



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 10 SEPTEMBER 2021

14:00hrs, Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Present: Victoria Browning; Audrey Cumberford; Laura Craig; Rose Dodgson; Janyce Holmes; Ethelinda Lashley-Scott; Neil Manning; Jeanette Stevenson (Chair); Jordan Wylie

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Janet Campbell (Education Scotland); Nick Croft; Kerry Heathcote; Monica Hoenigmann; Jakki Jeffery; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk)

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Committee NOTED apologies from Rebecca Agnew, Mike Cowley and Sandra Morrison.
- 1.2 The Committee NOTED that Judith Sischy, a Non-Executive Board Member, and a member of the Academic Council, had resigned from the Board on 4 September 2021 with immediate effect.
- 1.3 The Committee NOTED that the Board had agreed on 6 September 2021 that Janyce Holmes, a Non-Executive Board Member, would temporarily act as a member of the Academic Council to ensure its membership remained quorate. The Chair welcomed Ms Holmes to her first meeting of the Academic Council as a member.
- 1.4 The Chair welcomed Janet Campbell, HMI Inspector (Education Scotland) to the meeting as an observer.
- 1.5 The Chair welcomed Jakki Jeffery, Head of Creative Industries, to the Committee. The Committee NOTED that under *Item 5; Terms of Reference*, a proposal to have at least one Head of Faculty in attendance at each meeting of the Academic Council would be discussed.
- 1.6 The Chair welcomed the reappointed ECSA Student Sabbatical Team of Rose Dodgson (Student President), Jordan Wylie (Vice President, Welfare), and Victoria Browning (Vice President, Activities). The Committee NOTED the Rose Dodgson and Jordan Wylie had been appointed to different posts from those they occupied in the previous academic year.

- 1.7 The Committee NOTED that co-opted lecturing staff members; Iris Aitchison, Julian Henderson, Ryan Quinn and Kevin Maloney had all stepped down from the Academic Council over the summer. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked departing co-opted members for their service to the Academic Council. The Committee NOTED that co-opted lecturing staff arrangements going forward would be considered under *Item 5; Terms of Reference*.

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 21 May 2021 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.
- 4.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the Vice Principal Education & Skills would provide a presentation on the development of a refreshed curriculum strategy at its next meeting.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 5.1 The Committee NOTED 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 NOTED that in August 2021 the new Chair of the Academic Council had met with the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance, the Vice Principal Education & Skills, and the Clerk to the Board to discuss the operation of the Committee in 2021/22. The Chair advised the Committee that, further to this meeting, several amendments to the Academic Council's Terms of Reference were proposed.
- 5.3 The Committee NOTED that whilst its Purpose, Role and Remit remained relevant, it was proposed that the title of the Academic Council should be changed to capture all aspects of its role, including learning & teaching and student experience. The Committee DISCUSSED proposed title changes and AGREED that the *Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee* should be put forward to the Board for approval.
- 5.4 The Committee NOTED that at its last meeting members were notified that both the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance and the Vice Principal Education & Skills would act as joint 'Executive Leads' for the Academic Council. The Committee DISCUSSED and AGREED that both Vice Principals

attendance at meeting of the Academic Council should be stated in the Terms of Reference.

- 5.5 The Committee NOTED a proposal to invite at least one Head of Faculty to attend future meetings of the Academic Council, to provide members with a greater understanding of the work taking place within the four facilities. The Committee DISCUSSED and AGREED that at least one Head of Faculty should sit in attendance at meetings, along with the Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance and the Head of Student Experience.
- 5.6 The Committee NOTED that, at its last meeting, the eight co-opted staff members of the Academic Council were advised that they would be offered a further year of tenure until the end of the academic year 2021/22. The Chair advised the Committee that four co-opted members had agreed to continue in their role, whilst the Academic Council reviewed its co-opted membership.
- 5.7 The Committee DISCUSSED the requirements related to co-opted membership within the extent Terms of Reference and AGREED that amendments to the co-opted membership of the Academic Council should be implemented before the start of the academic year 2022/23. The Committee AGREED that the following co-opted membership model would be more representative of lecturing staff across the College:
- (i) One member of lecturing staff from each faculty.
 - (ii) One Curriculum Leader.
 - (iii) One Curriculum Manager.
 - (iv) One part-time member of lecturing staff.
- 5.8 The Committee NOTED that the agreed amendments to the Academic Council's Terms of Reference would be put forward to the Board on 29 September 2021 for approval.

6. STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT

6.1 STUDENT EXPERIENCE UPDATE

- 6.1.1 The Committee NOTED that the Student Experience Team had continued to provide support to students remotely through online student services. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that the Team were continuing to consider ways of improving communications and support for students.
- 6.1.2 The Committee NOTED that that College had recruited 3 FTE Learning Development Tutors (Wellbeing), who would ensure that pastoral support was available across all areas. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that a Short-Life Working Group had been established to consider the approach of the College to pastoral care, with the outcomes set to be presented to next meeting of the Academic Council.
- 6.1.3 The Committee NOTED that the SFC had prioritised Student Mental Wellbeing and allocated the College funding to support developments in the academic year 2021/22. The Committee DISCUSSED how the funding would be used by the College, and limitations placed on the use of such funding for more

structural changes due to there being no commitment by the SFC to allocate funds beyond the current academic year.

- 6.1.4 The Committee NOTED that application and offer figures for the 2021/22 academic session were down on those recorded in the previous year (- as of 27 August 2021). The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that data had shown that a number of 2021/22 applicants had not taken up their college place due to either securing a place at university, going into employment, or gaining an apprenticeship.
- 6.1.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the impact of applicants choosing another articulation pathway, and what feedback the Student Experience Team had collated regarding students' choice not to start college. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the College maintained good relations with local universities and, if appropriate, students could be referred to the College should their choice to study at university present challenges.
- 6.2 ECSA ANNUAL LEARNING & TEACHING REPORT 2020/21
- 6.2.1 The Committee NOTED a report from ECSA which compiled information from the 2020/21 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 NOTED that due to the Covid-19 Pandemic all four Class Reps conferences in 2020/21 were held online. The Student President informed the Committee that, due to the high-level of engagement with the online format, ECSA would continue to hold Class Reps conferences and more frequent engagement events remotely.
- 6.2.3 The Committee welcomed the report and DISCUSSED the following points:
- (i) The use of the online platform for lectures and students to better utilise time for discussions.
 - (ii) The need to ensure all course documentation labelling is standardised across the College.
 - (iii) The preference of students to use one specific form of communication (e.g. Moodle, Microsoft Teams etc.) to main contact with lecturers, and the work currently being undertaken by the lecturers to gain feedback on students preferred means of communicating.
 - (iv) The success of smaller ECSA engagement events to focus on specific themes raised by students.
- 6.2.4 The Committee NOTED that the ECSA Learning & Teaching Report 2020/21 had been reviewed by the Senior Management Team at its most recent meeting. The Principal advised the Committee that such feedback from ECSA was important as it highlighted how minor changes to practice could significantly improve the student experience
- 6.2.5 The Committee NOTED that Education Scotland were currently in process of recruiting student members for upcoming institutional reviews. The HM

Inspector advised the Committee that she would strongly encourage Edinburgh College students, through ECSA, to apply for these paid roles.

7. COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS UPDATE

- 7.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update on the 2021 Student Induction Survey which would be launched on 12 October 2021. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance informed the Committee that the analysed results of the Induction Survey would be presented to the next meeting of the Academic Council.

8. HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? AND OUR BEST FUTURE FRAMEWORK 2021/22

- 8.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation outlining the details of the November 2021 Education Scotland visit as part of the How Good is Our College? (HGIOC) Quality Framework. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the visit, which was originally planned for April 2020, would focus on *'what is working, and what is not working'*.
- 8.2 The Committee NOTED that Digital Pedagogy would be a key feature of the review, along with other themes identified by the Executive Team. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance informed the Committee that key messages from the visit would be presented to both the SFC and the Academic Council in due course.
- 8.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the preparations of the College for the visit which included evaluating evidence against 'Our Best Future' prompts, which related to planned adjustments to provision and services in light of Covid-19. The Chair, on behalf, of the Committee welcomed the preparations outlined by the Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance and the strong focus of the College on Digital Pedagogy.
- 8.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the role of the Academic Council in monitoring progress against the HGIOC quality framework. The Committee AGREED that it would welcome ideas from the Executive as to how the Academic Council could further engage with elements of framework at future meetings

9. CREATIVE INDUSTRIES OVERVIEW 2020/21

- 9.1 The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Head of Creative Industries which provided a 'snapshot' of the Faculty's performance in 2020/21. The Chair informed the Committee that the presentation would be the first of four faculty presentations to the Academic Council over the coming year.
- 9.2 The Committee NOTED that the Faculty had surpassed its annual credits target for 2020/21 and had taught courses across SCQF levels 4 to level 10, 54.6% of which were FE courses. The Head of Creative Industries highlighted that the Faculty had also held its annual Glow Festival and maintained links with over 200 active employers.
- 9.3 The Committee NOTED that the Faculty had established three new degree pathways for 2021/22 with its partners at Robert Gordon and Kingston

Universities. The Committee NOTED the remarkable achievement of 46% of articulating students being awarded 1st class honours or ordinary distinctions through existing pathways, and the Faculty was looking to build on this success further going forward.

9.4 The Committee NOTED that although there had been a number of successes across the Faculty there were areas of improvement, including the need to raise FE achievement to match the level demonstrated at HE and the need to reduce the number of students completing their course with only 'partial success'. The Head of Creative Industries advised the Committee that both performance measures had been negatively affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic due to the practical nature of many of the courses taught within the Faculty.

9.5 The Committee NOTED that the Head of Creative Industries hoped that going forward improvements would be made to support early interventions for students in need, and more catch-up classes and assessment opportunities would become available. The Committee DISCUSSED the following in relation to the additional barriers effect FE students' achievement:

- (i) Mental health support and budding schemes as a means to be build students' confidence.
- (ii) The guidance available to potential students when choosing a course, and the need to ensure that students find the right course.
- (iii) The barriers raised through the uncertainties around the Covid-19 Pandemic and the need to be reactive to the current environment.
- (iv) Student assessment and the benefits of adopting a holistic assessment model.
- (v) The adaptability of the SQA to new forms of assessment and the potential need for wider sectoral change.

9.6 The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Head of Creative Industries for her presentation and for engaging in discussion with members. The Committee NOTED that the Head of Engineering & Built Environment would provide an update to the next meeting of the Academic Council on 19 November 2021.

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

10.1 None.

11. FOR INFORMATION

11.1 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: STUDENT SUPPORT

11.1.1 The Committee NOTED that internal audit had conducted a review of the controls in place at Edinburgh College relating to student support. The Chair advised the Committee that the internal audit report had been considered by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 26 May 2021.

11.2 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: CURRICULUM PLANNING

11.2.1 The Committee NOTED that internal audit had conducted a review of the controls in place at Edinburgh College relating to curriculum

planning. The Chair advised the Committee that the internal audit report had been considered by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 26 May 2021.

11.3 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2021/22

12.3.1 The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the academic year 2021/22.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 The next meeting of the Academic Council will take place on 19 November 2021.

The meeting closed at 15:55