



**GLASGOW KELVIN COLLEGE
BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
ACADEMIC BOARD
MINUTE**

**Minute of the meeting of the Academic Board held on Friday 07 February 2025 at
1.30pm via MS Teams**

1. Sederunt

Robin Ashton (Chair – Vice Principal of Curriculum),
Tracy Leavy (Director of Wellbeing, Development and Creative Services) (WDCS);
Peter Brown (Director of Apprenticeship, Skills and Curriculum) (SEA);
Gerry Harkins (Lecturer);
George McGuire (Senior Curriculum Manager);
John Gallagher (Quality Enhancement & Development Manager);
Gary Sharp (Student Support Services Manager);
Monica McKerlie (Head of Student Support Services);
Arlene Sweeney (Learner Engagement Officer)
Mae Smillie (Head of Student Information Services);
Katie McAnenay (Team Leader, Library Services);

In Attendance

Debbie Friel (Senior Committee Coordinator) (purpose of the minute)

2. Apologies

Amrit Bedi (Equalities and Inclusion Lead);
Lesley Phee (Organisational Development Business Partner);
James Davidson (Lecturer);
Iain Cameron (Lecturer);
Alastair McGhee (Director of Student Experience and Enterprise)
Chantell McCallum (President, Student Association); and
Jason Quinn (Director of Digital and Information Services);

3. Academic Board Terms of Reference

It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate with 11 members in attendance.

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

5. Minute of the Previous Meeting held on 1 November 2024

The minute of the meeting was accepted as an accurate record of the business conducted on 1 November 2024.

**6. Matters arising from Minute of Previous Meetings held on 1 November 2024
Matters arising**

Item 08 – Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS)

R Ashton informed members that the LTAS had been approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee at its meeting on 20th November 2024.

Item 09 – Teaching Development Activity Update

R Ashton noted that an update would be brought back to the Academic Board at a future meeting.

Item 10 – Quality Update

Members were informed that an update on External Verifications (EVs) was included within the agenda.

Item 14 – Block One Student Feedback

Members acknowledged that the Student Support Services question would be reworded to enhance clarity and improve student understanding. R Ashton confirmed that the revised version would be incorporated into next session's Block One Student Feedback Survey.

7. Academic Malpractice Policy

The Quality Enhancement and Development Manager presented an overview of the Academic Malpractice Policy, focusing on the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) in assessments. He informed members that the paper outlined current guidance from awarding bodies, including the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), regarding the use and potential misuse of AI in student work.

J Gallagher drew members attention to a paragraph highlighted in yellow, under candidate practice, which referred to the misuse of AI in assessments. He added that guidance on the use of AI in assessments were provided within appendices 3 and 4 *for SQA qualifications and for other awarding bodies, respectively*.

R Ashton thanked J Gallagher for his report and invited comment or questions.

Gary Sharp emphasised the importance of clearly defining "misuse" when it comes to AI and assistive technologies in education. He acknowledged that the statement itself is reasonable but highlighted concerns about how institutions, including universities, have sometimes broadly restricted certain assistive tools. He also raised questions about how evidence is gathered to determine AI use and pointed out the similarities between AI-powered tools like Co-Pilot and traditional forms of academic support, such as proofreading. Moving forward, he stressed the need for greater awareness and clarity around what constitutes misuse in this context.

Action: AI Use in Assessments: *J Gallagher to review and potentially update the guidance on AI misuse to provide more explicit details on what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate use of AI tools.*

Members of the Academic Board agreed to approve the contents of the report and its appendix.

8. Student Association Priorities Update

The Learner Engagement Officer provided an update on the Student Association's activities, including class representative training, executive committee engagement, ESOL speaking classes, LGBTQ+ working group, fundraising for the student pantry, and the introduction of microwaves and hot water facilities on campuses.

- **Class Representative Training:** A Sweeney mentioned that class representative training sessions have been conducted across campuses, helping students understand their responsibilities and the mechanisms used within the college.
- **Fundraising Activities:** The Student Association has been involved in fundraising activities, including raffles and toy drives, to support the student pantry and provide resources for students in need.
- **Microwaves and Hot Water:** Microwaves and hot water facilities have been introduced on campuses, allowing students to prepare their own meals and access hot drinks. This initiative has received positive feedback from students.

A Sweeney highlighted the success of the student pantry and clothing bank, "Meet the Managers" event, and the collaboration with Skills Development Scotland. She also mentioned the hiring of two Student Association assistants to increase visibility and SA engagement on campuses.

G Harkins thanked the SA Association for their hard work in providing additional catering facilities for students in the refectory. He noted that the improvements were highly anticipated, well received by students, and widely used.

R Ashton thanked the Learner Engagement Officer for her update.

Members of the Academic Board agreed to note the contents of the report.

9. Quality Update

The Quality Enhancement and Development Manager provided an update on quality assurance activities, including the completion of external verification visits, the management of impact plans for medium-risk programmes, and the preparation for the upcoming external review under the new tertiary quality enhancement framework.

J Gallagher reported that most external verification visits were completed successfully, with only a few subject areas placed on amber due to insufficient evidence. These issues were resolved by December 2024. Furthermore, he noted that there are 25 programmes on impact plans this year, managed by Senior Curriculum Managers and monitored by the Quality Forum. These plans are regularly updated to address medium-risk programmes and improve their performance.

Members were informed that the College is preparing for an external review under the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) in session 2026-2027. Discussions have already begun on how to prepare for this review, involving Senior Curriculum Managers and support staff. Members noted that J Gallagher and R Ashton, along with other staff members, are working on a new self-evaluation template for support areas. This template will be rolled out after further discussions and feedback from support area managers.

R Ashton thanked J Gallagher for the report

Members of the Academic Board agreed to note the contents of the report.

10. Summary of the Block 2 Student Experience Survey

The Quality Enhancement and Development Manager summarised the results of the Block 2 Student Experience Survey, noting high satisfaction with learning environments and materials. He highlighted the preference for practical work, the desire for a single learning platform, and the need for quiet study spaces.

J Gallagher informed members that the survey received over 1700 responses, with high satisfaction reported for learning environments and materials. Students expressed a strong preference for practical, hands-on activities and group work. Additionally, students indicated a preference for using a single learning platform, with many favouring Teams over Moodle. This feedback suggests a need for consistency in the digital tools used across courses. He noted that the Survey was accessible and open until the end of February 2025.

A Sweeney noted that the survey results were consistent with the findings from the focus groups.

R Ashton highlighted the abundance of positive feedback regarding staff, relationships, and the welcoming nature of the College, emphasising that this remains one of its key strengths. J Gallagher agreed, noting that appreciation for both teaching and support staff was one of the most frequently mentioned themes. He also referenced the recent discussion on new quality arrangements, emphasising the increasing prominence of student feedback within these frameworks. He stressed the importance of conducting surveys to ensure continuous improvement. He further noted that the National Student Satisfaction Engagement Survey would be launched in March 2025 and run for a six-week period.

Members of the Academic Board agreed to note the contents of the report.

11. 2023-24 Student Outcomes Review and Improvement Targets

The Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality presented his report, sharing it on screen while reviewing the statistics on the College's improvement targets for student outcomes. The report outlined the goal of exceeding the national average for full-time Further Education (FE) and closing the gap towards the national average for full-time Higher Education (HE).

P Brown stated that he found the report to be clear, well-structured, and an easy read. Furthermore he highlighted the importance of conducting a more in-depth data analysis beyond general statistics. He noted that while certain areas of the college do not hold a monopoly, they do maintain a dominant presence in regional activity. Given this, specific departments should be expected to perform competitively against national averages. However, he also pointed out that some departments offer curricula that are widely available across the sector, which may impact their comparative performance.

Members of the Committee agreed to endorse the contents of the report.

12. 2024-25 Student Withdrawal Update Report

The Head of Student Information Services, M Smillie presented J Quinn's report on Student Withdrawals up to December 2024, highlighting the impact of the funding date change and the College's efforts to improve retention. The report showed a positive trend in early withdrawal rates and monthly withdrawal rates, with health issues being the main driver for student withdrawals.

M Smillie informed members that the funding date was moved from November to late September, which positively impacted early withdrawal rates. This change, along with efforts by the College, contributed to a decrease in early withdrawals. Members noted that historically, September has the highest withdrawal rates due to students being unsure of their courses. However, withdrawals from October to December were lower compared to previous years, indicating progress in retaining students. Furthermore, health issues were identified as the main driver for student withdrawals. M Smillie mentioned that the College records multiple reasons for withdrawals, which can lead to duplication in the data.

M Smillie highlighted the College's efforts to improve retention, including early intervention, pre-course activities, responding to student feedback, restructuring poorly performing courses, and strengthening mental health and well-being support. Additionally, she noted that the College's retention team focuses on early intervention for classes identified as having retention issues through the quality process. This proactive approach aims to address potential problems before they lead to withdrawals.

Members discussed the high number of students citing academic issues as a reason for withdrawal. R Ashton noted that 50 students cited academic issues as their reason for leaving early in the course. Furthermore, he suggested exploring whether academic issues are concentrated in specific levels or subject areas. This could help identify targeted interventions to support students facing academic challenges and reduce withdrawals. M Smillie explained that academic issues are typically reported by the department based on students' engagement and performance. This highlights the importance of departmental monitoring and support to address academic challenges early on.

Action: R Ashton suggested that the Quality Team dive deeper into the data on Academic Issues to identify patterns and potential areas for improvement. This could involve analysing specific subject areas or levels where academic issues are more prevalent.

Members of the Academic Board agreed to note the contents of the report.

13. The Changing Learner Research Report Report by Vice Principal Curriculum

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality updated members on the key findings of the *Changing Learner Research Report*, produced by the College Development Network (CDN).

He explained that this research, based on studies at Forth Valley and Fife Colleges, highlights challenges faced by learners in Scotland, including lower academic performance, delayed skills development, underdeveloped social skills, heightened anxiety, and decreased resilience. These trends were already emerging before the pandemic, though the crisis exacerbated the issues.

The report further notes that the growing dependence on digital communication is impacting students' social skills, attention spans, and ability to engage with their studies. These factors, along with increased anxiety and reduced resilience, are expected to lead to greater demand for support services from the College.

Members discussed the report on the increasing mental health and digital technologies challenges faced by students, exacerbated by COVID-19. R Ashton highlighted that the College had implemented enhanced support systems for student wellbeing, resilience, and mental health, including increased staff resources (counsellors, well-being officers) and targeted interventions, especially at the beginning of the academic year. Staff have also received training on addressing complex student needs, such as neurodivergent students and trauma-informed teaching.

M McKerlie acknowledged the importance of documenting the challenges outlined in the report, particularly those related to student wellbeing and the impact of digital technology. She emphasised, however, that addressing these issues will require more than just short-term fixes. It will necessitate a holistic, college-wide approach. Furthermore, she highlighted that, while the College has a well-being officer and counsellors in place, the scope of support needed extends beyond these roles. She noted that classroom staff, in particular, are on the front lines, regularly addressing students' anxiety, panic, and uncertainties with the skills and techniques they have. She stressed that these efforts are critical in helping students manage their emotions and overcome challenges. Despite these difficulties, she noted a positive aspect: students' desire to be on campus is reassuring and reflects a commitment to their education. However, she also pointed out that while online learning during the COVID pandemic was a major issue, it continues to present challenges as many students who were accustomed to online formats are now transitioning back to in-person learning, which brings its own set of obstacles.

Gary Sharp expressed support for the College's current efforts, noting that they are on the right track and should continue to build upon. He acknowledged the importance of documenting these efforts, but also pointed out a key challenge: the increasing complexity and volume of students experiencing these issues. As more students with these challenges continue to enter the College, the demand for support will grow, and this will inevitably lead to greater challenges that need to be addressed.

Members of the Academic Board agreed to note the contents of the report.

Robin Ashton thanked members for their valuable insights and contributions.

Risk, Equality and Data Protection - Discussion

- 14. Resource Implications – 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.
- 15. Impact on Students – 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.
- 16. Risk Management – 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.
- 17. Equality Management – 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.
- 18. 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.
- 19. 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.
- 20. Closure**
The meeting closed at 2.45pm
- 21. Date of Next Meeting**
02 May 2025 - MS Teams