

Executive Council Meeting

Friday 13th February
Edinburgh College / Zoom

MINUTES

NOTE: Pre-meeting chit-chat from 1000, meeting starts 1030

In attendance:

Jonny Pearson	(JP)
Stew Fowlie	(SF)
Ben Graham	(BG)
Ian Lowe	(IL)
Chris Sellar	(CS)
Anna Edvaldsson	(AE)
Julia Stenhouse-Walton	(JSW)
Liv Stevens	(LS)
Savannah Antoine	(SA)
Katherine Duncan (virtual)	(KD)
Bob Wyllie - sportscotland	(BW)

Apologies:

Freya Rennie	(FR)
BUCS Representative	

Approx. Timings

- **Welcome, intro and scene setting** (5 min)
 - Special welcome to Savannah Antoine, ACC at West College Scotland
- **Homologation** (10 min)
 - Apologies for absence
 - As noted above
 - ES has departed from the University of Glasgow. The Executive Committee will run x1 staff member short until AGM in August.
 - BUCS denote apologies due to staff requirement at BUCS Nationals.
 - Conflicts of interest
 - No conflicts of interest were noted
 - Minutes of last meeting(s) & matters arising
 - The minutes from the previous meeting in November 2025 were accepted as a true and accurate reflection. The outstanding actions from previous meeting were discussed.

- **Current Context** (30 min)
 - Around the network – verbal updates
 - Institutional perspectives – open forum & committee update

JP gave an intro note on current context. SA noted delighted to join, and excited by the Active Campus programme. SA gave an update on her role and facilities available to the college, as well as challenges she faces in the role, especially challenges regarding policy (behaviour of student etc). Challenges also include maintaining volunteers in roles across the year. She shared her passions with EDI, especially importance of role models, noting that she has joined the Sporting Equals Leaderboard programme which she has really enjoyed. Noted that the programme looks to make sure SGB decision makers are reflecting society & aims to breaking down as many barriers as possible for this.

Discussion had regarding EDI initiatives across college boards, SGB & SSS committee recruitment. Discussion had around placement of active campus in different departments across different colleges, and also noted on the success of the active campus programme so far. SA noted request to have more regional meetings of ACCs due to similar needs. Questions asked regarding how much delivery vs coordination across the colleges, where SA notes delivery has come first. Potential future move to more sophisticated reporting, as no focus on numbers of KPIs when the programme was first introduced. Reporting is done through MySport via sportscotland and storytelling is through individual ACCs. Colleges Scotland has recently gathered some examples of good practice relating to retention of students and are expected be putting together a report on this by the end of this session.

IL notes update from RGU that things are going well, campus is less busy but the sports facilities are busier. Strategy discussions are ongoing at the moment. Challenges highlighted due to inexperience of office bearers this year, but currently exploring a possible change conditions of elections for future years.

LS noted that Edinburgh are looking to secure data on employability, retention and academic attainment, officially a significant difference in sporting students with an 8% higher attainment rate. Increase in intramural & club member numbers. Finding challenge with students running for executive roles. Shifted a participation role, to move to club development & operations manager role and have had a successful recruitment.

AE noted the 'Girls Night In' event, is up 24% from last year. Challenges regarding Wednesday afternoon policy, information request on modules taking place on a Wednesday afternoon. Created good conversation about changing policy. Democracy review has been approved by the board, and the VP role has now moved to Sports President, and terminology changes re 'officers'. Strath looking to implement a 'student voice' contact in each department, and will look to include sport in that. JP denoted that staff losses do seem to create less flexibility with moving away from Wed Afternoons. Notes about moving to 'instruction' of utilising all time equally across the week.

CS membership in a good place, business in a good place, attainment is 5% difference at HW and dropout rate is 1.6% difference if taken part in sport. Noted it would be good if could get a national overview. HW undertaking a membership review, options to remove the required facility membership. Looking to potentially move to a St Andrews model, lower costs without gym, and taking away a

flexible membership moving (due to high admin requirements) to semester model, with a levy to central costs. Ten-year anniversary of Oriam this summer & currently mapping activity. CS reviewing Borders campus on their sport & wellbeing delivery.

KD on update with development committee:

- Members have acknowledged SSS are “less present” generally they still feel supported in development space by SSS.
- Across all groups slightly more of disconnect/lack of awareness at managers level which committee are proactively addressing.
 - Shift to national partner at Sport Scotland
 - Grace timelines of annual reporting
 - Brightspace opportunity ~ learning and development/onboarding of volunteers.
- Workforce Development events
 - Deeper dive into feedback and analysis of trends in attempt to better understand what members want from these events
- Data – exploring concept of “data group” to understand right approach for data literacy.
- Number of projects stakeholder or collaborator of including menstrual health (Grace & Green & Sam Fawcner at UoE) and pilot active student survey follow up in Scotland.
- Coach Like A Girl (CLAG) remains very popular, with almost 60 applicants for latest intake
- Secured two Edinburgh University placement students who will be working with Jordan to explore member satisfaction and embed more sustainable approach to SGB partnerships.
- Student officiating rebrand coming soon
- SAMH club and community charter just launched – roadshow to follow

Summary – Jordan is doing a sensational job balancing a broad portfolio and laying foundations to deliver things differently and/or grow again in the future.

Discussion followed about popularity & structure of CLAG.

BG update on competitions committee. Staff team entering into busiest period in Sem 2. Only had 3 events not take place due to variety of reasons. National squad sports have had cases put forward to keep their activity, due to passionate volunteers leading. Noted discrepancies with some men’s squads staying and women’s dropping, due to loss of volunteer leads. Noted challenges with IA approvals, in a period of review. Feedback from IAs is that there is less goodwill amongst the sport specific leads in institution. Quality of risk assessments being reviewed. Conference Finals volunteer recruitment has been good.

- **Partners in focus** **(30 min)**
 - **sportscotland (BW)**

Significant redundancies in Jan/Feb last year, but from ScotGov budget has made a significant move towards its prior commitment to double the Sport & Physical Activity budget. There are still some

reservations, but sportscotland have been on full steam ahead since the news. National Lottery has also shared a desire to double their budget for sport & physical activity.

See paper attached.

- Core commitment from ScotGov for 26/27 & 27/28 of £20M.
- The 3M included for SGBs includes SSS. We are expecting to see an increase of investment equivalent to 10% of our current staffing costs
- SSS are also included in the growth & innovation project funding work stream, with Ian Lowe joining a working group on this topic.
- The pathways & performance projects funding have representation from the tertiary ed sector, with Ross Campbell and Neil Brown part of a group which also includes academics Stephen MacDonald (Stirling) and Russell Martindale (Napier)
- £5M is for direct club investment, with slightly different mechanism than previous DCI funding. Mark Munro is representing tertiary education on their working group
- BW notes want to work with the sector on data insights within tertiary ed.

SF thanked BW for his work supporting SSS and the tertiary ed sector in getting as close to the core work strands as we are today. SF playing a sweeper role across the different groups to help with information flow and connections – whilst member reps will be strongly encouraged to represent the whole tertiary education sector within the groups themselves. BW notes this whole process is incredibly fast moving. Looking to gain an Active Campus programme four-year commitment from 2027 & a similar agreement with Active Schools. Ambition is to grow the network, and appreciate that the ACC roles are often now not 100% funded due to rising on costs.

- Summer of Sport funding is at £20M. Scottish FA will receive a portion of this funding as will Scottish Swimming for national swimming programme.
- £15M will go to sportscotland which will be allocated mostly to Local Authorities with focus of SIMD work – could be a bidding model or a core part of the funding model.
- The working group will include tertiary education, and Cathy Gallagher (CG) is involved in this.
- Current discussions on how to share out the £15M between LAs and national partners, and this is a live discussion.

IL notes that we need to look at this as a two-way street about working together and how tertiary ed can support wider sport sector, as well as vice-versa “more student tennis players equal more tennis players”. CS asks how does the tertiary sector mobilise & how does SSS mobilise our ideas so we’re moving quickly & all on the same page. Summer of sport is focussing on, children, young people & poverty – do our students count as young people? BW shared that Active Scotland has asked for this ‘young people’ to be moved from 18 to 25 & under. CS notes that increasing the parameters would help spend the money & asking around saturation of young people activity e.g. summer camps/commercialisation.

- **Strong Organisation** (15 min)

- **Finance (JSW)**

- October figures & updated 2526 forecast

JSW gave an overview of the Jan Accounts, noting we are ahead of the forecasted deficit.

- Membership Payment Overview

JSW gave an overview of all members have paid.

- **Planning 26/27 (SF)**

- Notes about moving into 26/27. Looking for temperature check on travel for planning week as we will look to go further afield. The BUCS aspect may play into our planning time, similarly with our relationship with Ireland. The group endorsed the concept of SSS staff taking residential time away to help advance robust planning for next year.
- Staffing Structure
 - Our planning estimate is that we are expecting around another £30K of income through investment from sportscotland. This – along with our smaller than budgeted forecast deficit may make it attractive to explore additional staffing as we approach the new academic year.
 - There are two opportunities, we can make use of the student employment route, identifying people into lower-level roles from Sept -April but providing CPD. 12hrs would cost around £7K, this has limitations but is easy to change. We could potentially go up in FTE and still get to the summer in 2027 but in no different shape than we planned to be.
 - Potential for event assistant support post too, as weekends can be tricky to service well across the current team
 - We could perhaps do a student recruitment or part-time or both and not being in too different a situation than we were planning.
 - Some challenges at the moment, with not yet having received additional investment and some discussion to be had with Edinburgh HR.
 - SF notes that we may want to move on this sooner than the next Exec. ¹
 - BG notes about covering day rates for volunteer to support for events. It may be worth considering a shared role with a member or partner organisation
- CS noted that the core budget needs to be included in thinking about staff roles. SF in agreement and deciding which move to make & when in consideration of the core budget spending.

¹ To create a paper which describes benefits/cost of changing staffing structure in advance of the May Exec meeting

- **Post-budget (SF)**
 - There may be more campaign/ manifesto material as we go into the election. In the meantime, we are visible in a range of groups, and again are more connected to partners than we have ever been. Any further expenditure or messaging relating to political influencing and advocacy will be shared with Exec for approval.
- **LUNCH** **(30 min)**
- **SSS Exec Workstream Updates** **(60 min)**
 - Commercial Workstream (JSW & chums)
 - JSW gave an overview of the Showcase work. Looking to go ahead with an event on 20th May 2026, with a high profile panel supporting Mark and the staff in making a compelling case for third party investment into student sport.
 - BUCS partnership (SF & chums)
 - Note BUCS agreement, note typo in recent BUCS email 'Student Sport Scotland'
 - Looking to have wider joined up approach with BUCS in future, with significant potential for more collaboration. SF and Will shall ensure that joint planning meetings and other opportunities (incl. each org's conference) are suitably leveraged.
- **sportscotland**

See paper attached.

BW introduced the concept of a Further & Higher Education, sport & education partnership framework. BW notes that tertiary ed is the most visible as it has ever been. CS noted that this reframes agreement from just SSS x sportscotland to sportscotland & the sector.

Noted several areas where we can look to develop such as placements, specific sports, as well as connecting up with students leading school delivery. IL noted about terminology from sport & education to sport in education and mapping projects. Discussion had around facility engagement.

LS noted importance of placements, and AE shared focus on the volunteering routes, and where schools fit into this as well. BG shared about this importance of transition from student clubs to community club, making sure this is demonstrated. Also noted that community clubs help prop up by community members and also vice versa, greater collaboration is a positive move.

JP shared importance of the PASS (Placement Agreements for Students in Sport) programme with joined up resource across the LAs. Discussion had about joined up qualifications – adding QS as a partner? BW/SF notes that SGBs have been in ‘firefighting’ mode rather than in developmental mindsets for the past number of years. CS notes that the framework could act as guiding principles for the workstreams looking at spending core budget. BW notes this is a move away from Ad Hoc action, and looking to bring SSS closer into wider sportscotland work. ²

- **AOCB** **(10 min)**

IL raised a question on potentially inviting ScotGov figure to Conference Finals. This was taken away for consideration by SSS staff.

- **Closing remarks, future meetings and actions** **(5 min)**

JP thanked all for attending. The next Executive Committee meeting will be Friday 15th of May 2026 at Oriam. Meeting closed 14:00.

Actions

1. To create a paper which describes benefits/cost of changing staffing structure in advance of the May Exec meeting
2. To take the Further/Higher Education framework away and committee members prepared to discuss at the next Exec meeting

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