

REVIEW OF SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

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

**Minutes of Meeting
held at 1pm on 17 January 2007
at St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh**

Attendees:

Marian Healy, EIS (Joint Chair)

James Alexander, NUS Scotland (Joint Chair)

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

Susan Bird, Stevenson College Edinburgh

John Bowditch, HMIE

Gordon Casey, AMICUS

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

Bill Harvey, Scottish Funding Council

Martin Kirkwood, Scottish Funding Council

Matthew Lancashire, NUS Scotland

John McCann, SFEU

Stewart McKillop, South Lanarkshire College

Sheila Meikle, UNISON

Penny Neish, ASC

Apologies:

Maureen Anderson, UNISON

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

John Ireson, Skill Scotland

Iain McCaskey, SSAScot

1. Chair's Introduction, Apologies etc.

- Apologies were recorded as noted above.
- It was noted that Victoria Beattie had now moved to a new post in the Scottish Executive. Thanks were recorded for her considerable contribution to the work of the group.
- It was also noted that Col Baird was still on sick leave. The Chair asked that the best wishes of the group be conveyed to him.

2. Note of Meeting of 14 December 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:

Description of Action	Update
FAED to source central guidance, if available, on the format of Spending Review bids	Peter Beaumont advised that this was still not available.
Stewart McKillop to obtain testimonials from employers, staff and students and pass these to Martin Kirkwood in good time for the December meeting.	Done.
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.	Done. To be discussed under item 4.
John Ireson to obtain evidence re learning resources for disabled students from the BRITE Centre and pass this to Martin Kirkwood.	Done.
Redrafted Sub-group report to be circulated before Christmas.	Done (belatedly).
Members to send any further comments on draft Sub-group report to Reviews Team within next few days (i.e. by about 20 December).	All comments taken account of in revised draft.
Members to e-mail suggestions for title of final report to Tom Craig.	One member – John Ireson – had replied with suggestions. However, members agreed to stay with FAED's suggestion of 'Inspiring Achievement'.

3. Draft Final Report of SLALE

Revised Sub-group Report

- Peter Beaumont first of all spoke to the document he had circulated the previous day proposing alternative wording for certain parts of the final Sub-group report. The changes were focussed particularly on the recommendations on CPD for all staff and reflected recent correspondence he had held with the ASC (represented by Susan Bird) on that issue.
- John McCann said he was uncomfortable with extending the role of the PDF and that the task of monitoring CPD for all staff should be given to a sector body instead. Susan Bird advised that the changes were designed specifically to reflect what John was saying. According to the revised version of the Sub-group report, the PDF role would not be extended to cover CPD for all staff.
- There followed a lengthy debate, during which it became apparent that all members would not be able to agree to either the original or the revised versions of the recommendations on CPD for all staff. While some members strongly favoured an extended role for the PDF, others thought that this would not necessarily be the best solution. Ultimately, it was decided by members to 'agree

to disagree' on the issue and that this divergence of views should be reflected within the final SLALE report. Peter undertook to draft revised text and a recommendation which would ensure that these issues were revisited within a reasonably short timescale, but after RoSCO was complete.

- Members suggested some minor amendments to other sections of the document. These were noted with a view to the changes being reflected in both the final Sub-group report and the final SLALE report.

Final SLALE Report

- Peter Beaumont spoke to the draft final report circulated in advance. (Note: since Martin Kirkwood had to leave early, item 4 was actually dealt with beforehand). He noted that certain content was still to be added. This included the Learning Environments chapter, discussed previously, as well as a short section on learning support staff, a section on learning and teaching methods (based on a revised Paper 14), and the part of the Conclusion relating to learning environments. He had also tabled a learning environments case study for members to consider.
- Peter also advised that absent member John Ireson had recently called to request that the section on disability in the Learners chapter be revised. Specifically, John had asked that the existing text and chart be replaced with the text and chart from p.23 of the 'Unlocking Opportunity' report. This suggestion was agreed.
- The Chair led members through the draft report one page at a time. Members made various suggestions for how the report could be improved and these were noted by the Secretariat with a view to producing a revised version for the next and final meeting.

ACTION

- **Revised and updated version of final SLALE report to be circulated one week in advance of the final SLALE meeting (i.e. by 24 January). This draft to reflect the divergent views of members with regards to the issue of supporting CPD for all staff, and include revised text and a related recommendation.**

4. Draft Learning Environments Chapter

- Martin Kirkwood spoke to the draft chapter circulated in advance. He said that he had tried to convey as much information as possible in diagrammatic form. He briefly summarised the chapter, pointing out the content which had been provided by Stewart McKillop.
- A member noted that the appendix only contained one quotation from a member of staff. Stewart McKillop said he would obtain more.
- It was agreed there should be reference to BRITE at paragraph 19.
- The hyperlinks at paragraph 20 lacked descriptions of where they led.
- It was agreed that paragraph 16 should refer to the 'business and wider community'.

- It was noted that the chapter did not contain a recommended sum of money for the sector to invest in capital projects. Martin said his thinking was that this should come through the Funding Council's own Spending review submission.
- It was agreed that the chapter should explicitly relate the group's concern about using PFI. The suggested form of words was as follows: 'PFI has had negative consequences for colleges in the past and data indicates that it is unlikely to be effective in future'.
- Paragraph 9 re the CAFE report did not seem to be saying anything of substance. Peter Beaumont undertook to rectify this.
- The Chair suggested considering in turn the points which had been raised in the e-mail from Tom Craig which had included the draft chapter.
- On the question of including the chart which identified the colleges in different categories, Martin said he had wanted the focus to be on the sector as a whole rather than particular institutions. Members agreed that this was sensible.
- It was agreed that FAED should seek to obtain a case study from John Wheatley College in preference to the one that had been tabled. Members felt that this study should focus particularly on the Easterhouse campus, since the impact of that development could be more readily assessed as it was completed several years ago.
- FAED agreed to draft a sentence on why learning environments were important in delivering the skills needs of Scotland.
- Martin agreed that including a link to the Spaces for Learning report would be sensible. However, he did not see particular merit in including links to either the Atkins or Currie and Brown reports.
- Penny Neish agreed to provide some quotes with regard to the role and coverage of learning resource centres.
- Martin agreed to augment the conclusion of the chapter so that it emphasised the desire to bring the college estate to a condition where it was: 'efficient; relevant, fit for purpose and responsive; and well maintained'.
- Martin also agreed to make mention of Funding Council work relating to sustainability.
- It was also suggested that FAED should contact the SQA for a contribution on learning resources.
- Members thanked Martin and Stewart for their work in preparing the draft chapter.

ACTION

- **Stewart McKillop to obtain more staff quotations.**
- **Martin Kirkwood to provide redraft of Learning Environments chapter by 24 January.**
- **FAED to augment paragraph 19 re CAFE report.**
- **FAED to seek to obtain a learning environments case study from John Wheatley College.**
- **FAED to draft a sentence on why learning environments are important in delivering the skills needs of Scotland.**
- **Penny Neish to provide quotes re the role and coverage of Learning Resource Centres.**
- **FAED to contact the SQA for a contribution on learning resources.**

5. Any Other Business

- No items were raised under this heading.

List of Action Points

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**Tom Craig
ETLLD-FAED
24 January 2007**