

REVIEW OF SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

WORKING GROUP: STAFFING, LEARNERS & LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

**Minutes of Meeting
held at 1pm on Thursday 14 September 2006
at St. Andrews House, Edinburgh**

PRESENT

James Alexander	NUS Scotland (Joint Chair)
Col Baird	ETLLD-FAED (Review of Scotland's Colleges Team)
Peter Beaumont	ETLLD-FAED (Skills and Staffing Team)
Raaj Bhatti	ETLLD-FAED (Skills and Staffing Team) (substituting for Tom Craig)
Heather Dunk	West Lothian College (substituting for Susan Bird)
Bill Harvey	Scottish Funding Council
Marian Healy	EIS (Joint Chair)
Martin Kirkwood	Scottish Funding Council (substituting for Claire Bell)
Matthew Lancashire,	NUS Scotland (substituting for Gail Edwards)
John McCann	SFEU
Stewart McKillop	South Lanarkshire College
Sheila Meikle	UNISON (substituting for Maureen Anderson)
Penny Neish	ASC

APOLOGIES

Maureen Anderson	UNISON
Victoria Beattie	ETLLD-FAED (Review of Scotland's Colleges Team)
Claire Bell	Scottish Funding Council
Susan Bird	Stevenson College Edinburgh
John Bowditch	HMIE
Gordon Casey	AMICUS
Tom Craig	ETLLD-FAED (Skills and Staffing Team) (w/g Secretariat)
John Ireson	Skill Scotland
Iain McCaskey	SSAScot

1) Welcome and Introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed everybody and apologies were noted as above.

2) Note of meeting on 4 July 2006, incl update on Action Points

2.1 This was approved for publication on the ROSCO website.

2.2 Progress on action points was noted as follows:

Description of Action	Person(s) to provide update
John McCann to provide group with final Profiling of Staff report as soon as it becomes available.	John McCann <i>Outstanding</i>
Funding Council to provide further evidence of the link between estates improvement and retention rates with a view to informing the group's recommendations	Martin Kirkwood <i>Outstanding</i>
FAED to source central guidance, if available, on the format of Spending Review bids	Peter Beaumont <i>Outstanding</i>
Amendment to be made to SFC discussion paper as suggested by Susan Bird	Martin Kirkwood <i>Cleared</i>
FAED to investigate issue regarding developing role of SSCs and report back to the group on this	Peter Beaumont <i>Cleared</i>
FAED to revise Paper 12 as suggested and then circulate it to members prior to its being submitted to the Core Group	<i>Cleared</i>
NUS to provide second case study for approval by members prior to its inclusion in revised Paper 12	<i>Cleared</i>
All members to review the second case study, in due course, to allow Paper 12 to be finalised and submitted to the Core Group	<i>Cleared</i>

3) Funding requirements for estates

3.1 Martin Kirkwood spoke to paper 13 circulated in advance.

3.2 SFC is gathering evidence in three main areas:

- Known and likely capital funding commitments for the next spending review period – around £125m over first two years, but this does not include Glasgow city centre colleges and some colleges who have yet to submit a business case.
- Establishing an evidence base to move towards an ongoing and sustainable capital funding stream in the medium term – consultants have been commissioned to examine funding levels required to move the sector to a “steady state”.
- Qualitative evidence of benefits to staff, students and wider communities from investment in college estates – in progress. Some positive evidence is available relating to student recruitment and retention and work is ongoing to gather this.

- 3.3 The group noted the importance of this area of work to the group's overall success, and that it was vital that SFC's evidence gathering was finalised as a matter of urgency.

✚ ACTION – Scottish Funding Council (Martin/Claire) to finalise evidence gathering (on sustainable funding and the benefits of investment in estates) in time for the October meeting

- 3.4 Stewart McKillop advised that ASC were also keen to produce a paper on qualitative benefits, which would aim to capture impact in terms of:

- DIFFERENCE TO LEARNER
 - achievement
 - retention
 - recruitment
 - overall perceptions – for example, would it make the college a more desirable option than University?
- DIFFERENCE TO STAFF
 - conditions of employment (in terms of working environment/morale but not contract)
 - use of ICT
 - teaching methodology
- DIFFERENCE TO COMMUNITY
 - wider regeneration, for example Telford
 - library, sports, hairdressing & beauty, and restaurant facilities
- DIFFERENCE TO EMPLOYER'S VIEWS
 - would they be more likely to use Colleges?
 - impact on the economy

- 3.5 It was agreed that SFC would have a co-ordinating role for ASC's proposed paper and that a draft would be prepared for the November meeting.

✚ ACTION – Stewart McKillop and Martin Kirkwood to circulate initial draft of their paper looking at the qualitative benefits of improved college estates in time for the November meeting

- 3.6 It was also agreed this work should encompass the views of college staff and learners as well as Principals. Costings, geographical breakdowns and trend analysis would also be useful.

4) Modernisation and improvement of learning and teaching methods

- 4.1 In Victoria Beattie's absence, Peter Beaumont spoke to paper 14 circulated in advance.
- 4.2 The group broadly welcomed the report but suggested it needed a more evidence-based approach. For example:

- Paragraph 6 – too generic. Need to unpack more with some percentages and number of colleges affected, referring to HMIE stats. Also, need to focus more on why students drop out. Solid research was needed, although the group acknowledged that one source of information was the “withdrawal slip” completed by students when they leave their course. Most colleges should be doing this and it feeds into the student outcome PI. SFC collates the data
 - Paragraph 8 – needs to acknowledge that improvements are being made to college estates. Need to unpack the staff development bullet more with percentages and number of colleges affected. Could also reference HMIE stats.
 - Paragraph 21 – more detail required in terms of the role of the Professional Development Forum, how many staff take up these awards and how they are funded.
- 4.3 Disappointing that there is no reference to student satisfaction survey which indicated a higher level of satisfaction from students when compared to HEIs.
- 4.4 Emphasis should be on the way sector could deliver with increased resources.
- 4.5 The CPD issues are still a matter of ongoing discussion. HMIE report on sector leading innovation and practice is due before Christmas. The “Focus on Learning” project is nearly complete and has suggested several new positive approaches to improve the student learning experience.
- 4.6 There was a general discussion on the benefits of reflective practice and the following points were noted:
- reflection time can increase quality of learning for students
 - generally agreed staff do not have enough time to reflect on their practice
 - no doubt there is an argument to be made for more time, with related resource implications, but need to be careful how this is sold. For example, consider how it fits in with CPD.
- 4.7 With regard to the discussion points in paragraph 38, the group agreed the following:
- (i) “Focus on learning” project should be asked to present at next meeting.
 - ✚ **ACTION – John McCann to arrange for colleagues from the “Focus on learning” project to present at the October meeting**
 - (ii) The HMIE report would be a useful document to focus discussion. There is a culture of innovation out there that we want to foster.
 - (iii) Retention – SFEU undertook a literature review around 18 months ago, which found that there was no single reason/action which lay behind students dropping out. The review suggested that good practice places

responsibility for seeking to address such issues with course leaders. More research in this area is unlikely to be enlightening.

✚ ACTION – John McCann to circulate literature review on retention

(iv) The assessment burden on both learners and teachers, is however, an area where further research (which is beyond the scope of this group), would be helpful.

5) Profile of college students

5.1 In Victoria Beattie's absence, Peter Beaumont spoke to paper 15 circulated in advance. He explained that although it did provide some helpful broad findings, it was not possible to obtain information on sexual orientation, religion and belief of college students.

5.2 The key characteristics of college students in terms of these statistics are:

- Generally older than in HEIs, the biggest band being 25-59
- Age and gender distribution has remained fairly consistent since 1999/2000
- More female students (as is also the case in HEIs). But in colleges, females also tended to be older than the males
- Majority of both HEI and College students stated they were "white" but HEIs have more students in the "other" category
- HEI students more likely than college students to have no known disability

5.1 The group did not believe that, in itself, the paper had any specific implications for its work or the college sector generally. The group also decided there was no need to engage Equality Forward for further research

6) Update on Professional Development Sub Group

6.1 Peter provided a progress update. With regard to teacher training costs, he is continuing to work with the chairs of the SFEU's HR Community of Practice and the Professional Development Community of Practice. He has also had a useful meeting with Bill Harvey. A revised paper will hopefully be ready for the group to consider at the October meeting.

✚ ACTION – Peter Beaumont to present revised paper on estimated costs of teacher training at the October meeting

6.2 The group will also discuss papers in the following areas:

- statistics comparing the profile of College Staff in relation to the HEI and schools sectors
- principles for an interim code of practice for all staff
- SFC update on CPD Pilot

7) Any other business

- 7.1 Date of next meeting - this will be at 1pm on 12 October 2006 in Europa Building, Glasgow. A meeting for 20 November was also confirmed and there was a provisional meeting scheduled for 14 December if needed.
- 7.2 Roundtable staff governance paper - this is a document that will have some similarities to the NHS staff charter. Marian thought that it had been previously agreed that it would be remitted to SLALE.

- ✚ **ACTION – Col Baird to investigate whether roundtable staff governance paper was to be remitted to SLALE and feedback to group in time for next meeting**

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS:

- ✚ **ITEM 3: Scottish Funding Council (Martin/Claire) to finalise evidence gathering (on sustainable funding and the benefits of investment in estates) in time for the October meeting**
- ✚ **ITEM 3: Stewart McKillop and Martin Kirkwood to circulate initial draft of their paper looking at the qualitative benefits of improved college estates in time for the November meeting**
- ✚ **ITEM 4: John McCann to arrange for colleagues from the “Focus on learning” project to present at the October meeting**
- ✚ **ITEM 4: John McCann to circulate literature review on retention**
- ✚ **ITEM 6: Peter Beaumont to present revised paper on estimated costs of teacher training at the October meeting**
- ✚ **AOB: Col Baird to investigate whether roundtable staff governance paper was to be remitted to SLALE and feedback to group in time for next meeting**

Raaj K Bhatti, FAED Skills & Staffing Team, October 2006