decrease in direct spending on student activities, whilst ECSA continues to deliver a wide range of services.
- (iii) The Charity status of ECSA and its aspirations with regards to income generation.

The Board welcomed the 2025/26 ECSA Budget and NOTED that the approval of funding would be confirmed as part of the College Budget 2025/26.

The ECSA Director left the meeting

8.2 COMMITTEE BUSINESS

8.2.1 AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE 21.05.25

The Board NOTED a verbal update from the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on matters considered at its meeting 21 May 2025.

The Board DISCUSSED and APPROVED changes to the Committee's Terms of Reference which ensured they remained concise and clear,

whilst fully aligning with the Scottish Governance's Audit & Assurance Committee Handbook.

The Board DISCUSSED the Top-Level Risk Register (TLRR) and the consistency around how individual risks were worded. The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee advised the Board that although the TLRR contained a significant level of detail, the Committee (- through its Risk Management & Assurance Group) would continue to ensure that top risk titles remained clear and concise.

8.2.2 STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE 26.05.25

The Board NOTED a verbal update from the Student Success Committee on matters considered at its meeting on 26 May 2025.

The Board DISCUSSED and APPROVED minor amendments to the Committee's Terms of Reference which outlined internal sub-groups - reporting directly to the Committee - and the importance of considering the 'added value' of the College experience.

The Board NOTED that, based on unaudited credit activity to date, the College had achieved over 99.8% of its credit target and therefore would avoid any financial clawback. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, commended the College on its strong performance against its 2024/25 credit target.

8.2.3 FINANCE, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & RESOURCES (FBDR) COMMITTEE 27.05.25

The Board NOTED a verbal update from the FBDR Committee on matters considered at its meeting on 27 May 2025.

The Board DISCUSSED and APPROVED minor revisions to the Committee's Terms of Reference which included clarification of its role in relation to Health & Safety monitoring.

The Board NOTED that the Committee had considered the strategic aims of the Business Development Team for 2025/26, and the potential impact of the Director of Enterprise & Knowledge Exchange departure from the College on 30 May 2025.

8.2.3.1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS SUMMARY TO APRIL 2025

The Board NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to April 2025.

8.2.4 PEOPLE & REMUNERATION COMMITTEE 02.06.25

The Board NOTED a verbal update from the People & Remuneration Committee (Open Session) on matters considered at its meeting on 2 June 2025.

The Board DISCUSSED and APPROVED amendments to the Committee's Terms of Reference, which included clarification around its role relating to employee relations and national bargaining.

The Board NOTED that the Committee had reviewed progress against the People Strategy 2023-26 and considered what 'success' could look like over the next 4-5 years in relation to the College's culture. The Chair of the People & Remuneration Committee advised the Board that the Committee had agreed that People Strategy would be refreshed in 2025/26 to ensure that it remained fit for purpose.

The Board DISCUSSED a proposal for each committee to present an end of year report at the final Board meeting of the academic year and AGREED that the Chair and the Clerk should incorporate this item into the 2025/26 agenda planner.

8.3 GOVERNANCE REPORT

8.3.1 GOVERNANCE UPDATE

The Board NOTED a Top-Level Risk Register Summary, as endorsed by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 21 May 2025.

The Board NOTED that it was good practice for boards of management to review their risk appetite statements on an annual basis. The Clerk advised the Board that, given that the College's Risk Appetite Statements were last reviewed in June 2024, it had been decided that a light touch review would take place through the committee structure. The Board NOTED that no changes to the Risk Appetite Statements had been proposed by any of the committee. The Chair advised the Board that the Risk Appetite Statements would be reviewed by the Board in the academic year 2025/26.

The Board NOTED that the dates of upcoming 2025/26 Board meetings would be agreed via circulation, subject to final amendments to include both Development and Strategy Days.

The Board NOTED that 17 of the 28 recommendations within the 2024/25 Board Improvement Plan had been completed, with eight further actions expected to be completed by the start of the academic year 2025/26. The Clerk advised the Board that three actions related to the External Engagement Plan and the development of a Policy Register would not be completed until at least December 2025, however, these actions continued to be closely monitored by the FBDR Committee and the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee – respectively.

The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to 2024/25 Improvement Plan:

- (i) The development of a new KPI dashboard incorporating strategic priorities within the College's Transformation Plan.

- (ii) Board diversity and the ongoing efforts to support greater community engagement with the work of the Board.
- (iii) The re-launch of the Board Mentorship Scheme.

The Board AGREED that progress relating to both the KPI dashboard and Board diversity should be considered in further detail at its next scheduled meeting.

8.3.2 ANNUAL BOARD APPRAISAL REPORT 2024/25

The Board NOTED that the Chair had held one-to-one meetings with members of the Board on the weeks commencing 5 & 12 May 2025. The Chair highlighted that observations arising from individual discussions would be considered further by the Chair and the Board Secretary and, if necessary, further actions taken forward.

The Board NOTED quantitative and qualitative data collected through an annual evaluation survey completed by Board Members. The Chair advised Board Members that any outstanding responses to the evaluation survey should be submitted to the Board Secretary.

The Board DISCUSSED the lowest scoring response to the evaluation survey related to 'Relationships and Collaboration'. The Board AGREED that it should hold a future pre-Board session to look at how the College engages with stakeholders and industry partners.

The Board DISCUSSED the feedback provided through one-to-one meetings with the Chair of the Board and AGREED that proposed actions should be incorporated into an updated Improvement Plan. The Board AGREED that its Governance & Nominations Committee should consider the new Improvement Plan before its was presented to the next meeting of the Board on 23 September 2025.

8.3.3 ANNUAL APPRAISAL OF THE CHAIR REPORT 2024/25

The Chair of the Board left the meeting, and the Vice Chair assumed the role of Chair

The Board NOTED that in accordance with good practice, and as part of the overall evaluation of the Board, an evaluation of the Chair was conducted by the Vice Chair. The Vice Chair outlined to the Board the methodology used and a summary of the results.

The Board DISCUSSED the written report provided by the Vice Chair and were content with its positive and constructive findings. The Board welcomed the formal process of evaluation conducted by the Vice Chair, which was considered in line with best practice.

The Board NOTED that any outstanding responses to the evaluation survey should be submitted to the Board Secretary.

The Chair of the Board returned to the meeting and reassumed the role of Chair

9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

9.1 AMBASSADOR AWARD 2025

9.1.1 The Board NOTED that the Edinburgh College Ambassador Award – would be presented at the Graduation Ceremony on 6 November 2025. The Chair advised the Board that the award criteria would be circulated to Members shortly, with proposed nominations welcomed from colleagues.

9.2 BOARD REFLECTION / FEEDBACK

9.2.1 The Board NOTED that it had held a detailed discussion on the 2025/26 College Budget and Members had an opportunity to reflect on the practice of the Board through an robust appraisal process.

9.3 DEPARTURE OF STUDENT BOARD MEMBER

9.3.1 The Board NOTED that the tenure of Student Board Member, Charlie Whitson, would end on 30 June 2025, following a year's service as ECSA Vice President Welfare. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the departing Student Board Member for their significant contribution to both the Board and key aspects of the student experience during their tenure.

The Executive Team left the meeting

10. CLOSED ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS

10.1 Items of business were considered by the Board as part of a closed session. Closed items were recorded under a separate minute (Closed Minutes 10.1/10.06.25 refers).

11. FOR INFORMATION

11.1 AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES 21.05.25

11.1.1 The Board NOTED the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 21 May 2025.

11.2 STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE MINUTES 26.05.25

11.2.1 The Board NOTED the Student Success Committee minutes from the meeting held on 26 May 2025.

11.3 FBDR COMMITTEE MINUTES 27.05.25

11.3.1 The Board NOTED the FBDR Committee minutes from the meeting held on 27 May 2025.

11.3 PEOPLE & REMUNERATION COMMITTEE MINUTES 02.06.25

- 11.3.1 The Board NOTED the People & Remuneration Committee (Open Session) minutes from the meeting held on 2 June 2025.

11.4 HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE

- 11.4.1 The Board NOTED a Health & Safety Update which provided a quarterly update on occupational health, safety and welfare within the College over February to May 2025.

12. FOR CIRCULATION

12.1 BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW

- 12.1.1 The Board NOTED an overview of the Board and committee membership as of 16 May 2025.

12.2 TOP-LEVEL RISK REGISTER TO MAY 2025

- 12.2.1 The Board NOTED a Risk Management Summary Report and the Top-Level Risk Register to May 2025.

12.3 BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AGENDA PLANNER 2025/26

- 12.3.1 The Board NOTED an agenda planner for the 2025/26 academic year, which aimed to provide members with an opportunity to review upcoming items of business.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 The Board NOTED that its next meeting would take place on 23 September 2025.

Meeting closed at 17:05