

REGIONAL BOARD

MINUTE OF MEETING

Minute of Meeting of the Regional Board of North East Scotland College held on Wednesday 18 March 2026 at 10:00am, in the Boardroom of Fraserburgh Campus

<p>Agenda Item</p>	<p>Present: Susan Elston, Regional Chair Jim Gifford, Vice Chair Iain Watt Mark Fotheringham Neil Cowie Averil Watt Ellie Zemani, from 10:12am Cindy Dempster Sheena Ross Duncan Cockburn</p> <p>Present Via Teams: Leona McDermid, Vice Chair Gerry Lawrie Emma Maclsaac</p> <p>In Attendance: Robin McGregor, Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality Stuart Thompson, Vice Principal, Finance & Resources Susan Lawrance, Secretary to the Board Karen Fraser, Minute Secretary</p> <p>Guest Attendees: Sharon Scott, ASET General Manager (for Agenda Item 49-25/26) John Reid, ASET Board Chair (for Agenda Item 49-25/26) David Archibald, Partner, Henderson Loggie (as observer and for Agenda Item 61-25/26) Duncan Abernethy, Assistant Principal Curriculum & Commercial Development (for Agenda Item 68-25/26) Kimra Donnelly, Assistant Principal People Services (for Agenda Item 73-25/26)</p> <p>Regional Chair extended a welcome to all and to D Archibald in particular, in his capacity of meeting observer.</p>
	<p>Guest Attendees S Scott and J Reid joined the Meeting at 10:04am</p>
<p>49-25/26</p>	<p>Reserved Presentation ASET Update (S Scott/J Reid)</p>

	Guest Attendees S Scott and J Reid left the Meeting at 10:37am
50-25/26	Apologies for Absence (S Elston) Apologies were received in advance from C Laurenson, B Hutcheson, M Dugan and E Rattray.
51-25/26	Declaration of Any Potential Conflicts of Interest in Relation to Any Agenda Items (S Elston) J Gifford declared a potential conflict of interest by virtue of his position with Aberdeenshire Council. D Cockburn declared a potential conflict of interest by virtue of his position with RGU. L McDermid declared a potential conflict of interest by virtue of her position with Aberdeen Foyer.
52-25/26	Minute of the Previous Meeting (10/12/25) (S Elston) The Minute was approved as a true and accurate record.
53-25/26	Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting (10/12/25) (S Lawrance) Members noted the updates to the 2 Matters Arising captured in the shared report.
	Matters for Decision
54-25/26 (discussed after 55-25/26)	Annual Review of Governance Manual (S Lawrance) Minor adjustments to the Manual were specified in the accompanying cover paper to Appendix 1. Owing to the inclusion of Private Reserved Matters on today's Agenda, attention was drawn to point 3.74. Confirmation of this being in place and in alignment with the Act made by Scottish Government was provided. Repetition was noted in points 3.60 and 3.62 and a suggestion to amalgamate these was put forward. Action: Board Secretary to review and adjust. The specification of one meeting per year being held in person in some, but not all, of the Committees' Terms of Reference was queried. Decision = Subject to the combining of points 3.60 and 3,62, all proposed amendments were approved.
	Reserved Matters for Discussion
55-25/26 (discussed after 53-25/26)	ASET Update (S Thompson)

56-25/26	2025/26 Budget Update (S Thompson)
57-25/26	Lessons Learned Report Update (R McGregor) (Verbal Update)
	Matters for Information
58-25/26	Indicative Funding Allocation AY2026-27 (S Thompson) (Verbal Update) In addition to the points raised earlier in the meeting, S Thompson reiterated the high-level increase already announced and the face-to-face discussions held with SFC. Reference was made to the potential increase to capital funding, and SFC funding methodology changes. Action: An update on NESCol's allocation to be shared with Members following SFC's announcement on 27/03/26.
59-25/26	PREVENT Annual Report (R McGregor) R McGregor spotlighted the Report detailing the work undertaken to fulfill NESCol's responsibilities regarding its Prevent Duty, with no significant change highlighted. The completion of the Prevent Self-Assessment by the end of the month was confirmed. Members noted S Thompson's representation through CONTEST.
60-25/26	Sub-Strategies Progress Report (R McGregor) (Verbal Update) R McGregor provided an update on the embedding of the sub-strategies following feedback from the Winter Development Day Workshops (10/02/26) and the re-alignment of internal governance structure being undertaken by the SLT. Members noted the highlighted planned impacts including improvement of cross campus communication; better alignment between organisation plans and improved reporting lines. Reference was made to consolidation, time effectiveness, and visibility of the "golden thread", with positivity noted from feedback provided.

	<p>In reply to an observation regarding the overlap with Regional Board Committees, the inter-linkage was acknowledged. Action: SL to share the organogram with members once finalised.</p>
61-25/26	<p>Effectiveness Review Feedback (D Archibald) (Verbal Update) Having thanked the Chair for his meeting invitation and in advance of the full report being presented at the 17/06/26 meeting, preliminary observations were shared.</p> <p>Background context for the review was provided. Members noted its' mandatory nature as set by the SFC, and the suggested options for its' completion. D Archibald indicated that the option to speak to all members individually furnished him with the best outcomes, and gratitude was expressed to all for making the time to meet and being candid in their responses. Members were prompted to complete the subsequent questionnaire and return this to D Archibald at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Reference was made to resulting themes from the 1:1 meetings having been identified, with key pillars clearly in place to facilitate effective governance. The existence of a committed Regional Board, depicting a wide range of experience and care for NESCol was noted. Ownership of high-level strategic priorities and engagement with the corporate planning process was evidenced. Clear understanding of being monitored and measured was portrayed. The presentation of an outward-looking organisation was depicted, alongside a clear message of confidence in the senior team and a willingness to interact in this.</p> <p>Closing remarks intimated that the fundamentals of good governance are in place at the College, with any recommendations put forward in the final report aimed at generating incremental improvements to the strong foundations already identified. Action: Final written report to be presented for information at 17/06/26 meeting.</p> <p>In response to a query regarding the possibility of grouping, D Archibald acknowledged recurring themes but reiterated having opted to converse with members on an individual basis.</p> <p>S Elston expressed thanks to all for their participation.</p>
62-25/26	<p>Report by the Regional Chair (S Elston) (Verbal Update) S Elston spotlighted her late paper, itemising meeting attendances from a different perspective to that of N Cowie. Job evaluation, the EIS-FELA pay claim, and the upcoming first NNC meeting were mentioned.</p> <p>S Elston also expressed congratulations to N Cowie on his 26 years of service to the College, which had been recognised prior to the meeting.</p>
63-25/26	<p>Report by the Principal (N Cowie) N Cowie referenced his submitted Report. Thanks were expressed to D Cockburn for the joint political engagement undertaken in February 2026. N Cowie stated his intention to continue the lobbying.</p>
64-25/26	<p>Report by Committee Chairs Members noted the Report by the Committee Chairs, with Chairs or representatives from all invited to highlight the salient points from Meetings held.</p> <p>On behalf of the C&Q Committee, R McGregor noted the discussed spotlight review and the deep-dive into SRR entries pertinent to curriculum and quality.</p> <p>As Chair of the F&R Committee, S Ross acknowledged a similar agenda content to much of today's', and noted consideration given to the Financial Regulations Policy. The next F&R Committee meeting was confirmed as having both in-person and online attendance options.</p> <p>S Elston referenced conversations held at the Remuneration Committee.</p> <p>Representing the A&R Committee, J Gifford drew attention to the Risk Management Policy review, internal audits, and the RRs of both NESCol and ASET having featured.</p> <p>From HR Committee discussions, L McDermid referenced the importance of any</p>

	<p>organisations people and culture, and the need to align the messaging to emphasise the link between strategy and “on the ground” practice. The ambitious nature of the People Services’ Enhancement Plan was also highlighted.</p> <p>Summarising the Chairs’ Committee, S Elston highlighted the re-launch of RB recruitment aimed specifically at those with a financial background and an ask of members to promote through their own networks; the approval of Policies; and the agreement of the ToRs. Expanding on RB recruitment, S Lawrance advised members of the resignation of teaching staff member P Butters on 05/03/26 with immediate effect, and the subsequent opening created.</p>
	Reserved Matters for Information
65-25/26	Credit Activity Update and Forecast (S Thompson)
66-25/26	Strategic Risk Register (S Thompson)
67-25/26	Opportunities Register (S Thompson)
	Guest Attendee D Abernethy joined the Meeting at 12:48pm
68-25/26	BCD Update (D Abernethy)

*Items in red denote reserved/private matters

	Guest Attendee D Abernethy left the Meeting at 1:03pm
69-25/26	Capital Projects and Estates Update (S Thompson)
70-25/26	Any Other Business Following a check-in with each individual member by the Chair, no other business was raised.
71-25/26	Summation of Actions and Date of Next Meeting S Lawrance summarised the agreed actions and confirmed the next Regional Board meeting as Wednesday 17/06/26 at City Campus.
	NESCol staff (incl Minute Secretary) and SA Member left the Meeting at 1:06pm
	Private Reserved Matters for Information
72-25/26	Progress Update to Principal's Performance Management Objectives (S Elston)
	Guest Attendee K Donnelly joined the meeting
73-25/26	Employee Related Matters

Actions from the Regional Board Meeting of 18 March 2026			
Agenda Item	Action	Responsible Person	Deadline
54-25/26	Governance Manual: Review the amalgamation of points 3.60 and 3.62 and adjust as appropriate.	Board Sec	Immediate
55-25/26	ASET Update:		
56-25/26	2025/26 Budget Update:		
57-25/26	Lessons Learned Report:		
58-25/26	Indicative Funding Allocation AY2026-27: detail to be shared upon receipt.	S Thompson	27/03/26
60-25/26	Sub-Strategies: share organogram of internal governance structure once finalised.	Board Secretary	ASAP
61-25/26	Effectiveness Review: final written report to be presented for information.	D Archibald	03/06/26
66-25/26	SRR:		
72-25/26	Principal's Objectives:		

*Items in red denote reserved/private matters

Signed: S Elston, Regional Board Chair

Dated: 17.06.26