

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

12.30-14.00 on Thursday 13 March 2014, Committee Room 2, Scottish Parliament

Note of Meeting

Present:

Elizabeth Smith MSP	Convenor of the CPG on Scotland's Universities and Colleges
Kezia Dugdale MSP	Deputy Convenor of the CPG on Scotland's Universities and Colleges
Liam McArthur MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mary Scanlon MSP	Scottish Parliament
David Anderson	UCU Scotland
Terry Brotherstone	University of Aberdeen
Joanne Buchan	Colleges Scotland
Garry Cameron	College Development Network
Peter Cannell	Open University in Scotland
Alan Dearle	University of St Andrews
Roisin-Alana Di Giacomo	Glasgow Caledonian University
Robert Foster	NUS Scotland
Moira Gibson	University of Edinburgh
Jackie Graham	College Development Network
John Henderson	Colleges Scotland
Grant Jarvie	University of Edinburgh
Charlie Jeffery	University of Edinburgh
Paul Little	City of Glasgow College
Alan MacKenzie	Scottish Parliament
Brian McLeish	Scottish Enterprise
Susan Rigby	University of Edinburgh
Jane Scott	Queen Margaret University Edinburgh
Claire Shepherd	Thorntons Law LLP
Heather Sloan	Universities Scotland
Shona Struthers	Colleges Scotland
Robert Wallen	North East Scotland College
James Wilson	Universities Scotland

Apologies:

Stewart Maxwell MSP	Scottish Parliament
Matthew MacIver	
Pater Aitchison	University of Glasgow
Una Bartley	Open University in Scotland
Lesley Carcary	Lead Scotland
Roger Collins	University of Edinburgh

Susannah Lane	Universities Scotland
Finlay MacCorquodale	Edinburgh Napier University
Judith McClure	Scotland
Jim Miller	Open University in Scotland
Alistair Sambel	Edinburgh Napier University
Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland
Mike Williamson	sparqs

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Welcome and introduction from the Convenor

The Convenor, Ms Smith MSP, welcomed everyone to the Group's fifteenth meeting and second Annual General Meeting. The Convenor explained that there would be two parts to the meeting: first, the AGM; and second the topical meeting to discuss the topic of Open Education Resources (OERs), Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) and Remote Learning and scene-setting from the speakers.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted.

3. Annual Return Form (AR1) / Summary of the Group's activities to date

The Convenor explained two documents had been provided to the Group. Firstly, a summary detailing the Group's activities in 2013 including a note of who has been attending and speaking at these meetings. Secondly, the official paperwork to be submitted to Parliament, the Annual Return Form (AR1) on which the Group must agree is an accurate record. The Convenor noted her thanks to Mr James Wilson for his help in preparing these papers. The Group unanimously approved the AR1.

4. Election of Office Bearers

The Convenor indicated that as part of the AGM process, office bearers had to be elected.

Convenor

The Convenor asked Group members for nominations for the role of Convenor. Ms Smith indicated that she was happy to continue in the role if that was supported by the meeting.

Ms Moira Gibson proposed Ms Smith as Convenor, Seconded by Mr Paul Little

Deputy Convenor

The Convenor asked Group members for nominations for the role of Deputy Convenor. The Convenor indicated that the current Deputy Convenor, Ms Kezia Dugdale MSP, had expressed an interest in continuing in his role.

Ms Mary Scanlon proposed Ms Dugdale as Deputy Convenor, Seconded by Mr Liam McArthur MSP

Meeting closed.

TOPICAL MEETING

1. Welcome and Introduction from the Convenor

The Convenor, welcomed everyone to the sixteenth meeting of the Cross Party Group. The Convenor thanked Una Bartley (not present at the meeting) and the Open University in Scotland for sponsoring the lunch for the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted.

3. Introduction to the topic of Open Education Resources (OERs), Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) and Remote Learning

The Convenor introduced the speakers on the topic of Open Education Resources (OERs), Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) and Remote Learning and noted that questions would be taken at the end of all three presentations.

Dr Pete Cannell, Deputy Director, Open University in Scotland

Dr Cannell informed the Group that over the last decade there has been a qualitative and quantitative increase in content online. The number of platforms has increased, including development of Khan Academy in the United States, iTunesU, and the Commonwealth of Learning website with a schools and colleges user base.

Dr Cannell explained that an important development is open educational resources. Their creative commons licences mean they are free resources available for use and (possible reuse), it is possible to remix the content and it is also possible to redistribute the resources (not for profit). Dr Cannell told the Group that there is broader online learning terrain worldwide, for example MOOCs led by the United States, and that although the potential is great, we are not yet realising the full potential.

Dr Cannell cautioned that there is potential for huge inclusion, but that if we do not get the practices right then these resources could be potentially exclusionary.

Dr Cannell spoke about Open Educational Practices, citing the example of an OER in rural entrepreneurship developed in partnership with practitioners from rural Scotland. The Group heard that the process involved being thoughtful about how the content will be used after its development as well as thinking about the content. Another example cited is a collaboration with a third sector

organisation supporting refugees which is being used much more widely than simply with the initial partner.

A new sector wide project in Scotland is being led by the Open University in Scotland. The steering group comprises the University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, University of Strathclyde and University of the Highlands and Islands. The project aims to support development in Scotland – including developments in practice – of a state of the art hub for OER, including some new content, putting Scottish HE at the forefront of new developments. Dr Cannell said the job of the project leaders is to engage with everyone they can as this is a good time to make a difference in this area.

Dr Sue Rigby, Vice Principal Learning and Teaching, University of Edinburgh

Dr Rigby began her presentation by pointing out that there is no cost to online open courses and that they have huge potential to transform learning. However, Dr Rigby pointed out that MOOCs could be viewed as a fad by Americans which run the risk of people becoming bored and wanting to move on to the next thing. Dr Rigby explained that MOOCs are loaded onto a platform and can be taken throughout the year. Success can be measured by scale of take-up with 200,000 learners making a course successful but only 500-600 learners meaning a course is not as successful.

Dr Rigby told the Group about the University of Edinburgh's work: the University has lots of courses with a wide range of topics, including 'do you have what it takes to be a vet?' which teaches about what to expect during the first year of a veterinary medicine degree.

Dr Rigby said the model can still do better in terms of being made to be more interactive and engaging. Dr Rigby said that there were 308,000 participants in the first set of MOOCs, with some 240,000 signed up at the start. The MOOCs appeared to tap into inherent curiosity mostly amongst people who already have a first degree. Dr Rigby said that MOOCs had been criticised for their low completion rates, but said that the point is that any engagement brings benefit. Feedback from participants revealed that they have been impressed by the courses and that expectations have been met or surpassed. The Group heard that MOOCs have an enormous pool of interested learners as some 167 countries participated in the University's offerings.

Dr Rigby said that learners' appetites need to be met; that universities could extend their expertise across different modes of open online learning; and that we have Scottish brand capacity to do so. Further potential can be identified in relation to teaching in primary and secondary schools and in the future online study could become part of formal education from age six.

Mr Garry Cameron, Manager, College Development Network and Ms Jackie Graham, Consultant, College Development Network

Mr Cameron introduced the College Development Network (CDN) as the support agency for the college sector. Mr Cameron and Ms Graham showcased Re:Source (<http://resource.blogs.scotcol.ac.uk>) to the Group, one of many open education resources. Mr Cameron said Re:Source makes a small but significant contribution and is an excellent example of a partnership approach with JISC RSC, Education Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) all involved.

The vision is that resources will be published under open licences for all colleges and Scotland to access as well as for access around the world.

Mr Cameron said there has been exploration of employer demand as part of the Re:Source project, for example on food manufacture and hospitality, with demand for lots of Open Educational Resources (OERs) to support HNC/D courses.

The Group heard about a number of benefits to colleges, including: wider education opportunity; supports inclusion; ability for inter-institutional collaboration and efficiency, a context of the regional model to be adapted to local needs; and contributes to sustainable economic growth and a smarter, fairer Scotland.

Mr Cameron explained that the potential of OERs is massive across schools, colleges and universities and challenged the Group to think about how it can promote and support a public debate on this issue.

Specifically on Re:Source, Mr Cameron explained that it was constructed during 2011-12 with its starting point being resources written by college lecturers for other college lecturers to use. After regionalisation the challenge was about how to take that forward. The idea from 2011 was to release resources developed nationally for open use. Re:Source is an open platform which contains a repository of material as well as a blog area to talk about and highlight resources. In concluding, Mr Cameron said that future developments include opening up SQA resources as well as developing statistics on how resources have been used.

4. Discussion

The Group participated in a lively discussion on issues such as inclusion benefits, how OERs are consumed by users, accreditation, support for users and what barriers might exist which need to be addressed.

5. Date and topic of next meeting

The Convenor advised the Group that the date for the next meeting of the CPG in 2014 will be Thursday 29 May 2014, 12.30 – 2.00 pm in Committee Room 3. The topic of the 29 May meeting will be the Contribution of Scotland's Colleges and Universities to the Success of the XX Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

The Convenor welcomed suggestions for future meeting topics from Group members. The following topics were suggested: 1) an update on college regionalisation 2) world skills crossover with colleges and universities.

The Convenor thanked all of the speakers and attendees for their contributions.

Meeting closed.