



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 07 SEPTEMBER 2018

14:00hrs, Boardroom, Sighthill Campus

Present: I Aitchison; B Anderson; L Craig; A Cumberland; S Hay; J Henderson; N Manning; R Quinn; K Maloney; F Riddoch (Chair); J Stevenson; S Young

In attendance: J Buglass; N Croft; K Heathcote; M Hoenigmann; M Walker (Clerk)

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Committee NOTED apologies from Mike Cowley, Debbie Dow, Ann Landels and Ethelinda Lashley-Scott.
- 1.2 The Committee Chair welcomed the new Principal & Chief Executive, Audrey Cumberland, to the meeting as a member.
- 1.3 The Committee Chair welcomed Sarah Hay (ECSA Student President), Beth Anderson (ECSA Vice President, Welfare) and Shannon Young (ECSA Vice President, Sports & Activities) to the Committee as co-opted student members.
- 1.4 The Committee Chair welcomed Laura Craig (Curriculum Lead, Sports & Exercise) and Julian Henderson (Curriculum Lead, Social Care) to the Committee as co-opted teaching staff members representing the Faculty of Health, Wellbeing and Social Science.
- 1.5 The Committee NOTED that a new co-opted teach staff member representing had yet to be appointed, and would be confirmed in advance of the next meeting of the Academic Council in November 2018.

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 25 May 2018 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.

4.2 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE OPERATION 2017/18

- 4.2.1 The Committee NOTED a finalised version of the Review of Committee Operation 2017/18, as agreed by Members outwith the meeting.

4.3 STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

- 4.3.1 The Committee NOTED an update on progress relating to the development of student communications at the college. The Head of Corporate Development advised the Committee that a group, consisting of appropriate senior and middle managers and ECSA representatives, had been set-up to consider student communications.

The Committee NOTED that the Student Communications Group had developed a communications plan which had been implemented prior to the start of the new academic year. The Head of Corporate Development informed the Committee that, through the plan, information to school leavers following the publication of exam results had been improved, and that the college was now working to maintain regular contact with students during the initial months of their course - to improve retention.

5 TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 5.1 The Committee NOTED its Terms of Reference as previously agreed in September 2015. The Chair advised the Committee 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 DISCUSSED its Terms of Reference and the role of the Academic Council in relation to student experience. The Committee NOTED that it was content with its current purpose and remit for the current academic year.

6 SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT 15-24 LEARNER JOURNEY REVIEW

- 6.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the recommendations of the Scottish Government's '15-24 Learner Journey Review' published in May 2018. The Assistant Principal highlighted the 17 recommendations outlined by the review, which aligned to five priorities for improvement. Further to this, the Assistant Principal advised the

Committee that the college was already well placed with regards to a number of the review recommendations, however, a number of the proposals provided the college with an opportunity to enhance further its educational and vocational training offer - in partnership with other agencies operating in the education and skills sector.

6.2 The Committee NOTED a presentation putting forward challenge questions regarding the implications and opportunities for the college as a result of the review recommendations. In response to the questions the Committee DISCUSSED the following recommendations:

- (i) **Removing duplication of Level 7 provision (e.g. Advanced Higher)**
 - the pros and cons of advanced highers in preparing students for employment;
 - the need for further investigation into the numbers of students enrolled on advanced highers, and whether or not it makes a difference to where students go.

- (ii) **Improving articulation with advanced standing:**
 - The discussion taking place between the college and regional universities around advanced standing and what universities want from college students;
 - the role of Education Scotland in improving links to universities;
 - the changes required by schools and universities (not just colleges) to support improved articulation for young people;
 - the impact of universities bringing their entry level requirements down, and how the college needs to consider its position in the market place, for instance the need to promote the greater level of face-to-face support provided by colleges;
 - the pros and cons of students going into Year 2 at university and the interlinking considerations around student funding.

- (iii) **Maximising vocational routes with employers:**
 - The current difficulties associated with finding student placements in science based subjects.

- (iv) **Implementation of a UCAS style application process across all colleges:**
 - The concerns that such a system is in stark contrast to the current system which allows students to speak directly with staff to make the right choices.

- (v) **Improving the quality of careers advice:**
 - The existing careers advice provisions in place at Edinburgh College, which is favorable in comparison to other colleges.

- (vi) **Enhanced offer for care experienced students:**
 - The need for safe environments for care experienced students during the summer holidays, to support their continued development and progress.

6.3 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to discuss the strategic position of the college in response to the Learner Journey Review, and NOTED that further discussion would be held by senior management and the Board in due course. The

Committee AGREED that the Committee Chair should highlight points raised by the Academic Council to the Board, which was scheduled to discuss the Learner Journey Review at its next meeting on 18 September.

7 HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? UPDATE

- 7.1 The Committee NOTED that the college had reviewed its progress toward achieving actions set out in the 2017/18 Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan (EREP), and had established a RAG assessment methodology to assess performance against key actions. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that, as of 17 August, the college had no areas of concern and that actions marked 'Amber' were underway and on target for completion.
- 7.2 The Committee DISCUSSED progress against the EREP action plan and NOTED that self-evaluation against the EREP was a live process. The Chair advised the Committee that as a standing item updates on 'How Good is Our College?' would come forward to every meeting of the Academic Council.

8 EDINBURGH COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-22 AND BLUEPRINT REPORT

8.1 BLUEPRINT 2017-22 UPDATE

- 8.1.1 The Committee NOTED an update on the development of the Edinburgh College Blueprint, following the approval of the Strategic Plan 2017-22 by the Board on 19 September 2017. The Head of Corporate Development advised the Committee that the transformation portfolio was made up of five transformation programmes (aligned to the five strategic aims of the Strategic Plan), and a current total of 19 individual projects.
- 8.1.2 The Committee NOTED the three levels of governance proposed for the delivery of the Blueprint, which included a Portfolio Board (strategic), a Programme Board (tactical) and Programme and Project Teams (operational). The Head of Corporate Development outlined the 19 current projects and the lead offices at each level of governance.
- 8.1.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the Blueprint and the role of the Policy & Resources Committee in providing Board oversight on the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the Blueprint. The Committee AGREED that the Head of Corporate Development should provide a further update to the Academic Council on the two key programmes connected to its remit, including the Student Experience Programme and the Curriculum Excellence Programme.

8.2 LEARNING ANALYTICS PROJECT OVERVIEW

- 8.2.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the concept of learning analytics, and a presentation on the progress made by Edinburgh College towards embedding learning analytics in its student support. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that the Student Experience Programme of the Blueprint included a specific project entitled Learning Analytics.

- 8.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the current model employed by the college offered every student one hour per week of 'generic' support, and assumed that all students required the same amount of support. The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that through the use of learning analytics the college would recognise when intervention was required and allow the college to offer students enhanced support when they needed it. The Committee NOTED that the effective use of learning analytics could significantly improve the retention and attainment of all students by radically changing the way the college offers support.
- 8.2.3 The Committee welcomed the proposed use of learning analytics at the college and DISCUSSED the importance of effectively utilising information to conduct effective interventions. The Chair advised the Committee that further updates on the learning analytics project would be provided to the Academic Council through its Blueprint Report.

9 STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT

9.1 STUDENT EXPERIENCE UPDATE

- 9.1.1 The Committee NOTED an update on developments to improve the experience and retention of students since the last meeting of the Academic Council in May.
- 9.1.2 The Committee NOTED that 2018/19 Welcome Events had been run across all campuses from 14 to 24 August to enrol student and prepare them for college. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee that these events had been received positively, and that further feedback would be collated from staff and students to enhance future events. The Committee NOTED that in addition to Welcome Events, ECSA had successfully launched Fresher's Week events across the college to engage with new and existing students.
- 9.1.3 The Committee NOTED a number of developments to student funding which had been put in place by the college over the summer period, including funding drop-in sessions and an increased funding staff profile at 2018/19 Welcome Events. The Head of Student Experience informed the Committee that all completed funding applications had been successfully dealt with in advance of students starting their course.

9.2 PROMONITOR PROJECT OVERVIEW

- 9.2.1 The Committee NOTED an update on the strategic and operational benefits of engaging with ProMonitor, a user-friendly platform developed collaboratively by a number of further and higher education college for the purpose of creating a Single Central Record for every student. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that ProMonitor was already in use at the college for a number of pastoral aspects of the student experience, with the aim now to advance the system to automatically result all credit and qualification outcomes.

- 9.2.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the use of ProMonitor as a tool to support the student experience, and welcomed the plans outlined by the Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance to extend its use across the college.

10 COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS UPDATE

- 10.1 The Committee NOTED a verbal update from the Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance on the proposed reconfiguration of college satisfaction surveys. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the college would move from three college surveys to two in 2018/19, with the chief aim to improve overall completion rates.
- 10.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the merger of the Learning & Teaching Survey and the Pre-Exit Survey to become the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey. The Committee AGREED that the new survey should be presented to the Academic Council for approval prior to its circulation to students.

11 HORIZON SCANNING REPORT

- 11.1 The Committee NOTED a Horizon Scanning Report which outlined major political, economic, social, technologies, legal and/or environmental developments that could impact on the five strategic plan aims of the college. The Head of Corporate Development advised the Committee that further to this, the report summarised what the impact of these developments might be and proposed a course of action in response.
- 11.2 The Committee DISCUSSED the Horizon Scanning Report and AGREED that the Head of Corporate Development should consider crosslinking the report with the Top Level Risk Register.

12 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

- 12.1 None.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 The next meeting of the Academic Council will take place on 16 November 2018, in the Boardroom, Granton Campus.