

CROSS PARTY GROUP (CPG) ON SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The cultural impact of colleges and universities and their contribution to the creative industries

13.00 – 14:00 on Wednesday 9 May, Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament

Note of Meeting

Present:

Ms Liz Smith MSP (Convener)	Scottish Parliament
Mr Iain Gray (Deputy Convener)	Scottish Parliament
Ms Jenny Gilruth	Scottish Parliament
Mr Oliver Mundell MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mr Jon Buglass	Edinburgh College
Mr Finlay MacCorquodale	Edinburgh Napier University
Ms Pauline Miller Judd	Edinburgh Napier University
Professor Tim Inns	Glasgow School of Art
Ms Heather Rattray	Interface
Ms Rebecca Scarlett	LEAD Scotland
Ms Carolynne Hunter	PAMIS
Ms Pat Graham	PAMIS
Ms Alison Eales	QAA
Dr David Stevenson	Queen Margaret University
Ms Jane Scott	Queen Margaret University
Mr David Martin	Skills Development Scotland
Mr Christopher Kennedy	Unite the Union
Mr Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland
Mr Boab Thomson	Universities Scotland
Ms Moira Gibson	University of Edinburgh
Mr Sean McGivern	University of Glasgow
Mr Matthew Maciver	University of the Highlands and Islands
Mr Andrew McGowan	West College Scotland
Ms Lorraine Patterson	West College Scotland
Mr Paul McLaughlan	West College Scotland

Apologies:

Ms Joanne Buchan	Colleges Scotland
Dr Sandra Cairncross	Edinburgh Napier University
Ms Anne Keenan	EIS
Mr Martyn Spence	Heriot-Watt University

Professor Karl Leydecker	University of Dundee
Mr Gavin Donoghue	University of Edinburgh
Dr Neil Croll	University of Glasgow

1. Welcome and introduction from the Convener

The Convener welcomed members to the eighth meeting of the CPG on Colleges and Universities in session five of the Scottish Parliament, on the topic of the cultural impact of further and higher education. The Convener introduced the speakers: Ms Pauline Miller Judd, Dean of Arts and Creative Industries at Edinburgh Napier University; Professor Tom Inns, Director of the Glasgow School of Art; Ms Lorraine Patterson, Lecturer in Creative Industries at West College Scotland; and Mr Jon Buglass, Assistant Principal Curriculum Design and Development at Edinburgh College.

The Convener thanked Colleges Scotland for sponsoring the lunch for the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted.

3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting

Members approved the minutes from the previous meeting on 7 March 2018. The Convener informed the group that following the discussion at the last meeting, she has written to Maureen Watt MSP, Minister for Mental Health, to seek assurances that NHS mental health first aid training will resume later this year.

4. Introduction to topic: *The cultural impact of colleges and universities and their contribution to the creative industries*

The Convener invited the speakers to make their presentations.

Ms Pauline Miller Judd, Edinburgh Napier University

Ms Miller Judd began her presentation by explaining the creative sector in Scotland has very few large organisations: 96 per cent of organisations employ 10 staff or less, with the average being three. That means, in terms of university partnerships, the sector can often be difficult to engage with as it's unable to sustain much of its own research and development.

Edinburgh Napier works very closely with Interface, the knowledge exchange platform, allowing creative organisations to test and develop ideas. For example, the institution worked with the publishing company Bright Red Publishing to digitise all their Scottish Qualification Authority publications, including documents and study guides. Since the move to digitisation, pupils have taken over one million tests online.

Edinburgh Napier also engages with the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), which is done on a bigger scale, but not used as extensively due to the cost. Ms Miller Judd added that it's important to raise awareness about what these partnerships can offer. They enable business to bring in new skills and the latest academic thinking to deliver a specific, strategic project by embedding academics and researchers in the business.

As well as universities providing the expertise to fulfil the needs of business, they are also at the forefront of innovation. Ms Miller Judd informed the group that there is a huge amount of work taking place that, in time, will change practice across the sector. In April, Edinburgh Napier hosted a symposium which showcased new technology which will enable synchronous musical performances across the world. The symposium engaged several smaller Scottish performing arts organisations to see how the technology might help them develop new approaches to building and engaging audiences.

As well as significant economic impact, the collaboration between universities and industry has other benefits. Involving students in industry-led projects ensures that creative graduates are employable after their studies. Ms Miller Judd noted that creative skillsets are valued well beyond the creative sector. Many creative graduates are employed within other sectors, which is a testament to the transferable nature of their degrees.

Professor Tom Inns, Glasgow School of Art

Professor Inns began by providing a brief background about Glasgow School of Art. The institution was established in 1845 as the government's school of design to service the creative needs of Glasgow's industry. A selective institution, students are admitted based on their ability and creativity. A studio-based approach is taken to develop the creative skills of students, who have the opportunity to engage with the latest research.

Currently, there are 2400 students based in the Glasgow campus. The institution is comprised of five schools: an architecture school, one of the five architecture schools in Scotland; a design school, which covers all the different disciplines of design; a school of fine art, which is very focused on contemporary art; a new school of simulation and visualisation, which focuses on the new worlds of virtual-reality and immersive systems; and finally, a new school of innovation, which takes design-thinking into new territories and is very focused on pocket-sector development.

Professor Inns stated that Glasgow School of Art is deeply embedded in its community. He added that he often finds it problematic when a divide is industry and education. To him, they are the same thing and completely integrated, as demonstrated by the numerous projects which are ran in collaboration the institution has with the creative sector.

Professor Inns said that Glasgow School of Art has always been an internationalised institution, with students recruited from over 75 countries. The institution's Singapore campus brings a rich connection into South East Asia. The institution is very engaged with China, and undertakes lots of staff and student exchanges with Chinese institutions. In terms of cultural impact, Professor Inns believes this is very significant.

Discussing the career paths of creative graduates, Professor Inns echoed Ms Miller Judd's earlier comments and said that many graduates work in non-creative industries. There is huge demand for the creative skillset in other parts of the economy, with creative graduates being highly valued by other sectors.

Concluding, Professor Inns said that Glasgow School of Art is fully committed to ensuring people from disadvantaged backgrounds have the opportunity to study at the institution. Diversity drives creativity and the institution greatly welcomes people from diverse backgrounds. Although there is a huge emphasis from government on increasing social diversity in the university sector, in terms of the creative industries, it's important to also look at diversity of ethnicity and nationality too.

Ms Lorraine Patterson & Mr Paul McLaughlan, West College Scotland

Representing the creative industries department at West College Scotland, Mr McLaughlan began by stating that industry collaboration is central to everything the college does. The department tries to deliver all HNC and HND provision through live-client briefs, allowing students to work on real projects with real companies. Mr McLaughlan added that this has been a real selling point for the college in recruiting students and raising interest among young people.

A project by the college was recognised at the SPARQS Student Engagement Awards and also at Bridge 2 Business' annual end-of-the year event for the West of Scotland. The project, called MOYA (Minds of Young Artists), established a student-led production company, which allowed artists to come together and sell their creations. Now, the initiative is in its third year and entirely funds itself.

Mr McLaughlan then spoke of a project which the college ran in partnership with Cohesion Medical. It was discovered that Crohn's disease was a particular problem for 18 to 24 year olds, but that this was not widely known. Graphic design students were then tasked to design an app to appeal to that particular age group to raise awareness of the condition. Mr McLaughlan added that the important thing about live briefs, such as this partnership, is that they are centred on the relationship between the client and the student.

Ms Patterson, also presenting on behalf of West College Scotland, then informed the group that the most successful project her department has ran has been with Neat Living, an interior design company whom the college has collaborated with for three years. Together, they have co-created a unique project called Designers of Tomorrow. The partnership is a competition which sees students generate new concepts and design solutions for small, compact homes called micro40 and micro80. The project designs were then judged by ex-students of the college at an awards event. Ms Patterson added that this was extremely valuable as it allows the former students to inform current students about their university experience and share insight about networking and career opportunities.

Mr Jon Buglass, Edinburgh College

Mr Buglass began his presentation by explaining that the creative industries department at Edinburgh College is comprised of five areas: art and design; broadcast media and photography; computing; music and sound production; and performing arts. He added that most people would consider computing to be out of place within the department, but that Edinburgh College sees a direct link between creativity and digital learning. The college has established Creatives Connect, an online portal which allows students to collaborate with other students and share expertise. For example, if photographers need make-up artists for a photoshoot, they are able to connect and work together.

Moving on to discuss student outcomes, Mr Buglass revealed that 97 per cent of creative industries graduates of Edinburgh College have positive-known destinations. Of this figure, 80 per cent progress on to further study, mostly into university, whilst 17 per cent go into employment. Mr Buglass said that it was important to acknowledge that is not always the case that graduates secure their dream job immediately, or even six months, after graduation. He added that impact isn't always immediately seen in the statistics and what constitutes 'success' can be achieved many years later.

The group was informed that the creative sector has a complex employer network, which has only really developed over the last few years. Now, there are over 500 different employers in the sector. Mr Buglass added that this was of great benefit to students as they have been offered work placements and have the opportunity to go on industrial visits.

Each year, the college holds two specific events for its students. One is focused on employability, which sees a board of advisers from the creative industries in Edinburgh help plan and deliver a conference for the college's students. Around 700 students attend the event and work directly with employers.

The college also hosts Glow, a two-month creative festival which allows creative individuals to showcase their projects in music, theatre, dance, photography, and other areas. Over 20 events occur throughout Edinburgh, in some major places such as the National Portrait Gallery and the FilmHouse.

5. Discussion and questions

The Convener thanked the speakers for their presentations and opened the floor for discussion.

Liz Smith MSP, Scottish Parliament

Ms Smith raised the issue of the lack of music education in schools. She asked whether the decline in creative provision has resulted in lack of aspiration and ambition for a career in the creative industries.

Mr McLaughlan referred to the partnership between his institution and Castlehead High School in Paisley. The college has operates a credit system, whereby staff members receive credits for going into schools and teaching music and art. Staff members typically teach in S2 and S3 classes, where pupils are beginning to look at senior phase choices. He added that schools have said they do not necessarily have the expertise to provide an extensive creative education and welcome the partnership. Mr McLaughlan concluded by saying that it's not overly tricky to set partnerships up between schools and further and higher education institutions, it just takes buy-in from both parties.

Iain Gray MSP, Scottish Parliament

Mr Gray asked about articulation from college to university and how this relationship operates in terms of creative subjects.

Professor Inns replied that Glasgow School of Art does much more articulation than it did five years ago and this is largely due to the work the institution does with the Scottish Funding Council. However, he stressed that it was important to always consider the individual learner. Sometimes, although a learner may be qualified for entry into Year 2 or Year 3, they may benefit from the extra support that would come with going into an earlier year.

Mr Buglass said that his institution has great relationships with Edinburgh Napier University and Queen Margaret University, and has articulation agreements in place with both of these institutions. However, he added that it was often difficult for performing arts students to progress from college to university. Places are just too competitive in Scotland and often, students will end up going to university in England. Whether that is through choice or due to the competitiveness of the Scottish sector, is hard to tell.

Dr David Stevenson, Queen Margaret University

Dr Stevenson echoed the remarks expressed by Mr Buglass, saying there was a high demand for performing arts courses and not enough places. He added that creative arts courses were expensive to run and that this was widely misunderstood. People can easily understand a radiotherapy module requiring medical equipment but lack understanding regarding a performing arts course needing resources such as a well-lit empty hall with sound capabilities.

Ms Pat Graham, PAMIS

Ms Graham asked what provision there was for people with profound multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) to study creative courses. Secondly, she asked what institutions could do to develop the skills of their existing skills by allowing them the opportunity to work with people with PMLD.

Mr Buglass replied that Edinburgh College has a course in art and design which is specifically for people with PMLD. The college also works with specialist schools and organisations, who sometimes refer sufferers onto courses. However, he added that more could be done to promote or raise awareness about this. Ms Miller Judd said the students at Edinburgh Napier regularly work and engage with community groups, and recently worked with elderly people with dementia.

Mr Matthew Maclver, University of the Highlands and Islands

Mr Maclver referred to the recent government emphasis on the lack of STEM teachers and said arts and humanities subjects were considered second-class. He added that colleges and universities to could do more to promote these subjects.

Professor Inns replied that he agreed. He recounted his favourite study by Michigan State University, which analysed the hobbies and pastimes of Nobel Prize winners of science. The study found was that you were 22 times more likely to win a Nobel Prize if you could play a musical instrument or sing and 12 times more likely if you participated in creative writing. He added that this was a testament to the academic importance of creative skills.

6. Close

Ms Smith closed the meeting with thanks to all for attending.

ENDS