

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

12.30-13.15 on Thursday 10 March 2016, Room TG 22, Scottish Parliament

Note of Meeting

Present:

Elizabeth Smith MSP	Scottish Parliament	CPG Convener
Iain Gray MSP	Scottish Parliament	CPG Deputy Convener
Liam McArthur MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Prof Grant Jarvie	University of Edinburgh	
Susannah Lane	Universities Scotland	
Dr Finlay MacCorquodale	Edinburgh Napier University	
Prof Matthew Maclver	University of the Highlands and Islands	
Jane Scott	Queen Margaret University Edinburgh	
Heather Sloan	Universities Scotland	
Rob Wallen	North East Scotland College	
James Wilson	Universities Scotland	

Apologies:

Peter Aitchison	University of Glasgow
Joanne Buchan	Colleges Scotland
Alan Dearle	University of St Andrews
Moir Gibson	University of Edinburgh
Charlie Jeffery	University of Edinburgh
Dr Judith McClure	Scotland China Education Network (SCEN)
Megan McHaney	NUS Scotland
Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland
Dr Richard Simpson MSP	Scottish Parliament

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Welcome and introduction from the Convener

The Convener, Ms Smith MSP, welcomed everyone to the Group's fourth Annual General Meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted.

3. Annual Return Form (AR1)

The Convener explained that the Group had to submit an Annual Return Form (AR1) to the Scottish Parliament's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

Mr Wallen said that Colleges Scotland should only appear on the list of members on the form once and also asked for his own institution, North East Scotland College, to be added to the list of members.

The Group agreed to add a legacy note to the AR1 recommending that a similar Cross Party Group is established in the next parliamentary session.

The Group approved the Annual Return Form (AR1).

4. Summary of the Group's activities in 2015

The Convener said she was delighted about the variety of topics that had been suggested by members in the last year and the quality of the presentations over the lifetime of the Group. The Group had worked successfully with other Cross Party Groups, for example holding a joint meeting with the CPG on Skills.

Members agreed that the frequency of meetings was about right (the CPG met on four occasions in 2015).

The Deputy Convener welcomed the substantial presentations at each meeting and suggested that the Group should consider whether it is possible to meet outside of Parliament in order to see first-hand some of the projects being discussed by the Group.

Professor MacIver said that one of the strengths of the Group is that the Chair keeps speakers to a certain amount of time, which allowed for maximum time for questions and discussion. Professor MacIver made a plea for the discipline around speakers' contributions to continue.

Group members agreed that two to three speakers at each session was the best approach.

5. Future of the Group after the 2016 Scottish Parliament Elections

The Group had a fruitful discussion of topics that could be explored by a future Cross Party Group in the next parliamentary session. Topic suggestions included:

- Commission on Widening Access. The Commission is due to publish its final report before the election, which will be far-reaching and have a lot of content. It would be useful to unpack the report and discuss it as a Group.
- The relationship between colleges and universities and best practice about collaboration on the learner journey.
- How new technologies are being used in rural communities to help people access higher education and, in particular, mature learners.
- Explore what is being done to attract young people into creative and cultural courses, particularly at the small specialist institutions. (It was noted that there is a lot of demand for courses in SSIs, but there is often more of a focus on STEM rather than creative disciplines.)
- The contribution of further and higher education to the creative industries.
- A presentation from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on its work and remit.
- How universities and colleges engage with their local communities, including community relations and additional community contributions such as teaching and research.
- How universities and colleges develop an international outlook in their students to fit them for a 'global' future, including language provision and exposure to overseas students.
- Post-study work for international students studying in Scotland.

Mr McArthur said that a future CPG should consider further collaborative working across CPGs and that this is something that would be encouraged and welcomed by the Parliament.

6. Close

The Convener thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their contributions over the lifetime of the Group.

Ms Lane thanked the Convener and the Deputy Convener for their work to chair the CPG and to provide opportunities for further and higher education institutions to present on the work they are delivering for Scotland.

Meeting closed.