



## REGIONAL BOARD

### NOTE OF MEETING

Minute of the Meeting of the Regional Board of North East Scotland College, held on Tuesday 25 March 2025 at 1000hrs in the Boardroom of Fraserburgh Campus.

#### **Present:**

Susan Elston, Regional Chair  
Sheena Ross  
Caroline Laurenson  
David Blackhall  
David Anderson  
Cindy Dempster  
Neil Cowie  
Ellie Zemani  
Gerry Lawrie  
Ewan Rattray  
Viktorija Nikitina  
Emma MacIsaac  
Averil Watt

#### **In Attendance:**

Stuart Thompson, Vice Principal, Finance & Resources  
Lorraine Garden, Acting Secretary to the Board  
Maureen McLean, Minute Secretary

#### **Guest Attendees:**

Alesia du Plessis, Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Student Experience  
Gwen Watt, Head of Student Support and Engagement  
Robert Laird, Head of Planning and Academic Partnerships  
Susan Grant, Strategic Lead, Energy Transitions  
Linda Taylor, Assistant Principal, Student Services

Regional Chair, S Elston welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

<b>Agenda Item</b>	
45-24	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> Apologies were received in advance from B Hutcheson, M Fotheringham, J Gifford, I Watt, D Cockburn, R McGregor and S Lawrance. L McDermid was not in attendance.
46-24	<b>Declaration of any Potential Conflicts of Interest in relation to any Agenda Items</b> There were no declared potential conflicts of interest raised.
47-24	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting (11/12/2024)</b> The Minute of the previous meeting was approved as a true and accurate record.
48-24	<b>Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting</b> Members noted the Matters Arising report.
	<b>Reserved Matter for Discussion</b>

49-24	<b>Summary/Overview of Quality Assurance Issue (A du Plessis)</b>
	<b>Matters for Decision</b>
50-24	<p><b>Equalities Mainstreaming Report</b> (G Watt joined the meeting for this item only) Members considered and reviewed the Equalities Mainstreaming Report for AY25-29, tabled for approval.</p> <p>G Watt provided a brief update on AY21-25 Outcomes highlighting key points and achievements. A full report, Members noted, is available on the College Intranet.</p> <p>The 4 new Equalities Outcomes detailed below were highlighted:</p> <p><b>EO1: Men's mental health</b> – for both staff &amp; students, Bespoke RESPECT campaign, improve training and participate in national campaign - short to medium term priority.</p> <p><b>EO2: Students only</b> – increase in demand for mental health support services noted, coupled with the need to look at long term solutions. Wellbeing advisers are currently assisting with referral cases. All staff will receive CPD training in June 2025 as part of Trauma Informed College support.</p> <p><b>EO3: Race</b> - this is a long-term goal for both staff and students. The new Student Records system will provide a greater understanding of student data.</p> <p><b>EO4: Care-experienced learners</b> – data shows a 5% decrease in success for these learners. Ongoing Partnership Working with Social Work Services regarding current guidance and support highlighted.</p> <p>The next step to have a fully designed report published by 30 April 2025 was noted.</p> <p>Discussion followed on improving baseline data which is being reviewed during the enrolment period to help understand existing barriers and how to overcome them. Members noted the ongoing Strategic Leadership Team work regarding improving quality data gathering.</p> <p>Dialogue regarding disadvantaged students and the current opportunities available, including the strong partnerships with Aberdeen Foyer, King's Trust.</p> <p>Information regarding ongoing work regarding dis-engagement and the model to co-support learners from Secondary Schools being explored was shared with Members.</p> <p>S Elston thanked G Watt for presenting a full Report for consideration and all members</p>

	<p>agreed to approve this proposal.</p> <p><b>Decision - Approved</b></p>
51-24	<p><b>Governance Manual – Annual Review</b> (S Elston)</p> <p>S Elston presented this item on behalf of S Lawrance. Members were directed to the various updates and changes applied within Appendix 1.</p> <p>A query was raised in relation to a potential conflict with the Remunerations Committee and the Chairs Committee. S Elston advised no conflict exists.</p> <p><b>Decision - Approved</b></p>
52-24	<p><b>Regional Board Succession/Office Bearer Positions</b> (S Elston)</p> <p>Reference was made to the 15/01/25 Governance &amp; Nominations Committee Meeting where Succession and Office Bearers were discussed. Members were tasked with noting the vacancies and continuations identified, and approval of E Rattray as Vice Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee.</p> <p>S Elston acknowledged this as being D Anderon's last meeting and thanked him for being part of the Regional Board for the past 10 years.</p> <p>It was suggested that secondment posts are increased to a period of 2 years. This was agreed by members.</p> <p>The Skills Matrix was reviewed, with Members noting the need to fill the skills gap in relation to finance. Any suggestions for potential Board members are encouraged to get in touch with S Elston.</p> <p>Members approved the recommendation that E Rattray become Vice Chair of F&amp;R Committee.</p> <p><b>Decision – E Rattray approved as Vice Chair of the F&amp;R Committee</b>  <b>Decision – Secondment post duration to be increased to a 2-year period</b></p>
	<b>Matters for Discussion</b>
53-24	<p><b>Strategic Plan Update</b> (R Laird)</p> <p>R Laird shared a presentation with Members providing an update on the Strategic Plan for AY25-30.</p> <p>This plan has been developed in conjunction with R Laird, R McGregor &amp; P Smith with a summary of decisions and consultations to date forming part of the overview presented. Members were informed of the plan detail noting the requirement for the use of clear language, the plan format consisting of 5 core objectives and the formation of 6 sub-strategies of high-level areas. Each sub-strategy will be led-on by members of the Strategic Leadership Team with themes cutting across many of the strategies.</p> <p>The inclusive way this plan has been produced was observed with N Cowie endorsing this approach, thanking R Laird for his input.</p> <p>S Elston acknowledged the approach highlighting this method demonstrates the new way to do things and something that fits for NESCol.</p> <p>Discussion followed on the community aspect, the staff experience and retention, the social impact, performance measures, growth, values and the suggestion to use 'we are' as inclusive wording.</p>
	<b>Reserved Matters for Discussion</b>
54-24	<p><b>ETSH Update</b> (S Grant) (S Grant joined the meeting)</p>

55-24	<b>AY2024/25 Budget and Funding</b> (S Thompson)

56-24	<b>25/26 Budget</b> (S Thompson)
57-24	<b>5-Year Plan</b> (S Thompson)
58-24	<b>ASET Update</b> (S Thompson)
59-24	<b>Data Management System Update</b> (L Taylor)

60-24	<b>Strategic Leadership Team Update (ET)</b>
	<b>Reports to the Board</b>
61-24	<p><b>Report by the Regional Chair</b> (S Elston) S Elston summarised the key messages contained in the Report.</p> <p>New governance model within Colleges Scotland to streamline Board membership are being put in place.</p> <p>Colleges Employers Scotland – aim for more collaborative environment with Trade Unions, much better meetings and more positive. There is a focus is on closing out issues that have not been dealt with. Aim is to have support Staff pay negotiations deal to be closed by the end of this AY.</p> <p>Upcoming CDN meeting will overview the sector and what's next.</p> <p>Community Planning will look at improvement plans and next stages.</p>
62-24	<p><b>Report by the Principal</b> (N Cowie) N Cowie highlighted the key takeaways from his submitted Report.</p> <p>British Council – support for Scottish Government and ways to assist the College sector will be discussed further with the Strategic Leadership Team.</p> <p>Extraordinary CPG meeting – waiting for SFC funding announcement on new funding model</p>
63-24	<p><b>Report by Committee Chairs</b> Members noted the Report by the Committee Chairs, with Chairs from the A&amp;R, F&amp;R, C&amp;Q and HR Committees invited to highlight the salient points from Meetings held.</p> <p>S Elston provided an update of the Audit &amp; Risk Committee meeting held on 26 February 2025 on key points provided by J Gifford who highlighted discussions on the Risk Registers for both the College and ASET, noting the intention to have the ASET Register reviewed to align more closely with the College format.</p> <p>Members noted the A&amp;R Committee's agreement, after discussion, on the proposed Internal Audit Plans for next year and the following years.</p> <p>HR Committee update noted the enhancement plan, the update on reporting by the HR Group and on Committee evaluation feedback.</p> <p>The F&amp;R Committee update recognised the positive paper in relation to the loss to profit surplus last year and lessons learned.</p>
	<b>Matters for Information</b>
64-24	<b>Strategic Risk Register</b> (S Thompson)

65-24	<b>Indicative Funding Allocation AY2025/26</b> (S Thompson) S Thompson provided a verbal update on the anticipated funding allocation for the new academic year. Members were asked to note the summarised information.
66-24	<b>PREVENT Annual Report</b> (A du Plessis) A du Plessis detailed work undertaken in order to meet NESCol's Prevent Duty responsibilities. Relaunch of PREVENT will be activated once new changes implemented
	<b>Reserved Matters for Information</b>
67-24	<b>Credit Activity Update and Forecast</b> (R Laird)
68-24	<b>Opportunities Register</b> (S Thompson)
69-24	<b>Any Other Business</b> N Cowie informed members of the impact of the Strategic Leadership Team and recent activity, observing the team is in a better place than 5 years ago and feels the College is doing some fantastic work which is shared via good news stories. The Credit Activity provided by R Laird is a great piece of work and this achievement has been recognised.
70-24	<b>Summation of Actions and Date of Next Meeting</b> L Garden provided a summary of the identified actions and confirmed the extra Regional Board Meeting called for Thursday 10 April 2025 at 1030hrs via Teams, and the next in-person Meeting on Tuesday 17 June 2025 at 1000hrs at City Campus. Members noted a possible change of venue to Altens Campus for this, to accommodate the showcasing of the ETSH and the outreach vehicle.

**Signed: S Elston, Regional Board Chair**

**Dated: 17.06.25**