



For the future you want

EDINBURGH COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 23 MARCH 2021

Meeting held remotely via Microsoft Teams

Start time: 14:00

Present: Bruce Cassidy; Mike Cowley; Audrey Cumberland; Lesley Drummond; Rose Dodgson; Janyce Holmes; Alex Killick; Ross Laird; Ann Landels (Chair); Toni McAlindin; Nigel Paul; Gwen Raez; Fiona Riddoch; Azra Sharif-Qayyum; Judith Sischy; Jeanette Stevenson

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Nick Croft; Michael Jeffrey; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Alan Williamson; Al Wilson (ECSA)

Observers: Peter Sharma

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Rose Dodgson, Donny Gluckstein and Jordan Wyllie.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Janyce Holmes, a new Non-Executive Board Member, to her first meeting of the Board - following their appointment by Scottish Ministers on 15 March 2021. The Board NOTED that, in line with the requirements of its skills matrix, the newly appointed Non-Executive Board Member was a qualified Chartered Management Accountant with significant experience as a commercial director.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed UNISON representative, Peter Sharma, to the meeting as an observer. The Board NOTED that trade union representatives would remain as observers until the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges had been updated to confirm legislative changes to Board membership arrangements.
- 1.4 The Chair welcomed the ECSA Director, Al Wilson, to the meeting for *Item 7; ECSA Report*. The Board NOTED that due to campaigning for the sabbatical officer elections taking place on the week commencing 22 March 2021, both the Student President and the Vice President (Welfare) had submitted their apologies.
- 1.5 The Board NOTED that Kerry Heathcote (Head of Curriculum Performance & Planning) and Bethany Parson (Equalities Officer) would join the meeting for *Item 6; Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021-25*.

- 1.6 The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Steven MacKenzie (Acting Marketing Manager) and Tom Stewart (Digital Marketing Officer) for their presentation prior to the Board meeting on the development of a new Edinburgh College website.
- 1.7 The Chair, on behalf of the Board, acknowledged recent national awards won by the College during a challenging year. The Board NOTED and commended the following award winners and nominees:
- (i) The College was a finalist at the China-Scotland Business Awards for the second year running. The International team was shortlisted in the Educational Partnership of the Year category for its work in developing a new five-year English for Business programme with Hainan University's College of Foreign Studies.
 - (ii) The College was named Training Provider of the Year at the inaugural Edinburgh Apprenticeship Awards 2021, ahead of Edinburgh Napier University and Heriot-Watt University.
- 1.8 The Board NOTED that 23 March 2021 marked one year since the UK first went into lockdown in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked staff and students for their considerable efforts in dealing with the challenges posed by the Pandemic, particularly the transition to provide the majority of learning and support services online.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were received.
- 2.2 The Board NOTED that an updated [Edinburgh College Board of Management Register of Interests](#) had been published on the College website on 23 March 2021.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- 3.1 The Board APPROVED the minutes from 08 December 2020 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 ALL STAFF SURVEY [Ref. 5.3/11.12.18]

The Board NOTED that the College aimed to undertake an all staff survey before the end of the academic year 2020/21. The Principal advised the Board that a follow-up event would be hosted in late June 2021 to provide staff, and Board members, with an overview of the results and general feedback.

4.1.2 *DECOLONIALISATION OF THE CURRICULUM [Ref. 7.2.1/16.06.20]*

The Board NOTED that the decolonialisation of the curriculum had been raised at a national level by the Executive Team, and strategic discussions on this matter continued. The Board AGREED that further updates on the decolonialisation of the curriculum should be presented through future Principal & Chief Executive Reports.

The Board NOTED an update from the Teaching Staff Board Member on the work of EIS-FELA to establish a group to consider potential changes to the curriculum which were consistent with the decolonialisation agenda. The Teaching Staff Board Member agreed to feedback from the group to the Executive Team, in order to support coordination across the college sector.

5. PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

- 5.1 The Board NOTED an update on recent developments and items of note, including the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Principal updated the Board on activities undertaken by the College since its last meeting on 08 December 2021, and progress against its strategic key performance indicators.
- 5.2 The Board NOTED that, in line with the Scottish Government's Covid-19 Strategic Framework announcement on 23 February 2021, the College had commenced preparations to bring 5% of students back on to campus. The Principal advised the Board that students returning to campus were limited to those priority groups which required practical assessments in order to progress.
- 5.3 The Board NOTED that a communication from the SFC had been received on 19 March 2021, which outlined how the Funding Council would continue to support students towards course completion and progression. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Board that additional funding was proposed to help colleges deal with continued financial pressures in 2020/21, and additional costs associated with students completing their studies in the current academic year - where possible.
- 5.4 The Board NOTED a draft Edinburgh College Strategic Framework, as presented to the Policy & Resources Committee on 23 February 2021. The Principal advised the Board that the Strategic Framework would be considered in further detail at the scheduled Board Strategy Session on 17 May 2021.
- 5.5 The Board NOTED that EIS-FELA members employed by the College had been asked to undertake a programme of discontinuous strike action. The Principal informed the Board that the current dispute related to a decision by EIS-FELA to escalate a local matter to national level - regarding the use of instructor roles to replace lecturing roles within colleges.
- 5.6 The Board NOTED that given the disruption students had already experienced during the academic year, as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the collective aim was to minimise the impact of any industrial action. The Principal advised the Board that an Industrial Action Contingency Group had been reactivated by the College, and was being chaired by the Vice Principal Corporate Development.
- 5.7 The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to the proposed industrial action:

- (i) The ongoing nature of discussions between the college sector and EIS-FELA, and the broad support for a consensus to be reached;
- (ii) The suspension of strike action on 16 March 2021 pending the ratification, by EIS-FELA and Employer Association members, of a consensus position;
- (iii) The distinct and valuable role of 'instructors' in the college sector;
- (iv) The college sector's position that lecturing roles will not be replaced by instructor roles;
- (v) The current collaborative relationship between the College and the local branch of EIS-FELA, especially with regards to matters of Health & Safety.

5.8 The Board NOTED the importance of ongoing discussions between EIS-FELA and the Employers' Association, and the need to minimise the impact on students' learning. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, hoped that an appropriate resolution could be reached before planned industrial action in March and April 2021 took place.

6. STRATEGIC DISCUSSION: EQUALITY OUTCOMES AND MAINSTREAMING REPORT 2021-25

The Head of Curriculum Performance & Planning and Equalities Officer joined the meeting

- 6.1 The Board NOTED a Draft Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021-25. The Head of Curriculum Performance & Planning informed the Board that a draft of the proposed equality indicators had been reviewed by members on 08 December 2020, and a further consultation session had been held with the Board on 10 February 2021.
- 6.2 The Board NOTED that, as an employer and a public body, the College played a leading role in the wider promotion of equality and diversity. Further to this, both equality and access to education were recognised as crucial to unlocking many significant opportunities in life. The Equalities Officer highlighted the aim of the College to help remove barriers, and advance equality for groups who experienced disadvantage in our society.
- 6.3 The Board NOTED that the College had a responsibility to meet the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The Equalities Officers advised the Board that the PSED required public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard for the need to:
- (i) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other prohibited conduct;
 - (ii) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and,
 - (iii) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.4 The Board NOTED the seven proposed Equality Outcomes for the period 2021-25, and details of the rationale, measurable success metrics, and actions taken by the College for each Outcome. Further to this, the Equalities Officer highlighted that the Mainstreaming Report also gave due regard to the PSED by detailing the

day-to-day incorporation of equality, diversity and inclusion into work of the College.

- 6.5 The Board welcomed the numerous opportunities members had received to engage in the development of the Report, and DISCUSSED the following points:
- (i) The publication of the Report on the College website - once approved;
 - (ii) The national context of the Report, and how such documents varied across the college and university sectors;
 - (iii) The Equality Outcome relating to an improved experience for LGBT staff and students, and the specific level of improvement sought over the reporting period;
 - (iv) The creation of a meaningful metric to tackle racial and religious harassment and discrimination;
 - (v) The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on student age demographics, due to unemployment and re-skilling opportunities;
 - (vi) The resources available to the College to tackle inequalities, and the need for a collective effort from all staff and students;
 - (vii) A Marketing campaign to support the publication of the Report, and the need to engage with all staff and students around Equality Outcomes.
- 6.6 The Board AGREED that, to ensure that the Equality Outcomes and measures outlined in the Report were appropriate, a Short-Life Working Group (SLWG) should be created to consider specific outcomes further. The Board AGREED that the SLWG should be chaired by a member of the Board, and consist of both Board members and appropriate College staff. The Chair advised the Board that members who wished to participate in the SLWG should contact the Clerk directly.
- 6.7 The Board AGREED that the SLWG should consider how progress against actions outlined in the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021-25 would be reported to the Board - over the reporting period.
- 6.8 The Board AGREED that a final draft of the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021-25 would be circulated to the Board for approval, via correspondence, following its consideration by the SLWG. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Head of Curriculum Performance & Planning and Equalities Officer for producing the draft Report, and engaging with the Board and other stakeholders extensively in the process.

The Head of Curriculum Performance & Planning and Equalities Officer left the meeting

7. EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION REPORT

7.1 ECSA QUARTERLY UPDATE

- 7.1.1 The Board NOTED a report from ECSA covering a range of activities at the College since its last meeting on 08 December 2020. The ECSA Director informed the Board that voting for the student sabbatical officer elections had commenced, and the results of the elections would be announced on 26 March 2021.

7.1.2 The Board NOTED that ECSA had hosted a number of online engagement events on a weekly basis, including 'Chat & That' session (on Tuesdays and Thursdays) and 'Wellbeing Wednesdays', which provided an informal space for students to come together online. The ECSA Director advised the Board that although the level of online engagement had been positive since the start of the academic year, students were beginning to tire of online activities.

7.1.3 The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to students' online engagement:

- (i) The benefits of online engagement, and the strong response of students to the three Class Reps Conferences held to date in 2020/21;
- (ii) The frustration of students and the ECSA Team around the lack of face-to-face engagement over the past year;
- (iii) The protocols for remote learning, and their continued development over the academic year;
- (iv) The current status with regards to all students having access to appropriate hardware to access online classes and events;
- (v) The transition towards a blended learning approach once Covid-19 restrictions allowed on campus learning.

7.1.4 The Board NOTED that the general feedback received, through satisfaction surveys and Class Reps Conferences, indicated that students were content with remote learning arrangements at the College. The ECSA Director advised the Board that moving into the next academic year the Students' Association had recognised that students' anxieties around returning to campuses, subject to the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, would be a significant issue going forward.

7.2 ECSA VIRTUAL CAMPUS UPDATE

7.2.1 The Board NOTED a presentation on the ECSA Virtual Campus, which had originally been launched in March 2020 as a Facebook group - to maintain engagement with students whilst campuses remained closed. The ECSA Director advised the Board that a 'Virtual Campus 2.0' was launched in June 2020, to support pre-enrolment activities prior to the start of the academic year.

7.2.2 The Board NOTED that the Virtual Campus had almost 2400 members and, with the help additional funding through the SFC, a '3.0' version was expected to be launched in advance of the 2021/22 academic year. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, congratulated ECSA on the success of the Virtual Campus as a means to reach out to new and existing students.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

8.1 POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

8.1.1 MINUTES 23.02.21

The Board NOTED the Policy & Resources Committee minutes from the meeting held on 23 February 2021.

The Board NOTED progress in the development of a Workforce Plan, which outlined actions over the next three years to manage staffing costs and ensure a workforce aligned to new curriculum delivery and operational models. The Chair advised the Board that it was expected that a Draft Workforce Plan would be presented to the Board in the new academic year, once more detailed planning at faculty level was completed.

The Board NOTED an updated on the 2020 Voluntary Severance (VS) Scheme which was launched to all College staff on 16 November 2020, and ran until 07 December 2020. The Chair advised the Board that the Net recurring gross savings generated through the VS Scheme were £1.22m, with total VS costs of £0.77m.

8.1.2 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION DASHBOARD

The Board NOTED that, subject to a FES Audit, the College had achieved its 2020/21 activity target for the fifth successive year. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Board that the College continued to liaise with colleagues at the SFC to establish whether additional in-year funding was available to support further credit activity.

The Board NOTED that applications for the academic year 2021/22 had opened on 01 February 2021. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance informed the Board that applications were slightly down on the previous year, however, it was expected that numbers would increase once progressing students had an opportunity to submit their applications.

The Board DISCUSSED student recruitment and the potential impact of deferrals going into the academic year 2021/22. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance advised the Board that the College was currently working to reduce the number of deferrals, and staff were working hard to manage the in-take of students accordingly.

8.1.3 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO JANUARY 2021

The Board NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to January 2021.

The Board NOTED that the UK Government's Job Retention Scheme (JRS) had been extended until the end of April 2021. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that the College had received £200k of JRS income for the first six months of the current financial year.

The Board DISCUSSED the in-year saving through both the VS Scheme and the JRS, which had significantly improved the adjusted operating position of the College. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, welcomed the positive financial position outlined by the Chief Operating Officer - whilst recognising the continued financial challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

9. GOVERNANCE REPORT

- 9.1 The Board NOTED a Governance Report highlighting development related to internal and external governance matters, and progress against the 2020/21 Board Improvement Plan.
- 9.2 The Board NOTED that the College Development Network (CDN) had partnered with the Association of Colleges (AoC) to commission a research report exploring the ways in which college boards had adapted to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Board Secretary advised the Board that the Governing a College Using Virtual Meetings Report provided insight into the experiences of colleges, of chairs and of governing body members, and provided useful insights for the Board to consider.
- 9.3 The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to the recommendations arising from the Report:
- (i) The continued use of virtual meetings once social distancing restrictions was eased;
 - (ii) Issues related to various virtual meeting platforms, and the need for participants' web cameras to be switched on - to facilitate improved interactions;
 - (iii) The amount of paperwork circulated prior to Board and committee meetings, and how this could be streamlined further;
 - (iv) The potential to enhance the cover sheet provided with Board/committee papers;
 - (v) The proposed paperless Board system to be introduced by the College before the next academic year;
 - (vi) The IT hardware and software available to all Board members, to enhance engagement further;
 - (vii) Online fatigue and the need to ensure appropriate breaks within, and between, meetings;
 - (viii) The potential to record online meetings and the benefits (if any) this would provide.
- 9.4 The Board AGREED that, to ensure appropriate governance arrangements were in-place for online Board and committee meetings, an 'online meeting' annex to the extant Standing Orders would be drafted. The Board Secretary advised the Board that its Standing Orders, and an accompanying annex, would be presented to the next meeting of the Board - for approval.
- 9.5 The Board AGREED, that in line with the Board Development Plan, an updated reporting template for Board and committee papers should be introduced in the academic year 2021/22.

10. NATIONAL REPORT

- 10.1 The Board NOTED a verbal update from the Chair on national developments in the college sector and the work of the Colleges Scotland Board, of which the Chair is a member.
- 10.2 The Board NOTED that that presentation on the interim findings of the Colleges Scotland Working Group on '*Scotland's Colleges at the Core of Inclusive Regional Economic Development*' had been well received by regional chairs. The Chair

advised the Board that the presentation would be circulated to Board members, for information, following the meeting.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

11.1 THE FUTURE OF WORK IN THE COLLEGE SECTOR

11.1.1 The Board NOTED a proposal to hold a session focussing on what working life in the college sector would look like in the coming years, following the wide-ranging impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Board AGREED that the Chair and the Principal should consider arrangements for such an event in the current academic year.

11.2 COMMITTEE BUSINESS REPORTING

11.2.1 The Board NOTED a proposal to ensure that the committee chairs had the opportunity to verbally highlight key strategic matters, within the remit of their committee, to the Board at least once per academic year.

11.2.2 The Board DISCUSSED the proposal, and AGREED that the Chair should consider further a structure for future committee reporting with the Vice Chair, the Principal and the Board Secretary.

12. FOR INFORMATION

12.1 INTERIM REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2021/22

12.1.1 The Board NOTED the Interim Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) 2021/22, as endorsed by the Edinburgh College Board of Management (via email) and submitted to the Scottish Funding Council on 29 January 2021. The Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance advised the Board that the College was currently awaiting a response from the SFC, to confirm that the 2021/22 Interim ROA had been approved.

12.2 AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES 24.02.21

12.2.1 The Board NOTED the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee minutes from the meeting held on 24 February 2021.

12.3 RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

13.2.1 The Board NOTED a Risk Management Report, which included a Top-Level Risk Register to March 2021.

12.4 ACADEMIC COUNCIL MINUTES 26.02.21

13.3.1 The Board NOTED the Academic Council minutes from the meeting held on 26 February 2021.

12.5 CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES 02.03.21

12.5.1 The Board NOTED the Corporate Development Committee minutes from the meeting held on 02 March 2021.

12.6 EU WITHDRAWAL REPORT

12.6.1 The Board NOTED an updated analysis of the implications of EU withdrawal on College business. The Chair advised the Board that the report had been considered by both the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and the Corporate Development Committee at their meetings in February and March 2021 - respectively.

12.7 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE MINUTES 19.02.21

12.7.1 The Board NOTED Remuneration Committee minutes from the meeting held on 19 February 2021. The Chair of the Remuneration Committee advised the Board that the Committee would meet again on 26 March 2021, to consider pay differentials following further details on the 2020/21 annual pay uplifts for teaching and support staff.

12.8 RIDDOR REPORT

12.8.1 The Board NOTED a RIDDOR Report for the second Quarter of 2020/21.

12.9 BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AGENDA PLANNER 2020/21

12.9.1 The Board NOTED an agenda planner for the 2020/21 academic year, which aimed to provide members with an opportunity to review upcoming items of business.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The next meeting of the Board of Management shall take place on 15 June 2021.

Meeting closed at 16:55