

## **REVIEW OF SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES**

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

#### **Minutes of Meeting held at 1pm on 23 March 2006 in Adam Smith College (St. Brycedale campus)**

##### **Attendees:**

James Alexander, NUS Scotland (substituting for Melanie Ward: Joint Chair)

Victoria Beattie, ETLLD-FAED (Review of Scotland's Colleges Team)

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

John Bowditch, HMIE

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

Gail Edwards, NUS Scotland

Bill Harvey, Scottish Funding Council

Marian Healy, EIS (Joint Chair)

John Ireson, Skill Scotland

John McCann, SFEU

Stewart McKillop, South Lanarkshire College

Sheila Meikle, UNISON (substituting for Maureen Anderson)

Penny Neish, ASC

##### **Apologies:**

Maureen Anderson, UNISON

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

Claire Bell, Scottish Funding Council

Susan Bird, Stevenson College Edinburgh

Gordon Casey, AMICUS

Iain McCaskey, SSAScot

Melanie Ward, NUS Scotland (Joint Chair)

##### **1. Chair's Introduction, Apologies etc.**

- Apologies were recorded as noted above.

##### **2. Presentation by Jennie Lee Students' Association**

- Sandra Edmundson, president of the Jennie Lee Students' Association, delivered a presentation on the purposes, nature and value of student representation. She focussed on the benefits of representation and mentioned specific initiatives with which Jennie Lee Students Association have been involved. Following this, she answered questions from members on related issues.

### **3. Presentation on Profiling of Staff Project: Interim Report**

- John McCann spoke to the draft Executive Summary of the Interim Report, circulated in advance. He advised that the actual report was still with the ASC and STUC and that the document provided was purely for this group's attention. The first phase of research, which had been based on existing data, was now complete. Though not especially revealing, it did at least provide a solid foundation for the second phase. Noting that as a general rule they had kept to the terminology adopted by their data sources, he summarised some of the main findings from the summary. He said that the next phase of research would be more interesting as it would involve working with fresh sources of data. In that regard, some interviews were currently being analysed and others would soon be held. In addition, an employee questionnaire was being developed and this would be piloted by one college prior to rollout. He noted that the process to date had been both lengthy and challenging and said that he would inform the group immediately when the final report became available.
- John Ireson said he was concerned that disability hadn't been mentioned in the summary. He said that this was a critical issue in the context of recent legislative changes. John McCann replied that this was probably because the existing data sources didn't explicitly cover the issue. Some other key issues were also not addressed by the existing data. Marian Healy noted that while colleges usually already gathered information on disability, staff were often reluctant to formally declare themselves as being disabled. John Ireson suggested that disability be addressed specifically as an issue in the second phase of research.
- Stewart McKillop expressed some surprise that academic staff numbers hadn't grown over the period covered. Given current concerns over an ageing workforce, he also asked whether it would be possible to provide a further breakdown of the numbers of staff aged over 50, including information on the occupational roles of those individuals. John McCann said that he would take this suggestion back.
- In other discussion, it was suggested that an element of benchmarking would be helpful, either in relation to other educational sectors or the labour market generally, and one member sought clarification on the types of jobs that were undertaken by temporary part-time college staff. It was also noted that the summary highlighted issues relating to gender and ethnic minority representation that the group could usefully discuss. However, it was agreed that such discussion should be deferred until after the final report had been circulated.

#### **ACTION**

- **John McCann to feed back to relevant colleagues the views and suggestions of members with regards to the Profiling of Staff project**
- **John McCann to provide group with final Profiling of Staff report as soon as it becomes available**

*At this point Peter Beaumont handed rounded a note of clarification on the parameters of RoSCO working groups' authority with particular regards to policy setting. Members were invited to note the policy process described with a view to aiding and informing the group's deliberations.*

#### 4. Note of Meeting of 16 February 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	Person(s) to provide update
The Executive to report back to a future meeting on whether its responsibilities under the 1993 regulations can be delegated to another body.	Peter Beaumont advised that he hoped to observe some progress on this issue within the next week or so.
The Funding Council to provide FAED with as much information as possible re funding requirements for estates by end February 2006	These matters were now planned to be discussed at the May meeting.
NUS and ASC to report back to the group on whether they think the joint audit idea would be worthwhile	NUS still planned to raise this issue at a meeting with Tom Kelly.
FAED to advise group on costs and tender process once final scope of research project on student experience agreed	Covered under item 5.
In due course, Scottish Equalities Unit to be invited to make a presentation to the group	Unit not yet established.
Holistic discussion of student representation issues to take place at a later meeting of the group	Planned to be held at June meeting.
John McCann to provide Profiling of Staff report to group in due course	Draft Executive Summary provided. See item 3.
Minutes and Conceptual Framework for Sub-group to be circulated to all members once finalised	Done.

#### 5. Research on the Student Experience: Literature Review

- Victoria Beattie spoke to paper SLEWG-P10 and the draft minutes of the research sub-group, both circulated in advance. She advised that colleagues in Analytical Services Division (ASD) had undertaken a literature review on behalf of the working group and, due to an abundance of existing data on the student experience, advised against undertaking another general survey of the sector. They had, however, suggested that there might be potential for the nascent Scottish Equalities Unit to undertake some more focussed research within the field. Members of the research sub-group, meanwhile, felt that the literature review had been helpful but understated some of the more negative aspects of the existing data. They considered that there was a need for some more focussed and considered research on the student experience. They also felt that best practice should be disseminated and encouraged throughout the sector and that there was an issue about guidance time which could potentially be explored through an HMIE aspect report. Finally, they agreed that the Scottish Equalities Unit should in due course be made aware of the work that had been done by ASD.

- It was agreed that these and other issues raised by the research sub-group could be discussed at a later meeting of the working group.
- It was confirmed that the term 'student experience' was being used in the wider, global sense, i.e. not just within the college setting. However, in making its recommendations, the group would need to be mindful of the extent of its influence over other areas of policy.
- John McCann reported that the new equalities unit would be called 'Equality Forward' and that its first task would be to assess the 'state of the nation' with regard to the equalities agenda. He suggested that the presentation by the head of the unit could not realistically be held before June and added that while he understood that the unit would have a research function, issues of capacity would need to be borne in mind.

## **ACTION**

- **As noted in minutes of research sub-group, FAED to prepare a list of common concerns/themes on the student experience for discussion by the group at a future meeting**
- **In due course, FAED to inform Scottish Equalities Unit about the work undertaken by ASD and the SLALE group in relation to the student experience**

## **6. Update on Professional Development Sub-group**

- Peter Beaumont gave a verbal update on the progress of the Professional Development Sub-group. He advised that at the last meeting Bill Harvey had provided an update on the Funding Council's professional development updating pilots. So far all of the feedback from these had been positive. Bill had also highlighted the usefulness of the SFEU's new CPD toolkit for college staff.
- The other main item for discussion had been statistics on the numbers of staff in colleges who were teacher trained. These statistics had been sent to colleges along with a letter seeking assistance with the sub-group's work, notably in taking forward Ministerially approved recommendations relating to professional development. So far there had been 19 replies from colleges and one promise of a reply. In terms of content, many of the replies had expressed broad agreement with the recommendations but also raised practical issues with regards to their implementation. There would be an attempt to obtain further replies before gathering all of the feedback into a single document for discussion. Peter hoped that this would be ready in time for the sub-group's May meeting.
- Another issue discussed at the last meeting had been the updated 'Conceptual Framework' for the work of the Sub-group. The finalised document had since been e-mailed to all working group members.
- Finally, Peter advised that all of the associate members of the Sub-group (from the PDF, SFEU, LLUK and the TEIs) had been invited to attend that afternoon's meeting.

## **7. Any Other Business**

- James Alexander sought views on potential agenda items for the next two meetings. It was noted that the Profiling of Staff report might not be available for discussion at either of these meetings. However, estates issues would hopefully be discussed at the May meeting and the discussion on student representation issues could then take up the larger part of the meeting in June.
- It was confirmed that the Scottish Funding Council headquarters in Haymarket and the Central College of Commerce in Glasgow had been provisionally arranged as the venues for the meetings in May and June respectively.
- NUS offered to send FAED suggestions for a presentation and an alternative venue for the meeting to be held in June.

### **ACTION**

- **NUS to send suggestions to FAED for a presentation and an alternative venue for the meeting to be held in June**

### **List of Action Points**

- **John McCann to feed back to relevant colleagues the views and suggestions of members with regards to the Profiling of Staff project**
- **John McCann to provide group with final Profiling of Staff report as soon as it becomes available**
- **As noted in minutes of research sub-group, FAED to prepare a list of common concerns/themes on the student experience for discussion by the group at a future meeting**
- **In due course, FAED to inform Scottish Equalities Unit about the work undertaken by ASD and the SLALE group in relation to the student experience**
- **NUS to send suggestions to FAED for a presentation and an alternative venue for the meeting to be held in June.**

**Tom Craig  
ETLLD-FAED  
30 March 2006**