

**Minute of the Learning & Teaching
Committee Meeting
Held via Video Conference using Zoom,
On Thursday 3 September 2020**



Present: Fiona McQueen (Chair)
Lauren Howieson
Mary McClung
Steven Oliver
Mike Stewart
Alison Sutherland
Carol Turnbull
Steven Wallace

In attendance: Brendan Ferguson (Board Secretary)
Yvonne Melvin (Board Administrative Officer)
Anne Campbell (Vice Principal – Curriculum)
Jane McKie (Vice Principal – People)
Elaine Hutton (Director of Curriculum)
Julie Maxwell (Director of Curriculum)
Gavin Murray (Director of Curriculum)
James Thomson (Director of Finance & Student Funding)

1 Welcome and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular, the new Student Vice-President Steven Oliver.

There were no declarations of Interest.

2 Apologies

Apologies were received from Committee members Alan Walker, Elaine Anderson, Margarete Bryan and Steve Graham and from ELT member Michael Breen.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 28 May 2020 (Paper 1) (C/P)

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Steven Wallace
Seconded: Mike Stewart

There were no matters arising.

Action Tracker (Paper 1a)

The Chair introduced Paper 1a.

All outstanding actions had been completed to May 2020.

4 Student Association Report (Paper 2) (P)

L Howieson introduced Paper 2 and took the Committee through it as presented. The Committee was reminded that, due to the imposition of Covid-19 restrictions, the 2020 Student Association elections were conducted online, with campaigning and polling taking place from 1 to 5 June 2020. The online student elections were

carried out successfully and Student President, Lauren Howieson and Student Vice President, Steven Oliver, officially took up their positions on 1 July 2020.

It was noted that, as a result of the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 restrictions, the focus for the year ahead would be student engagement, with student mental health and wellbeing as a priority. L Howieson highlighted that the ACSA was currently exploring ways to create a virtual Student Association which would be fit for purpose and enable the Student Association to support and represent students effectively.

S Oliver highlighted that the Student Association was working closely with the Marketing team to relay to students the message of COVID-19 Awareness, including the wearing of face coverings whilst on-campus and individual and collective cultural behaviour when off-campus. It was noted that the possibility of asking a local celebrity to endorse and reinforce this message was being explored.

S Oliver also updated the Committee on this year's Fresher's Event. The Committee was advised that, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Student Association were planning an alternative event using the Wakelet platform, which would allow students access to discounts and live social events, such as quizzes, live music and online chats. It was noted that a link to the Fresher's Wakelet would be circulated to all students at the start of the new academic year.

The Committee noted that S Oliver would be taking the Wear It On Your Sleeve campaign forward this year and was currently exploring options and ideas on how this year's campaign could work best for individual curriculum areas. It was noted that a re-launch of the campaign was planned during My Mental Health Matters Month, scheduled to take place from 10 September to 10 October.

The Committee recognised the importance of the Wear It On Your Sleeve campaign and members were keen to be involved. L Howieson thanked members for their offer and advised that further communication would be circulated to the Committee.

The Committee noted and welcomed the above report.

5 Terms of Reference and 2020-21 Work Plan (Paper 3) (P)

The Board Secretary took the Committee through Paper 3 as presented. The use of colour coding in the 2020-21 Work Plan was highlighted and it was explained that this was due to a number of reports potentially being delayed/unavailable as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions.

The Committee noted and approved the Terms of Reference and the 2020-21 Work Plan.

6 Covid-19 Update (Paper 4) (P)

A Campbell introduced Paper 4 and took the Committee through it as presented. The Committee was reminded that specific guidance for the College sector in Phase 3 of the Scottish Government's Route Map came into effect on 29 June 2020. It was advised that updated guidance was expected in line with recent announcements.

The Committee was informed that the main focus, for now, was supporting those students deferred in AY2019-20 to complete their studies, which was being undertaken in line with guidance received from the various awarding bodies.

A Campbell also highlighted to the Committee that Course Teams had used professional judgement and SQA Guidance to estimate grades and bands for students who had been due to sit their exams with the College in AY2019-20. All authorised estimates were submitted to SQA on 29 May 2020. Following review of the grades by SQA, a number of candidates' certificated results were downgraded from the estimate submitted by the College. This decision, however, had subsequently been reversed nationally, as widely reported, and the College estimated grades for candidates were accepted. It was noted that the affected candidates would receive replacement certificates from SQA on 8 September 2020. It was also highlighted that, following the announcement of an independent review by the Deputy First Minister, A Campbell had been invited to join a group of colleagues to provide feedback on behalf of the College sector.

The Committee was reminded that the school/college partnership programmes were scheduled to commence week beginning 24 August 2020. In support of the safe return of schools, the Scottish Government had asked colleges to provide the mitigation practices that had been agreed with Local Authority partners in order to minimise risk of transmission of Covid-19 through school pupils attending college. It was noted that, in reviewing those practices, the Executive Team took the difficult decision to postpone the commencement of school/college programmes until 31 August and were currently awaiting further guidance from Scottish Government on the matter.

A Campbell also advised that the Principal and Vice-Principal Curriculum now represent the views of the College on various strategic fora. The Committee noted that the College was well-represented at strategic level both locally and nationally and this, in turn, would ensure that that future curriculum planning was informed by both regional and national requirements.

Further discussions took place during which questions were asked and satisfactory responses provided. In response to one query, confirmation was provided that the College would actively take part in the Scottish Government's Test, Protect and Trace initiative and that all communication plans had been agreed in line with the College Business Continuity Plan.

The Committee noted the content of Paper 4 and commended the work of the College and the commitment of staff to the students during this difficult and unprecedented time.

7 2019-20 External Verification Report (Paper 5) (P)

A Campbell introduced Paper 5 and noted that the College had expected to participate in 86 external verification activities in 2019-20 (compared to 92 in 2018-19) as follows:

- 14 SQA visits (62 in whole of 2018-19)
- 2 SQA postal/central verifications (14 in whole of 2018-19)
- 8 visits from other Awarding Bodies (16 in whole of 2018-19)

Members were advised that, post 20 March, four external verification activities had been completed remotely and that 58 planned activities had been cancelled/postponed due to the closure of campuses in response to the Covid-19 emergency.

Of the 28 external verifications which were carried out, 26 were successful at the first visit while on two occasions some minor further actions were required. The actions were completed quickly and the external verification reports updated to a successful outcome. The Committee was asked to note the positive feedback received.

The Committee noted the contents of Paper 5 and welcomed the positive feedback received.

8 2019-20 Credit Position Report – Final Position for Audit (Paper 6) (P)

A Campbell introduced Paper 6, confirming that the College had exceeded its credit target by 719 credits. The Committee noted this very positive position.

The Committee noted Paper 6 and commended the College on the positive 2019-20 credit position reported.

9 2019-20 Student Support Funds – Final Position at July 2020 (Paper 7) (P)

J Thomson took the Committee through Paper 7, advising of a small underspend in the 2019-20 Student Support Funds of c£25,000, which would be carried forward to AY2020-21. The overspend in FE Discretionary Funds and SFC Bursary were also highlighted. The Committee was advised that this was due to the additional financial assistance provided to students during the current period of Covid-19 restrictions.

The Committee noted Paper 7 and commended the College and its Finance Team for the support provided to students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

10 Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Report (Paper 8) (P)

G Murray introduced Paper 8 and took the Committee through it in detail. The Committee noted that the impact of Covid-19 meant that the College fell short of its Modern Apprenticeship target. However, it was also noted that the College had exceeded the Sub-Contracted Modern Apprenticeships target.

The Committee was advised that, despite the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the College had received a positive level of enquiries in Engineering, which it hoped would translate into new starts at a level close to the contracted volume. In addition, it was noted that the College would continue to work with employers and partners to promote apprenticeships to industry and young people, to maximise recruitment in 2020-21 and minimise the impact of COVID-19 to the skills pipeline. A discussion followed during which a number of questions were asked and satisfactory responses received

The Committee noted the contents of Paper 8 and commended the ongoing work in the area of Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning being undertaken by the College in difficult circumstances

11 Risk Register – Learning and Teaching Extract at May 2020 (Verbal) (R)

J Thomson provided a verbal update. The Committee was reminded that, as agreed by members at the meeting in June 2020, the normal committee extract from the Corporate Risk Register had been temporarily suspended in place of an overarching COVID-19 Risk Register during the Coronavirus pandemic and the consequent restrictions imposed. It was proposed that this continue during this cycle of Committee meetings and that a paper be provided for consideration by the Audit Committee outlining the actions taken by the College to mitigate the risks which, if approved, would then be presented to the Board at its scheduled meeting on 24 September 2020.

Discussion followed during which it was agreed that the above proposal represented an appropriate way to proceed and agreeing the continued suspension of the Committee's risk extract.

The Committee thanked J Thomson for the update and approved the above proposal.

Received for Information

12 2020-23 Gender Action Plan (Paper 9) (P)

13 SFC Credit Guidance for Colleges AY 2020-21 (Paper 10) (P)

14 Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 12 November 2020 at 4.00pm

(C/P) Confirmed minutes will be published

(P) Papers will be published on the College website

(R) Papers will not be published for reasons of commercial sensitivity or for reasons of personal data confidentiality