



University of the  
Highlands and Islands  
Argyll College

Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd  
agus nan Eilean  
Colaiste Earra-Ghàidheil

**Final Version**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING OF ARGYLL COLLEGE BOARD**  
**Held on Friday 11 December 2020 at 1 pm**  
**Via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:** Andrew Campbell (AMC) Chair, John Colston (JC) Vice Chair, Martin Jones (MJ), Tony Dalgaty (TD), Jim Findlay (JF), Jennifer Swanson (JS), Faye Tudor (FT), Maggie Tierney (MT), Vicky Gunn (VG), Rosemary Allford (RA), Elodie Nowinski (EN), Billie Smith (BKS), HISA Depute (FD), Bettina Sizeland (BS), Scott Matheson (SM) (attended for items 2.4.11, 2.4.24-2.4.29), Mo McKenna (MM) (attended for item 2.4.22)

**Apologies:**

**In attendance:** Elaine Munro (EM), Ailsa Close (AEC), Vicky Daveney (VD) Board Secretary

No	Minute	Who	Action	Date
20.4.1	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence.</b> The Chair welcomed all governors to the meeting and welcomed Mo McKenna, Head of Marketing and Communications. Apologies were received from Scott Matheson who could only attend part of the meeting.			
20.4.2	<b>Declarations of interest &amp; to determine any items as confidential.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>JF declared his position as a local authority councillor.</li><li>BKS reported that her employer had been instructed by the college in relation to the nursery lease. BKS confirmed she is not involved in the engagement and internal safeguards are in place.</li><li>An item under 20.4.29 was deemed to be confidential.</li></ul>			
20.4.3	<b>Minutes of the last meeting.</b> These were approved by the board and are to be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.	VD/AMC	To sign	
20.4.4	<b>Outstanding Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Aligned finance service – action on hold.</li></ul>			

20.4.5	<p><b>Matters arising.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Covid-19:</b> MJ reported the majority of staff are still working from home with a small number in centres as required. Face-to-face teaching is taking place for courses with practical elements and is underpinned with appropriate risk assessments. Students are being kept informed about the mental health support available to them and the college has provided equipment, ie laptops and internet access, to students experiencing digital poverty. Staff have access to the EAP (Employee Assistance Programme).</li> </ul>			
20.4.6	<p><b>Chair's report.</b></p> <p>The chair provided a report on his recent activity including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing to liaise with the Principal and senior staff.</li> <li>• Attending regional strategy committee meetings.</li> <li>• Attending a Court meeting.</li> <li>• Alignment discussions ongoing.</li> </ul>			
<b>RESOURCES</b>				
20.4.7	<p><b>Draft Finance &amp; General Purposes Committee Minute of 27 November 2020</b></p> <p>Minute approved, to be sent to JC for signature. JC drew the boards attention to MT's comment regarding a skills audit to ensure there is adequate finance experience within the committee on his departure.</p>	VD VD	To organise To complete	29/1
20.4.8	<p><b>Management accounts for period to 31 October 2020</b></p> <p>AEC confirmed that a surplus is being forecast.</p>		Noted	
20.4.9	<p><b>Draft Audit Committee Minute – meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December</b></p> <p>Minute to follow w/c 14<sup>th</sup> December.</p>	VD	To complete	
20.4.10	<p><b>Audit Chair's annual report to the board</b></p> <p>Report to follow – Audit Chair unable to attend full meeting.</p>	SM/VD	To complete and circulate	
20.4.11	<p><b>Draft Internal Audit Reports</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Development</li> <li>Health &amp; safety</li> <li>Payroll</li> <li>Follow up reviews</li> <li>Internal Audit Annual Report 2019/20</li> </ol> <p>AEC confirmed that the reports were reflective of the current lack of resources within the college. JC agreed while there are some concerns, the internal audit is a tool which the board can use to understand how the college is performing at a detailed level. MJ</p>			

	<p>stated that the conclusions are as expected and will help the college move forward. JF asked what benchmarks the auditors applied, suggesting the college may be a victim of its distribution. MT agreed that it is a useful tool and asked if the auditors suggested there was a capacity problem. AEC confirmed that they had. BS confirmed that the discussion had been helpful and the audit gives a good insight into what is happening in the college, also suggesting the management response be revisited to better reflect the capacity concerns. AEC agreed that the response may need revising and responded to JF's point regarding distribution, agreeing that it can create difficulties especially during this year's covid-19 situation. JS asked how confident the senior team are that the actions will be completed within the given timescales and asked what the board can do to help. AEC responded that the timings may be revisited in January. MJ stated that the college has recruited a strategic projects co-ordinator who may be able to assist with some elements of the internal audit reports.</p> <p>SM joined the meeting to give an overview of the audit committees conversation with the auditors and stated that a number of issues had been identified. The result being that the auditors could not conclude full confidence in the environment, which will lead to more work and testing on the part of the external auditors, adding that resource availability needs to be considered going forward. AMC reported that SM's overview reflected the discussion the board had just had and noted the impact for the external auditors. SM stressed the importance of the board following up on actions at every meeting and asked for any comments. None were received.</p>			
20.4.12	<p><b>External Audit Plan</b> AEC confirmed that a set of accounts are being prepared for February/early March for audit.</p>		Noted	
20.4.13	<p><b>RAM Consultation</b> MJ stated this was mentioned at the F&amp;GP meeting with a view to a full discussion at the board meeting. The proposal's principles seem helpful, but in practice there would be little change for Argyll College based on the models used. AEC commented that finance directors have asked for more detail and examples of how it would work. JC suggested that the college respond recommending a fresh attempt is made at delivering on the principles. AMC asked MJ whether a response is being sought. MJ stated that a response should be provided. <b>ACTION:</b> MJ, JC and AEC to discuss response.</p>	MJ/JC/ AEC	Noted Respond	
20.4.14	<p><b>Capital Infrastructure Investment: new Dunoon Learning Centre</b> MJ communicated the importance of having a building which is fit for purpose in Dunoon, which has the highest population outside of Helensburgh and high levels of deprivation. SFC are aware of this issue and funding has been applied for through the region as well as a Rural Growth Deal application. AMC stressed the college has a strong social conscience and asked for any comments. None were received.</p>			
20.4.15	<p><b>Health and Safety (Standing item) : H&amp;S issue</b> AMC stated there are no current issues and asked TD for any comments. TD had no particular comments and reported that a discussion was held at the Audit Committee meeting as part of the risk register, adding that in the current climate it is difficult to move items forward.</p>			

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE				
20.4.16	<p><b>Principal's Report for Period ended 30 November 2020</b></p> <p>MJ updated the board on recent activity;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending twice weekly UHI covid crisis management group meetings.</li> <li>• Alignment and merger options appraisal – aligns with SFC's Coherence and Sustainability, phase 1 report. EO are providing £50k for an options appraisal which is currently going through the procurement process, with a view to making an appointment in January. Reporting is expected in April.</li> <li>• Rural Growth Deal – there has been increased activity including meetings with Argyll &amp; Bute Council and HIE.</li> <li>• Meetings have been held with Scottish Futures Trust and Hub South East regarding co-location of services within a shared footprint in Dunoon.</li> <li>• There is a positive move towards block timetabling college time within schools, which will provide an improved college experience to pupils and solve the problem of recruiting part-time tutors to teach, currently, fragmented timetables.</li> </ul> <p>AMC asked MJ if the college has capacity to manage a building project. MJ responded that the new strategic project co-ordinator will be involved.</p>			
20.4.17	<p><b>Draft Minutes of Learning, Teaching and Engagement Committee held on 27 October 2020</b></p> <p>Minute approved, to be signed at next committee meeting.</p> <p>RA noted the good work presented by Susie Wilson at the committee meeting.</p>	RA/VD	To sign	
20.4.18	<p><b>Updated Enhancement Plan</b></p> <p>EM informed the board that this is an update to the regular action plan as part of ongoing engagement with HMIe.</p>		Noted	
20.4.19	<p><b>Update on final HE FTEs and FE Credit Count</b></p> <p>a) FE Credits – EM confirmed that we do not expect to achieve credit target in 20/21, this will be the first time the credit target has not been achieved; short courses cannot currently run due to covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>b) HE FTEs – EM confirmed that the target has been substantially exceeded.</p>		Noted	
20.4.20	<p><b>Early retention KPI for full time FE courses to date 2020/21</b></p> <p>EM confirmed that this is slightly lower than previous years across the sector. There have been challenges for students, including moving to online delivery. The college tracks the reasons as far as is possible.</p>		Noted	
20.4.21	<p><b>Early student satisfaction survey – 2020/21</b></p> <p>EM reported that the response rate had been good – with Argyll College receiving both the highest response and highest overall satisfaction rates across the UHI partnership. Detailed analysis of the data is being carried out by the strategic project co-ordinator for the LTE Committee.</p>		Noted	
20.4.22	<p><b>Recruitment trend analysis</b></p>			

	<p>MM reported on student recruitment activities for the year:- Traditionally volume builds slowly throughout year, peaking in late August/September, this is problematic as it can result in some courses not being viable due to low numbers. This leaves students and tutors in a precarious position close to the start of the academic year. The aim for 2020 was to bring applications forward, this was achieved by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions worked with existing students and progression options.</li> <li>• Kept in contact with ‘warm’ applicants.</li> <li>• Began online promotion early March; focussing on student wellbeing during lockdown.</li> <li>• Online open days held June and August – including original video content and virtual events.</li> <li>• Royal Mail leaflet drops in highly populated areas.</li> <li>• Paid for FB activity to drive traffic to website.</li> <li>• News items have resulted in higher volume of traffic to website – eg Covid tracker created by a Dunoon student.</li> <li>• Online open days well received – popular with tutors and potential students.</li> <li>• Working closely with admissions was successful – focus on better enquiry management and conversion to applications.</li> </ul> <p>MM asked if there were any questions. FT commented on the 80% conversion rate, MM confirmed that conversion rates had been relatively steady year on year. EN asked whether other social media is being used. MM confirmed that twitter and Instagram are also used, but FB is paid for content tailored to target influencers such as teachers and parents/guardians. JS asked if comparisons are being made with other colleges. MM confirmed that there are frequent comparisons with other UHI partner colleges and as part of the marketing and practitioners’ group. JS stated this was encouraging. AMC thanked MM for her presentation and MM left the meeting.</p>			
20.4.23	<p><b>HISA Update</b> FD gave an update on what HISA has been doing to improve the student college experience:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are fewer class reps than last year but a higher level of engagement.</li> <li>• The Digital Poverty fund was promoted, students reported that it was taking longer than expected to receive equipment. EM confirmed this was because the college did not know how many laptops it would receive but all students affected already had a college laptop on loan.</li> <li>• Online competitions and events have been popular.</li> <li>• There has been a rise in engagement on social media.</li> <li>• HISA have supported class events and competitions.</li> <li>• Class reps have attended the ‘Closing the Loop Conference’.</li> <li>• Tutors have engaged well and helped encourage students to attend social events.</li> </ul> <p>AMC thank FD for his report and for the letter regarding possible mergers.</p>			
<b>PEOPLE</b>				
20.4.24	<b>Draft HR &amp; R Committee Minute 27 November 2020</b>			

	Minute approved, to be signed at next committee meeting.	JS/VD	To sign	
20.4.25	<b>Confidential item – Summary of HR and Recruitment in last quarter</b> EM highlighted the information on page 7 reporting on the EAP - the confidential support service for staff.		Noted	
20.4.26	<b>Summary of recruitment</b>		Noted	
<b>BOARD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT</b>				
20.4.27	<b>Recruitment of Chair</b> MT referred to the email circulated to the board recommending AMC stay on as Chair until the outcome of the alignment and merger options appraisal, which the board supported. A recruitment notice is to be issued in April dependent on the appraisal outcome.			
20.4.28	<b>Board meetings schedule for 2021</b> Schedule agreed.		Agreed	
20.4.29	<b>AOCB</b> <b>Developing the Young Workforce Secondary Schools Pilot Project:</b> AEC explained that Argyll College currently hosts the DYW project in Argyll; currently 1 full-time manager and an assistant. Funding is to be provided for 10 staff, 1 in each secondary school. The college's preferred option is for the council to employ the staff, but the money must come to the college as host. The funds would then be granted to the council by the college. AEC is to investigate any potential VAT implications. AMC asked if the board were content for AEC to proceed with the project as outlined. The board were in agreement.  At this point in the meeting MJ, EM and AEC left the meeting for the board to have further discussions regarding the Senior Management Report.			
20.4.30	<b>Date of next meeting.</b> Committee meetings – Friday 26 <sup>th</sup> February MS Teams Board meeting – Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> March MS Teams			
	..... <b>Signed by Chair of meeting</b>		<b>Date</b> .....	





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### Outstanding Actions

		Responsibility	Deadline
<b>September 2020</b>			
<b>Chair's Report</b>	<i>AMC to put in writing the Board's concern over Aligned Finance Service</i>	AMC	<i>*ON HOLD*</i>
<b>Chair's Report</b>	FD to pass on thanks to student body.	FD	Dec 20
<b>December 2020</b>			
<b>RAM Consultation</b>	Response to be provided.	MJ/JC/AMC	Jan 21
<b>Developing the Young Workforce Secondary Schools Pilot Project</b>	VAT implications to be investigated.	AEC	Jan 21