

The 2nd meeting of the Skills, Enhancement, Access and Learning (SEAL) Committee was held on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 10.00 by video-conferencing.

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

Officers: Dr André Reibig (Secretary)
James Dunphy
Linda McLeod
Kathryn O’Loan (paper 21/02)
Sharon Drysdale (paper 21/03 and 21/04)
Nick Stansfeld (Clerk)

Apologies: None

21/01 Welcome and declarations of interest

The Chair welcomed all Committee members and the executive to the meeting.

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
- Andy Kerr in relation to South Lanarkshire College and New College Lanarkshire
- Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam in relation to Glasgow School of Art
- Professor Ewart Keep in relation to his role as an Associate Fellow of the Scottish Centre for Employment Research, University of Strathclyde.

21/02 Minutes of previous meeting: 28 October 2020 (SEAL/Min/01)

The minute of the 28 October 2020 meeting was **confirmed** as an accurate record of the meeting.

21/03

SEAL Committee progress report

(SEAL 21/01)

The SEAL Committee received a progress report since the last meeting.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- SFC is reviewing its work on Fair Access as part of the wider SFC Review, which is based on an overall vision for an integrated tertiary skills system focused on delivery for students that is open, fair and accessible. It was agreed that Access (including the most recent report from the Commissioner for Fair Access) would be an agenda item at the next meeting with the focus to include fair access to learner pathways and positive student mental health; and
- The executive will prepare a summary report covering the key information included in the interim outcome agreements, particularly in relation to how colleges and universities have responded during the pandemic, what collaborative approaches are emerging and how the sector is contributing to economic and social recovery.

21/04

Quality of the student experience

(SEAL 21/02)

The SEAL Committee received a paper on the quality of the student experience during the pandemic outlining how SFC's approach has responded to the changing operating environment.

In discussion the Committee:

- Noted the far reaching impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had and will have on the overall learning experience. In the future there is likely to be a blend of online and face to face on campus teaching. A clear framework for supporting digital innovation in learning and teaching, investment in technologies is needed to support this. The Committee also noted the need for a strategic collaborative and tertiary approach
- Recommended a discussion at SFC Board level – to inform the SFC Review - on the changing student experience, which takes account of a renewed ambition for the student and learning experience of the future. It was agreed the format and timing of this would be considered by the Executive.

- Noted Education Scotland is reporting to SFC on national overview of quality of remote and online learning in colleges due in May 2021. QAA Scotland is producing a similar piece of work for SFC report by end of May 2021. It was suggested that both reports could be discussed at the next meeting.
- Acknowledged the demand for student mental health and wellbeing support services, which have been growing even before the pandemic. There will now be a much increased demand with institutions having closer links to NHS services.
- Noted Jisc has been working with SFC to deliver a stakeholder consultation on supporting the digital revolution for learners. The Committee also noted the work Jisc has undertaken in the university and college sectors which will inform and support the SFC stakeholder consultation.

21/05

Embedding Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships on SFC core funding (SEAL 21/03)

The SEAL Committee received an update paper on the apprenticeship landscape and progress embedding foundation apprenticeships (FAs) and graduate apprenticeships (GAs) into SFC core funding.

In discussion, the Committee noted:

- that FAs and GAs present opportunities for employers, however, the long-term funding landscape is still challenging;
- SFC and SDS are working with the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) to ensure employers are at the forefront of discussions, and the offer is based on employer demand and the needs of the Scottish economy; and
- the role of SFC in looking more widely at work-based learning and to bring flexibility and rigour to current thinking including extending GA opportunities to Colleges.

21/06

In year investment to support responsiveness in our education and skills offer (SEAL/21/04)

The SEAL Committee received a paper on investment to support responsiveness in our education and skills offer.

In discussion the Committee noted the following:

- the provision of additional funding for upskilling and reskilling through the various funds exceeded £41M this AY and the sectors have been agile in their responsiveness.
- for AY 2021-22 the challenge is to maintain the considerable momentum and work collaboratively with sectors, employers and other stakeholders in the design and delivery of future upskilling and reskilling opportunities to support local and regional need; and
- it may be helpful in future to differentiate between upskilling and reskilling in the naming of funds to ensure parity and fairness and to avoid confusion especially with employers.

21/07

SEAL Committee and long-term agenda

(SEAL 21/05)

The SEAL Committee received a paper on its future membership and long-term agenda.

On membership, the Committee:

- After an extensive discussion considered its current membership remained appropriate, taking account of the expertise of members and the planned long-term agenda.
- Agreed the membership should be evaluated, as the executive routinely do, on an annual basis. The SFC executive will review the membership and the Committee's remit again by 31 March 2022 as part of its annual process of reviewing the Committee's effectiveness.

On the long-term agenda, the Committee:

- was invited to consider the long-term agenda by email correspondence to allow more time for review; and
- Agreed the executive will update the long-term agenda and will include this in the progress report for the next meeting.

21/08

AOB

The Chair thanked all the members for their contributions and the executive for the excellent papers.

21/09

Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will take place in June, date TBC.