

The 4th meeting of the Skills, Enhancement, Access and Learning (SEAL) Committee was held on Thursday, 17 March 2022 at 10.00 by video-conferencing.

Present: Dr Paul Little (Chair)
Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam
Professor Ewart Keep
Sheila Duncan

Officers: Jacqui Brasted
Sharon Drysdale
Seamus Spencer
Fiona Burns (paper 22/03 and 22/05)
Dr André Reibig (Secretary)
Nick Stansfeld (Clerk)

Apologies: Andy Kerr
James Dunphy

22/01 Welcome and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed all Committee members and the executive to the meeting. Introductions were made to Jacqui Brasted, Deputy Director who joined SFC on 7 March 2022.

The following members noted a potential conflict of interest:

- Dr Paul Little in relation to City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board, the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and as co-author of the Cumberford-Little report, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Vice-Chair of the college sector Employers' Association, Vice Convenor of the College Principals Group.
- Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam in relation to Glasgow School of Art and an Advisory Board member for a research centre at the University of Edinburgh.
- Professor Ewart Keep in relation to his role as an Associate Fellow of the Scottish Centre for Employment Research, University of Strathclyde, and as member of the Board of Management at City of Glasgow College.

The minute was clarified under declarations of interest as Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam is an Advisory Board member of a Research Centre at the University of Edinburgh.

Otherwise the minute of the 27 January 2022 meeting was confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

2.1 Action Tracker

The SEAL Committee received an update on the actions from previous meetings and noted progress to date.

- On European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) it was noted EFQM is hosting an event at EICC on 24 March.

At the SEAL Committee meeting in March 2021, it was agreed that the Committee should discuss and review membership again by the end of March 2022. This was added to the Action Tracker and the Committee used the opportunity to discuss membership at this meeting.

In the discussion that followed the Committee:

- Suggested that membership should be broadened to include a member of the SDS Board to take account of the Audit Scotland report recommendations “Planning on Skills”. This will require further discussion between the SEAL Committee Chair, the Chair of the SFC Board and the SFC executive as well as with SDS.
- Suggested that a SME employer voice (e.g. Chamber of Commerce or FSB), while also paying attention to gender balance and representation across protected characteristics including geographical representation.
- Suggested that to support advice on the SFC Review implementation, vocational and academic experts in educational research, digital learning and pedagogy would be useful.
- Noted that the RKEC model included membership of core members and observer members. The Committee also suggested that there could also be a role for specialists who would only attend as required. The SEAL Committee Chair will have further discussions with the Chair of RKEG to share good practice.

- Noted the executive will discuss SEAL Committee membership further at its Directorate Leadership Group and other senior groups. The executive will update the Committee with fuller proposals at the next meeting.

22/03

SEAL Committee Policy update

(SEAL 22/03)

The SEAL Committee received an update paper on the key areas of policy within SFC's Access, Learning and Outcomes Directorate not covered on the agenda otherwise.

In discussion the SEAL Committee:

- Commended the executive on the depth and content of the paper and noted progress to date.
- Commended the inclusion of student experience within the fair access policy area so there is a better understanding of learner needs, wants and interests.
- Noted progress with the National School Programme, that is it Scotland-wide, an entitlement offer to all senior-phase pupils so they are able to access tertiary education.
- Noted the anticipated additional funding for mental health counsellor funding from Scottish Government. The Committee welcomed all efforts to improve the support of mental health and wellbeing services for students and staff due to the profound and continuing impact of the pandemic. The Committee encouraged student participation in the [Thriving Learners](#) study into student mental health. Connected with this are increasing social challenges with child poverty and digital poverty acting as barriers to further and higher education.
- Noted major updates on Lifelong Learning, Flexible Workforce Development Fund and other upskilling and retraining programmes, National Care Service, UK Shipbuilding Strategy, and PACE.
- Acknowledged the growing policy area of skills and economic recovery and voiced concerns about the capacity within SFC and specifically the Skills team to meet the expectations and volume of work involved in the policy area which includes economic transformation to net zero (CESAP, ScotWind etc.), NSET implementation and implementation of Future Skills Action Plan.

- Noted the Education Scotland evaluation of Foundation Apprenticeships was due in April 2022.

22/04 Update on Outcome Agreements AY 2021-22 (SEAL 22/04)

The SEAL Committee received an update paper on Outcome Agreements in AY 2021-22 and the steps to develop arrangements in AY 2022-23.

In discussion the Committee:

- Noted the Outcome Agreement process for colleges and universities and the transition from a period of managing Covid19-related public health challenges to a recovery focus structured around key sector priorities and outcomes for students, outcomes for research, and outcomes for economic recovery and social renewal.
- Welcomed the tertiary approach in the Outcome Agreement Guidance and streamlined reporting arrangements and increasing convergence between the two sectors.
- Recognised SFC’s close engagement and partnership with the sectors and with regional and national partners.
- Reflected it was important that the Outcome and Impact Framework, the National Impact Framework, and the Tertiary Quality Framework were SMART, aligned and complement each other.
- Recommended the executive provides an update to the sector on progress with the development of the National Impact Framework.
- Noted the value of the Innovation Centres and suggest lessons could be learned from them about supporting student learning and digital health, and further exploring links between future skills needs and innovation.

22/05 Update on SDS Careers Service Review

The SEAL Committee welcomed and noted the paper on the Skills Development Scotland’s Careers Service Review in Scotland.

The Committee agreed an update on Careers Service Review could be included in the policy update paper at the next meeting.

22/06

AOB

The Chair thanked all the members for their contributions and the executive for the papers with their engaging input.

21/07

Date of the next meeting

The next meeting is on 14 June 2022.