

**REVIEW OF SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES**

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

**Minutes of Meeting  
held at 2pm on 14 December 2006  
at Europa Building, Glasgow**

**Attendees:**

James Alexander, NUS Scotland (Joint Chair)

Victoria Beattie, ETLLD-FAED (Review of Scotland's Colleges Team)

Peter Beaumont, ETLLD-FAED (Skills and Staffing Team)

Susan Bird, Stevenson College Edinburgh

John Bowditch, HMIE

Tom Craig, ETLLD-FAED (Skills and Staffing Team) (w/g Secretariat)

Bill Harvey, Scottish Funding Council

Marian Healy, EIS (Joint Chair)

John Ireson, Skill Scotland

Martin Kirkwood, Scottish Funding Council

Matthew Lancashire, NUS Scotland

John McCann, SFEU

Sheila Meikle, UNISON

Penny Neish, ASC

**Apologies:**

Maureen Anderson, UNISON

Col Baird, ETLLD-FAED (Review of Scotland's Colleges Team)

Gordon Casey, AMICUS

Iain McCaskey, SSAScot

Stewart McKillop, South Lanarkshire College

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

- Apologies were recorded as noted above.

**2. Note of Meeting of 20 November 2006, incl. update on Action Points**

- John Ireson advised that he had recently sent a minor amendment to Tom Craig. This was under item 3.
- The minutes were otherwise 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>
FAED to source central guidance, if available, on the format of Spending Review bids	Peter Beaumont advised that this was not yet available, although he had recently attended a presentation about the Executive's finance systems, during which the Spending Review process had been mentioned.
Peter Beaumont to present revised paper on estimated costs of teacher training at the October meeting	This would be covered by the draft Sub-group report at item 4.
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.	This would be covered at item 3.
FAED to make available information on projected student populations in FE and HE.	Done. Sent with draft minutes.
John Ireson to pass details of the experiences of disabled staff, including examples of good practice, to John McCann.	Done.
John McCann to table paper highlighting the key messages from the Profile Report in time for the meeting on 14 December.	Done.
Stewart McKillop to obtain testimonials from employers, staff and students and pass these to Martin Kirkwood in good time for the December meeting.	Not yet done. Stewart was not present to provide an update.
FAED to return idea of Staff Governance Standard to the Roundtable in due course.	This had been agreed with colleagues in FAED.
FAED to prepare the Sub-group's recommendations paper which would be discussed by the Sub-group at their December meeting and then presented to the full working group in early January.	Done. To be discussed at item 4.
Susan Bird to send copy of Stevenson's Staff Governance Standard to the Reviews Team.	Done. Sent with draft minutes.
Costings paper to be updated for December meeting.	This would be covered by the draft Sub-group report at item 4.

### **3. Funding for Estates**

- Martin Kirkwood spoke to the paper circulated in advance. He advised that the Capital Investment Committee's conclusions were reflected in the paper, which assigned costs to the recommendations from consultants Currie and Brown. However, the scenarios in the paper had not yet been discussed by the Funding Council itself.

- The preferred option of the Committee was a less extreme variation of Scenario 1, whereby all that could be addressed was addressed as quickly as possible.
- John Ireson wondered if the £3.20 economic impact figure would become obsolete should this level of investment in the sector become a reality. However, members noted that this figure was based on returns to recurrent, rather than capital, expenditure.
- Marian Healy said she thought that a recent report had proposed that PPP/PFI was inappropriate for Scotland's Colleges. Martin advised that what the report had actually said was that PPP/PFI was inappropriate for projects below £50M. However, the Glasgow Colleges project would cost a lot more than this.
- There was some discussion over whether or not the group would wish to support a PPP/PFI solution and how influential this might be in terms of the Spending Review. Martin said he thought it would be valid for the group to state that PPP/PFI could have some negative consequences for Colleges, given the pace of curriculum change in particular.
- Susan Bird said it was important not to have pockets of major investment within the sector that would be to the detriment of other parts.
- Penny Neish said that the importance of moving the sector to a 'steady state' in terms of capital investment should also be emphasised. Martin agreed that this was fundamental. Either the sector could 'take the pain' now or it would have to wait for up to 25 years.
- John Bowditch said he was not sure that this group was qualified to decide on specific levels of spending. It would be more beneficial to concentrate on the benefits of improved investment in estates.
- Members agreed that their focus should be on quality, supporting Scotland's economy and on the potential benefits to students and employers. To this end, Stewart McKillop's qualitative analysis (including testimonials) should be given prominence within the relevant section of the report.
- It was agreed that Martin would draft the Learning Environments section of the final report in conjunction with Stewart McKillop and the Executive. It was further agreed that, while a draft of this would be made available in time for the January meeting, the section could be finalised afterwards, either by e-mail or at a subsequent meeting.
- It was agreed that the question of learning resources should be mentioned in the Learning Environments section. This should include evidence from the BRITE Centre, which John Ireson would seek to obtain.

## **ACTION**

- **Martin Kirkwood to draft Learning Environments section of final report in time for January meeting. This to be undertaken in conjunction with Stewart McKillop and the Executive.**
- **John Ireson to obtain evidence re learning resources for disabled students from the BRITE Centre and pass this to Martin Kirkwood.**

## **4. Draft Report of Professional Development Sub-group**

- Peter Beaumont spoke to the draft report circulated in advance. This had been discussed by the Sub-group at the meeting immediately prior to this one.

- The Sub-group had agreed to some further changes to the draft report. However, it had not changed fundamentally in Peter's view. A new version would be prepared for the full working group to consider.
- James Alexander proposed a vote of thanks to Victoria Beattie in particular for the hard work she had put into preparing the draft report.
- It was agreed that it would be best if members of the main group were to give comments then on the draft they had seen. Sub-group members could then advise whether these points had already been taken on board.
- John McCann said he had two main areas of concern with the draft report. First of all, he felt that there was no common understanding in the sector of what it meant to be professional and that this debate should be maintained in some way. Secondly, in the context of growing sector maturity, it was odd that the report seemed to be advocating a greater role for the Executive in relation to staff development issues. In particular, he was perplexed to note that the SFEU had not been listed as a potential member of the PDF Sub-group.
- Bill Harvey advised that explicit references to a PDF "Sub-group" were going to be dropped from the report and that the relevant matters were instead going to be referred to the full PDF to take forward as they saw fit. This could be by the PDF revisiting its remit, the setting up of a sub-group, or some other means.
- Peter Beaumont said that the Executive was not seeking to control more, but simply to continue working together with the sector as in previous years.
- John McCann said he hoped that the PDF could encourage the continuation of the debate around professionalism. However, it seemed anomalous to him that the SFEU had not been invited to sit on the Forum. John Bowditch (a member of the PDF) said there was nothing to stop this from happening.
- Bill Harvey said this raised the need for a recommendation on adjusting the membership of the PDF. It was agreed that such a recommendation should be inserted in the report.
- Penny Neish said she felt that there was a need for the report to put more of the positive messages about the sector up front. Also, since colleges were autonomous bodies, she was concerned about the references to colleges being 'required' to do this or that.
- Bill Harvey suggested a softening of the language to something like 'expectation' rather than 'requirement'. However, he felt that there would always be a bit of tension between what Ministers had recommended and what colleges were obliged to do in response.
- It was agreed that the redrafted Sub-group report should be circulated before Christmas if possible.
- It was requested that any further comments on the draft should be e-mailed to the Reviews Team within the next few days.

## **ACTION**

- **Redrafted Sub-group report to be circulated before Christmas.**
- **Members to send any further comments on draft Sub-group report to Reviews Team within next few days (i.e. no later than 20 December).**

## **5. Any Other Business**

- James Alexander noted that there was still a need for a title for the final SLALE report. He wondered if there were any views on this.
- Tom Craig said that the working title was 'Releasing Potential', but that members should feel free to submit any other suggestions. These should be e-mailed to Tom ASAP.
- A provisional 'wrap-up' meeting was scheduled for 2pm on Wednesday 31 January. If it was required, this meeting would be held in Glasgow.

### **ACTION**

- **Members to e-mail suggestions for title of final report to Tom Craig.**

### **List of Action Points**

- **Martin Kirkwood to draft Learning Environments section of final report in time for January meeting. This to be undertaken in conjunction with Stewart McKillop and the Executive.**
- **John Ireson to obtain evidence re learning resources for disabled students from the BRITE Centre and pass this to Martin Kirkwood.**
- **Redrafted Sub-group report to be circulated before Christmas.**
- **Members to send any further comments on draft Sub-group report to Reviews Team within next few days (i.e. by about 20 December).**
- **Members to e-mail suggestions for title of final report to Tom Craig.**

**Tom Craig  
ETLLD-FAED  
20 December 2006**