



Edinburgh College

Students' Association



ANNUAL REPORT 2018 - 2019

Powered by students | Driven by values | Committed to better

Foreword

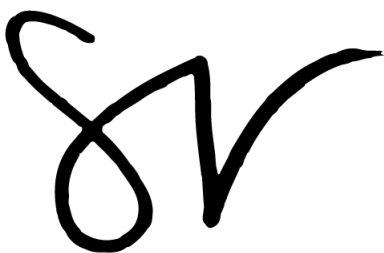
It has been another incredible year for ECSA and as I am coming to the end of my term as President I am proud to present our End of Year report.

We started the year by committing to an ambitious 13 priority objectives and I could not be prouder of all the amazing work we have achieved this year. That includes everything within ECSA and the College but also in the wider student movement, especially through our work with agencies such as the Poverty Commission, City Vision 2050 and the Climate Challenge Fund who funded our Go Green project.

I was incredibly pleased to see ECSA receive the NUS Scotland Diversity Award for our work with student parents and carers in order to ensure our campuses truly are Family Friendly. The Student Parent Working Group has come a long way but there is still far to go, however, I have every faith Edinburgh College and ECSA in partnership will achieve all they have set out to do and more.

At ECSA, we have continued to promote the student voice at all levels of Edinburgh College and in all areas of the student experience. Our evidence-based approach to gathering feedback from students is continuing to be successful through our well-established Class Rep system. Students value their voice being heard and it is clear they appreciate us closing the feedback loop with responses and feedback from the Senior Management Team.

Underpinning all of our successes this year has been working in partnership, whether that has been with students, college departments or external agencies. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board for all the support and guidance I have received this year but also the support you've given ECSA. We could not have achieved all our work without the continuing support from the Board and I am confident our ECSA-llent partnership will only grow stronger.



Sarah Hay - President 2018/19



Supporting student mental health and wellbeing



- **Student Mental Health Agreement aims for 18/19 met**
- **Continued ECSA drop ins and early interventions for vulnerable students in Milton Rd Halls**

We finalised the joint College and ECSA Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA) in semester 1. This is an initiative led by Think Positive on behalf of NUS Scotland to bring students' associations and their institutions together in a formal agreement to work jointly on mental health issues on campus. This agreement builds on work already completed and aims & objectives that already exist but needs further development. The SMHA end of year report and evaluation has been submitted with evidence and details of us meeting all objectives set out for this session.

We have continued our partnership with Nightline - a listening, emotional

support and information service, run by students for students. In conjunction with Nightline we handed out 600 stress-busting welfare packs to students across our 4 campuses.

Throughout the year as part of the SMHA, we have hosted a number of initiatives and activities related to student mental health. For example, 'Tea and Talk' events at Sighthill and Granton where students get a hot drink and cake/fruit and the opportunity for a chat. This is part of a wider activity of engaging students in talking about their mental health, supporting each other and understanding 'It's not just you'.

A major objective of the SMHA was to get a 'Wellbeing Hub' online to ensure there's round the clock advice and support available for students. The 'Wellbeing Hub' is now live on our website and it includes information about self-help provided by our students such as ideas for relaxation, physical activity and pages and apps that might be helpful.

The local partnership with Hope Church Musselburgh has also successfully continued this year. This works in conjunction with our monthly ECSA drop-ins in halls on the last Saturday of each month. The church provides a free hot meal which is sometimes the only hot meal they have that week. The drop-ins and meals are a vital point for us to identify vulnerable students in need of intervention. Additionally, we also handed out 100 food packs at Christmas for students staying in halls to help them over the Christmas period.

Supporting ECSA-Ilent Learning & Teaching



- Continuing evidence-based representation and feedback
- ECSA-Ilent Class Rep conferences

Building on and continuing the recognised and excellent course representation structures at Edinburgh College, we have this year elected 501 Class Representatives across 259 courses. 172 Class Reps attended a training session run by Student Engagement Assistants, ECSA staff and officers. Because the training offers important information on how to get the most out of their time as reps and valuable skills to influence and feed back on learning and teaching, the training was also made available online via Moodle where the remainder of Class Reps received their training.

This year's rounds of Class Rep conferences have followed a similar format to last year with 4 conferences across 4 campuses themed around the different stages of the student lifecycle. This meant that from our first conference all the way through the 4 conferences we were able to gather good quality data that has allowed us to make evidence-based

representations on behalf of students.

The 4 conferences covered the following topics:

- Induction & Retention
- Feedback & Self-evaluation
- Belonging & Inclusion
- Success & Progression

Each conference provides Class Reps with ECSA news and information relating to their learning and teaching experience as well a focussed workshop where students discuss with their peers as well as in the bigger cohort. This feedback and information is brought together in a themed report analysing any areas for concerns and where we need to improve. The reports are sent directly to curriculum managers, heads of faculty and SMT for consideration and comments. We always ensure to close the feedback loop with Class Reps so they also get an opportunity to comment on the outcomes of the reports. At the end of each academic year we pull together and Learning & Teaching report to highlight good practice and areas we will be working on with the college for the coming session.



We continued the well-loved tradition of the ECSA-llence Awards this year with students across Edinburgh College nominating their lecturers, LDTs, learning resources staff and class reps across 5 categories. We received 689 nominations for staff and students across the institution. A student-led panel had the pleasure of reading through all the wonderful words and the hard job of shortlisting and choosing winners. Unfortunately due to ongoing strike action it was not feasible to host our usual awards event, however we decided to do things slightly differently. We followed Sarah, President, around the campuses presenting the winners with their awards and certificates which resulted in a brilliant video which can be found on our website.



We win awards!



Awards:

- **NUS Scotland Campaign of the Year Award**
- **NUS Scotland Diversity Award runners-up**

It has been another award-winning year for ECSA. We were shortlisted and won the NUS Scotland Campaign of the Year Award with the ‘Do you want to see the Counsellor?’ campaign as well as our work to improve experience of student parents and carers being the runner up. Yet again the competition from other Scottish College and Universities was tough but our student led and impactful work came out on top.

The award for campaign of the year was awarded for a campaign which led to the introduction of a college wellbeing team based on feedback and suggestions from students and class reps. Both the winning campaign as well as the runner up were truly student-led and showcase exactly what positive engagement can lead to.

More activities for everyone



- **Gaming Society and LGBT Society successes**
- **Weekly Yoga at Sighthill and Granton**

Beginning at Welcome Weeks back in August, we gathered data on what type of activities and societies students would like to engage with. This influenced the planning of activities and resulted in accessible and engaging activities that a wide variety of students have engaged with. Yoga has been really successful and popular with students. We have had consistent attendance across weekly Yoga sessions at Sighthill and Granton throughout the year.

The LGBT society has had a couple of socials and are currently preparing to take part in Edinburgh Pride in June. Their activities are mostly online as that is how most of the students have been comfortable about getting involved. Students took part and signed the LGBT Purple Friday pledges as well as supported Vice President

Activities run a Clothing Swap in aid of LGBT Youth Scotland in May.

We have not had as many societies running consistently throughout the year as we had hoped but the ones that have been happening have been really successful and impactful. Especially the feedback from the newly established Gaming Society has been particularly positive.

The Gaming Society meet once a week, mostly at Granton depending on the location of those available, where they play group games on the Nintendo Switch such as Mario Kart and Smash Bros. The society hosted a gaming tournament in the Granton Hub where 20 people took part. The group is self-sufficient and is mainly being run by students themselves. They have a very active group chat and they don't just talk about gaming, they support each other with their anxieties or concerns. The students are very complimentary about their time in the Gaming Society:

“The society isn't picky about who you are - doesn't matter if you are male, female, old, young because everyone is always there to have a bit of fun even if you can't game!”

“The best thing I found with the Gaming Society was when I looked at my fellow students and I could see that all the stress of being a student was put on pause”

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind Award



- **Building on our two-star award**

We have continued the success of being involved with the Healthy Body, Healthy Mind project again this year. The project is run by NUS Scotland in conjunction with Scottish Student Sport and ASH Scotland. We are continuously improving our work on Healthy Body Healthy Mind and we are building on from the foundations created when we were awarded 2 Stars in 2018.



HBHM has been an excellent driver of

working across areas and departments within the College to promote and raise awareness of a healthier lifestyle. We have run a number of activities as part of Healthy Body, Healthy Mind including stalls to celebrate Purple Friday, Time to Talk events and our smoking cessation campaign - “Save your Lungs, Save your Funds”.



Additionally, as part of HBHM, the Vice-President Welfare has been hosting peer support groups throughout the year in the format of a ‘Crafternoon Club’. They have been weekly and on all four campuses. These sessions have included colouring in books and other crafts to create a basis for stress relief but also a way of chatting that doesn’t place any pressure on the students. These Crafternoon Club sessions have been particularly popular with ACE students.



Our year in photos



Record breaking Annual Election



- 17 candidates for 3 positions
- 27.5% increase in voter turnout from last year

This year we saw our 7th Annual Full-Time Officer Elections and it has been another successful year engaging students both to stand as candidates and to vote. In fact, this year, we reached our highest ever number of candidates, with 17 students putting themselves forward for 3 positions. It was fantastic to see so many enthusiastic students willing to put themselves forward and do something positive for the benefit of students, the Association and the College.

As in previous years we have been involved in a Scotland-wide project called the 'Big Student Elections', which is also in its 7th year and includes Students' Associations from across Scotland working together to run annual elections in the same week. The polling period lasted 4 days and involved polling stations

being made available in high-footfall areas on all campuses throughout that period. On Friday the 8th of March, ECSA joined colleagues from Edinburgh Napier Students' Association, Heriot Watt Students' Association, Queen Margaret Students' Union and the National Union of Students Scotland to celebrate a successful week and announce the winners from the participating Associations in Edinburgh.

All of our polling takes place online on the Association website, so students can vote from the comfort of their sofa, on the bus, or come and speak with us at one of the polling stations on campus. The vast majority of our voters prefer to vote on campus, so it proved particularly challenging to engage students, given that all classes were cancelled on 1 of the 4 days due to ongoing national industrial action. However, despite this, we have managed to increase our voter turnout by almost 200 voters year-on-year.



Community Impact



- **Edinburgh 2050 City Vision Project involvement**
- **Influencing student policy and decisions at a national level**

ECSA has been involved in initiatives across Edinburgh through established and new partnerships. We have ensured the student voice has been well and truly heard throughout the 2050 City Vision project - a project that includes stakeholders from Edinburgh and beyond to establish a city-wide vision and future. We obviously believe students are a vital part of the future of Edinburgh which has come across strongly through the Lord Provost visits in March.

Following the involvement of ECSA in the 'Tackling Poverty and Inequality' conference earlier in the year the President was invited to contribute directly to the Poverty Commission along with other stakeholders. The discussion centred around the link between poverty and low attainment of FE and HE students. Additionally,

the group discussed the barriers students in poverty face. ECSA President brought her lived personal experience of navigating through education while being a single parent on a low income to highlight the constant struggle and barriers faced by many in the current funding structures.

The current Vice President Activities and incoming Vice President Welfare will be new members on the National Union of Students Scotland Executive Committee following their election at their national conference in March. They are both looking forward to ensure college students are at the table and included when it comes to student funding reviews and campaigns for improving students lives. As part of ECSA's involvement with NUS Scotland, ECSA President attended a President's round table with Richard Lochhead MSP (Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science) at Scottish Parliament, discussing the barriers students face in Further Education.



Family Friendly College

STUDENT PARENTS & CARERS



- ‘New & Expectant Student Parents Policy’
- Student Parent and Carers Working Group set up

We are proud of the progress throughout this session to move towards a more family friendly college. This process had been sparked through an ECSA facilitated online space for Student Parents & Carers. Through feedback and ideas from students online and through conversations with student parents in welcome week, the ECSA President quickly made student parents & carers an official priority for the first time at ECSA.

Using the NUS Scotland report, ‘Bairn Necessities’, ECSA investigated current Edinburgh College policies and practices, showing that we were currently only meeting 1 of the 8 areas, namely having an on-campus nursery at Granton Campus.

There has a great deal of positivity from staff across the College to implement changes for student parents and this is reflected in the members of the Student Parent Working Group set up to improve the experience of student parents.

Members of the group includes the Head of Corporate Development, Nursery Manager, Student Funding, Student Experience Manager, Facilities Manager, Curriculum staff, and the ECSA Director and President.

As an outcome of the working group a ‘New & Expectant Student Parents Policy’ has been drafted and approved alongside student guidance for College Policies in general to improve understanding and accessibility. This is incredibly important for current and prospective students taking ownership of their experience and knowing what support and rights they have at College when they are new or expecting parents.

In addition to the new policy and guidance a number of other initiatives will be in place for the new intake of students as a result of the cross College working group. There will be high chairs available in all catering outlets as well as parent rooms on each campus. They will be equipped with bottle warming facilities as well as chest feeding, changing and resting facilities.

“I am extremely happy with the new family friendly policies for students that are being introduced! This will make the lives of student parents and carers so much easier, and have their rights as both parents and students protected.”

Paid jobs for students

- Student destination interviewers
- Student engagement assistants

We supported the Quality team with the recruitment of Student Destination Interviewers who successfully managed to track down destinations of 85% of leavers.

Additionally, we successfully recruited 3 Student Engagement Assistants again for 2018-19. We offer these roles for students to get experience that can be flexible and tailored around the timetables of the students. The Student Engagement Assistants have helped with class rep training, events, ECSA stalls and general admin and data input. The SEAs have also been supporting each of the Officers with an area of their priority objectives to ensure they are truly student-led. The areas of work for SEAs have been around reducing food waste on campuses, the wellbeing hub, and support for evening students.

The Evening Student booklet provides information for students who only attend Edinburgh College after main facilities have closed; such as student support, funding support and catering. The booklet includes information on who to contact in specific situations, what benefits they can access as students, and how to engage with ECSA. The format of the booklet is currently being finalised so it is ready to be distributed to students starting 2019/20.

Free sanitary products



This year saw the rollout of free sanitary products in college as part of the Scottish Government's £4m commitment to tackling period poverty. Young Scot's research showed that one in four respondents struggled to access sanitary products.

Working with the estates, student experience, marketing, and communications teams, we have ensured students can access a range of sanitary products including eco-friendly options.

There has been a positive takeup of the scheme, with 45,000 tampons and 40,000 pads distributed across the campuses from a range of locations, including key toilets, ECSA offices, and student services as well as some open-access locations.

Going Green



- First year saw 393 students engaged and 107.9 tonnes CO2 equivalent saved
- Further £6,810 funding secured from Paths for All for a Liftshare site for the College

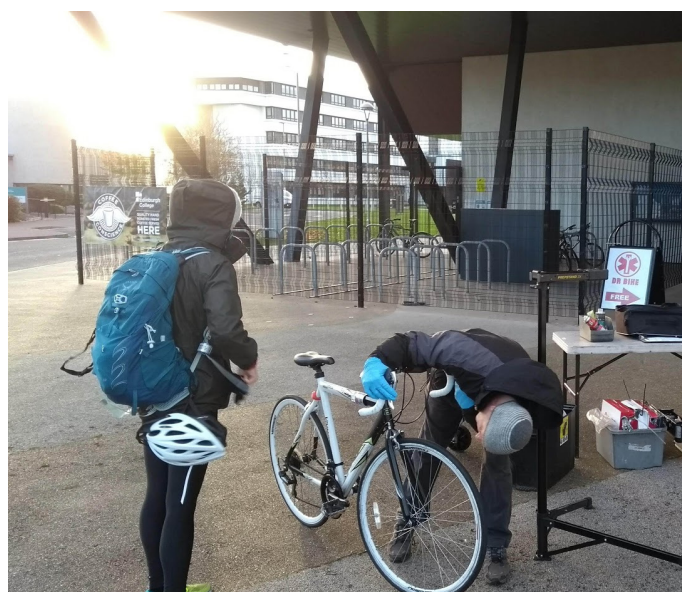
At this time last year, we reported the successful award of Climate Challenge Fund funding for a Low Carbon Travel project - Go Green. We are now a year into the two-year funded project and it is really taking off.



The key project events that have taken place this year were a New Year Travel Pledge and a Spring Travel Challenge. These encouraged students to sign up to make a change to their travel that is more environmentally-friendly, which was incentivised

through small prizes. A Walking Challenge was also run in conjunction with the Spring Travel Challenge - step counters were available to borrow, so students could tell us about their daily step count for two weeks. 48 students signed up to the New Year Pledge; 28 to the Spring Travel Challenge; and 44 to the Walking Challenge. We hope that students continue to be more active, and travel to college in more sustainable ways once these challenges are complete.

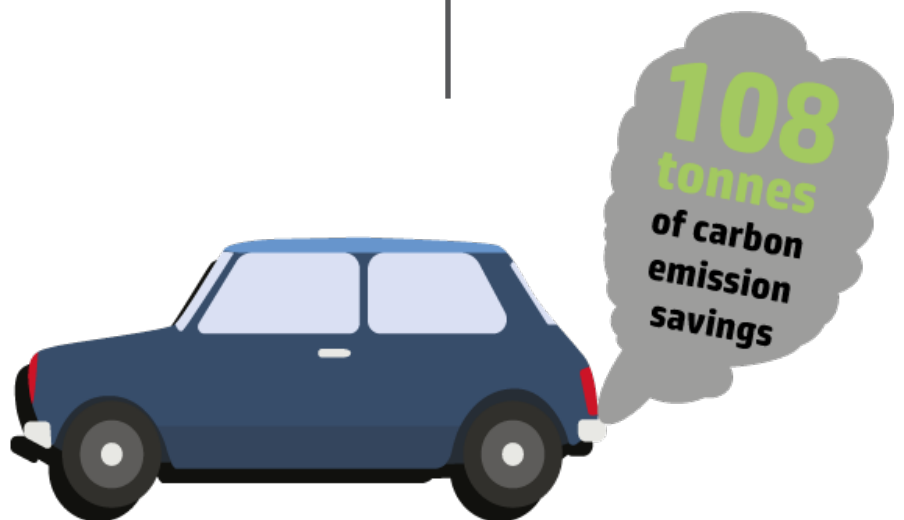
Through a further collaboration with the Edinburgh College Development Trust and the College's Estates department, we were able to secure further match-funding to get a bespoke Edinburgh College Liftshare platform. This funding is supplied through Paths for All's Smarter Choices Smarter Places Open Fund. This has resulted in a Liftshare.com site specifically there for College students and staff, so they can share cars to travel to college and thus reduce their fuel consumption and carbon emissions.



Our year in numbers



ECSA-Illence Award
Nominations





Edinburgh College
Students'
Association

Powered by students | **Driven by values** | **Committed to better**

Edinburgh College Students' Association is a charity registered in Scotland. Charity number SC028544