

## Learning Enhancement and Skills Committee meeting minutes

The first meeting of the Learning Enhancement and Skills Committee was held at 10.00am on Thursday 19 September 2019 at 99 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.

- Present:** Dr Paul Little (Chair)  
D-I Brown  
Megan Brown (Observer)  
Dr Martha Caddell  
Angela Cox  
Claire Farmer  
Selma Hunter  
Eve Lewis  
Debra Macfarlane (Presenter)  
Liam McCabe  
Rowena Pelik  
Dr Ken Thomson  
Maggie Wightman
- Officers:** Dr Dee Bird (Secretary)  
Keith Coyne  
Pamela Forbes  
Derek Horsburgh  
Dr Andre Reibig  
Emma Roberts (Clerk)
- Apologies:** Dr Veena O'Halloran (Vice Chair)  
Claire Carney  
Karen Corbett  
Frank Coton  
Fiona Robertson

### 19/01 Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all members, observers and Council executive officers to the first Learning Enhancement and Skills Committee

meeting. The SFC board had agreed that this committee would now have a skills remit. A brief round-table introduction from members followed.

**19/02      Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded the members of their responsibility to indicate if they had or may be perceived to have a conflict of interest under any item. None was declared.

**19/03      Minutes of previous LEC meeting: 11 April 2019**

The minutes were amended to add reflect Karen Watts' position as Chief Executive in the list of attendees.

It was **agreed** that a matters arising action tracker would be developed for future meetings.

**19/04      Chair's Update**

The Committee received a paper for noting, to inform members of ongoing or recent developments relevant to the remit of this Committee. Members also received SFC's recently published Strategic Framework. The Chair advised that the Strategic Framework indicates a new approach to SFC's work, and will be an important influence on the forward agenda planning for the Committee.

The Chair informed members that he had been commissioned by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work on a review the economic impact of Scotland's colleges, along with Audrey Cumberland. The review aims to establish how colleges in Scotland currently impact on the economy through helping improve businesses' performance and productivity, and how they can be enabled to do more in the future. A similar review of the university sector would be undertaken by Anton Muscatelli, Principal of Glasgow University.

It was **agreed** that the Chair would share the recommendations from the college report with the Committee when available.

**19/05      Update on Skills Alignment**

The Committee received an oral update from Maggie Wightman, Director of Skills Alignment SFC/SDS, on the work that had taken place over the four weeks that she had been in post.

The Committee noted that:

- Skills alignment had emerged as a key priority area from the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board, under the Future Skills Mission.
- The Director of Skills Alignment's work to date had included scoping current provision and gaps in both agencies, and considering the current evidence base in order to inform an implementation plan
- Scoping work had also been undertaken of three pilot initiatives in Early Learning and Childcare, Financial Services and with the Glasgow college region. Learning from those pilots can be used to inform and influence national developments related to improving the alignment of skills training to employment demand.
- It was intended for there to be a detailed programme plan in place over the next month to progress the work on skills alignment.

The Chair advised members that the Committee will have a role in feeding into and advising the SFC Council, who would in turn advise the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board.

**19/06 Remit and Membership of the Learning Enhancement and Skills Committee LEC/19/01**

The Committee received a paper outlining the draft remit of the Learning Enhancement and Skills Committee. Members were invited to discuss and approve the remit, and to advise of any amendments.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- The remit had been agreed by members at the first meeting of the Learning Enhancement Committee, but three areas of the remit had since been enhanced to incorporate skills.
- It was agreed that item three of Annex A would be amended to 'Link SFC's strategies to other *relevant* learning initiatives', to allow the Committee flexibility to engage with strategies from industry.
- The Committee's discussion of meta skills should not be limited to their application to the labour market, and should encompass their wider application to learner's lives.
- To reflect this, members agreed to amend item five of the remit to 'Ensure that all learners have the opportunity to develop the

attributes and meta skills to anticipate, *shape*, and adapt to change’.

- It was agreed that the item on lifelong learning and funding models would be separated.
- It was agreed that the final item of the remit would be removed.

The remit was then agreed. It was also **agreed** that the revised remit and a membership list would be circulated to members.

#### **19/07 Risk Register**

The Secretary advised the Committee that there would be risk register for consideration in future meetings.

#### **19/08 ‘Developing Human Skills’ LESC/19/02**

The Committee received a paper providing an update on recent and ongoing activity to enhance learners’ meta-skills and graduate attributes. This paper was prepared for members’ consideration ahead of the presentation.

#### **19/09 Developing Skills and Using Meta Skills- Claire Farmer, SDS, and Debra Macfarlane, QAA**

The Committee received a presentation from Claire Farmer of SDS. The presentation focused on SDS’s recent work on meta skills and future priorities.

The Committee also received a presentation from Debra Macfarlane, Quality Enhancement Manager, QAA. The focus of this presentation was to share with the Committee findings from two projects commissioned by QAA Scotland to explore the views of students, graduates and employers on the skills students develop in higher education. The projects focused on readiness for employment, equality and diversity and global perspectives.

In discussion, the Committee noted that:

- The meta skills model is currently untested with employers. This will be the focus of SDS’s work in the coming year.
- The results from QAA’s project show that involvement in student’s associations is a particularly good way for students to develop graduate skills. It is important that the skills developed through students associations are recognised and that student

associations are properly funded to support this. There should be commitment to ensuring that work in this area is student led, including democratic curriculum design.

- The Committee noted that this work applies to a range of learners including veterans – a policy area that SFC is currently working on.
- Members recognised that while meta skills will be increasingly required of young people entering the workforce, there is a need to consider the challenges of scaling up this model at a pace, and of the assessment and measurement of meta skills.
- Caution should be taken that the focus on meta skills does not add to the existing pressures on students, especially in relation to mental health.
- Duplication of work should be avoided, as there has already been some work carried out in relation to meta skills with the Curriculum for Excellence.
- It is important to embed meta skills starting at primary school level and ensure consistency in the use of terminology throughout the learner journey so that students understand and recognise the language of meta skills as they transition from one stage to the next.
- The Chair noted that the Committee would be re-visiting this topic on behalf of the SFC Council as work by SDS and other agencies progressed.

**19/10**

### **Any Other Business**

In discussion, the Committee noted that:

- The Committee must consider the practical implications of their discussions, and define their strategic objectives.
- The Committee provides a unique opportunity to bring the college, university and industry sectors together, so members must carefully consider what they can do as a group to add value.
- The Committee must be able to inform the council about primary and secondary education. SFC is able to more directly influence tertiary education through funding, but can also inform the incoming pool of students.

**19/11**

**Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place at 2.00pm on Tuesday 3 December 2019 at 99 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.