Edinburgh College

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LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 19 NOVEMBER 2021

14:00hrs, Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Present: Victoria Browning; Audrey Cumberford; Mike Cowley; Rose Dodgson; Janyce Holmes; Neil Manning; Jeanette Stevenson (Chair); Jordan Wylie

In attendance: Jon Buglass; Nick Croft; Kerry Heathcote; Monica Hoenigmann; Jonny Pearson; Marcus Walker (Clerk); Scott Warden.

1.   WELCOME & APOLOGIES

1.1   The Committee NOTED apologies from Laura Craig and Ethelinda Lashley-Scott

1.2   The Committee NOTED that the Board, on 29 September 2021, had approved the proposed title change of the Committee from the Academic Council to the Learning, Teaching & Student Experience (LTSE) Committee. The Chair welcomed all attendees to the first meeting of the newly titled Committee.

1.3   The Chair welcomed Scott Warden, Assistant Principal Engineering & Built Environment, to the Committee. The Committee NOTED that under its updated terms of reference, as approved by the Board, at least one Head of Faculty would sit in attendance at each meeting of the LTSE Committee.

1.4

          The Committee NOTED that Sandra Morrison, a Co-opted Member of the Committee had recently left her post as a lecturer at Edinburgh College. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Ms Morrison for her contribution to the LTSE Committee over the past two years.

1.5   The Committee NOTED that the tenure of the Lecturing Staff Board Member, Mike Cowley, would end on 2 December 2021. The Chair, on behalf of the Board and the Committee, thanked Mr Cowley for his significant contribution to the LTSE Committee. The Committee NOTED Mr Cowley's thanks for the opportunity to serve as the Lecturing Staff Board Member and the chance to actively participate in discussions at the LTSE Committee.

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 10 September 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.

5. CURRICULUM STRATEGY UPDATE

5.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update from the Vice Principal Education & Skills on the development of a new Edinburgh College Curriculum Strategy. The Vice Principal advised the Committee that the College currently had a Curriculum Planning & Design Strategy 2017-20, however, the development of a new Edinburgh College Strategic Plan offered the opportunity to pause and reflect on the current curriculum offer.

5.2 The Committee NOTED that the purpose of the new Curriculum Strategy was to provide institutional coherence, oversight, and leadership, whilst refreshing the focus on the core pillars of learning, teaching, assessment, and outcomes. The Vice Principal Education & Skills outlined to the Committee the curriculum design principles to which the process of strategy development would adhere, and the central importance of the student voice to the process.

5.3 The Committee NOTED that the College would shortly begin a consultation process with students, staff, and other stakeholders to define the curriculum of the future. The Vice Principal Education & Skills informed the Committee that a series of engagement workshops would be conducted over the coming months to which a wide range of stakeholders would be invited.

5.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the following with regards to the development of a new Curriculum Strategy:

 (i) The need to engage with ECSA and the Class Reps framework.
 (ii) The significant changes to learning, teaching and assessment over the past 18 months due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.
 (iii) The scope for major change and the need to encourage innovative approaches.
 (iv) The benefits and risk of providing curriculum teams with greater autonomy.

5.5 The Chair advised the Committee that the development, and approval, of a new Curriculum Strategy would be a major strand of work for the Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee in 2022.

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 Assistant Principal 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 a report on School College Partnerships (SCPs) had been published by the Scottish Government, which recognised these Partnerships as integral to the 15-25 Learner Journey. The Assistant Principal Student Experience advised the Committee that the College lead for SCPs was working with the College Development Network to responded to the recommendations within the Report, given the positioning of SCPs as a strategic priority for the sector.

6.1.3   The Committee NOTED a range of enhancements that had resulted from the 'Lean' Continuous Improvement Project related to student funding and the Student Services Hub. The Assistant Principal Student Experience advised the Committee that one such development was the appointment of a new Student Services Team Leader, who would work collaboratively with funding and front of house teams to provide a seamless service to students.

6.1.5   The Committee NOTED that SFC Wellbeing Funding had assisted the College in recruiting two (of four) new Student Advisers to support unaccompanied young students and students residing in accommodation at the Granton and Milton Road Campuses. The Assistant Principal Student Experience informed the Committee such funding would also be used to continue the development of other mental health and wellbeing services.

6.1.5   The Committee DISCUSSED the significant improvements made to student funding processes at the College over the past year, with all student applications currently being processed within a previously agreed timescale. The Student President informed the Committee that ECSA had received positive feedback from students and reported a significant decrease in the number of individuals approaching the Students' Association with funding related queries.

6.1.6   The Committee DISCUSSED the use of additional SFC funding to support capacity building and the development of further connections between departments and faculties. The Principal advised the Committee that whilst additional funding provided in the wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic had provided much needed financial support, it could not be relied upon indefinitely.

6.2   ECSA CLASS REPS UPDATE

6.2.1   The Committee NOTED an update on Class Reps activities which were currently taking place online, including Class Rep registration, training, and conferences. The ECSA Student President advised the Committee that Class Rep registration in 2021/22 had increased by 24% since last year due to the implementation of a data sharing agreement with the College, allowing ECSA to identify which classes had representation, and which did not.

6.2.2 The Committee NOTED that feedback from the first two Class Reps conferences of the academic year would be presented to the LTSE Committee on 4 March 2022. The ECSA Student President informed the Committee of initial feedback from the first Class Reps conferences of 2021/22, which had been attended by 190 students (32% of registered Class Reps).

6.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED initial feedback from the Class Reps conferences, including the request from students for access to bookable study spaces on campus. The Chair advised the Committee that a more detailed discussion around student feedback, and the Senior Management Teams' response, would be considered at the next meeting of the LTSE Committee.

6.2.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the general frustration of students around the restrictions placed on colleges, whilst other leisure and commercial enterprises across Scotland remained fully open, and the lack of communication on a national level to student and parents regarding the limits placed on student numbers. The Principal informed the Committee that, through Colleges Scotland, the sector had requested that the Scottish Government provide clearer guidance to the public on the restriction placed on colleges regarding on campus student numbers.

7. COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS UPDATE

7.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update on the 2021 Student Induction Survey which was launched on 12 October 2021. The Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement informed the Committee that the response deadline to the Survey had been extended by a further two weeks, to encourage further participation.

7.2 The Committee NOTED that the analysed results of the 2021 Induction Survey would be presented to the next meeting of the LTSE Committee.

The Lecturing Staff Board Member left the meeting

8. HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? REPORT

8.1 HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? UPDATE

8.1.1 The Committee NOTED that an update for the preparations of the College for the upcoming Education Scotland Progress Review Visit, which was scheduled to take place from 30 November to 2 December 2021. The Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement informed the Committee that information sessions were taking place across the College to ensure that staff were appropriately prepared for the visit.

8.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the Progress Review would focus on the following five themes from the perspective of perceived strengths and challenges, and recognition of the student voice:

Theme 1: Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment.
Theme 2: Services to Support Learning.
Theme 3: Learner Engagement.
Theme 4: Evaluation to Facilitate Improvement.
Theme 5: Learner Progress and Outcomes.

8.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the focus of the Progress Review and the future publication of an anonymised sector report by Education Scotland on the response of colleges to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement advised the Committee that the College had reflected on its strengths, and the challenges its faced, and was confident that it could appropriately showcase the excellent learning experience provided to students.

8.2 REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT SELF-EVALUATION 2020/21

8.2.1 The Committee NOTED a draft Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) Self-Evaluation Report which was expected to be submitted to the SFC on 30 November 2021. The Assistant Principal Quality & Improvement advised the Committee that the Report focussed on the following four high-level outcome agreement priorities: (i) Recruitment; (ii) Retention; (iii) Attainment; and (iv) Progression, along with Covid-19 Recovery information pertaining to the start of the academic year 2021/22.

8.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the following points relating to the Self-Evaluation Report:

(i) The continued success around the Widening Access Agenda and its positive impact on inclusion.
(ii) The development of a robust Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021-25.
(iii) The total number of enrolments across the College remaining stable despite the significant impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic.
(iv) The challenges around ensure that all students had digital access to engage, with, and complete, their course.
(v) The need for the College to improve its complete and partial success performance, and the work required to achieve this.

8.2.3 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to review the ROA Self-Evaluation Report and AGREED to endorse its approval by the Senior Management Team and its submission to the SFC.

8.3 DRAFT REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2021/22

8.3.1 The Committee NOTED a draft Regional Outcome Agreement 2021/22 and an accompanying one-year projection against the Outcome Agreement. The Vice Principal Performance, Planning & Innovation advised the Committee that due to changes in ROA reporting requirements, in light of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Outcome Agreement was produced in-year.

8.3.2 The Committee NOTED that the ROA 2021/22 outlined the response of Edinburgh College to the immediate challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic, and how the College would continue to contribute to the wider economic recovery in Edinburgh and the Lothians. The Vice Principal Performance, Planning & Innovation highlighted to the Committee that College staff had shown tremendous agility and resilience throughout the Pandemic by continuing to deliver high quality learning, teaching, operations, and support to all students.

8.3.3 The Committee NOTED the key performance indicators which the College aspired to achieve in 2021/22 and proposed targets for 2022/23, which

included progression into the upper quartile for successful FE outcomes. The Vice Principal Performance, Planning & Innovation advised the Committee that the College already had successful HE outcomes in the upper quartile, for both full and part-time learners, and continued to seek further improvements in these areas.

8.3.4   The Committee welcomed the clear and concise nature of the draft ROA 2021/22 and DISCUSSED the collection of data on regional needs by Skills Development Scotland and the challenges around the interpretation of such data to illustrate the contribution of careers in the Creative Industries to the regional economy.

8.3.5   The Committee AGREED to endorse the draft ROA 2021/22 for approval by the Board of Management. The Chair informed the Committee that, subject to Board approval, the ROA 2021/22 would be submitted to the SFC on 30 November 2021.

9.   ENGINEERING & BUILT ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW 2020/21

9.1   The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Assistant Principal Engineering & Built Environment which provided an overview of the Faculty's performance in 2020/21. The Chair informed the Committee that the presentation was the second of four faculty presentations to the LTSE Committee over the academic year.

9.2   The Committee NOTED that the Faculty consisted of three Schools; Construction, Engineering, and Building Services, with 11 curriculum areas. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that the Faculty currently had 155 members of staff and approximately 6000 students.

9.3   The Committee NOTED that, in 2019/20, the College was the sector leader in HE Science and rated second nationally in HE Engineering. The Assistant Principal informed the Committee that whilst HE outcome had been excellent; FE had proved more challenging, and it was hoped that a recent approved reconfiguration of the curriculum staffing structure would lead to improved outcomes in this area.

9.4   The Committee NOTED that the City Region Deal for Edinburgh & South East Scotland had brought investment in a number of housing construction and infrastructure projects. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that this investment had led to the development of a waste management short course and bricklaying programs to address skills shortages across the region.

9.5   The Committee DISCUSSED the significant growth in Modern Apprenticeships over the past year, with increases of 25-30% across Construction, Engineering and Building Services. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that the continued expansion of Modern Apprenticeship was expected to continue to over the coming years.

9.6   The Committee DISCUSSED the development of new Renewable Energy Facility, which would provide access to cutting edge technologies including hydrogen boilers. The Committee NOTED that the College had also created a new Engineering Robotarium which included access to an ABB Robotic Arm, to allow students of all levels to practice their coding and programming skills.

9.7   The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Assistant Principal Engineering & Built Environment for his presentation and acknowledged testimony from staff and students around the high levels of engagement with industry across the Faculty.

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

10.1   None.

11. FOR INFORMATION

11.1 ANNUAL COMPLAINT ACTIVITY REPORT 2020/21

11.1.1   The Committee NOTED and annual report on complaints activity as provided by the Quality Enhancement Team.

11.2 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2021/22

11.2.1   The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the academic year.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1   The next meeting of the Academic Council will take place on 4 March 2022.

The meeting closed at 16:00