

# EDINBURGH COLLEGE CURRICULUM HEALTHCHECK

The report provides an evaluation of the curriculum in six areas of performance/contribution to the success of the College.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report provides an analysis of the College curriculum 2013/14 as an aid to the Senior Management Group in determining the future curriculum of the College.
- 1.2 The report sets out to provide an evidence based response to the following issues:-
  - 1.2.1 To what extent does the College curriculum:-
    - align with emerging job opportunities in Edinburgh and the Lothians;
    - engage with employers (or their representatives) in the design and delivery of the curriculum;
    - achieve higher than sector average achievement rates;
    - provide effective learning opportunities for those furthest from the labour market to access employment and further study;
    - provide effective learning opportunities for senior school students to study vocational curriculum and then progress seamlessly to full/part time study at NC./NQ or HN level;
    - provide opportunities for HN/Advanced study level students to progress to University with advanced standing.
- 1.3 As a pre cursor to this exercise and subsequent report, an environmental scan of the Edinburgh College region was developed. The scan collated and presented information from College key stakeholders (Government, local councils, economic agencies, employer groups, local communities and secondary schools). The evidence contained within the environmental scan has been fully utilised in the scoring exercise and subsequent judgements on the college curriculum.
- 1.4 [REDACTED] a consultant recommended by SFC was approached to lead this exercise having had previous experience of carrying out similar exercises in other regions in Scotland. [REDACTED] Vice Principal and [REDACTED] Head of Department completed the team involved in developing the process, scoring and development of this final report.
- 1.5 This report has been developed without reference to the current College Curriculum Strategy and it should be used in conjunction with this and other strategies to determine the future College curriculum (eg Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Blended Learning Strategy)

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

- 2.1 The methodology utilised built upon a similar exercise carried out within the Glasgow Region. In order to evaluate the curriculum offer, the curriculum was sub divided into the Education Scotland subject areas. Each area was then analysed and curriculum streams identified. For example, Art and Design was further sub divided into Animation, Graphic Design, Art & Design, Photography and Fashion and Textiles. All the courses within each stream were then evaluated based on provision in three groupings SCQF levels 1-4 (Access), 5-6 (FE), and 7-10 (HE).

- 2.2 Evaluation criteria were developed and approved by the College. The six key areas agreed were: economic alignment, employer engagement, widening access (recruitment from ethnic minorities, people with disability, gender mix and those from areas of deprivation), achievement rates, schools partnerships and progression to university.
- 2.3 A simple scoring system of awarding a score of 1 – 5 (1 = low performance and 5 = high performance) was proposed and criteria for judgement were drafted and subsequently approved (see annex 1).
- 2.4 The main sources of evidence for the scorers were the environmental scan, the FES dataset for 2013/14, schools provision 2014/15 and destination data.
- 2.5 Two sets of scores were completed. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The scores were then discussed and a final score agreed.
- 2.6 The scores were then sorted into tables for each of the evaluation areas. Through discussion, gradings were added for each of the six tables and a commentary added where appropriate.
- 2.7 The scoring process was helpful in creating an approximate sort to determine performance against the criteria. Where the scoring did not match perceptions of an area, further investigation was carried out and adjustments were made to the final tables.
- 2.8 Heads were then invited to comment on the draft findings and final adjustments made.

### **3 SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **3.1 Economic Alignment**

The key focus of this report is for economic alignment, which identifies areas for growth, those, which should remain stable, and those, which may require to reduce due to over provision. The current College system appears to rely largely on student demand and SFC activity target achievement which can lead to students being attracted to the course rather than the career it represents and realistic expectations of employment. This has highlighted fundamental issues in relation to the quality of independent guidance offered, which does not form part of this review but may require separate attention.

##### **3.1.1 Areas of Growth**

In line with the regional economic strategy, it is recommended that Hospitality & Tourism, Computing and IT and Business and Management be resourced to encourage growth.

In business and management in particular, the strength of the financial services sector within the regional economy is not currently reflected in the curriculum. There is also potential in providing Skills plus Business or Skills plus Management courses throughout the College. College based CPD programmes in business, enterprise and management are very weak and provide little or no opportunity for those with newly developed vocational skills to develop into management or to run their own businesses. (Hairdressing with Management, Self employment in the Construction sector).

In all priority sector areas, the recently developed Skills Investment Plans, set out action plans for addressing the labour market needs of each key sector.

*As a comparison Glasgow Region devote 12% of the WSUMs resource to Business and Management, whereas Edinburgh allocates 6%. Glasgow allocates 9% of their resource to Computing and ICT, whereas Edinburgh allocates 7%.*

### **3.1.2 Areas which should continue to grow in line with the economy**

Areas such as Construction, Engineering and Care are largely self-regulating in size due to the close working relationships with employers and their agencies. This model of working closely with employers is clearly one, which should be replicated in other sectors.

The College should seek to meet employers needs in Construction and Engineering but some may not be achievable due to resourcing issues. Under 3 early years education is set for expansion and this will impact upon the Childcare Practice area.

### **3.1.3 Areas which are stable but change is required**

Despite Creative Industries being a priority sector within Edinburgh, it is recommended that areas such as Performing Arts (Dance, Music and Theatre Skills), Fine Arts and Photography, which attract large numbers of students, are refocussed in favour of vocational streams where employment prospects are more likely eg creative digital skills.

It is unclear how effective the Employability/Personal and Social Development programmes are in moving students into work or further study from the available evidence. Personal and social development programmes are very close to the work and mission of community learning and development and their purpose within the curriculum should be reviewed with particular attention to vocationally related outcomes. Links from these programmes to employers seem to operate independently from vocational areas of the College and as a result opportunities for students to continue in structured learning whilst in employment are being missed.

### **3.1.4 Areas which should contract slightly**

Languages and ESOL currently utilises 9% of total WSUMs, which seems high for this area of provision. However, Government policy is currently to maintain levels of ESOL, so reductions need to be targeted to the other streams within this area. It may be appropriate to offer ESOL plus courses linked to vocational areas of the College.

There are concerns that there may be over provision in the area of Sport and Leisure in comparison with job opportunities. More evidence is required to establish levels and types of employment gained through undertaking in particular, Sports Coaching courses. Developments in Sports Therapy may strengthen job opportunities.

### **3.1.5 Areas of contraction**

In order to free resource for use by areas identified for growth, it is recommended that Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy and Social Sciences reduce in size.

In Hair and Beauty, the current allocation of WSUMs is out of proportion to the job opportunities within this sector of the economy. In addition, Skills Development Scotland fund Modern Apprenticeships in Hairdressing in partnership with local employers making the market very crowded indeed.

As the only land based subject within the College, it is recommended that Veterinary Science to be offered to a land based College. Any such transfer should ensure that resources are retained for reinvestment in growth areas.

Social Sciences is not a priority for the local economy yet it absorbs 2% of total WSUMs. A reduction in order to support growth in priority sectors seems appropriate.

It is unclear what benefits there are to offering higher psychology within the College portfolio and how this relates to accessing College provision.

*As a comparison Glasgow Region devote 6% of their WSUMs resource to Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and Complimentary Therapies, Edinburgh allocate 9%.*

## **3.2 Employer Engagement**

### **3.2.1 Areas with high levels of engagement**

Construction, Engineering, Care, Education & Training and Land based have been graded as having high levels of employer engagement as evidenced by the high proportion of SVQ programmes, high levels of

employer pay and in some areas such as Care, a good range of CPD programmes. The recently published Skills Investment plans outline further opportunity to deepen the relationship within these sectors.

### **3.2.2 Areas with moderate levels of engagement**

Hospitality and Tourism, Science, Art & Design, Media and Performing Art are identified as having moderate levels of employer engagement.

Hospitality & Tourism has relatively small portfolio of SVQ programmes in relation to the size and scale of the local industry opportunities. Private training providers dominate SDS contracts for this area of work. This area would benefit from greater use of work experience to enhance the student experience and to increase the regular contact with local employers and their training needs.

Science has pockets of good practice with dental nursing assistants and pharmacy assistants, which are clearly the result of good working relationships with employers. Applied Science programmes however, could utilise work placements to develop a closer working relationship with the Life Sciences sector.

Art and Design, Media and Performing Arts provide shows and exhibitions and in some areas carry out commissions for employers but this masks that there is virtually no part time provision or employer subsidised students. The recently published Creative Industry Skills Investment Plan sets out new thinking in this area and the College should position itself as the College willing to embrace these changes. (eg employability programmes, MA's/traineeships, Creative Industries plus business programmes, embracing work based learning).

Sport and Leisure enjoys good links with employers, which provides off site spaces essential for the delivery of sports related programmes. Some SVQ programmes are offered in conjunction with local authorities. This area has no employer pay part time students (other than Hibernian FC), which highlights the nature of the relationship with employers.

### **3.2.3 Areas with low or no levels of engagement**

Business and Management, Computing and ICT, Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and Complimentary Therapies, have all been graded as having low levels of employer engagement.

In Business and Management, engagement with the dominant finance and business sectors in the Edinburgh region is not yet reflecting changes in mainstream provision. However, commercial programmes (not part this review) appear to be developing well. Given the volume and range of employers locally, the environment seems rich for the development of SVQ programmes, work experience placements and work based projects which

will greatly enhance the relationship with employers and bring dividends for increased demand for part time CPD programmes.

There are pockets of good practice with professional awards offered on a part time basis to some employer-subsidised students and events management students undertake work-based assignments.

In Computing and ICT, beyond basic training, there are virtually no employer-subsidised students, SVQ programmes and there is little in the way of CPD programmes on offer. Given the emergence of the Edinburgh Region as a digital hub, it is vital that this area grasps the opportunities identified within the Skills Investment Plan to reposition itself closer to the industry.

It may seem unexpected to describe Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and Complimentary Therapies as having low employer engagement given its high levels of SVQ programmes, commercial salons and customer focus. However, it is interesting to note that of the SVQ programmes almost all are delivered within a College environment (0.03% of H, BT&CT WSUMs are allocated to work based delivery). Given the prioritisation of the sector within economic strategies, it is recommended that in addition to downsizing that this area it also needs to refocus its activity to work with employers through the use of work experience and work based learning when students confidence and skill levels are sufficiently well developed in the College training environments.

In social sciences and Languages and ESOL, there is virtually no employer engagement and developing links is not appropriate to these areas.

### **3.3 Widen Access**

#### **3.3.1 Recruitment from areas of deprivation**

All areas of the curriculum recruit reasonably well from areas of deprivation with only Social Sciences registering a percentage figure less than 10%.

#### **3.3.2 Recruitment from ethnic groups**

According to the census in 2011, approximately 8% of the Edinburgh region reported themselves as non-white. Taking this as a benchmark, Sport and Leisure (3.6%), Performing Arts (0.4%), Construction (3.7%), Veterinary Science (0.4%), Social Sciences (4.7%) and Engineering (3.1%) recruited well below the population norm.

#### **3.3.3 Recruitment from the disabled population**

This is notoriously difficult to measure accurately and the results are interesting but further study would be required to draw any firm conclusions from this report.

### **3.3.4 Recruitment by gender**

This is now a priority area for action as identified within the SFC letter of guidance. Areas of severe male under representation appear to be in Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and Complimentary Therapies, Care and Veterinary Science. Areas of female under representation are Construction and Engineering.

There are also imbalances in a number of other areas: Business and Management, Languages and ESOL, Computing and ICT, Media and Sport and Leisure.

### **3.3.5 Part Time provision**

Most areas have a reasonable balance of part time and full time provision based on an analysis of WSUMs. However there are weak areas in Art & Design and Media.

Closer inspection however reveals that much of the part time provision is at lower levels (Community based outreach, secondary schools activity) with little CPD programmes being offered in many areas. Notable exceptions are in Business and Management, where there is a range of professional awards offered on a part time basis. That said, given the industrial environment, more could be offered particularly in management/business/enterprise skills development, which would be a natural development for graduates from disciplines across the College.

Opportunities for part time study in Computing and Digital skills beyond level 6 are virtually non existent in WSUMs funded provision but it is understood that a full range is available within the commercial portfolio.

## **3.4 Achievements in comparison to national averages (13/14 data)**

### **3.4.1 Further and Higher Education**

Social Sciences, Art and Design, Science, Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and Complimentary Therapies and Engineering were above the national averages in both further and higher education.

### **3.4.2 Further Education**

Hospitality and Tourism, Sport, and Leisure, Construction, Media, and Special Programmes were significantly below the national averages in Further Education provision.



### **3.4.3 Higher Education**

Education and Training, Business and Management, Languages and ESOL, Construction and Media were significantly below the national averages for Higher Education.

## **3.5 Schools activity**

### **3.5.1 General comments**

In general terms, the investigation found the volume of activity and programmes on offer fall some way short of the ambitions for young people set out in Developing Scotland's Young Workforce Report (DSYW). In too many instances, programmes do not appear to connect with the full and part time portfolio of courses (eg advanced standing/guaranteed access) so that students can make informed choices considering both vocational and academic pathways. It is also not evident where employers engage with these programmes.

The SUMs investment in this area is barely 2%. Whilst there is no agreed national target for this area of work, 2% appears well short of the investment required to create the service outlined within the DSYW report.

### **3.5.2 Specific comments**

Hospitality and Tourism, Care, Engineering, Media and Performing Arts have developed academy programmes, some of which provide opportunity to study at HNC level. Other programmes including Get Ready for Work and SVQ programmes provide the type of programmes envisaged in DSYW report.

Within School provision, there is a range of Advanced Higher and Highers programmes (9% of total Schools provision), which appear to supplement services, offered by secondary schools but do not contribute to the DSYW agenda. In comparison National Progression Awards accounts for only 3% of total Schools provision. Academy programmes account for 17% of total Schools provision.

In some areas, programmes for School based students do not appear to provide effective links for students to move to full or part time study. In many instances skills learned in school-based study may be repeated on full time programmes. Where taster programmes are offered, it is recommended that some element of work placement is also offered to allow young people the opportunity to make informed career decisions

## **3.6 Progression to University**

### **3.6.1 General comments**

There is clearly a large and comprehensive range of articulation with local universities to support HNC/D and access students to progress to University. It is disappointing to note that despite the range of articulation arrangements, destination analysis reports approximately 80% of students enter “unknown” Universities.

An Articulation and Progression Agreement with the Open University offering flexible routes from Higher National to Degree level provision exists but appears not to be well utilised. The Associate Degree model with Napier seems to provide a strong model for development.

### **3.6.2 Specific comments**

The College delivers degree level programmes in Hospitality and Tourism, Sport and Exercise Science, Dance, Music and Photography and an Advanced Diploma: Teaching in FE. PDA programmes at SCQF level 9 in Outside Broadcasting.

Scottish Wider Access Programmes are offered in Arts, Social Sciences and Primary Teaching, Engineering, Science, Humanities, Nursing and Nursing (Learning difficulties)

Progression rates are strong in Social Sciences, Sport and Leisure, Performing Arts, Art and Design, Business and Management, Care and Computing and ICT.

Progression rates from Construction, Media, Hospitality and Tourism, Science, Languages and ESOL and Engineering are less well developed.

Progression from Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and Complimentary Therapies and Land based is very limited.

## **4 Other issues**

- 4.1 It is interesting to note the overall balance of FE to HE which is currently 25% HE and 75% FE. In a City Region where it is increasingly the case that to gain, retain and flourish in employment, workers will require higher level skills.

*In comparison, the Glasgow Colleges offer 38% HE and 62% FE*

- 4.2 The destination report in common with most regions is very poor. The overall impression is that the College is not clear on the destinations of students and yet it is the key success.

There is no real attempt to measure whether students enter employment in the sector for which they have studied, nor whether the employment is at a level commensurate with their skills levels. This is sector wide issue but serious resources or research commissioned via partner universities to improve the quality of data gathered is recommended.

## **5 Big Ticket Items**

- 5.1 Support growth in priority sectors particularly business and management related provision. Create the resource by contracting programmes of over provision.
- 5.2 Review part time provision to create CPD programme for people in employment
- 5.3 Invest resources in gathering robust data on student destinations to inform future curriculum planning.
- 5.4 Review Special Programmes and community provision to establish clarity of purpose and agree success criteria.
- 5.5 Exploit the best industrial landscape in Scotland by improving employer engagement throughout the College (work placements, student visits, external speakers, work based projects etc)
- 5.6 In order to strengthen work with Schools the College should seek discussions with Education authority directors to review progress on the ambitions set out in the DSYW Report and offer to significantly increase the resource allocated to Schools in return for improved partnership working.

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015