

SUALL

Scottish Universities Association
for Lifelong Learning

Hon Secretary
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Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on Thursday 19th November 2009 at Glasgow Caledonian University.

Present: Caroline Anderson (OU), Lucy Bate (UALL), Jim Bradley (Stirling), Lesley Hart (Strathclyde), Theresa Hoare (Glasgow), Graeme Ligterwood (SAC), Helen Martin (Glasgow Caledonian), Alex MacLennan (chair), Lea McKay (UWS), Peter Murray (Aberdeen), Donald Paterson (Aberdeen), Geraldine Prince (Edinburgh College of Art), Rod Purcell (Glasgow), Kevin Sinclair (UHI), David Smith (Glasgow Caledonian), Kaye Stevenson (Dundee), Raymond Thomson (Strathclyde), George Wilson (Edinburgh Napier),

Apologies: Fiona Andrews (Glasgow), Pete Cannell (OU), Alison Dix (UHI), Richard Dockrell (Stirling), Jackie Dunne (UALL), Con Gillen (Edinburgh), Ruth Harris (St Andrews), Anne McGillivray (UWS), Margaret Mill (Edinburgh Napier), Iain Morrison (UHI), Ruth Whittaker (Glasgow Caledonian)

In attendance: Joyce Wardrop (Scottish Government), Hilary Westwood (Scottish Government)

Professor MacLennan welcomed Caroline Anderson, Kaye Stevenson and George Wilson to their first meeting and Kevin Sinclair who was attending in place of Iain Morrison.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

These were accepted as an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

a) Lifelong learning Directorate update

Hilary Westwood reported that over 70,000 ILA200 accounts had been opened. There had been a big increase in usage, from 20,000 courses last year to 27,000. ILA 500 uptake had also increased, from 2,300 learners to 4,000 already this year. Funding was ok for this year and next but there was a general move to focus on work-based learning and upskilling.

Information was given on an accredited training programme being run in conjunction with the Child Poverty Action Group for student money advisers. Skills Development Scotland were working on an interactive learning space where everyone would have an individual learner account.

The pilot programme of support for part time postgraduate students had not been particularly successful, with only half of the 150 places taken up. Members were invited to comment on how the next phase of the pilot should be implemented.

b) UALL Awards Scheme

Eighteen applications had been received for the second year of the scheme. Seven or eight had been shortlisted. It was noted that applications this year had come from a different range of institutions than last year.

c) Website

A list of changes required had been sent to the site administrator.

3. Chair's business

Professor MacLennan reported that the SCQF handbook had been launched and the benchmarking to the European framework completed. SQA had introduced new qualifications in literacy and numeracy which were causing some unrest in the profession.

4. Reports from Sub-Committees

a) Widening Participation in HE.

The group had not met and it was felt that no contacts within institutions needed to be made. A new chair was being sought as Fiona Andrews was leaving.

b) Management and Administration

This group had discussed issues relating to ILAs and it had been agreed to seek a widened membership of the LLL Directorate's 'ginger' group for this. The income level at which institutions approve fee waiver discretionary applications was found to vary substantially and neither SFC nor DWP could give advice on what was acceptable. There was a presentation from the University of Edinburgh on their new online enrolment system which members found very interesting but it was noted that it took seven clicks to get to it from the main university page.

c) Research

No members of this group were present. A written report would be requested for the next meeting.

d) KILTS

This group continued to pursue an agenda of interacting with the Sector Skills Councils, who have been more involved with FE. The next meeting was on the theme of 'developing community programmes'.

5. Discussion: on the challenges and opportunities presented by the current economic situation; how LL departments might 'future proof' against the likely forthcoming cuts in public funding; preparing and helping Scotland to emerge from the recession.

There was a sense that universities were marginalising LLL now that their visions were driven by KPIs and the need to figure highly in league tables. Strategies for accommodating a broader social mission within this needed to be developed and brought to the attention of Principals. There was a feeling that 'Learning for All' had allowed universities to withdraw from these activities. 'Learning through Life', the recent output from the inquiry into the future of lifelong learning, was praised as an aspirational document but there were worries that it carried no authority.

There was a view that the changing landscape was complex with uncertainty over the impact in different regions of demographic shifts. A re-focussing of funding, with an emphasis on skills and employer engagement was expected and it was not clear what the best way was to have our voices and those of learners heard on this. It was noted that the benefits to older learners could not always be easily quantified. It was

recognised that there was a need to go into communities and work with partners. It would be useful to engage with the Sector Skills Councils.

Members were urged to try and influence policy within their institutions by using the committee structure. Although Universities Scotland and the SFC were invited to SUALL Council meetings no one ever actually attended. It was felt that it would be useful to cultivate contacts in these organisations. Prof MacLennan would write to Alastair Sim, Secretary of US, about developing a more robust involvement.

6. Reports from Universities

Aberdeen: They were now concentrating on credit bearing courses and numbers on these were growing substantially. A part-time MA was being offered, based on the existing full time programme; lectures were recorded and put on the web. It had been successfully piloted in sciences and would now be expanded to other subjects and other levels.

Dundee: The restructuring had benefitted continuing education, which was now located within a college. However cuts were expected. A new Principal had been appointed.

ECA: They expected to be re-designated as a Centre for Public Engagement following the restructure. It was hoped that the part time degree would then become embedded in the institution. Research projects were underway with Vancouver and Stirling.

Edinburgh Napier: Following the move of LLL to an Academic Development unit they were concentrating on community and other external drivers and trying to build up participation rates particularly through their 2+2 routes.

Glasgow: Numbers on the Open Programme and the Access programme had increased. The university was abolishing all departments and its existing nine faculties and re-organising into a number of schools managed through four colleges. The change would be in place by Aug 2010. LLL was expected to be part of a school of education within a college containing the existing faculties of education, law, business and social sciences as well as the Dumfries campus. It was hoped that although it would be organisationally different it would remain much the same operationally although re-branding would be required.

Glasgow Caledonian: CRLL had been given a strategic role in developing the institution's WP policies. The hub for the Greater Glasgow articulation partnership was up and running well. Projects were being undertaken on improving systems for monitoring student tracking, understanding and supporting the nature of transition, and tracking HN students into HE and beyond.

OU Scotland: Managerial changes had taken place. The new Vice Chancellor had been the general manager of Microsoft. There had been a number of debates about online forums v face-to-face contact as this was an issue for retention. Materials were now placed on i-tunes and youtube. In Scotland, Peter Syme was retiring. ILAs were proving to be hugely popular with 68% of social care students using either ILAS or fee waivers. Fifteen work-based learning DipHEs (equivalent to an English Foundation degree) were being offered. Work was being done with Colleges to develop flexible part time routes using transferable HNC/D credits.

SAC: There are less than 1,000 students on three sites. CPD runs across both the consultancy directorate and the academic directorate leading to problems with staff balance. They were moving away from skills-based courses to more academic ones now that the Auchincruive farm had been sold. Articulations with the land-based colleges were being formalised.

Stirling: Major changes had taken place following the 10% cut in staffing across the institution. DAICE had been subsumed within the Institute for Education and had lost their summer programme, extra-curricula courses, evening degree and externally funded WP activities. Only the Access course remained. A new Principal had been appointed.

Strathclyde: The Centre for Lifelong Learning was restructuring internally following the loss of three members of staff. They were being placed within the Faculty of Education which was then merging with Law, Arts and Social Sciences to form a Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

UALL: Jim Bradley had taken Anne McGillivray's place on the UALL Executive Committee. Networks continued to be active and many had Scottish members. The new CPD/employer engagement network was established. A new chair of the research committee had taken over and joint events with SCUTREA and SHRE were being planned. The 2010 AGM would take place in Cardiff and the 2011 conference in Scotland. Subscriptions had been raised by £15.

UHI: A new Principal and a new Secretary were in place and re-structuring was expected to make degree programmes more flexible. A number of widening access projects were underway, linked to progression, retention and careers. Programmes for schools and communities were being developed with the North Forum.

UWS: Following re-structuring of the university, the Lifelong Learning Academy sits outwith the three faculties but has membership of faculty management groups and subject development groups. Anne McGillivray was now Dean of Students and was leading a review of all student facing units with a view to establishing a one-stop shop. They were looking to increase their research base. The annual Part-Time Forum meeting had been arranged for 11th January, with the theme 'making part time learning work for Scotland'.

Theresa Hoare, Hon Secretary SUALL
15 December 2009