

EDINBURGH COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 26 MARCH 2024

Meeting held in the Boardroom, Granton Campus

Start time: 14:00

Present: Bruce Cassidy; Sue Cook; Audrey Cumberland; Stewart Darling; Fiona Doring; Becky Duff*; Daniel Holland; Alan Holligan; Alex Killick; Ross Laird; Skye Marriner; Kerry McCormack; Liz McIntyre; Ian McLaughlan; Luna Morrison; Gwen Raez Nora Senior (Chair); Bill Troup

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Michael Jeffrey; Jan Juillerat (Advance HE); Jonny Pearson; Vonnie Sandlan (Advance HE); Patti Turfrey (Hive HR)*; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson

Observer(s): Kirsty MacKenzie

**Joined via Microsoft Teams*

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1.1 The Board NOTED apologies from Eleanor Sim.

1.1.2 The Chair welcomed Alan Holligan, EIS-FELA Nominated Board Member, to his first meeting of the Board of Management following his appointment on 1 February 2024.

1.1.3 The Chair welcomed Kirsty MacKenzie, a Co-opted Member of the Board's Corporate Development Committee, to the meeting as an observer.

1.1.4 The Chair welcomed Jan Juillerat and Vonnie Sandlan, Advance HE Reviewers, to the meeting for *Item 5.2: 2023/24 Governance Effectiveness Review Report*.

1.1.5 The Board NOTED the Patti Turfrey, Lead People Scientist at Hive HR, would join the meeting via Microsoft Teams for *Item 6.2: Staff Survey 2024 Update*.

1.2 CHAIR OF THE BOARD'S UPDATE

1.2.1 The Board NOTED an update from the Chair on developments across the wider college sector since its last meeting on 12 December 2023.

- 1.2.2 The Board NOTED that, in advance of its meeting, the Chair had asked Board Members to reflect on the circulated agenda and consider areas of business for future consideration. The Board DISCUSSED the inclusion of a more detailed quarterly Health & Safety Summary on the Board agenda, the KPI and management information presented to meetings (based on feedback from the *Governance Effectiveness Review*, Minute 5.2 refers), and scope for a strategic discussion into the future of the College and the wider sector (Minute 6.4 refers).
- 1.2.3 The Board NOTED that the Chair, the Vice Chair, the Principal, and the Board Secretary would consider Board Members feedback in further detail in preparation for the next meeting of the Board of Management on 11 June 2023.

1.3 COLLEGE AWARDS

- 1.3.1 The Chair, on behalf of the Board, acknowledged recent national awards won by the College since the last meeting of the Board. The Board NOTED and commended the following award winners and nominees:
- i. The College won an *Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce Business Award 2024* in the Innovation in Business category for its partnership work with Anturas Consulting.
 - ii. The College's Business Development Advisor Michelle Skotzen was the winner of the *Knowledge Exchange Heroes Award* at the *Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards 2024* in recognition of her work in showcasing the Innovation capabilities of Scotland's college sector.
 - iii. Professional Cookery and Hospitality students were the first ever winners of the national *Nespresso Professional Student Coffee Challenge*.
 - iv. Enterprise and Commerce lecturer Rik Weightman was shortlisted in the *JISC Community Champion Awards 2024* for his work in widening access to Digital and Data Skills across Edinburgh and the Lothians.
 - v. Professional Cookery student Aidan Lyon won a medal for displaying 'exceptional culinary talent' at the annual *Young Chef Olympiad* competition in Delhi.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 None.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SCHEDULED MEETING

- 3.1 The Board APPROVED the minutes from 12 December 2023 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, with the exception of the following:

4.1.1 *Class Reps Feedback [Ref. 6.3/12.12.23]*

The Board NOTED an update on communications to students relating to improvements implemented in response to Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visits, students' satisfaction survey feedback, and Class Reps engagement. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance informed the Board that the College was in the process of installing large TV screens across campuses to communicate improvements directly to students.

5. FOR APPROVAL

5.1 2023/24 GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW REPORT & 2024/25 IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

- 5.1.1 The Board NOTED that as required by the Code of Good Governance, all Scottish colleges must undertake a governance effectiveness review every 3-5 years. The Chair advised the Board that Edinburgh College submitted its last Effectiveness Review and accompanying Improvement Plan to the SFC in March 2020.
- 5.1.2 The Board NOTED that planning and preparation for the effectiveness review has been reported regularly to the Board over the past 12 months, and a Governance Effectiveness Review Steering Group had been set-up in September 2023 to oversee the process and consider key matters in further detail. The Chair informed the Board that the Steering Group had reviewed a draft report produced by the External Reviewers, Advance HE, on 1 March 2024 and endorsed its presentation to the Board of Management.
- 5.1.3 The Board NOTED that Advance HE had presented their 2023/24 Governance Effectiveness Review Report, and its recommendations, as part of a pre-Board session on 26 March 2024. The Board DISCUSSED the contents of the Report and both the recommendations and suggestions put forward by the Advance HE Reviewers.
- 5.1.4 The Board APPROVED the 2023/24 Governance Effectiveness Review Report and AGREED that it should be submitted to the SFC, and published on the College website, in line with the requirements of the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges.
- 5.1.5 The Board NOTED that to fully comply with the Code of Good Governance, it was also required to develop and approve a 2024/25 Improvement Plan based on the recommendations and suggestions outlined within the Report. The Board Secretary advised the Board that progress against the Improvement Plan would then be reviewed at each scheduled meeting of the Board in 2024/25.

- 5.1.6 The Board DISCUSSED the creation of a Short-Life Working Group (SLWG) to oversee the development of a 2024/25 Improvement Plan. The Chair advised the Board that the finalised Improvement Plan would also include recommendations put forward by the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Working Group, as presented to the Board of Management on 12 December 2023.
- 5.1.7 The Board APPROVED the creation of SLWG which included the following Members:
- (i) Chair of the Board, Nora Senior.
 - (ii) x3 Non-Executive Board Members; Stewart Darling, Alex Killick, and Liz McIntyre.
 - (iii) Support Staff Board Member, Bruce Cassidy.
 - (iv) Student Board Member, Skye Marriner.
- 5.1.8 The Board AGREED that the SLWG would present a draft 2024/25 Improvement Plan to the Board of Management on 11 June 2024 – for approval.

Jan Juillerat and Vonnice Sandlan left the meeting

6. FOR DISCUSSION

6.1 PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

- 6.1.1 The Board NOTED an update from the Principal on developments across both the College and the wider college sector since its last meeting on 12 December 2023. The Principal advised the Committee that the Scottish Government's Draft Budget for 2024/25, announced on 19 December 2023, had outlined unprecedented financial pressures for Scotland's colleges – including the removal of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF).
- 6.1.2 The Board NOTED that both the Scottish Government and the SFC recognised the need for a sustainable and impactful college sector, however, it remained unclear what form (if any) changes to skills planning / delivery and the funding model would take. The Principal advised the Board that, at present, there were no clear transitional plans or available funds to support long-term sustainable change within the college sector or beyond.
- 6.1.3 The Board DISCUSSED funding cuts to the college sector and their direct impact on students. The Board AGREED that the College should ensure that in communications with the Scottish Government, the SFC and other stakeholders that it clearly outlined how reduced funding would negatively impact on students' learning opportunities.
- 6.1.4 The Board NOTED a verbal update on the proposed transfer of Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL) to Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (RDEL) for the Financial Year 2024/25. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the SFC had communicated its

intention, on 20 February 2024, to end its current flexible policy arrangements towards the use of Capital lifecycle maintenance. The Board DISCUSSED the impact of transferring from CDEL to RDEL in 2024/25, including the potential consequences that such a change could have towards accelerating the decline of buildings and financial sustainability across the whole sector.

6.1.5 The Board NOTED an update on the National Job Evaluation (NJE) project, which was now in its sixth year. The Principal advised the Board that the partial outcome data shared with colleges was now outdated and therefore approximately 40% of support staff employed in Scottish colleges were excluded from the initial detail provided for the project. The Board DISCUSSED that NJE project and the potential risks it presented for the college sector.

6.1.6 The Board NOTED that the outcome of a recent EIS-FELA ballot had been received, with 85.3% voting (from a 58.7% turnout) in favour of Action Short of Strike (ASOS), from 12 February 2024 until 15 July 2024, in pursuit of the national college pay dispute 2022/23. The Principal advised the Board that there was a clear consensus across colleges that pay should be deducted in response to the resulting boycott..

6.1.7 The Board NOTED that Education Scotland undertook an Annual Engagement Visit (AEV) at the College, over two days on 31 January and 1 February 2024, which explored the following themes: (i) Learner progress and outcomes; (ii) Approaches to assuring and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching; and (iii) Learner engagement. Further to this, the Principal advised the Board that Education Scotland also reviewed progress against actions arising from its AEV in June 2023.

6.1.8 The Board NOTED that the Education Scotland AEV Report indicated HM Inspectors' confidence that the College had made 'satisfactory progress' and had the capacity to continue to improve. The Principal informed the Board that the AEV Report also confirmed that previous areas of development and points for action, identified in 2023/24, had been fully addressed.

6.1.9 The Board NOTED an update on its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which could be viewed through the College's Microsoft PowerBI Dashboard.

6.2 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STAFF SURVEY 2024 UPDATE

6.2.1 The Board NOTED that a key priority for the College was its culture, as it underpinned the delivery of our strategic ambitions along with the successful delivery of the People Strategy. The Principal highlighted that the College's staff survey, as conducted by Hive HR, had launched on 15 January 2024, and closed on 12 February 2024.

6.2.2 The Board NOTED that 76% of staff had completed the 2024 Staff Survey. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, welcomed the positive level of engagement by staff with the Hive HR survey.

The Lead People Scientist (Hive HR) joined the meeting

- 6.2.3 The Board NOTED an ‘Executive Insights’ overview of the results of the Staff Survey from the Lead People Scientist at Hive HR. The Lead People Scientist advised the Board that the average score across all scaled questions within the Survey rated the College’s performance as ‘Moderate’. The Board NOTED that ‘Engagement Drivers’ relating to all scaled questions highlighted the three following themes: (i) Confidence in the future of the College; (ii) Work-Life Balance; and (iii) Inclusivity.
- 6.2.4 The Board NOTED that engagement would be undertaken by Hive HR to assess the themes arising from the Staff Survey in further detail. The Lead People Scientist advised the Board that further engagement with staff around these themes would be conducted with openness and transparency and employee involvement.
- 6.2.5 The Board NOTED initial feedback from its Lecturing, Support, and EIS-FELA Nominated Members on the high-level outcomes outlined within the presentation. All three Board Members welcomed the feedback provided, which aligned with their own discussions with colleagues, in particularly lecturing staff comments relating to work-life balance.
- 6.2.6 The Board welcomed the overview of the 2024 Staff Survey results provided and DISCUSSED the following points:
- (i) The strong level of participation and engagement with the survey by College staff.
 - (ii) The wider context relating to the undertaking of the survey during a period of significant uncertainty for the College sector.
 - (iii) The level of data contained within the Staff Survey and the need for caution with regards to the implementation of future sub-surveys.
 - (iv) The need for the College to commit to undertaking an all-staff survey on a regular basis.
 - (v) The potential for further analysis of the data to consider the impact of demographic data on the College culture.
 - (vi) Comments relating to the perceived mistrust in management during a challenging period for the College, which included the implementation of a targeted VS Scheme, and the need to respond to such matter through regular staff communications and engagement.
 - (vii) The correlation between the Hive HR Survey, Education Scotland AEV Reports, and Student Satisfaction Survey data, and how this could be used a more holistic picture of the College.
- 6.2.7 The Board NOTED the next steps relating to further analysis of the Staff Survey data and its communication to staff. The Principal advised the Board she would be sending out a message to all staff following the Easter Half Term Break regarding the initial outcome of the Survey, in which the discussions of the Board would be referenced.
- 6.2.8 The Board AGREED that it would welcome an opportunity to consider an outline communications plan relating to the Staff Survey, which included details around actions, their ownership, and benchmarking data. The Board

AGREED that such a plan should be presented to its next meeting and reviewed on a quarterly basis.

6.3 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ECSA) REPORT

6.3.1 The Board NOTED a report from ECSA covering a range of activities at the College since its last meeting on 12 December 2023.

6.3.2 The Board NOTED that, in the week commencing 29 January 2024, ECSA had held its second round of Class Rep meetings. The Student President advised the Board that ECSA were delighted that two Board Members, Ross Laird and Ian McLaughlan, could join Class Reps meetings at Milton Road and Sighthill Campuses, as part of its Reverse Shadowing Scheme.

6.3.3 The Board NOTED that ECSA had held student elections to choose its full-time officers for the academic year 2024/25, with online voting taking place on the week commencing 18 March 2024. The Student President informed the Board of the outcome of the elections, as follows:

- (i) Adam Lowe, ECSA Student President
- (ii) Caitlin Whitson, Vice President Activities
- (iii) Sukinder Landa, Vice President Welfare

6.3.4 The Board NOTED that newly appointed officers would come into post on 1 July 2024, 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, congratulate the newly appointed officers and advised Board Members that they would be invited to observe the next meeting of the Board of Management on 11 June 2024.

6.3.5 The Board NOTED that, in line with the ECSA Constitution, the recruitment of both external and student trustees had been finalised. The Student President informed the Board that a meeting of the ECSA Board of Trustees had been held on 16 February 2024, with follow-up meetings set to take place in April and June 2024.

6.4 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION: SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT BUDGET 2024/25: IMPLICATIONS & MODELS

6.4.1 The Board NOTED a Financial Forecast 2022/23 to 2026/27 presentation from the Chief Operating Officer. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the financial forecast was based on college funding outlined in the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2024/25 (Minute 6.1.1 refers).

6.4.2 The Board NOTED that a Major Projects Group, consisting of the Senior Management Team, had met seven times since 11 January 2024 to consider the impact of the Draft Budget and discuss Priority Based Budget (PBB) options. The Chief Operating Officer informed the Board that a range of options, including indicative timelines, had been worked through to remove the financial gap outlined with the forecast.

6.4.3 The Board welcomed the work undertaken by Senior Management relating to PBB and DISCUSSED the following relating to the sustainability of both the College and the wider sector:

- (i) The need to ensure continued 'good housekeeping' by the Senior Management Team to support immediate financial savings.
- (ii) The proposed engagement of College students, staff, and recognised trade unions representatives.
- (iii) The sustainability of the sector and the challenges finding a solution to suit each individual college and its regional needs.
- (iv) Potential models for the future of the college sector and the need for greater clarity on changes to the funding model from the SFC.
- (v) The Edinburgh City & South East Scotland context and the opportunity for the College to place itself at the centre of a skills led region.

6.4.4 The Board DISCUSSED preparations for its scheduled Board Strategy Session on 1 May 2024. The Board AGREED the Strategy Session should consider blue-sky thinking around the future of the College, specifically in relation to key initiatives such as the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal.

Ian MacLaughlan left meeting.

6.5 COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.5.1 PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

6.5.1.1 Recruitment, Retention & Credits Dashboard

The Board NOTED an overview of the performance of the College against its 2023/24 activity targets. The Vice Principal Education & Skills reminded the Board that the SFC had set the College a total activity target of 164,857 credits for the academic year.

The Board NOTED that the credit position of the College, as of 26 March 2024, was 160,256. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that, based on expected credit activity in Semester 2, the College was confident that it would meet its 98% credit target and avoid any financial clawback.

6.5.1.2 Management Account Summary to January 2024

The Board NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to January 2024.

6.5.2 LEARNING, TEACHING & STUDENT EXPERIENCE (LTSE) COMMITTEE

6.5.2.1 LTSE Committee Annual Report 2022/23

The Board NOTED an annual report from the Learning, Teaching & Student Experience (LTSE) Committee, which highlighted activities over the past 12 months.

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

- (i) The approval of an Edinburgh College Curriculum Strategy, which provides institutional coherence, oversight, and leadership in relation to learning, teaching, assessment, and outcomes. The LTSE Committee actively engaged in the creation of the Strategy over several meetings, culminating in a workshop event on 19 May 2023. The Curriculum Strategy 2023-26 was subsequently endorsed by the Committee and approved by the Board of Management in September 2023.
- (ii) The workshop held by the Committee on 17 November 2023 to support the development of a new Health & Wellbeing Strategy. The Chair of the LTSE Committee had previously highlighted to the Board of Management, in December 2023, that Members of the LTSE Committee were concerned that limited national funding was available to support health and wellbeing initiatives and that this could impact on student satisfaction, retention and attainment.
- (iii) The Committee welcomed the outcome of the two most recent Education Scotland Progress Visit Report published on 15 August 2023 and 26 March 2024 – respectively – which illustrated the significant progress made by the College over a 6-month period.

The Board welcomed the update provided and NOTED that the LTSE Committee on 17 May 2024 would consider a further update on the development of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

6.6 GOVERNANCE REPORT

- 6.6.1 The Board NOTED a Top-Level Risk Register (TLRR) Summary graphic, which included a URL link to the main TLRR. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that no changes to the top-level risks outlined in the summary graphic had occurred since its last meeting on 12 December 2023.
- 6.6.2 The Board NOTED that, in response to amendments to Legislation implemented in November 2023 relating to the addition of trade union nominees to college boards of management, Alan Holligan (Lecturer, Art & Design) has joined the Board of Management as the nominated EIS-FELA Member, for a period of up to four years from 1 February 2024. The Board Secretary advised the Board that in line with its Induction Procedure, initial induction meetings have been held between the new Board Member and key stakeholders, including the Chair, the Principal, and the Board Secretary.
- 6.6.3 The Board AGREED that, as a temporary measure whilst recommendations from the Governance Effectiveness Review were being considered (Minute 5.1 refers), the Nominated EIS-FELA Board Member would join LTSE

Committee as a Member. The Chair advised the Board that all its Members should have the opportunity to sit on at least one of the Board's committees.

6.6.4 The Board NOTED that Edinburgh College's UNISON Branch had been invited to nominate a member to join the Board of Management, in alignment with recent legislative changes (Minute 6.6.1 refers), however, no nomination was received. The Board Secretary informed the Board that once a nomination had been put forward by the UNISON Branch a further update would be provided to the Board.

6.7 COLLEGES SCOTLAND ENGAGEMENT SESSION 01.03.24

6.7.1 The Board NOTED that it had held an engagement session with the Colleges Scotland Chief Executive Officer on 19 February 2024. The Chair advised the Board that although the College had paid its annual membership fee to Colleges Scotland, it remained important to monitor the work of the sector body and ensure it provided best value.

6.7.2 The Board DISCUSSED the following points in relation to Colleges Scotland and its role as the collective voice of the sector:

- (i) The need to ensure that the sector provides a cohesive ask of Colleges Scotland.
- (ii) The varying regional contexts relating to individual colleges across Scotland.
- (iii) The opportunities available for individual colleges to provide leadership in response to challenges facing the sector.
- (iv) The governance of Colleges Scotland as determined by the Scottish Government.
- (v) The wider role of sector bodies including College Scotland, CDN, JISC, and APUC.
- (vi) The potential incoming changes to the fee structure and membership arrangements of Colleges Scotland.
- (vii) Colleges Scotland's Key Performance Indicators and the role of colleges in setting and monitoring performance.

6.7.3 The Board AGREED that, with regards to changes in membership arrangements, the Chair should write to Colleges Scotland stating its position regarding the need to ensure best value and its concern relating to changes to membership fees.

7. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

7.1 BOARD REFLECTION / FEEDBACK

7.1.1 The Board NOTED that there were no further reflections beyond those highlighted under Minute 1.2.1.

8. FOR INFORMATION

8.1 PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES 29.02.24

8.1.1 The Board NOTED the Planning & Resources Committee minutes from the meeting held on 29 February 2024.

8.2 AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES 06.03.24

8.2.1 The Board NOTED the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 6 March 2024.

8.3 CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES 07.03.24

8.3.1 The Board NOTED the Corporate Development Committee minutes from the meeting held on 7 March 2024.

8.4 LTSE COMMITTEE MINUTES 22.03.24

8.4.1 The Board NOTED the LTSE Committee minutes from the meeting held on 22 March 2024.

8.5 RIDDOR REPORT

8.5.1 The Board NOTED a RIDDOR Report for the second Quarter of 2023/24, there were two RIDDOR reportable accidents.

9. FOR CIRCULATION

9.1 EDUCATION SCOTLAND ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT VISIT REPORT

9.1.1 The Board NOTED the Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit Report as published on 26 March 2024 (Minutes 6.1.7 & 6.1.8 refer).

9.2 TOP LEVEL RISK REGISTER TO FEBRUARY 2024

9.2.1 The Board NOTED the Top-Level Risk Register to February 2024 included within.

9.3 BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AGENDA PLANNER 2024/25

9.3.1 The Board NOTED an agenda planner for the 2024/25 academic year, which aimed to provide members with an opportunity to review upcoming items of business.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 The next meeting of the Board of Management is scheduled to take place on 11 June 2024.

Meeting closed at 17:05