

Disclosable

SEAL Committee minutes

The 7th meeting of the Skills, Enhancement, Access and Learning (SEAL) Committee was held on Tuesday 31 January 2023 at 10.00 in The Burns, Scottish Enterprise offices and by videoconference.

Present:

- Dr Paul Little (Chair)
- Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam
- Professor Ewart Keep
- Sheila Duncan
- Anne Campbell
- Donella Beaton
- Gordon McGuinness
- Helyn Gould
- Ellie Gomersall
- Kevin Kelman

Officers:

- Dr Jacqui Brasted
- Sharon Drysdale
- Erica Russell-Hensens
- Elizabeth Shevlin
- Kathryn O'Loan
- Seamus Spencer
- Fiona Burns
- Keith Coyne
- Helen Raftopoulos
- Nicola McGhee
- Dr André Reibig (Secretary)
- Nick Stansfeld (Clerk)

Apologies:

- Andy Kerr
- James Dunphy

23/01 Welcome and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed all Committee members, especially to the six new members, and the executive to the meeting.

The following members noted a potential conflict of interest, excluding their main employer:

- 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, Vice-Chair of the college sector Employers' Association, Vice Convenor of the College Principals Group, and Chair of UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce.

- Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam in relation to Glasgow School of Art and as Advisory Board member of a Research Centre at the University of Edinburgh.
- Professor Ewart Keep in relation to 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.
- Gordon McGuinness in relation to Board member of Glasgow Clyde College, and Trustee of West College Scotland Foundation.
- Helyn Gould in relation to University of Strathclyde, and as Ordinary Member of Glasgow Colleges Regional Board.
- Kevin Kelman in relation to Non-executive Board Member of Education Scotland, and as Advisory Board Member, Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools at the University of Strathclyde.
- Anne Campbell in relation to Ayrshire College, and as Chair of CDN's Care Strategy Steering Group.
- Donella Beaton in relation to Robert Gordon University, and as NE Scotland Pathfinder's National Energy Skills Accelerator project.

23/02 Minutes of the previous meeting: 1 November 2022 SEAL/Min/06

The minute of the 1 November 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.

Three actions were removed from the Tracker as they were complete:

- Recruitment of external members on SEAL Committee.
- Digital teaching skills will be considered as part of the Committee's forward agenda.
- Regional Pathfinders data and analysis summary report has been published and was circulated to members. Pathfinders will also be considered as part of the Committee's forward agenda.

2.2 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

23/03 SEAL Committee policy update SEAL/23/01

The SEAL Committee received an update paper on the key areas of policy within SFC's Access, Learning and Outcomes Directorate.

In discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the paper and the oral update on the Scottish Government's Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape, led by James Withers. Members noted that the SFC executive has engaged extensively with the Review team and that the final report, with recommendations, is intended to be with the Minister by the end of March 2023 for further consideration. The SFC Board would receive a presentation and have further discussions at its next meeting on 3 February 2023.
- Noted and welcomed the budget allocations and guidance on Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) for 2022-23 and noted the extensive work by the SFC executive to get clarification on the budget for 2022-23.
- Welcomed the recent announcement of additional funding for counsellors in colleges and universities to support student mental health, the fourth year of investment. However, there was concern that Scottish Government funding is not due to continue beyond 2022-23 and, given the scale of the adverse impact of the pandemic, the mental health and wellbeing of students could suffer further, particularly with the rising cost of living, which are already impacting on retention and attainment.
- Commended the SFC on the range of work around coherent provision in Health and Social Care. It was agreed there should be further discussions with Care Strategy Steering Group and NHS Scotland Academy of additional opportunities.
- Noted progress with the Tertiary Provision Pathfinders in the South and North-East of Scotland, that the project remains on schedule, that initial work on evaluation taking an action learning approach has commenced. This will inform reflection and further understanding which will be critical as the programme develops and we consider broadening the approach to other regions.

23/04 National Equality Outcomes SEAL/03/02

The SEAL Committee received a paper on the joint publication by the SFC and the European Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on enhancing our approach to equality through a set of National Equality Outcomes.

In discussion, the Committee:

- Welcomed the publication of the National Equality Outcomes and the strategic partnership between SFC and EHRC.
- Emphasised the importance of intersectionality, how a combination of factors (like age, gender, race, disability, SIMD, care-experienced) impacts the equity of success rates and retention for learners.
- Encouraged SFC to undertake deeper data analytics on exploring intersectionality and the differing factors, what it means for different combinations e.g., disabled students in low areas of deprivation. There was agreement there was an opportunity for SFC to use the data to better understand the context behind low success rates and retention.
- Advised around the use of language on disadvantage, that “working class” or “high deprivation” may be better understood than SIMD.
- Recommended an evaluation of the impact of school college partnerships, which are embedded within the schools’ system, as a theme for the thematic reviews. There was also a suggestion to explore the use of reasonable adjustments for disabled students to support their learning, including accessibility to support as not all disabilities have formal NHS diagnosis.
- Noted the research report [Life in Scotland for LGBT young people](#) from LGBT Youth Scotland which includes a section on the educational experiences of LGBT young people in Scotland.

23/05

College and University Outcome Agreements publication

SEAL/23/03

The SEAL Committee received a paper on an Outcome Agreements publication titled [Delivering Economic and Social Benefit Through Tertiary Education and Research – College and University Case Studies 2021-22.](#)

In discussion, the Committee:

- Commended the publication which highlights the valuable work in the tertiary sector and the value and impact of SFC funding, and noted the report includes case studies from every college and university in Scotland.
- Discussed the importance of photographs in the publication which used well better engage the reader. They suggested that there could be more impactful photographs with a more diverse age range of students and be depicted with the latest technologies. The executive agreed to ask institutions for a greater range of photographs when asking for case studies.

23/06 SEAL Committee forward agenda Oral

The SEAL Committee discussed its forward agenda on areas they would like to explore, in an advisory capacity, over the forthcoming period.

In discussion the Committee:

- Agreed to invite the new Commissioner for Fair Access to the next Committee meeting.
- Advised the forward agenda should be dynamic and flexible, able to adapt to the SFC and Scottish Government policy priorities. The focus should be on enhancing the student learning experience and responding to the outcomes of the reviews, key themes and recommendations.
- Suggested other main themes could be on skills and qualification planning; digital education and how delivery needs to adapt; green skills; WorldSkills; and student support, including how to support specific groups of students.
- Discussed the uniqueness of the Scottish system which has been achieved through communication, trust, and collaboration e.g., enhancement-led approach, the multiple pathways, that the focus is on quality of the student experience, and the diverged skills system. The Committee encouraged SFC to explore this further.
- Encouraged a deep dive on other specific policy areas for example Tertiary Provision Pathfinders, Health and Social Care, National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET). The Committee also agreed experts could be invited, as required, to give a different perspective to discussions, for example, the Chief Entrepreneur.
- Agreed that the discussions from the Committee should inform the SFC Board and that the executive consider more explicitly where the Committee's advice is strategically needed.
- Commended the executive on the quality of the papers though advised the executive that they could ask more explicit questions where advice is being sought, or where specific input is required in a policy area.

23/07 AOB

The Chair thanked all the members, particularly new members, for their ongoing support and the quality of the papers.

23/08 Date of next meeting

The next SEAL Committee is confirmed as 25 May 2023 where we will welcome the Commissioner for Fair Access.