Edinburgh College

For the future you want

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING OF 13 NOVEMBER 2020**

**14:00hrs, Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

**Present**: Iris Aitchison; Victoria Browning; Audrey Cumberford; Mike Cowley; Laura Craig; Rose Dodgson; Ethelinda Lashley-Scott; Neil Manning; Sandra Morrison; Ryan Quinn; Fiona Riddoch (Chair); Judith Sischy; Jeanette Stevenson; Jordan Wylie

**In attendance**: Jon Buglass; Janet Campbell (Education Scotland); Nick Croft; Phil Ford (Skills Development Scotland); Kerry Heathcote; Monica Hoenigmann; Alex Killick; Toni McAlindin; Marcus Walker (Clerk)

1. **WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

   1.1     The Committee NOTED apologies from Julian Henderson and Kevin Maloney.

   1.2     The Chair welcomed Alex Killick and Toni McAlindin to the Academic Council as observers, following confirmation of their appointment to the Board as non-executive members on 22 September 2020.

   1.3     The Chair welcomed Janet Campbell, HM Inspector (Education Scotland), to the Academic Council as an observer.

   1.4     The Chair welcomed Phil Ford, Skills Planning Lead at Skills Development Scotland (SDS), to the meeting for *Item 3; Skills & Employment Gaps Update*.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

   2.1     No declarations of interest were received.

3. **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SCOTLAND: SKILLS & EMPLOYMENT GAPS UPDATE**

   3.1     The Committee NOTED a presentation from the Skills Planning Lead at SDS on skills issues and challenges in the Health and Social Care sector. The Skills Planning Lead advised the Committee that challenges related to long standing demand for skilled staff in key health and social care occupations, and increased demand due to the impact on the Covid-19 Pandemic. Further to

this, the impacts of EU withdrawal on recruitment to the sector was expected to lead to a reduced pool of suitably qualified candidates across various job roles.

3.2 The Committee NOTED that recruitment to the health and social care sector continued during the Covid-19 Pandemic, with employment levels expected to increase in the short to medium term. The Skills Planning Lead highlighted the range of opportunities in the sector, including new posts to harness the power of digital technologies in both existing and new roles.

3.3. The Committee NOTED the ongoing collaborative work in Edinburgh and South East Scotland, and the agreement to develop a Health and Social Care Skills Gateway by the Integrated Regional Employability and Skills (IRES) Board. The Skills Planning Lead advised the Committee that the project team overseeing the development of an Outline Business Case for the Skills Gateway was being led by the College's Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance.

3.4 The Committee NOTED a range of labour market insights into the challenges and responses posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic, including the following:

(i) the significant negative impact on business activity and low business confidence;
(ii) rising unemployment, increases in Universal Credit claims and overall claimant count (- with young people, women and low paid most impacted);
(iii) growth in some sectors (e.g. Health and Social Care, Food and Retail), but negative impact on others;
(iv) impact varying by region, with evidence indicating that rural areas will be less resilient;
(v) the full impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the timeline for economic recovery remains uncertain.

The Skills Planning Lead advised the Committee that a one size fits all response to the Pandemic would not resolve many of the regional and demographic challenges it raised for the labour market in the Edinburgh and South East Region.

3.5 The Committee welcomed the presentation provided by SDS, and DISCUSSED the following points:

(i) the support provided by SDS to help school leavers, and those facing unemployment;
(ii) the impact on college students of not being able to go on work placement, and how this impacted upon their learning experience;
(iii) the impact of remote learning and teaching on practical based courses, especially those with in the area of health and social care;
(iv) the mapping of individuals who are moving from other sectors to work in the Health and Social Care sector.

3.6 The Chair, on behalf of the Academic Council, thanked the Skills Planning Lead for engaging in a wider ranging discussion with members. The Committee AGREED that a representative of SDS should be invited to a future meeting, to provide a further update on regional skills and employment gaps.

*The Skills Planning Lead, SDS, left the meeting*

## 4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1     The Committee APPROVED the minutes of the Academic Council from 11 September 2020 as an accurate record of the meeting.

## 5. MATTERS ARISING

5.1     MATTERS ARISING REPORT

5.1.1   Actions from the previous meeting were complete, overtaken or on the agenda, with the exception of the following:

5.1.2   *BURSARY TRAVEL FUND [Minute 6.2.3 / 28.02.20 refers]*

The Committee NOTED a response from the SFC to clarify that the Funding Council could not agree to fund a more expensive form of public transport (e.g. train travel) for College students, as it would considerably increase overall costs across the sector. The Principal advised the Committee that the College could however organise its own buses for students, which was allowable under Student Support travel costs, if there was a significant group of students travelling from a similar area(s) to a college campus or building.

5.1.3   STAFF EXPERIENCE ITEM *[Minute 8.6 / 11.09.20 refers]*

The Committee NOTED that four of the points raised within the Staff Experience Item held at the last meeting of the Committee would be picked up by the Academic Council under either the *How Good Is Our College? Report* and the *Student Experience Report*. The Chair advised the Committee that points raised in relation to 'staff mental health' and 'IT capacity and infrastructure' sat within the remit of the Policy & Resources Committee, and were reviewed on a quarterly basis. The Committee AGREED that feedback on these matters, and progress on Enhance (a staff development tool), would be presented to the Academic Council at the end of the academic year.

## 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 2020/21 enrolments had been positive, with a home enrolment URL link being set-up for the registering of ESOL students. The Head of Student Experience informed the Committee of current enrolment activity levels for full-time, part-time and Foundation Apprenticeship students.

6.1.3 The Committee NOTED that School College Partnership (SCP) applications had improved by 12% on 2019/20, however, following a significant number of course cancellations - activity was now much lower than in the previous year. The Head of Student Experience informed the Committee that, due to Covid-19 restrictions, SCP activity across construction, automotive, engineering, electrical and professional cookery courses had all been cancelled.

6.1.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the allocated funding to support students experiencing digital poverty, and the opening up of college learning spaces so that students requiring access to a computer and/or Wi-Fi could continue their studies. The Head of Student Experience advised the Committee of the high demand for laptops nationally, which made the procurement of such devices more difficult, and the efforts of the College to distribute devices as quickly as possible to those identified as facing digital poverty.

6.1.5 The Committee DISCUSSED the challenges to cover classes without a Learning Development Tutor (LDT), and NOTED that a temporary post was being advertised to enable drop-in support to students without an LDT. The Committee AGREED that an item on LDTs arrangements should be considered on a future Academic Council agenda in 2020/21.

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 the Students Association were on track to register the same levels of Class Reps as in previous years, despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

6.2.2 The Committee NOTED that feedback from the first two Class Reps conferences of the academic year would be presented to the Academic Council on 26 February 2021. The Vice ECSA President (Welfare) informed the Committee of initial feedback from the first Class Reps Conference of 2020/21, including student concerns about the delay in processing bursary payments.

6.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED the issues around the processing of student bursaries, and NOTED reassurances from the Vice Principal Innovation, Planning & Performance that the College had concentrated its efforts on supporting the Student Funding Team to process outstanding bursary applications in a timely manner. The Committee AGREED that a review of the bursary process should be conducted, and reported to the next meeting of the Academic Council.

## 7. COLLEGE SATISFACTION SURVEYS REPORT

7.1 STUDENT SATISFACTION & ENGAGMENT SURVEY 2020

7.1.1 The Committee NOTED a report on the results of the 2019/20 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey, which was designed to assess levels of student satisfaction in relation to key aspects of their experience at College. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that, as agreed by the Academic Council on 28 February 2020, the Survey had been reconfigured into a more student-friendly format - which could be completed through Moodle.

7.1.2 The Committee NOTED that the Survey was carried out during the UK wide lockdown period, in March and April 2020, and as such data collection and analysis had been delayed. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that qualitative feedback from the Survey had been reviewed by the Academic Council on 22 May 2020, prior to further qualitative analysis being conducted.

7.1.3 The Committee NOTED that qualitative feedback from students was thematically analysed and the following categories emerged, each of which have been systematically addressed by the College: (i) Participation in online learning; (ii) Mechanisms for feedback and progress reviews; and, (iii) Guidance and Support.

7.1.4 The Committee DISCUSSED the feedback provided and NOTED the action to respond to matters arising from the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey.

7.2 INDUCTION SURVEY 2020/21 UPDATE

7.2.1 The Committee NOTED that the Induction Survey 2020/21 opened on 26 October 2020, in order to coincide with the return to timetabled classes following the October break. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the Survey would remain open until 20 November 2020.

7.2.2 The Committee NOTED that the SFC were due to request amendments to questions, but overturned this decision due to the unexpected nature of the time constraints on all parties involved. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance informed the Committee that two of the questions posed were amended locally, in order to ensure they remained both meaningful and inclusive - in light of changes to the induction process in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

7.2.3 The Committee DISCUSSED changes to the Induction Survey 2020/21, as previously agreed by the Academic Council on 26 May 2020. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance advised the Committee that the outcomes of the Survey would be presented to the next meeting of the Academic Council on 26 February 2020.

**8. ACADEMIC STAFF EXPERIENCE REPORT: ONLINE LEARNING AND TEACHING BEST PRACTICE**

*Tim Childs, Learning Assistant (Performing Arts), joined the meeting*

8.1 The Committee NOTED that, on 11 September 2020, its members had agreed that further discussion around the online delivery of learning and teaching would be welcomed. The Chair advised the Committee that Co-opted Academic Council Members, Ryan Quinn and Ethelinda Lashley-Scott, had been invited to update members on the work their departments had undertaken to enhance online delivery.

8.2 The Committee NOTED a verbal update from Ryan Quinn (Curriculum Leader, Engineering) on the development of best practice within his Department. The Committee NOTED the following points:

    (i)    the use of Office 365 tools as a means to conduct formative assessments;

    (ii)    the potential use of Microsoft Teams to build staff relationships and support structures;

    (iii)    the ongoing considerations around staff and students home environment, and their life/work balance;

    (iv)    the use of Microsoft Teams to record lectures, to aid students understanding and support improved retention;

    (v)    the assessment of practical work via Microsoft Team.

8.3 The Committee NOTED a presentation from Ethelinda Lashley-Scott (Curriculum Manager, Performing Arts) and Tim Childs (Learning Assistant, Performing Arts) on best practice in the Department, which included the development of learning materials to support racial literacy.

8.4 The Committee NOTED a demonstration on the use of CAD software in the PASS Theatre, which could create an accurate 2D and 3D model of the College theatre space. The presenters informed the Committee that the theatre space could be integrated with specialist theatrical lighting software to enable students to practice lighting programming and lighting design from home, prior to transferring designs directly to the theatre space.

8.5 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to hear from academic staff members, and DISCUSSED the integration of such best practice across the College. The Chair, on behalf of the Academic Council, thanked Ryan Quinn Ethelinda Lashley-Scott and Tim Childs for their presentations.

*Tim Childs left the meeting*

## 9. HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? REPORT

9.1    HOW GOOD IS OUR COLLEGE? UPDATE

9.1.1 The Committee NOTED the Edinburgh College Quality Enhancement Plan 2018-21 (QUEP), and reviewed progress against the areas of improvement highlighted within the Plan. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance outlined the primary drivers of the Enhancement Plan, which included: recruitment; retention; attainment; student satisfaction; learning, teaching and assessment; work-integrated learning; and, future proofing of the College curriculum.

9.1.2 The Committee NOTED that Education Scotland had offered colleges an opportunity to review current working methodologies and practices, and Edinburgh College had agreed to participate in a pilot exercise. The HM Inspector advised the Committee that the working relationship between the College and Education Scotland had been positive, even though restrictions in place for the Covid-19 Pandemic had impacted on the format of planned Progress and Support Visits.

9.2    REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

9.2.1 The Committee NOTED a draft Regional Outcome Agreement Self-Evaluation Report which was expected to be submitted to the SFC in January 2021. The Head of Curriculum Planning & Performance 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.

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

(i)     the number of deferred students during 2019/2, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the impact of deferral on their attainment;
(ii)    the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on work placements, and how this could impact on the perceived 'validity' of qualifications;
(iii)   the successful outcome for students, with 98% reporting a 'positive destination';
(iv)    the role of the WAX-ED Group in considering information pertaining to student's ethnicity against the four high-level outcome agreement priorities.

9.2.3 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to review the Self-Evaluation Report and AGREED to endorse its submission to the SFC.

9.2.4 The Committee AGREED that specific issues raised during the course of the meeting, such as bursary payment, student deferrals, work placement access and LDTs, should be considered by the Academic Council in further detail at its meetings in February and May 2021.


## 10.    ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

### 10.1 TENURE OF THE CHAIR OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL

10.1.1 The Committee NOTED the tenure of the Chair of the Academic Council, as a Non-Executive Board Member, would end on 20 October 2021. The Chair advised the Committee that to support succession planning a new Chair would be agreed by the Board on 08 December 2021, to commence in the role at the start of the new academic year (2021/22).


## 11.    FOR INFORMATION

### 11.1 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: STUDENT REPRESENTATION

11.1.1    The Committee NOTED an internal audit report on student representations, as previously reviewed by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 07 October 2020. The ECSA Student President advised the Committee that the Students' Association welcomed the recommendations outlined within the report, and would work with the College to address these actions in a timely manner.

### 11.2 HORIZON SCANNING REPORT

11.2.1    The Committee NOTED a Horizon Scanning Report which outlined major political, economic, social, technological, legal and/or

environmental developments that could impact on the five strategic plan aims of the College.

11.3 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK 2020/21

11.3.1 The Committee NOTED its proposed programme of work for the upcoming academic year

## 12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 The next meeting of the Academic Council will take place on 26 February 2021.

*The meeting closed at 16:00*