



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 26 June 2020 at 1 pm
Via Webex

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), Bettina Sizeland (BS), Rosemary Allford (RA), Elodie Nowinski (EN), Billie Smith (BKS)

Apologies: Scott Matheson (SM)

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

No	Minute	Who	Action	Date
20.2.1	Welcome and apologies for absence. The Chair welcomed all governors to the meeting and welcomed Ian Beach of Education Scotland. Apologies received from Scott Matheson.			
20.2.2	Declarations of interest & to determine any items as confidential. JF declared his position as a local authority councillor. 20.2.3, 20.2.23, 20.2.24, 20.2.25 and 20.2.27ii were deemed to be confidential items.			
	Presentation by Ian Beach, Education Scotland IB explained that the Progress Visit took place in December over 2 days. Overall progress was positive, the main findings were:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">Argyll College has put in place a range of interventions to support full-time learners in particular, and improved access to mental health support with a view to reducing withdrawal rates.The piloting of timetabled guidance sessions has been well received by students.Improved induction and mentoring programmes are in place for staff.Increased use of digital platforms, specifically Brightspace.Additional HISA staff and increased communication between college staff and HISA.An increased number of student course representatives.			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexible approach to timetabling. • Expansion of FE and HE apprenticeships programmes and increased work placement opportunities. <p>Items which need more attention are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plans in place to address retention and achievement of FE full-time students. • Finding spaces for confidential meetings, eg student support meetings. Currently many of the centres do not have space for this. • Ensure all staff engage with Brightspace training. • Feedback to students on what college has done or could not be done and why in relation to student suggestions. <p>Overall it is clear that the college is systematically monitoring and working well to complete actions, with positive progress and a strong report.</p> <p>AMC asked the board for comments. EM stated that it had been a very positive process and it was useful to have a dialogue with Ian and the panel, with areas of good practice and areas requiring further action being highlighted. MJ welcomed the outcomes and felt it was useful that the issue of lack of confidential spaces was raised as this is a priority for the college. RA, as new Chair of LTE, felt it was very positive for the college and was particularly pleased to see the improvement in provision for students and mental health support in particular. AMC thanked IB and asked what opportunities there might be to make use of the report to secure funding for confidential spaces? IB stated that the report could be used and there may be opportunities for partnerships with 3rd sector organisations to provide spaces and suggested that Peter Connelly may be able to advise further. AMC thanked Ian for the feedback and IB left the meeting.</p>			
20.2.3	<p>Minutes of the last meeting. These were approved by the board and are to be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	VD/AMC	To sign	
20.2.4	<p>Matters arising.</p> <p>(i) Nursery:- MJ reported on the background of the nursery, for the benefit of new board members, and confirmed that today (26 June) was the final operating day of the nursery, although it had closed its doors in March because of staff isolating due to Covid-19. The college continues to offer support to the staff made redundant and is working with SDS in terms of signposting support. Children graduating this year will be given a small gift and certificate. The second stage is to decide what to do with the building the college is now left with. This will be progressed once the building has been emptied. AMC commented that the nursery had been a cause of stress for management over the years and was pleased that parents had received the closure in a measured and reasonable way.</p> <p>(ii) Helensburgh:- MJ reported that Argyll College successfully bid for strategic funds from UHI in 2017 to support the development of a centre in Helensburgh. To date that money has not been received, although there has now been an undertaking from EO that funds will now be released to the college. MJ will follow up if this is not received.</p> <p>ACTION: MJ to follow-up funding</p>	MJ	Follow-up	
20.2.5	<p>Chair's report. The chair provided a report on his recent activity:</p>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended 2 College Scotland meetings, at which the Minister, Richard Lochhead, was in attendance. As a result of Covid-19 the minister wants a review of the FE and HE sector, although there is no more detail at present. • Had a meeting with the recruitment consultants tasked with finding a new Principal for UHI, no feedback as yet. • Attended a meeting of the 'Regional Strategy Committee', the successor to FERB, the Chair is Gary Coutts and Vice-Chairs are Michael Foxley and Beverley Clubley. • Had a telephone conversation with Diana Murray, the new Chair of SAMS, looking at possibilities for Argyll College and SAMS to work more collaboratively. <p>AMC informed the board that the hard work of staff over the last few months, in relation to Covid-19, had been commented on at committees and he proposes writing a thank you to all staff.</p>	AMC	Write to staff	
RESOURCES				
20.2.6	<p>Draft Finance & General Purposes Committee Minute of 12 June 2020</p> <p>Minute approved, to be signed at next committee meeting.</p>	JC/VD	To sign	
20.2.7	<p>Management accounts for period to 30 April 2020</p> <p>AEC confirmed that a schedule showing breakdown of deferred grants has been added to the accounts. The majority is deferred capital grant funding but also included are proceeds from Riverside which was sold last year and grant funding for car charge points and leased electric vehicles. Funds have been set aside for agreed buildings maintenance and alterations which have not yet been able to proceed due to Covid-19. The college also received a legacy from a Campbeltown resident last year, to be spent on educational purposes which may be used for a building for construction and engineering. AMC mentioned to board members that it is worth visiting the centres to see the variety of building type within the College and the lack of purpose-built buildings. JC thanked AEC and asked for confirmation that the Helensburgh funds had not been received yet. AEC confirmed that this was the case. JC asked whether the distribution of 'unallocated' UHI HE teaching grants, as discussed at committee, was going to happen. AEC stated that it is still uncertain and distributing the underspend between partners had been discussed and feedback from UHI varied.</p> <p>AEC stated that £500,000 is proposed spend from reserves for land in Dunoon. AMC stated that there is confidence that financial assistance will be forthcoming for the costs of building a new centre in Dunoon. MT asked if the government is expected to repay some of it to the college and whether there is risk to depleting reserves without a funding source to re-coup from. AEC confirmed that discussions had taken place with HIE who have suggested that they will help with funding and the Rural Growth Deal has also committed to investing in Dunoon, but we would necessarily be looking to invest some of our own funds, and that any land purchased would be an asset.</p> <p>MT asked about the requirement to find 3% running costs when salaries are increasing and non-teaching staff numbers are already minimal and is there a plan to find 3% efficiencies. AEC stated that looking at joint initiatives within the partnership can reduce costs but the only way to realistically reduce running costs would be to reduce staff numbers or the number of centres. MJ stated that the original model of the college was that tutors received lower wages as class sizes were smaller and therefore workloads were smaller.</p>			

	Achieving further efficiencies in teaching will be looked at. There is some concern with support staff being too lean in some areas. MT agreed that operations can become inefficient very quickly if support staff numbers are not kept in balance.		Noted	
20.2.8	Draft Audit Committee Minute of 12 June 2020 Minute noted by board in the absence of SM Audit Chair, to be signed at next committee meeting.	SM/VC	To sign	
20.2.9	Internal Audit Plan AEC confirmed that the payroll audit is now underway.			
20.2.10	SFC Financial Forecast and Return AEC confirmed that this is due for submission on 30 th June, and stated that forecasting is difficult due to Covid-19. The main point is that SFC has assumed 2% increase in salaries and AEC had assumed 1.5% in budget presented to Board committees. AMC asked if SFC are asking for confirmation on how Argyll College will produce a breakeven budget? AEC confirmed this is correct and thinks breakeven will be achieved due to National Pay Bargaining funding covering salary costs. Figures for the return will be as per revised draft budget, and FFR commentary was approved.			
20.2.11	Health and Safety (Standing item) : H&S issue AMC asked if there are any specific issues. MJ confirmed there are no current issues, but more generally none of the UHI partners employ a Health and Safety Officer and there is talk amongst the partnership of investing in a resource that all partners can use.			
20.2.12	Draft Budget 2020/21 AEC confirmed that this has been amended for a 2% increase in salaries. Capital budget indicates proposed expenditure of up to £500k towards architect's fees and land in Dunoon and £60,000 to Helensburgh to improve premises. There are also old desktops which need to be replaced with laptops and VC equipment which needs upgrading. JC recommended that the estates plan be revisited and the intention for each part of the estate be set out for as and when funds become available. ACTION: AEC to revisit estates plan.	AEC	Approved Revisit plan	
STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE				
20.2.13	Principal's Report for Period ended 31 May 2020 MJ updated the board on recent activity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marine Industry Training Centre (MITC) – MJ reported that MITC is a £7.5m project, for which funding is not yet in place but will potentially be part of the Rural Growth Deal. It is an outcome from Oban as a University Town project and matches regional requirements of employers with support from Highlands & Islands Enterprise. A member of Argyll College staff has been seconded to the project for 2 years, with funding from the council, for whom the project is a high priority. This will be the largest infrastructure project the college has been involved in. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dunoon campus – MJ stated that HIE recognise the deficit of the campus in one of the largest centres of population in the region. The Rural Growth Deal could be useful with approximately £1m earmarked for Dunoon but now at the stage where the college needs to make some investment if SFC are to be approached for funding. <p>AMC asked if there were any questions or comments. MT commented that MITC sounded very interesting. MJ said that it is important to capture commercial courses and CalMac are very interested.</p>			
20.2.14	<p>Draft Minutes of Learning, Teaching and Engagement Committee held on 12 June 2020</p> <p>Minute approved, to be signed at next committee meeting.</p> <p>RA, as the new Chair of LTE, confirmed that the committee will be looking at ways in which enhancement activity has been implemented following on from Education Scotland’s report.</p>	RA/VD	To sign	
20.2.15	<p>Early and further withdrawal KPIs for full time FE courses to date 2019/20</p>		Noted	
20.2.16	<p>Update on progress towards targets – 2019/20</p> <p>a) FE Credits – EM confirmed that the credit target has again been exceeded, by 538 credits. This includes the May and June Schools Link activity. The board were reminded that there is no additional income for any credits that exceed the target set by the region.</p> <p>b) HE FTEs – EM stated that the final count is likely to be 201 FTEs</p> <p>c) HE FTE predictions for 2020/21 – Recruitment is being closely monitored. There are reductions in some courses, although this could be the time of year. There may be an increase in applications after SQA results are published.</p> <p>MT asked who sets target for credits. EM confirmed they are set by FERB (Further Education Regional Board) but the targets had not changed for approximately 3 years. MT commented that surely forecasting should be as real as possible and perhaps there should be a different discipline applied if the targets are not going to be moved, particularly if no extra funding is received for exceeding targets, taking into account this may not be the best way forward in terms of learning and teaching. MJ stated that there are other ways to get more credits via strategic development and a conversation should be had with SFC to bring extra credits into the region. EM confirmed that there had previously been a policy of achievement only but by exceeding targets it shows there is a need for additional credits in Argyll. JF commented that Argyll College may have an important role to play for students concerned about leaving Argyll to attend university until Covid-19 has settled down.</p>		Noted	
20.2.17	<p>Student Mental Health Paper</p>		Noted	
20.2.18	<p>Update on learning, teaching and enhancement items in last quarter:</p> <p>EM commented that the online open day was well received and VD had circulated a brief overview to board members for information.</p>		Noted	
20.2.19	<p>Policies for approval</p> <p>a) UHI PVG Policy</p> <p>b) UHI FE Guidance</p> <p>Approved by LTE Committee 12/6/2020</p>		Noted	

20.2.20	Student Survey Summary AMC commented that this is a useful summary of students views and concerns during lockdown.		Noted	
20.2.21	UHI Strategic Developments Executive Office Review – MJ commented that it is useful for the board to understand the circulation of money and provision of services within the partnership. EO has governance roles in reporting back to SFC and distributing funds. It also has a service provision function for which a top slice is taken from academic partners from the FE/HE teaching grant. It has not been transparent in strategy and in the way it spends money and opened itself up to a quasi-independent review. The scope of the review is outlined in page 2 of the report but it could have gone further, in terms of whether EO is providing value for money, but it is a step in the right direction. There seems to be an appetite for restructure in EO and beyond and change needs to happen as a consequence of the report. VG commented that there is a constant push to produce a coherent narrative in response to SFC and the government which makes it difficult to carry out the distributed work. BS commented that there are some serious recommendations within the report, MJ confirmed that there has not been any watering down of the initial recommendations and stated that if the resources that colleges bring in are precious and there is no scope for waste. Overall it was positively received and will provide a route map for the new Vice Chancellor.			
20.2.22	Academic calendar 2020/21		Noted	
PEOPLE				
20.2.23	Draft HR & R Committee Minute 12 June 2020 Minute approved, to be signed at next committee meeting.	JS/VD	To sign	
20.2.24	Confidential item – Summary of recruitment			
20.2.25	Confidential item – Redundancy			
20.2.26	NRPA Shadowing Update MJ provided an update report on pay harmonisation. To date Argyll College has not signed up to NRPA but is shadowing it. There is some work left to do, but once full alignment is reached the college would make an approach through the employers association with a view to signing up formally. The negative impact is extra costs, however the positives are that the pay scales are in line with all other colleges which will help to attract talent from further afield. AMC confirmed that the colleges decision to shadow unless fully funded was the correct decision at the time and asked that the board delegate powers to MJ to sign up. BKS was in agreement as there are benefits as well as the extra costs to signing up. BKS asked what the timescales for achieving sign up are and for a work plan so progression can be monitored by the board. MJ stated that meetings with staff to discuss contracts and transferring to permanency be held when staff return from summer leave, to be completed by August. Other issues are dependent on a response from SFC in relation to an aspect of funding. In a communication received last week, there was an indication from SFC that this would be determined very soon. The structure of how the college implements promoted lecturers requires review. MJ also confirmed that Argyll is not the last college to sign up and some have agreed to it only for teaching staff.			

	ACTION: MJ to produce work plan for the board			
		MJ	Approved Produce plan	
20.2.27	Confidential item - Trade Union Recognition			
BOARD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT				
20.2.28	AOCB Board Strategy and Induction Day – MJ stated that this is better done face-to-face and once we have more guidance from the government on easing of lockdown and social distancing we will start making plans for August/September provided that an appropriate third party venue can be found.			
20.2.29	Date of next meeting. Committee meetings – Friday 11 th September, Location TBC Board meeting – Friday 2 nd October, Location TBC (3 weeks between meetings as graduation originally planning for Friday 25 th September)			
 Signed by Chair of meeting			Date