

**Minute of the meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee held at 5pm on
Wednesday, 22 November 2023
via Microsoft Teams**

1. Sederunt

Dr Elaine Clafferty (Chair);
Derek Smeall (Principal);
Ian Patrick;
Marie Docherty;
Dermot Grenham;
Colm Breathnach;
Sonique Noreiga;
Heather McNeil;
Michael O'Donnell;

In Attendance

Robin Ashton;
Linda Ellison;
Monica McKerlie;
John Gallagher;
Peter Brown (item 12 only);
Alan Shields (for Alastair McGhee, item 11 only); and
Roddy MacKenzie (Regulations and Compliance Manager) (purpose of the minute)

2. Apologies

Dr Marion Allison (Vice Chair);
Alastair McGhee; and
John McBride.

3. Terms of Reference

[Learning & Teaching Terms of Reference](#)

It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate with nine members in attendance.

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

C Breathnach raised a question about the definition of declarations of interest and the issue of conflict of interest. Action - L Ellison agreed to forward a CDN document to C Breathnach which would help to clarify potential conflicts of interest as it relates to members of staff who are members of committees including the Board.

5. Minute of the Previous Meeting held on 13 September 2023

Members accepted the minute as an accurate record of the business conducted at the meeting held on 13 September 2023.

D Grenham, followed by C Breathnach proposed the minute.

6. a) Matters arising from Minute of Previous Meeting

Members noted that there were no matters arising from the previous minute of 13 September 2023.

b) Learning and Teaching Action Log - as at November 2023 (For Approval)

Members noted that there was one live action on the log and that this would be addressed at the meeting of the committee to be held on 28 February 2024.

Items for Approval/Endorsement

7. Strengthening Teaching Development Activity

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement spoke to the content of the report regarding Strengthening Teaching Development Activity. At the last meeting of the Committee, members were presented for consideration and endorsement six high-level College enhancement priorities for 2023/24. Following a review of the priorities, it was agreed that a report would be presented on the implementation of actions to Strengthen Teaching Development.

While the College had supported teaching development through cross-college development activity supplemented by Professional Development and Review (PDR), it was felt that there was a need to strengthen teaching development activity.

Three new elements had been added to the College's approach:

- A Professional Development Forum – this cross-college forum would provide the basis on which to engage with staff on professional staff development activity (with a strong emphasis on teaching activity).
- Teaching Practice Development Leads – these roles supported the promotion of new and innovative approaches to teaching practice. Teaching Development Leads would be recruited on the basis of proposed initiatives. They would be supported by a new Teaching Development Coordinator who had been recruited from Faculty Management. Twelve projects had been received with work progressing on five.
- Teaching Activity Groups (TAG) – teams of three to four curricular staff would undertake collective sharing of practice and development activities.

H McNeil supported the positive plan which would encourage innovation. She enquired if the proposal had sufficient resource.

R Ashton confirmed that, while not substantial, there was resource sufficient enough to support the Teaching Development Activity.

D Grenham agreed that the proposals were positive. He queried how the teaching development activity would be monitored and how the benefits would be measured.

R Ashton replied that activity would be reported to the Professional Forum, and that managers would also have the opportunity to monitor. Feedback would also be received from teaching staff. Where things were not working or not making an impact, changes would be made. The new elements were about promoting Professional Development which was not currently considered as a strength. A report on the outcomes would be produced next year.

I Patrick welcomed the new approach and stressed that should innovations not immediately be successful, time should be given to develop ideas and look to achieve long term benefits.

Dr. E Clafferty endorsed I Patrick's assessment.

M Docherty agreed that the new approach was positive. She queried if the local community was going to be involved in some way e.g. through outreach. R Ashton responded that community teaching staff were already involved and there were opportunities for further development.

Members having considered the report agreed to endorse the actions outlined to strengthen teaching development activity in 2023/24

8. 2023-24 Curriculum Review and 2024-25 Curriculum Development Priorities

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement spoke to the content of the report that reviewed the College's 2023-24 curriculum offer and identified curriculum development priorities for 2024-25. This analysis informed the portfolio of courses to be advertised by the College from January 2024 onwards.

The first part of the report reviewed regional employment and skills needs. This reviewed Regional Skills Assessments which had been produced by Skills Development Scotland to provide insights into forecast economic and employment patterns over the next ten years. Continued high levels of employment were expected to be required within Health and Social Care, Retail, Administration, Education and Science Industries. Significant growth was projected in demand for Corporate Managers, alongside Health and Social Care Professionals.

The second part of the report provided an overview of student demand. Data for the period 2020/21 to 2023/24 indicated a fall in overall numbers of applications. There had been an increase in the number of students entering Higher Education and a consequent fall in numbers entering Further Education. The biggest drop in numbers had come in areas where other local Colleges also offered similar curriculum.

The third part of the report reviewed key 2023/24 Performance Data. While the data indicated that more subject areas were achieving targeted class size (reflecting the positive impact of the changes made by the College in admissions and retention arrangements), a number of high-volume subject areas were still operating below targeted viable levels.

Retention levels for 2023/24 had shown some improvement. However, some subject areas had high withdrawal levels. Improving retention levels remained a key quality enhancement priority for 2023/24.

Action - R Ashton confirmed that he would provide members with an update on Course Risk Review at the next meeting of the Committee.

Dr. E Clafferty thanked R Ashton for his comprehensive report. It was clear that student numbers had been adversely affected by a number of factors including Covid and Brexit. The impact had been experienced across FE and HE and it was inevitable that competitors were looking to recruit our students.

R Ashton agreed: if the College was delivering an HE course, it had to deliver a strong cohort.

H McNeil queried why Construction was on the "At Risk Review" list given that they had 80% retention and a good class size.

R Ashton replied that the At-Risk process focussed on specific class groups and the curriculum review took a whole subject area perspective.

C Breathnach was concerned that decisions on “At Risk” courses were due before the Christmas break. He enquired if the process would benefit from more time. R Ashton replied that the “At Risk” courses listed had been monitored over a number of years and staff were aware of issues affecting these courses. Where a decision had been made to end course delivery, staff had been fully involved in the decision-making process.

M O'Donnell enquired how feasible it was to enter into new curriculum areas.

R Ashton referred to the example of Science and Engineering and the decision to offer a new HNC in Chemical Engineering, something which would be unique to the Glasgow College Region.

D Grenham asked what courses the College was offering to meet the demands of Business and Industry. He argued that the College must reflect what is happening in the world, for example with Artificial Intelligence, the Green agenda etc. He queried if it might be useful to survey schools to ascertain what their demands might be. He also questioned why competition was viewed as a threat and not an opportunity.

R Ashton responded that the College liaised closely with local schools and took account of economic and employment developments. He noted however, that it was a harsh reality that some students might prefer to study at a bigger institution or one that was within easier transport routes.

I Patrick appreciated that the College was contracting whether in terms of staff or course provision but that it had to be careful not to reduce opportunities for students where possible, referring to the reduction in Higher National courses for Business and Computing as an example.

D Smeall asked that the matter be placed in context. The College had been supporting a very small number of courses that had been struggling to recruit for a number of years. The vast majority of courses currently offered would continue and teams would be given time to implement changes and turn courses around if possible.

Members having considered and discussed the curriculum review, endorsed the approach and the identified development priorities.

Items for Discussion and Noting

9. Students' Association Update

The Student Association President, S Noreiga, provided members with an update on activity since the last meeting. Members recalled that, following Education Scotland's visit to the College in May 2023, their final report outlined two areas for development which related to the Student Association and Learner Engagement. These were:

- *The Students' Association (SA) is not sufficiently visible to learners and is not able to fully represent their views.*

• Class Representatives are not sufficiently aware of their role and its intended purpose. Many class representatives have not yet accessed the online training available, and many were unaware of its existence.

S Noreiga reported that the SA had since implemented a number of actions that aimed to raise the profile of the Association and to address its engagement with students. The actions included:

- An extensive programme of Freshers and 'Meet your classmates' events;
- Further development of the Students Association Teams page;
- Relocation of SA offices across the campuses to more prominent positions;
- A series of Student engagement events to allow students to meet others outside of class e.g., themed movie nights;
- Promotion of various clubs and societies students can join.

The SA had also worked to strengthen the role of class representatives in the design and delivery of learning and teaching. This would include regular meetings with course teams and opportunities to provide feedback on learning and teaching approaches.

- Members noted that class representative recruitment had been strengthened with 212 representatives now recruited, meaning that nearly every full-time class had a representative.
- Training for class representatives had been offered through SPARQS (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland).
- 12 volunteers had been recruited to take up roles in the Student Executive Committee.
- Monthly meetings with class representatives and Executive Committee members had been scheduled to provide regular opportunities for feedback and discussion.
- A 'Meet the Managers event' took place on 16 November 2023 which had provided class representatives the opportunity to meet Senior Managers to discuss students' experience of the College.

Dr. E Clafferty was satisfied that areas identified by Education Scotland for development had been addressed by the Students Association. The Committee looked forward to further updates from the Student President.

R Ashton thanked the Student President for her report. He reminded members that Education Scotland would return in May 2024 and would note the results of the good work achieved by the Students' Association.

H McNeil congratulated the Student Association in securing 212 class representatives.

I Patrick referred to the Student Satisfaction Survey and advised that some thought would have to be given as to how to ensure that students responded positively to this as the outcomes would be considered by Education Scotland

Dr. E Clafferty thanked the Student President for her detailed report. Members noted the report for information purposes.

10. College Mental Health & Wellbeing Service Update

The Head of Student Support Services provided members with an update on service provision and an overview of numbers of students accessing counselling and wellbeing support available at GKC over the last four years. The update also provided an outline of new approaches to supporting learners with wellbeing and resilience skills introduced for session 2023/24.

Members were reminded that the College Counselling service consisted of two qualified counsellors and a small team of trainee counsellors who supported students with mild to moderate mental health conditions. Students requiring more in-depth counselling would continue to be referred to NHS services to best meet their needs.

The College employed one Wellbeing Officer. The types of issues referred to the Officer included anxiety, suicidal thoughts, mental health problems, issues with eating and sleeping, overthinking, trauma, arguments with parents and more. One to one support would continue with additional support being provided by Guidance Advisers.

College referrals to both services had increased steadily with a total of 365 referrals in 2022/23. 132 referrals had been made in academic year 2023/24 up to October.

Members were reminded that SFC had issued a one-year Transition Fund for supporting students with mental health for session 2023/24. This fund had been made available to support the transition from the previous funding to a sustainable approach to support student mental health.

As part of the 2023/24 College Quality Enhancement Priorities, the College would continue to fund existing Wellbeing Officer and Counsellor roles to maintain services at a level consistent with previous years.

While both Wellbeing and Counselling would continue to provide response-based services dealing with individual needs, a particular focus for 2023/24 would be helping to build student resilience. It was hoped that this preventative approach would be of greater impact and benefit for students in the long term.

Members also noted that a range of activities aimed at awareness raising for students and staff had begun and included: a Presentation to staff; Freshers events; Student Information sessions; monthly Wellbeing and Resilience Sessions, and measures to improve student engagement and partnership with the Students' Association.

Dr. E Clafferty thanked the Head of Student Support Services for her report. She voiced her support for the proactive approach being adopted by Wellbeing and Counselling service to help students help themselves.

C Breathnach thanked the Head of Student Support Services for her report. He praised the actions of support staff who have had to intervene in a growing number of scenarios. He enquired whether the increase in numbers of students being referred to Wellbeing and Counselling services was a reflection of the growing mental health crisis, or as a result of the increase in the profile of the service.

M McKerlie responded that she believed it was a combination of both factors. The online presence had been increased, but it was important to note that not all referrals would result in a counselling intervention. 'Mental Health' was the second highest disclosed health issue recorded in enrolments.

M O'Donnell observed that it appeared that SFC funding could potentially end and that institutions would be expected to continue to operate services. He enquired if there was the potential for a sponsor or other form of external support that was available to help support such services?

M McKerlie stated that she would explore the possibilities and report to the Committee at a later meeting.

Action - M McKerlie agreed to investigate the availability of additional external funding to help support Wellbeing and Counselling provision beyond 2023/24. She would provide her findings to the Committee at a future date.

I Patrick referred to the approach employed at UWS where the focus of wellbeing and counselling was on preventable measures. It was unrealistic to expect that counselling could catch everything and therefore building resilience was vital.

Dr. E Clafferty echoed members' concerns noting that there was a strong relationship between attendance, retention and student wellbeing. The role of the Wellbeing and Counselling services was crucial in this respect.

Members agreed to note the contents of the report for information purposes.

11. Foundation Apprenticeship and Senior Phase Report

Members welcomed Alan Shields, Schools Liaison Manager to the meeting who would speak to the report on Foundation Apprenticeship and Senior Phase prepared by the Director of Enterprise and Student Experience and the Schools Liaison Manager.

The paper compared Foundation Apprenticeship and Senior Phase recruitment between 2022/23 and 2023/24 and provided a commentary on the impact of the withdrawal of taxi transport by local authorities on senior phase programmes.

- Performance Analysis – 2023/24 saw a slight increase in school programme enrolments (combined Foundation Apprenticeship and Senior Phase) from 276 to 295 at the start of the academic year. 57 of these enrolments were Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) and 238 were Senior Phase (SP) programmes.
- Foundation Apprenticeships – in common with the region, the College's FA portfolio had been reduced. Notwithstanding, the College was offering programmes over one year alongside two years programmes. By focusing on viable programmes, the College had also improved retention rates.
- Senior Phase - the College has focused on strengthening the North East Schools (NE) Partnership and developing the new East Dunbartonshire (EDC) Schools Partnership.
- Council funded taxi transport had been withdrawn from 2023/24 senior phase pupils due to financial pressures. However, this had not presented as many difficulties as anticipated since the College had focused on pupils from NE and ED schools who could walk home or utilise free bus or train passes.

- 2024/25 – the College would be reviewing its programmes for schools which had remained static for some time. Greater emphasis would be placed on STEM courses.

Dr. E Clafferty thank A Shields for his report and for adopting such an agile approach in facing the different challenges presented.

C Breathnach thanked A Shields for his report and praised him for his efforts. He noted that the withdrawal of taxi transport appeared not to have had too much of a negative impact on school programmes. He enquired about the number of partnership schools.

A Shields replied that there were ten schools in the North East Schools (NE) partnership and seven in the East Dunbartonshire (EDC) partnership. All ten of the schools in the NE would be categorised in the SIMD as being in areas of urban deprivation. Of the 295 enrolments, 141 were from NE partnership schools with 67 coming from ED schools. The College would prioritise all ten schools of the NE partnership.

M O'Donnell enquired why schools were opting for private training providers.

A Shields responded that it was a pragmatic approach from the school's perspective. Providing private training on-site removed issues of transport to/from an external provider such as the College. However, in his opinion, such decisions by schools diluted the experience for their pupils.

Members noted the content of the report for information purposes.

12. Update on 2023-24 Apprenticeships and Skills Activity

Members welcomed Peter Brown, Director of Apprenticeships, Skills and Curriculum to the meeting who would provide an update on 2023/24 Apprenticeships and Skills Activity.

Glasgow Kelvin College (and North Glasgow College) had worked with the Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) for over 40 years in the delivery of apprenticeship education within the Heating, Ventilation and Air-conditioning industry (HVAC).

The College was notified in November 2022 that BESA would no longer be acting as a managing agent for apprenticeships once their current SDS contract ended on the 31 of March 2023.

Following cessation of the contract between BESA and SDS, initial discussion between the College and other stakeholders indicated that the preferred approach was to transfer the SDS contract to another managing agent such as SNIPEF or SECTT. However, with no agreement forthcoming, the College began to explore the options to become managing agents. Following discussions with Forth Valley, Edinburgh College and City College, it was agreed that GKS would become the managing agent for Forth Valley and Edinburgh (with City College bidding for their own apprenticeship places).

The report detailed the timeline of events between November 2022 and March 2023 when the College was notified by SDS that it would now become the managing

agent for building services apprenticeships (formerly managed by BESA) for the interim year 2023/24. Apprenticeships and Skills jobs had been advertised in April 2023 with the Apprenticeship and Skills Team being appointed in May 2023.

As of the 1 April 2023, Glasgow Kelvin College became the managing agent for 300 apprentices (as well as 84 new starts). All apprentices were registered as per SDS guidelines and the College was in a position to draw down milestone payments.

The SDS contract with the College expires on the 31 of March 2024. The College, headed by the Apprenticeships and Skills Team, will be bidding for the new contract. Further, the bid would look to secure additional new start places beyond that of the 2023/24 contract. In addition to the courses that are running and currently not funded, the College has significant evidence of employer/industry demand. Both factors would be used as justification for an increase in contract value and new starts.

Dr. E Clafferty thanked P Brown for his report. She noted that it was a great initiative to secure the contract and to handle further demand.

R Ashton observed that this was an excellent opportunity to strengthen the curriculum development of the College. Resources would be added to initiatives where the College saw a clear opportunity.

I Patrick expressed the hope that the Withers Report would bear fruit since it recommended that funding for apprenticeships go directly to the College sector and not via Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and managing agents.

Dr. E Clafferty noted that there was resource risk to College funding levels if the 2024/25 SDS contract bid was unsuccessful, or the contract value was not in line with College planned recruitment targets.

D Smeall responded that a risk analysis had been conducted by P Brown. The risk exists but it is not one that would destabilise the College. It was concluded that it was a risk worth taking. It could be three to five years before SDS is replaced with a new organisation. Should the bid succeed, it would place the College in a good position, with the College being the only provider of certain courses.

Members noted the content of the report for information purposes.

13. 2022-23 Student Performance Indicators

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement spoke to the content of the report that sought to provide members with final performance indicators for 2022-23. R Ashton informed members that they had looked at retention levels as a proxy for outcomes. He was heartened to see an improvement in reducing partial success rates and converting more of these to successful completion.

In terms of changes to student success rates, there had been an improvement across almost all modes and levels, with the most significant change for Full-Time Further Education (+7.5%) and Full-Time Higher Education (+5.4%). This was in line with the improvements in retention levels highlighted in earlier papers to the Committee. Only Part-Time Higher Education rates had shown a small fall (-2.8%),

but this related to a relatively small cohort where changes to the curriculum offered could have an effect on overall success rates.

D Smeall voiced his confidence that changes implemented by the College were already having significant impact. He observed that the most telling indicator was the jump of 7.5% in success rates for Full-Time Further Education. This was noteworthy since success here held good portent for success across all modes and levels. Allied with indications of improvements in early retention bode well for the future.

M O'Donnell recognised the positive impact of all the changes and the investment of time and effort of College staff in achieving these results.

Dr. E Clafferty shared the Principal's optimism. While improvements were to be welcomed, it was recognised that these were not quick fixes but the early results of a long-term strategy.

Members of the Learning and Teaching Committee agreed to note the contents of the report for information purposes.

14. Block One Stop and Check

The Head of Quality informed members that the Stop and Check survey was conducted during weeks six and seven in Block 1 to give students the opportunity to feedback on their early experiences at the College. The survey had been created using MS Form and had been promoted to learners via faculty managers and course tutors.

J Gallagher reported that total of 2,386 responses were received, which represented a 27% increase on the last year.

Five of the questions remain unchanged from last year and these were compared with last year's responses. The third question was now more generic in nature than that which was asked last year since last year's question related to remote learning. Students were also given the opportunity to leave additional comments at the end of the survey. Overall, the responses were very similar to those received last year.

Many of the responses were appreciative of the support received from both teaching and support staff. Almost all of the negative comments around support were concerned with financial matters (student funding), but not with our support staff.

It was very clear that students had a strong preference for face-to-face learning and teaching. It was hoped that the survey feedback would assist course teams in shaping their courses.

Dr. E Clafferty thanked J Gallagher for his report. Members noted the report for information purposes.

At 7.05pm, the Secretary to the Board asked the members if they were willing to extend the time limit in accordance with the Standing Orders and proceed.

15. 2023-24 Early Withdrawal Update Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement spoke to the content of the report that sought to provide members with an update on Early Withdrawals in 2023/24.

Over recent years, early withdrawals have had a significant impact on the College's Performance Indicators (PIs), particularly for full-time programmes. During Covid, early withdrawal rates increased substantially, and a number of measures had been introduced with the aim of improving early retention. The report provided an indication of the level of early retention this academic year to date.

R Ashton reported that initial estimates on retention were encouraging. He was cautiously optimistic and advised that, should levels of retention continue to improve, the College would see a bigger improvement in PIs than last year. It was clear that, while the College was only at week 12 of the academic calendar, the measures implemented to improve early retention were beginning to have a positive impact.

Dr. E Clafferty thanked the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement for his report and the positive news. The Committee would monitor the matter with great interest.

Members noted the report for information purposes.

16. Education Scotland Thematic Visit

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement spoke to the content of the report that sought to update members on the Education Scotland Thematic Review which took place across the Glasgow College Region during the 6 November to 16 November 2023.

The review focussed on examining approaches to ensuring equity, attainment and achievement for all learners with a regional report to be published following the visit. The briefing paper attached as Appendix 1 to the report was provided by Education Scotland in advance of the visit.

A team of six HMle inspectors undertook the Glasgow Kelvin College visit during w/b 6 November 2023, meeting a range of staff and students across our three campuses.

Education Scotland stated that following completion of the review, each college would receive an institutional report which would not be formally published. A separate regional report would be published nationally.

R Ashton reported that, following the visit, the Inspector did not give formal feedback as the HMle team were mid-way through their regional inspection. However, informal feedback indicated that they were impressed by the way the College was managing multiple challenges, and that the positive impact of the changes implemented following their last visit in May 2023 was quite apparent.

Dr. E Clafferty thanked the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement for his report. The Committee would return to the matter at future date.

Members noted the report for information purposes.

Items for Information:

17. Review of Glasgow Community Planning Partnership

The Chair noted that this item was for information only.

18. Learning and Teaching Committee – Forward Agenda 2023-24

The Chair noted that this item was for information only.

Impact on Students, Risk, Equality and Data Protection – Discussion

19. Impact on Students – Key issues to be considered as a consequence of the consideration of the above agenda items.

Members agreed that no issues had arisen as a consequence of the business conducted at the meeting.

20. Risk Management – Risk Issues to be considered as a consequence of the consideration of the above agenda items.

Members agreed that no issues had arisen as a consequence of the business conducted at the meeting.

21. Equality Management – Equality Issues to be considered as a consequence of the consideration of the above agenda items.

Members agreed that no issues had arisen as a consequence of the business conducted at the meeting.

22. Data Protection – Data Protection Issues to be considered as a consequence of the consideration of the above agenda items.

Members agreed that no issues had arisen as a consequence of the business conducted at the meeting.

23. Environmental and Sustainability – Environmental and Sustainability Issues to be considered as a consequence of the consideration of the above agenda items.

Members agreed that no issues had arisen as a consequence of the business conducted at the meeting.

24. Closure

The meeting closed at 7.10pm.

25. Date of Next Meeting

24 February 2023 – MS Teams.