

**REVIEW OF SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES**

**WORKING GROUP: STAFFING, LEARNERS  
AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

**Minutes of Meeting  
held at 1pm on 12 October 2006  
at Europa Building, Glasgow**

**Attendees:**

James Alexander, NUS Scotland (Joint Chair)

Col Baird, ETLLD-FAED (Review of Scotland's Colleges Team)  
Victoria Beattie, ETLLD-FAED (Review of Scotland's Colleges Team)  
Peter Beaumont, ETLLD-FAED (Skills and Staffing Team)  
John Bowditch, HMIE  
Gordon Casey, AMICUS  
Tom Craig, ETLLD-FAED (Skills and Staffing Team) (w/g Secretariat)  
Bill Harvey, Scottish Funding Council  
John Ireson, Skill Scotland  
Martin Kirkwood, Scottish Funding Council (substitute for Claire Bell)  
Matthew Lancashire, NUS Scotland (substitute for Gail Edwards)  
John McCann, SFEU  
Stewart McKillop, South Lanarkshire College  
Sheila Meikle, UNISON  
Penny Neish, ASC  
Chris Robinson, Equality Forward (guest presenter)  
Alan Smith, Cardonald College (guest presenter)

**Apologies:**

Maureen Anderson, UNISON  
Claire Bell, Scottish Funding Council  
Susan Bird, Stevenson College Edinburgh  
Gail Edwards, NUS Scotland  
Marian Healy, EIS (Joint Chair)  
Iain McCaskey, SSAScot

**1. Chair's Introduction, Apologies etc.**

- Apologies were recorded as noted above.

**2. Note of Meeting of 14 September 2006, incl. update on Action Points**

- The minutes were agreed to be a fair and accurate record.
- An update on outstanding action points was provided as shown below:

<b>Description of Action</b>	<b>Update</b>
John McCann to provide group with final Profiling of Staff report as soon as it becomes available.	Condensed version provided. See item 6.
Funding Council to provide further evidence of the link between estates improvement and retention rates with a view to informing the group's recommendations	Stewart McKillop would present on the qualitative benefits of estates improvement at the next meeting.
FAED to source central guidance, if available, on the format of Spending Review bids	Peter Beaumont advised that this was not yet available.
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	Martin Kirkwood would present on funding for estates at item 5.
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	Stewart McKillop would present on the qualitative benefits of estates improvement at the next meeting.
John McCann to arrange for colleagues from the "Focus on Learning" project to present at the October meeting	Done. See item 4.
John McCann to circulate literature review on retention	In hand. Victoria Beattie would very shortly circulate the revised Learning and Teaching paper and the literature review paper on retention.
Peter Beaumont to present revised paper on estimated costs of teacher training at the October meeting	Peter Beaumont would now present this paper at the November meeting.
Col Baird to investigate whether roundtable staff governance paper was to be remitted to SLALE and feedback to group in time for next meeting	Col Baird advised that a paper would be prepared for discussion at the November meeting.

### **3. Equality Forward presentation**

- Chris Robinson, Director of Equality Forward, delivered a presentation on the establishment, launch and role of her organisation. Following this she answered questions from members on related issues.
- She said that progress on equalities was likely to involve both resourcing and cultural change. She acknowledged that there were significant cultural differences at institutional level and that some colleges might not be able to recruit dedicated Equalities Officers.
- It was important to embed equalities into learning and teaching practices. Obviously, it would be easier to do this with new courses than with existing ones.
- Members were invited to attend the forthcoming Equalities Forward regional launch events which were scheduled to take place throughout Scotland during October and November. (A list of the events could be located on the SFEU website).

#### **4. Focus on Learning presentation**

- Alan Smith of Cardonald College delivered a presentation on the Focus on Learning 2 project, with which he was very closely involved. While Focus on Learning 1 had had a practical focus, this project sought to provide evidence of the critical success factors in programmes seeking to improve employability. Following this he answered questions from members on related issues.
- Members were enthused to hear about the innovative work being undertaken by practitioners in an area of national policy significance.
- Key points to emerge from the presentation were: the importance of early intervention; the value of funding in allowing staff the time and space to intervene with particular groups and/or individuals; the high level of commitment from staff to their projects; the staff development benefits of involvement; and the importance of evidencing project outcomes.
- There was some discussion about the return on investment and the way in which funding from the project created 'space' for interventions to occur.
- Members thought it would be important to highlight to other colleges the lessons that had been learnt from the project. Alan noted that an article about the project was in the latest issue of the SFEU's Broadcast. There would also be a national dissemination event taking place on 07 December 2006 at the Stirling Management Centre.

#### **5. Funding for Estates presentation**

- Martin Kirkwood delivered a presentation on present and future funding requirements for estates within the college sector in Scotland. Following this he answered questions from members on related issues.
- Members were informed that a report had just been received from construction consultants Currie and Brown, which estimated the monies that would be required both to address the current backlog of estates projects and to move towards an ongoing sustainable capital funding stream – a key Funding Council objective. The latter estimate in particular would need to be considered in detail prior to any firm Spending Review recommendations being submitted.
- There was some discussion about the evidence which will be required by Ministers for the Spending Review. The need for timely, robust evidence - quantitative and qualitative - was reiterated.
- The Funding Council's Capital Investment Committee would soon be discussing the findings of the Currie and Brown Report. The Committee's conclusions were likely to be of close interest to SLALE as it finalised its report.

#### **ACTION**

- **Funding Council to provide members with the outcomes of the Capital Investment Committee's discussion on estates for the December meeting so that the findings can be used by the Working Group in their draft final recommendations paper.**

## **6. Profiling of Staff report**

- It was agreed that John McCann's full presentation should be deferred until the next meeting, to allow the matter to be discussed properly. For now, he would just give a brief introduction to the report.
- The report had been jointly commissioned by the ASC and STUC, funded by the Scottish Funding Council and produced by the SFEU. While the project had certainly been challenging at times, he felt that the ASC and STUC had represented their members well, resulting in a very strong piece of work.
- While Phase 1 had involved using existing data sets, mainly from the Scottish Funding Council, Phase 2 had involved new research, based mainly on an online questionnaire directed at college staff. In-depth interviews had also been held with senior managers in 15 colleges.
- The key messages and recommendations from the report were summarised as follows:
  - ✓ That Scotland's Colleges had a strong and committed workforce, comparing well with other sectors;
  - ✓ That there were nonetheless significant challenges looming, which emphasised the need for Scotland's Colleges to strengthen their HR strategies;
  - ✓ That CPD opportunities were a key factor in attracting staff into the sector and keeping them there;
  - ✓ That a fundamental review of staffing returns from the sector should be considered; and
  - ✓ That the profiling of staff in the sector should be a regular occurrence.
- Penny Neish thanked SFEU on behalf of the ASC for their hard work in bringing the project to completion.

## **7. Update on Professional Development Sub-group**

- Peter Beaumont gave a brief verbal update on progress. The last meeting had been held on 14 September and had considered four main items. The first had been Victoria Beattie's paper looking at statistics in relation to the age, gender and ethnicity of staff across the college sector. It was felt that this could be complementary to the SFEU's forthcoming Profile of Staff report (as discussed above). Secondly, there was discussion around the estimated costs of teacher training, with Peter undertaking to present a revised paper of estimates at the next Sub-group meeting. Thirdly, John McCann had introduced discussion on the issues relating to codes of practice in Scotland's Colleges. And finally, Bill Harvey had given an update on the Scottish Funding Council's CPD pilot.
- The minutes of the last Sub-group meeting would be circulated to all members as soon as they had been approved.

## **8. Any Other Business**

- James Alexander proposed that a Sub-group be established to look at pulling together the various strands of SLALE's work into a draft report. This group could comprise the two joint Chairs, two people from the Executive (one to contribute and one to take notes) and a couple of other people from the main

group. Victoria Beattie said she would send an e-mail to all members seeking volunteers.

#### **Action**

- **Victoria Beattie to e-mail members seeking volunteers for the Sub-group which would pull together the final report.**
- **FAED to convene Report-drafting Sub-group in due course.**

#### **List of Action Points**

- **FAED to prepare a paper on staff governance standard for discussion at the November meeting.**
- **Funding Council to provide members with the outcomes of the Capital Investment Committee's discussion on estates for the December meeting so that the findings can be used by the Working Group in their draft final recommendations paper.**
- **Victoria Beattie to e-mail members seeking volunteers for the Sub-group which would pull together the final report.**
- **FAED to convene Report-drafting Sub-group in due course.**

**Tom Craig  
ETLLD-FAED  
16 October 2006**