

EDINBURGH COLLEGE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

Meeting held in the Boardroom, Granton Campus

Start time: 14:00

Present: Bruce Cassidy; Sue Cook; Audrey Cumberland; Stewart Darling; Fiona Doring; Daniel Holland; Alex Killick; Ross Laird; Kerry McCormack; Ian McLaughlan; Nora Senior (Chair); Eleanor Sim

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

Observer(s): Kevin Dixon; Donny Gluckstein.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1.1 The Board NOTED apologies from Becky Duff, Skye Marriner, Liz McIntyre, Luna Morrison, Gwen Raez, and Bill Troup.

1.1.2 The Board NOTED that Kevin Dixon had joined the meeting remotely, via Microsoft Teams.

1.1.3 The Chair welcomed both EIS-FELA and Unison representatives, Donny Gluckstein and Kevin Dixon – respectively, to the meeting as observers.

1.1.4 The Chair welcomed Al Wilson (ECSA Director) to the meeting. The Chair advised the Board that due to both Student Board Members being unable to attend the meeting, due to personal circumstances, the ECSA Director had been invited to sit in attendance.

1.1.5 The Board NOTED that the Health & Safety Manager, Andy Bamberry, would join the meeting for *Item 7.1; Health & Safety Annual Report 2022/23*.

1.2 CHAIR OF THE BOARD'S UPDATE

1.2.1 The Board NOTED its thanks to both Sam Blyth (Head of School of Computing & Technology) and Adam Pettman (Head of Engineering at 2i) for their pre-Board presentation on an award-winning partnership project which supported the development of students' digital skills and charted a route into employment within the tech sector.

- 1.2.2 The Chair, on behalf of the Board, congratulated Ian McLaughlan, a Non-Executive Board Member, on becoming a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) as part of the King's first Birthday Honors List. The Chair advised the Board that Mr. McLaughlan had received the award for charity and youth work, which included 8 years as Chief Executive of Youth Scotland.
- 1.2.3 The Board NOTED that despite significant issues with the extant college sector funding model, as discussed by Members at previous meetings, no changes to existing arrangements had been put forward by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The Chair informed the Board that further to direct communications between the College and both the Chair and the Chief Executive of the SFC, a follow-up meeting would be held in due course.
- 1.2.4 The Board NOTED that both the Chair and the Principal had been contacted regarding the 2023/24 subscription fee for membership to Colleges Scotland. The Board DISCUSSED the annual subscription fee and the value for money offered by Colleges Scotland as an instrument for taking forward key sector priorities and supporting regional colleges. The Board AGREED that the Chair of the Board should revisit the current annual subscription with Colleges Scotland to ensure best value and appropriate alignment with the sector's ambitions.

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 and 2i picked up the Partnership Award at the Herald Higher Education (HE) Awards, held in Glasgow, for the Project highlighted to the Board of Management under Minute 1.2.1.
 - (ii) Beauty lecturer, Nicola Paterson, won a professional skincare brand, Dermalogica's Lecturer Appreciation Award for 2023.
 - (iii) Digital Marketing students received several prestigious commendations from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) for their strong performance in assessments.
 - (iv) Edinburgh College was shortlisted for six awards at the 2023 CDN College Awards – the annual celebration of talent, innovation, and achievement across the sector. The College is a finalist in the following categories:
 - Lecturer of the year, Kellyanne Cockburn.
 - Professional services colleague of the year, Sarah May.
 - Inclusive College, Story Valley Project.
 - Skills Development, Aspire S2 Schools Taster Programme.
 - Employer Connections, Codespace.

- (v) Edinburgh College has been named a finalist in the Herald and GenAnalytics Diversity Awards following the success of its pioneering Women in Data and Digital Innovation initiative.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 The Board NOTED that the Chief Operating Officer, the Vice Principal and both Observers 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 13 June 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.

4.1.1 Board Equality, Diversity & Inclusion [REF. MINUTE 5.9/13.12.22]

The Board NOTED that a Short Life Working Group - with a remit focussing on Board equality, diversity, and inclusion - had met on 1 September 2023. The Vice Chair of the Board advised the Committee that the Group would meet again in November 2023, prior to it reporting recommendations to the Nominations Committee and then the Board of Management.

5. PRINCIPAL & CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT

- 5.1 The Board NOTED an update on developments within both the College and the sector since its last meeting on 13 June 2023.
- 5.2 The Board NOTED that Education Scotland had published its Edinburgh College Progress Visit Report on 15 August 2023, following a scheduled visit by HM Inspectors in June. The Principal advised the Board that its Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee had considered the Report on 9 September 2023, and would monitor progress against recommendations at future meetings.
- 5.3 The Board NOTED that a key priority for the College moving forward was its People and Culture, as both underpinned the successful delivery of the strategic ambitions agreed by the Board of Management. The Principal advised the Board that Hive, an external HR organisation, had been contracted to work with the College with an initial priority to focus on shaping an all-staff survey.
- 5.4 The Board NOTED an update on the local EIS-FELA dispute which had resulted in EIS-FELA members employed by Edinburgh College undertaking a programme of discontinuous strike action over the months of August and September 2023, with

a re-ballot expected in due course to confirm whether industrial action would continue. The Principal advised the Board that curriculum management teams had aimed to ensure that disruption to both new and continuing students was kept to a minimum, with all campuses remaining open.

- 5.5 The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to the start of the 2023/24 academic year and ongoing local and national industrial actions:
- (i) The high level of student activity on campus in the opening weeks of term and the significant impact of the local industrial action on pockets of the curriculum.
 - (ii) Processes to monitor both the levels of support and wider impact of local industrial action.
 - (iii) Communications by the College and the general awareness of staff, students, and the public around the local and national context leading to industrial action and the conflation of the contributing factors involved.
 - (iv) The request for a no compulsory redundancy guarantees from both EIS-FELA and Unison as part of the ongoing 2022/23 National Pay Claim negotiation.
 - (v) The continuing impact of the National Action Short of Strike which meant that, due to assessment work remaining unmarked, a significant number of students would not graduate within the expected timeframe.
 - (vi) The EIS-FELA bullying grievance highlighted to the Board of Management on 28 March 2023, and its consideration within the wider Hive HR all-staff survey.
- 5.6 The Board NOTED concerns raised by the Lecturing Staff Board Member regarding current industrial relations and staff morale at the College. The Principal advised the Board that a meeting would take place between senior management and the College's EIS-FELA representatives on 27 September 2023 to seek an amicable resolution to ongoing local strike action and renewed engagement between both parties.
- 5.7 The Board NOTED concerns raised by the Support Staff Board Member relating to continued delays around the National Job Evaluation. The Principal advised the Board that college chairs and principals shared such concerns, and a College Employers Scotland meeting was expected to take place in the coming weeks to consider the matter further.
- 5.8 The Board NOTED UK-wide safety concerns relating to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in schools, colleges, and universities. The Principal informed the Board that the SFC and College Staff had been informed that RAAC was present in the following areas of the Sighthill Campus: Print room, stores, automotive workshops, and electrical workshops. The Board NOTED that the College was doing all it could to minimise disruption for all student and staff users of the affected areas.
- 5.9 The Board NOTED that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) it had agreed on 13 June 2023 could now be viewed through the College's Microsoft PowerBI Dashboard. The Board welcomed the new KPI Dashboard and DISCUSSED current performance against listed indicators, including enrolments, credit activity and student satisfaction.

6. EDINBURGH COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION REPORT

- 6.1 The Board NOTED a report from ECSA covering a range of activities at the College since the three full-time Sabbatical Officers were appointed on 1 July 2023.
- 6.2 The Board NOTED the ECSA Priority Objectives for 2023/24, as formulated and agreed by the new ECSA Sabbatical Team. The Board DISCUSSED the key priorities outlined and wished ECSA well in achieving their targets over the course of the year.
- 6.3 The Board NOTED the ECSA Team's response to the ongoing strike action, as outlined in their quarterly report to the Board. The ECSA Director advised the Board that students were worried and confused by the strike action and, in some cases, considering leaving College altogether. The Board DISCUSSED the impact of the strike action on students and the reassurances provided by ECSA to concerned individuals.
- 6.4 The Board NOTED that, following the success of the Discord Server launched in August 2022, ECSA continued to run an online community for registered students. The Board DISCUSSED measures taken to ensure that the Students' Association provided a safe and secure online environment for student engagement and AGREED that Eleanor Sim, a Non-Executive Member with appropriate cyber-security expertise, would provide guidance and support to the ECSA Team to review its practices.

7. FOR APPROVAL

7.1 HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 & POLICY 2023/24

The Health & Safety Manager joined the meeting

- 7.1.1 The Board NOTED an Annual Health & Safety Report 2022/23 as presented by the Health & Safety Manager, which included an updated Health & Safety Policy.
- 7.1.2 The Board NOTED that over the reporting period the Health & Safety Team had continued to monitor the standard of health, safety, and welfare within the College. The Health & Safety Manager informed the Board that accidents to staff and students had increased slightly within the reporting year, although RIDDOR reportable incidents remained the same.
- 7.1.3 The Board DISCUSSED the following in relation to the Health & Safety Report 2022/23:
 - (i) The potential to include more trend data / analysis in future reporting.
 - (ii) The number of staff working days lost to workplace incidents.
 - (iii) The distribution of incidents across campuses and whether a heatmap of relevant incidents could be provided within future reporting.
 - (iv) The number of incidents reported at the Granton Waterfront Nursery due to the Care Inspectorate reporting requirements.

- 7.1.4 The Board AGREED that the Health & Safety Manager should consider the inclusion of the points raised under Minute 7.1.3 in the 2023/24 Health & Safety Report, specifically trend data, information on working days lost, and incident heatmaps.
- 7.1.5 The Board AGREED that to ensure appropriate oversight of Health & Safety matters the alignment and reporting between the Board of Management, the Planning & Resources Committee, and the Health & Safety Group should be considered further.
- 7.1.6 The Board NOTED that there were no material changes within the 2023/24 Health & Safety Policy and APPROVED the updated Policy for publication.

The Health & Safety Manager left the meeting

Kevin Dixon left the meeting

7.2 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN AND PILLAR STRATEGIES

- 7.2.1 The Board NOTED that the Edinburgh College Strategic Plan, as approved by the Board of Management on 13 December 2022, had been launched at the start of academic year 2023/24. The Principal advised the Board that the strategic framework 'Our Strategy Our Future' was built upon five Pillar Strategies: Curriculum; Finance, People; Commercial; Digital.
- 7.2.2 The Board NOTED that the five Pillar Strategies had each been reviewed, and endorsed, by an appropriate committee of the Board prior to their presentation to the Board of Management. The Executive Team provided a brief overview of each of the Pillar Strategies which had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.
- 7.2.3 The Board welcomed the opportunity to review the Pillar Strategies and DISCUSSED the following in relation to each document:
- (i) **Curriculum Strategy 2022-25:**
 - The need to create a flexible, dynamic, and responsive curriculum, which provides the opportunity to develop innovative projects (- such as the one highlighted under Minute 1.2.1).
 - The Strategy as a means to reverse the downward trend in enrolments and put the College in a more sustainable long-term position.
 - (ii) **Finance Strategy 2023-26:**
 - The cost efficiency programmes undertaken by the College over recent years and the scope for further financial savings.
 - The future size and shape of the College, and the need to ensure service quality was not compromised.
 - (iii) **People Strategy 2023-26:**

- The College as an employer of choice in the tertiary education sector.
- The underpinning of KPIs within the Strategy utilising data from the Staff Engagement Survey.
- (iv) **Commercial Strategy 2023-26:**
 - The growth targets within the Strategy and whether they were realistic in the current economic environment.
 - The potential for further investment in both commercial and marketing activities to ensure achievable growth.
- (v) **Digital Strategy 2022-25:**
 - The Strategy's position as a 'live' document and the need to ensure that it is appropriately updated.
 - The need to ensure that an appropriate level of prominence is given to Artificial Intelligence in the refreshed document.
 - The importance of interdependencies between the Digital Strategy and other Pillar Strategies.

7.2.4 The Board APPROVED the Pillar Strategies presented by the Executive Team, subject to a copywriting process to ensure that each document was formatted uniformly and appropriately aligned. Further to this, the Board AGREED that the Digital Strategy should be refreshed to ensure it remain fit for purpose and that cross-strategy independencies were clearly outlined.

7.2.5 The Board AGREED that it would welcome an abbreviated version of each Pillar Strategy, in a 'strategy on a page' format, for ease of reference.

7.2.6 The Board AGREED that it would annually review progress against the Edinburgh College Strategic Plan, and its Pillar Strategies, at its first meeting of each academic year. Further to this, the Board AGREED that an interim progress update would be provided to the Board of Management on 26 March 2024.

8. FOR DISCUSSION

8.1 RISK APPETITE STATEMENT DEVELOPMENT

8.1.1 The Board NOTED a Risk Appetite Statement Development Report produced by Zurich Resilience Solutions following a risk appetite session with the Board of Management on 23 August 2023. The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee advised the Board that the Report reflected its previous discussions, although the nuances relating to risk appetite statements around '*Regulatory & Compliance*' and '*Reputation*' required further consideration.

8.1.2 The Board DISCUSSED the risk appetite statements outlined in the report and Members AGREED they were broadly content with both the appetite ratings applied and the accompanying statement for each risk category, except for *Cyber*, *Reputation* and *Regulatory & Compliance*. The Board AGREED that these three risk categories should be considered

further by the Chair, the Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, and the Executive Team, prior to finalised statements being circulated to the Board of Management for approval (via email).

- 8.1.3 The Board AGREED that a new Risk Appetite Statement had been approved by the Board of Management it should be reviewed on an annual basis. The Board AGREED that the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee should review the Statement(s) again at its meeting on 22 May 2023, prior to the Board of Management considering any changes at its final meeting of the academic year.

8.2 COMMITTEE BUSINESS

8.2.1 PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

8.2.1.1 Recruitment, Retention & Credits Dashboard

The Board NOTED an overview of the performance of the College against its 2022/23 activity targets. The Vice Principal Education & Skills reminded the Board that the SFC had set the College a total activity target of 183,174 credits for the academic year.

The Board NOTED that, subject to the completion of the annual FES audit, the College had accumulated 179,648 credits. The Vice Principal Education & Skills advised the Committee that since the College had achieved 98% of its annual activity target it would not be subject to a funding clawback from the SFC.

The Board DISCUSSED the impact of changes related to the new Curriculum Strategy and trend data relating to specific curriculum and course areas. The Board AGREED that the Planning & Resources Committee should consider the College's credits pipeline in more detail at its next meeting.

8.2.1.2 Management Account Summary to July 2023

The Board NOTED the financial performance of the College as outlined in the Management Accounts to July 2023.

The Board NOTED that the Year-to-Date Adjusted Operating Position illustrated a £430k deficit, which was a favourable variance of £452k against the profiled budget deficit.

8.2.1.3 College Budget 2023/24 Update

The Board NOTED the College Budget 2023/24 had been approved by the Board of Management (via correspondence) on 28 July 2023. The Chief Operating Officer provide a brief presentation on the Final Budget 2023/24 and outlined plans for in-year savings of £0.7m through a range of options.

8.2.2 CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

8.2.2.1 Corporate Development Committee Annual Report 2023

The Board NOTED an annual report from the Corporate Development Committee, which highlighted activities over the past 12 months and its future direction in the new academic year. Fiona Doring, a Member of the Committee, highlighted the following points raised within the report:

- (i) The Committee's role within the development of new College strategies, including the Commercial Strategy 2023-26, the External Engagement Plan 2023-26, and the Research Plan 2023-28.
- (ii) The strong performance of the Commercial and International Teams to exceed their 2022/23 income targets, and the role of the Committee in continuing to monitor non-SFC income.
- (iii) The continued Community Planning Partner engagement inline with duties under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

The Board NOTED that the Corporate Development Committee had met four times in the past 12 months, with only two of these meetings being quorate. The Board DISCUSSED a proposal to changes the quorum requirement of the Committee and AGREED that its Terms of Reference should state that *"at least three members of the Board, two of whom are Non-Executive Members, are in attendance"*.

8.3 GOVERNANCE UPDATE

8.3.1 The Board NOTED that the tenure of Alex Killick, a Non-Executive Board Member and Vice Chair of the Board had been extended by the Scottish Government until 21 September 2026.

8.3.2 The Board NOTED that the Edinburgh College Governance Framework, which included its Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation, was subject to review every two years. The Clerk advised the Board that no changes were proposed to the Governance Framework at present, however, it was expected that further a review would be required once changes to the Code of Gode Governance for Scotland's College ('the Code') and the outcomes from the External Effectiveness Review were known in early 2024.

8.3.3 The Board DISCUSSED the Edinburgh College Governance Framework and AGREED it was content with the current documentation.

8.3.4 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 following positive feedback from the recent Education Scotland visit, 'Risk (2) Student Retention and Attainment' had been reduced from a Red risk status to Amber.

8.3.5 The Board NOTED that its 2022/23 Board Development Plan ended on 31 July 2023, with all action marked as 'complete' except one relating to the review of Board induction and development materials. The Board DISCUSSED progress against the Board Development Plan and AGREED to the closure of its current Plan, subject to the satisfactory completion of the final action once the Nominations Committee had met in November 2023.

8.3.6 The Board NOTED that a tender exercise had commenced in July 2023 to find a third-party provider to lead an External Effectiveness Review of the Board of Management, in line with the requirements of the Code. The Board DISCUSSED the process and AGREED that one an outcome of the exercise was known an updated should be circulated to Board Members.

9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

9.1 BOARD REFLECTION / FEEDBACK

9.2.1 The Board NOTED that it had held open discussions on significant matters of business, including employee relations, the College's Strategic Plan Pillars, and Health & Safety matters.

The Chief Operating Officer, the Vice Principals and both Observers left the meeting

10. CLOSED ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS

10.1 CLOSED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

10.1.1 The Board APPROVED the closed minutes from 13 June 2023 as an accurate record of the meeting

11. FOR INFORMATION

11.1 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

11.1.1 The Board NOTED a Freedom of Information (FOI) Annual Report 2022/23, which outlined FOI activity over the academic year.

11.2 PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES 31.08.23

11.2.1 The Board NOTED the Planning & Resources Committee minutes from the meeting held on 31 August 2023.

11.3 CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES 07.09.23

11.3.1 The Board NOTED the Corporate Development Committee minutes from the meeting held on 7 September 2023.

11.4 LEARNING, TEACHING & STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE MINUTES 08.09.23

11.2.1 The Board NOTED the LTSE Committee minutes from the meeting held on 8 September 2023.

12. FOR CIRCULATION

12.1 EDUCATION SCOTLAND PROGRESS VISIT REPORT

12.1.1 The Board NOTED Education Scotland Progress Visit Report as published on 15 August 2023.

12.2 RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

12.2.1 The Board NOTED a Risk Management Report and the Top-Level Risk Register to September 2023 included within.

12.3 BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AGENDA PLANNER 2023/24

12.3.1 The Board NOTED an agenda planner for the 2023/24 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 is scheduled to take place on 12 December 2023

Meeting closed at 17:00